

Human Rights Council 34th session

Speaker: Helen Nolan – Check against delivery

ITEM 5 – HUMAN RIGHTS BODIES AND MECHANISMS

ISHR welcomes the Special Procedures' latest joint communications report, which provides a troubling picture of threats and attacks against civil society actors and human rights defenders across all regions, whose work and safety is critical to healthy societies that respect human rights and the rule of law.

We urge the Human Rights Council to address and denounce the three cases of reprisals contained in the joint communications report. Osman Isci, a Turkish human rights defender, was suspended from his position in a university after he cooperated with the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of the right to freedom of opinion and expression during his official country visit to Turkey. A human rights defender in Rwanda suffered an attempted kidnapping and intense interrogations after he cooperated with UN human rights mechanisms. Jiang Tianyong, a human rights lawyer, was disappeared and on 6 June charged with subversion of State power, related to his engagement with the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights during his official country visit to China.

We welcome actions taken by Special Procedures regarding these specific cases of reprisals, and urge them to systematically respond to such cases, public statements.

We join the High Commissioner in calling on all States to including through protect human rights defenders from any kinds of reprisals, and ensure they uphold their duty to guarantee the right of unhindered access by human rights defenders to UN mechanisms.

We welcome the efforts of mandate holders and OHCHR to make the joint communications report more easily searchable through the accompanying database as an important step towards providing more visibility of the cases contained therein. We appreciate the responsiveness of OHCHR and mandate holders to civil society concerns, as well as the ongoing dialogue with civil society that aims to refine the methodology of the database.

The database would allow OHCHR to ensure the publication of communications when the period provided for a State response has expired, and also for the immediate publication of State replies – rather than once official translations are made available of replies not sent in English, French or Spanish. These steps would greatly increase the timeliness and transparency of the communications procedure, a crucial requirement for civil society to be able to play its important role in following up on individual cases and encouraging State cooperation with the Special Procedures.

In closing, we call on States to respond to communications in a timely and substantive manner in line with their duty to cooperate with UN mechanisms – an obligation emphasised last week by the High Commissioner. 42 States are listed in the present joint communications report as having yet to respond to at least one communication alleging rights violations.

Mr President, we urge you to request speedy updates from non-responders, including 17 Council members: Bangladesh, Bolivia, Burundi, Brazil, China, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, India, Iraq, Kenya, Nigeria, the Philippines, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia and the United States.