

29 July 2013

Dear Colleague

NGO participation in the UN Human Rights Council

We are addressing this letter to you as we understand that the Permanent Mission of Egypt has invited your delegation to subscribe to a draft letter regarding NGO engagement with the UN Human Rights Council. We respectfully urge your delegation not to support the letter.

We are pleased that the draft letter acknowledges the 'important role played by civil society and NGOs in the promotion and protection of human rights at the national and international levels', including in the Council. This role is reaffirmed by Article 38 of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, General Assembly resolution 60/251 and the Human Rights Council's Institution Building Package. It is also reflected in Operative Paragraph 15 of Human Rights Council resolution 22/6 on human rights defenders, adopted by consensus by the Council in March.

We are deeply concerned, however, that some of the reasoning and proposals made in the letter are not compatible with these standards and may have the purpose or effect of restricting NGOs' constructive contributions to the work of the Council.

In particular, we are concerned that proposals made in relation to accreditation may lead to the arbitrary or discriminatory exclusion of NGO representatives or expose such representatives to increased risk of intimidation or reprisal.

We are also concerned that issues raised and proposals made in relation to the conduct of side-events may facilitate efforts to censor such events and be incompatible with the very human rights standards that the Council is mandated to uphold. As we are sure you will agree, it is appropriate and legitimate that NGOs subject the behavior of States to scrutiny and criticism, and that NGO activities and advocacy be timely and designed to ensure that the Council holds States accountable for their international human rights obligations.

While taking issue with the aspects of the letter referred to in the two paragraphs above, we do agree with the concern expressed in the draft as to instances of attacks and abuse against speakers in the Council. We are committed to respecting the integrity of all stakeholders in the Council and join particularly in condemning attacks on the Council's special procedures mandate holders, regardless of the quarter from which they originate.

Finally, we reaffirm our commitment to constructive and critical engagement and dialogue with all States and, in that spirit, would welcome the opportunity for further discussions with your delegation.

Yours sincerely

Amnesty International

Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)

Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies

Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network

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Human Rights Watch

International Service for Human Rights