

HRC55 Joint NGO end of session statement

The failure of States to pay their membership dues to the United Nations in full and in time, and the practice of conditioning funding on unilateral political goals is causing a [financial liquidity crisis](#) for the organisation, the impacts of which are felt by victims and survivors of human rights violations and abuses. The UN as a whole, and the Human Rights Council and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights specifically, have deliberated various [measures](#) and [proposals](#) to conserve cash, including through freezing the recruitment of staff to mechanisms created by States, and delays and postponements of key agendas, as well as partial fulfillment of activities. We remind decision-makers that what is being traded off are priorities brought to the UN by human rights defenders and affected populations and agreed to by governments themselves. Without the resources needed, the outcomes of this session can't be implemented. The credibility of HRC is at stake.

We welcome the adoption of three resolutions calling for the implementation of effective accountability measures to ensure justice for atrocity crimes committed in the context of **Israel's** decades long colonial apartheid imposed over the **Palestinian people**, and for the realization of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination. Special Procedures expressed their profound concern about "the support of certain governments for Israel's strategy of warfare against the besieged population of **Gaza**, and the failure of the international system to mobilise to prevent genocide" and called on States to implement an "arms embargo on Israel, heightened by the International Court of Justice's ruling [...] that there is a plausible risk of genocide in Gaza [...]". This session, the Special Rapporteur on the OPT concluded that the actions of Israel in Gaza meet the legal qualifications of genocide.

We deplore the **double standards** in applying international law and the failure of certain States to vote in favor of ending impunity. This undermines the integrity of the UN human rights framework, the legitimacy of this institution, and the credibility of those States. From **Palestine**, to **Ukraine**, to **Myanmar**, to **Sudan**, to **Sri Lanka**, resolving grave human rights violations requires States to address root causes, applying human rights norms in a principled and consistent way. The Council has a **prevention mandate** and UN member States have a legal and moral duty to prevent and ensure accountability and non-recurrence for atrocity crimes, wherever they occur.

We want to highlight and specifically welcome the adoption of the first ever **resolution on combating discrimination, violence and harmful practices intersex persons**. The resolution builds on growing support in the Council on this topic and responds to several calls by the global coalition of intersex-led organisations. The resolution takes important steps in recognizing that discrimination, violence and harmful practices based on innate variations of sex characteristics, such as medically unnecessary interventions, takes place in all regions of the world. We welcome that the resolution calls for States to take measures to protect the human rights of this population and calls for an OHCHR

report and a panel discussion to address challenges and discuss good practices in protecting the human rights of intersex persons.

We welcome the renewal of the **mandate of the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of human rights by persons with albinism**. As attested by human rights defenders with albinism, the mandate played an invaluable role by shedding light on human rights violations against persons with albinism through ground breaking research, country visits, and human rights training, and ensuring that defenders with albinism are consulted and take part in the decision-making. The organisations also welcomed the inclusion of language reflecting the important role played by “organizations of persons with albinism and their families”, and the reference to the role of States in collaboration with the World Health Organization, “to take effective measures to address the health-related effects of climate change on persons with albinism with a view to realizing their right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, particularly regarding the alarming incidence of skin cancer in this population, and to implement the recommendations of the report of the Independent Expert in this regard”.

We welcome the adoption of the resolution on the renewal of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur **on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment**. We also welcome the update of the title of the mandate acknowledging the recognition of this right by the Human Rights Council in its resolution 48/13 on 8 October 2021 and the General Assembly resolution 76/300 on 28 July 2022. We also welcome the inclusion of gender-specific language in the text, and we call on the Special Rapporteur to devote a careful attention to the protection of environmental human rights defenders for their strong contribution to the realization of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, as called for by several States. We also welcome that the Council appointed for the first time a woman from the global south to fulfill this mandate, and we welcome the nomination of another woman as Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change.

We welcome the resolution on **countering disinformation**, which addresses new issues whilst once again rejecting censorship and reaffirming the “essential role” that the right to freedom of expression plays in countering disinformation. We welcome the specific focus on girls - besides women - as well as risks associated with artificial intelligence, gender-based violence, and electoral processes. We urge States to follow the approach of the resolution and to combat disinformation through holistic, positive measures, including by ensuring a diverse, free and independent media environment, protecting journalists and media workers, and implementing comprehensive right to information laws. Importantly, we also urge States to ensure that they do not conduct their own disinformation campaigns. At the same time, social media companies have an essential role to play and should take heed of the resolution by reforming their business models which allow disinformation to flourish on their platforms. The resolution also mandates the Advisory Committee to produce a new report on disinformation, and it is absolutely essential that this report mirrors and reinforces existing standards on this topic,

especially the various reports of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of opinion and expression.

While we welcome the technical renewal of the resolution on **freedom of religion or belief**, we regret that the parallel resolution on **combating intolerance** (widely known by its original name Resolution 16/18) was not tabled at the session. Since 2011, these dual resolutions have been renewed each year, representing a consensual and universal framework to address the root causes of hate based on religion or belief in law, policy, and practice. We call on the OIC to once again renew Resolution 16/18 in a future session, while ensuring no substantive changes are made to this consensual framework. We also urge all States to reaffirm their commitment to Resolution 16/18 and the Rabat Plan of Action and adopt comprehensive and evidence-based national implementation plans, with the full and effective participation of diverse stakeholders.

We welcome the adoption of the resolution on **prevention of genocide** and its focus on impunity, risks and early warnings, as well as the paragraph reaffirming that starvation of civilians as a method to combat is prohibited under international humanitarian law; however, we regret that the resolution fails to adequately reflect and address serious concerns relating to current political contexts and related risks of genocide.

We welcome the adoption of the resolution on the **rights of the child: realizing the rights of the child and inclusive social protection**, strengthening the implementation of child rights-compliant inclusive social protection systems that benefit all children. We also welcome the addition of a new section on child rights mainstreaming, enhancing the capacity of OHCHR to advance child rights mainstreaming, particularly in areas such as meaningful and ethical child participation and child safeguarding. We remain concerned by persisted attempts to weaken the text, especially to shift the focus away from children as individual right-holders, to curtail child participation and remove the inclusion of a gender perspective.

We welcome the adoption of the resolution on **torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment** which addresses effective national legislative, administrative, judicial or other measures to prevent acts of torture. We welcome the new paragraph urging States concerned to comply with binding orders of the International Court of Justice related to their obligations under the Convention against Torture.

We welcome the adoption of a new resolution on the human rights situation in **Belarus**. The Belarusian authorities continue their widespread and systematic politically-motivated repression, targeting not only dissent inside the country, but also Belarusians outside the country who were forced to flee for fear of persecution. Today, almost 1,500 prisoners jailed following politically-motivated charges in Belarus face discriminatory treatment, severe restriction of their rights, and ill-treatment including torture. The resolution rightly creates a new standalone independent investigative mechanism, that will inherit the work of the OHCHR Examination, to collect and preserve evidence of

potential international crimes beyond the 2020 elections period, with a view to advancing accountability. It also ensures the renewal of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur who remains an essential “lifeline” to Belarusian civil society.

We welcome the resolution on technical assistance and capacity building in regard to the human rights situation in **Haiti** and emphasis on the role civil society plays in the promotion and protection of human rights and the importance of creating and maintaining an enabling environment in which civil society can operate independently and free from insecurity. We similarly welcome the call on the Haitian authorities to step up their efforts to support national human rights institutions and to pursue an inclusive dialogue between all Haitian actors concerned in order to find a lasting solution to the multidimensional crisis, which severely impacts civil society. We welcome the renewal of the mandate of the designated expert and reference to women and children in regard to the monitoring of human rights situation and abuses developments, as well as encouragement of progress on the question of the establishment of an office of the Office of the High Commissioner in Haiti. We nonetheless regret that the resolution does not address the multifaceted challenges civil society faces amid escalating violence, fails to further address the link between the circulation of firearms and the human rights violations and abuses, and does not identify concrete avenues for the protection of civilians and solidarity action to ensure the safety, dignity and rights of civilians are upheld. We welcome the adoption of the resolution on **Iran**, renewing the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on human rights in Iran and extending for another year the mandate of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Iran. The continuation of these two distinct and complementary mandates is essential for the Council to fulfill its mandate of promotion and protection of human rights in Iran. However, given the severity of the human rights crisis in the country, we regret that this important resolution remains purely procedural and fails to reflect the dire situation of human rights in Iran, including the sharp spike in executions, often following grossly unfair trials. It also fails to address the increased levels of police and judicial harassment against women and girls appearing in public without compulsory headscarves, human rights defenders, lawyers, journalists and families of victims seeking truth and justice, and the continued pervasive discrimination and violence faced by women and girls, LGBTI+ persons and persons belonging to ethnic and religious minorities in the country.

We welcome the adoption by consensus of the resolution on **Myanmar**, which is a clear indication of the global concern for the deepening human rights and humanitarian crisis in the country as a result of the military's over three-year long brutal war against the people resisting its attempted coup. We further welcome the Council's unreserved support for Myanmar peoples' aspirations for human rights, democracy, and justice as well as the recognition of serious human rights implications of the continuing sale of arms and jet fuel to Myanmar.

We welcome the resolution on the situation of human rights in **Ukraine** stemming from the Russian aggression. The latest report of the Independent International Commission

of Inquiry (COI) reveals disturbing evidence of war crimes, including civilian targeting, torture, sexual violence, and the unlawful transfer of children. These findings underscore the conflict's brutality, particularly highlighted by the siege of Mariupol, where indiscriminate attacks led to massive civilian casualties and infrastructure destruction. The report also details the widespread and systematic torture and sexual violence against both civilians and prisoners of war. Moreover, the illegal deportation of children emerges as a significant issue, as part of a broader strategy of terror and cultural erasure. The COI's mandate extension is crucial for ongoing investigations and ensuring justice for victims.

By adopting a resolution entitled “advancing human rights in **South Sudan**,” the Council [ensured](#) that international scrutiny of South Sudan’s human rights situation will cover the country’s first-ever national elections, which are set to take place in December 2024. With this resolution, the UN’s top human rights body extended the mandate of its Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan.

We welcome the resolution on the human rights situation in **Syria** and the extension of the mandate of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry (COI), which will continue to report on violations from all sides of the conflict in an impartial and victim-centered manner. Syria continues to commit systematic and widespread attacks against civilians, in detention centers through torture, arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance and through indiscriminate attacks against the population in Idlib. We welcome that the resolution supports the mandate of the Independent Institution of the Missing People and calls for compliance with the recent order on Provisional Measures by the ICJ - both initiatives can play a significant role in fulfilling victims’ rights to truth and justice and should receive support by all UN Member States. In a context of ongoing normalization, the CoI’s mandate to investigate and report on human rights abuses occurring in Syria is of paramount importance.

We continue to deplore this Council’s exceptionalism towards serious human rights violations committed by the Chinese government. At a time when double-standards are enabling ongoing atrocity crimes to be committed in Palestine, sustained failure by Council Members, in particular OIC countries, to promote accountability for crimes against humanity against Uyghurs and Muslim peoples in **China** severely undermines the Council’s integrity, and its ability to prevent and put an end to atrocity crimes globally. Findings by the OHCHR, the UN Treaty Bodies, the ILO and over 100 letters by UN Special Procedures since 2018 have provided [overwhelming evidence](#) pointing to systematic and widespread human rights violations across the People’s Republic of China. We reiterate our pressing call for all Council Members to support the adoption of a resolution establishing a UN mandate to monitor and report on the human rights situation in China, as repeatedly [urged](#) by UN Special Procedures. We further echo Special Procedures’ call for prompt and impartial investigations into the unlawful death of [Cao Shunli](#), and all cases of reprisals for cooperation with the UN.

We regret the Council's silence on the situation in **India** despite the clear and compounding early warning signs of further deterioration that necessitate preventive action by the Council based on the objective criteria. The latest of these early warning signals include the recent notification of rules to implement the highly discriminatory Citizenship Amendment Act by the Bharatiya Janata Party-led government just weeks before the election, along with recent intercommunal violence in Manipur and ongoing violence against Muslims in various parts of India amid increasing restrictions on civic space, criminalisation of dissent and erosion of the rule of law with political interference.

We further regret that this Council is increasingly failing to protect victims of human rights violations throughout the Middle East and North Africa, including in **Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Libya, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen**. The people of Yemen and Libya continue to endure massive “man-made” humanitarian catastrophes caused in large part by ongoing impunity for war crimes, crimes against humanity and other grave violations of international law. In Algeria, Egypt, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and in other MENA countries, citizens are routinely subjected to brutal, wide-spread human rights violations intended to silence dissent, eradicate independent civil society and quash democratic social movements. Countless citizens from the MENA region continue to hope and strive for a more dignified life – often at the cost of their own lives and freedom. We call on this Council and UN member States to rise above narrow political agendas and begin to take steps to address the increasing selectivity that frequently characterizes this Council’s approach to human rights protection and promotion.

We regret that once more, **civil society** representatives faced numerous obstacles to accessing the Palais and engaging in discussions, both in person and remotely, during this session. The UN human rights system in Geneva has always and continues to rely on the smooth and unhindered access of civil society to carry out its mandate. We remind UN member States, as well as UNOG, that the Council’s mandate, as set out in HRC Res 5/1, requires that arrangements be made, and practices observed to ensure ‘the most effective contribution’ of NGOs. Undermining civil society access and engagement not only undermines the capacities and effectiveness of civil society but also of the UN itself.

Signatories:

1. All Human Rights for All in Iran
2. Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)
3. Association Arc pour la defense des droits de l’homme et des revendication democratique/culturelles du peuple Azerbaidjanais Iran -”ArcDH”
4. Balochistan Human Rights Group
5. Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies
6. Child Rights Connect (CRCnt)
7. CIVICUS

8. Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI)
9. Egyptian initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR)
10. Ensemble contre la Peine de Mort
11. Franciscans International
12. Gulf Center for Human Rights
13. Impact Iran
14. International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI)
15. International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
16. International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA)
17. International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)
18. Kurdistan Human Rights Network
19. Kurdpa Human Rights Organization
20. PEN America
21. The Syrian Legal Development Programme (SLDP)
22. United 4 Iran