

Statement at 42nd session of the UN Human Rights Council

Item 2: General Debate with the High Commissioner

Thank you Mr President.

Madame High Commissioner, human rights defenders are people who **act with humanity**.

They are the people and NGOs rescuing migrants and refugees at sea and providing the vital humanitarian assistance that keeps them alive and gives them a chance at a better life.

Madame High Commissioner, human rights defenders are people who **serve humanity**.

They are the environmentalists and indigenous communities working to protect the world's forests and to prevent the climate catastrophe that impacts so disproportionately on those living in vulnerable areas or members of communities which experience marginalisation and discrimination.

Madame High Commissioner, human rights defenders are people who **bring out the best in humanity**.

They are the ordinary people in places you mentioned like Hong Kong, Burundi and Tanzania who are striving for societies in which people can participate in decisions and express themselves freely without risk of unrestrained violence, arbitrary detention or enforced disappearance.

Madame High Commissioner, the opposite of humanity is inhumanity.

Inhumanity is the criminalisation of migrant rights defenders by EU States such as Hungary and Italy, leading to people drowning at sea or being forcibly returned to danger.

Inhumanity is the greed of the politicians and major companies extracting short term profit by destroying our planet, killing environmental defenders, and smearing activists like Greta Thunberg.

Inhumanity is the systematic repression of those working for more free, just and inclusive societies, whether for women in Saudi Arabia or religious and ethnic minorities in China.

It's time to choose sides in the struggle for our future. Join us in siding with human rights defenders. Join us in siding with humanity.