



HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL - 46th SESSION

Item 2: Oral Update by the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Country Situations Across the World

(26 February 2021)

Ms. Michelle Bachelet – High Commissioner for Human Rights:

On a general note, civic space and civic freedoms have been constrained. Rights to freedom of expression, to peaceful assembly and to association have been increasingly denied. Worldwide, the COVID-19 pandemic has unveiled and exacerbated pre-existing social and economic inequalities. Women, children, ethnic and religious minorities, and persons with disabilities are just a few vulnerable groups, which have suffered the most from the effects of the health crisis. To counter the virus, and promote and protect human rights, international cooperation and multilateralism should be enhanced, and civic space restored.

As to oral updates on country specific human rights situations, here as follows:

- ❖ in the **Russian Federation**, rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly have been further curtailed. Unnecessary and disproportionate force has often been used against peaceful protesters.
- ❖ in **Turkey**, civic space has been further constrained (Law No. 7262), and opposition members have been arrested while judicial independence has continued to be undermined.
- ❖ in **Kazakhstan**, non-governmental organizations have been persecuted, and the right to freedom of association violated.
- ❖ in the **Nagorno-Karabakh**, the end of the conflict is welcomed. To provide justice to victims, investigations into international law violations should now be established.
- ❖ in **Germany, Greece, Italy, Malta, the Netherlands, and Spain**, activities of organizations, which defend the rights of migrants, have been impeded. Today, the number of operational humanitarian ships in the Central Mediterranean has been reduced to four.
- ❖ in **Hungary**, provision of aid to migrants and border monitoring have been criminalized.
- ❖ in **Croatia**, public oversight of migration practices has been denied to the Ombudswoman and human rights organizations.
- ❖ in **Myanmar, Cambodia, Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam**, as a reaction to people's demand for democracy, arbitrary detentions of human rights defenders and intimidations of journalists have been witnessed. The right to freedom of (online and offline) expression has also been constrained.
- ❖ in the **Philippines**, disproportionate use of force by the police has continued to be recorded.
- ❖ in **India**, violence against journalists that have reported on recent farmers' protests, and constraints on the right to free expression have been denounced. While in **Indian-administered Kashmir** restrictions on civic space have been attested, in **Pakistan-administered Kashmir** access to internet have continued to be an issue.
- ❖ in **Pakistan**, women continue to suffer from discrimination, which include denied access to education, and child and forced marriage.
- ❖ in **China**, under the excuse of national security, human rights defenders and activists have been subject to arbitrary detentions and unfair trials. As to the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, alleged instances of sexual abuses, forced labor and socio-cultural rights violations have continued to be reported.
- ❖ in **Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, and Peru**, unnecessary force has been used against protesters, who have denounced violations of international human rights standards. In relation to Venezuelan migrants, the militarization of border management is an issue of concern, particularly in Ecuador, Peru, and Chile. In Colombia, transitional justice developments are commended, whereas in Guatemala, attacks against human rights defenders and journalists are condemned.
- ❖ in **Venezuela**, to investigate human rights violations, cooperation between OHCHR and the Government should be enhanced.



- ❖ in **Brazil** and other countries of the **Amazon and Pantanal regions**, improper enforcement of environmental laws has resulted in illegal extractions, which have harmed indigenous people the most. Environmental activists and human rights defenders have also continued to be harassed.
- ❖ in the **United States of America**, new measures against racism and discrimination are welcomed. To solve the massive detention of migrants, alternatives to detention should be considered.
- ❖ in **Haiti**, episodes of arbitrary detentions and widespread social unrest have been documented. Constructive and inclusive dialogue between all stakeholders concerned should be encouraged, and the rule of law upheld.
- ❖ in **Syria**, the COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated the humanitarian crisis. Targeted killings and shelling have continued to harm the life of the Syrian people, whose voice remains unheard.
- ❖ in **Egypt**, rights to free expression and peaceful assembly have been restricted. Detentions of human rights defenders and journalists have been a recurrent issue.
- ❖ in **Jordan**, the right to freedom of expression has been further hampered.
- ❖ in **Saudi Arabia**, notwithstanding some positive developments (e.g., release of a women's rights activist), legal frameworks should be established to safeguard the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.
- ❖ in **Iraq**, human rights defenders and journalists have been repeatedly threatened. In the Kurdistan region, demonstrators have been detained, while their due process rights denied.
- ❖ in **Iran**, particularly in Khuzestan and in the Kurdish provinces, minorities have suffered from mass arrest and enforced disappearances. Perpetrators of human rights violations occurred in 2018 and 2019 have still not been held accountable.
- ❖ in **Yemen**, the formation of a new coalition Government is welcomed. Malnutrition, attacks on medical facilities and denied access to education however continue to harm the Yemeni people.
- ❖ in **Algeria**, soon to happen parliamentary elections are welcomed. On the other hand, detained peaceful protesters should immediately be released.
- ❖ in **Libya**, recent political developments are commended, and the establishment of courts on violence against women and children welcomed.
- ❖ in **Ethiopia**, human rights and humanitarian aid workers should be allowed to enter the Tigray region, whose people have allegedly been subject to human rights violations (e.g., sexual abuses, mass killings) in the past months. To prevent further regional instability, violence in Tigray and other Ethiopian regions should be ended promptly.
- ❖ in **Eritrea**, rights to freedom of expression and religion should be ensured. In addition, alleged human rights violations perpetrated by the Eritrean army in the Tigray region should be thoroughly investigated.
- ❖ in **Uganda**, political opponents, journalists and LGBTI people have been arbitrarily arrested and detained.
- ❖ in **Tanzania**, during and in the aftermath of the election period, alleged episodes of intimidation, arbitrary detention, and torture have been denounced.
- ❖ in **Mali**, to ensure that perpetrators of human rights violations be held accountable, recommendations issued by the International Commission of Inquiry on Mali should be implemented. In addition, civilian involvement should be strengthened, and gender equality ensured.
- ❖ in **Malawi**, sexual abuses, child marriages, and attacks against older women and people with albinism have risen drastically.
- ❖ in **Somalia**, women and children's legal safeguards against sexual violence and child marriage are weakened.
- ❖ in **Sudan**, ratifications of the Convention Against Torture and the Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance are welcomed. On the other hand, perpetrators of human rights violations documented in the Darfur region should be held accountable, and justice to victims provided.
- ❖ in **Guinea**, during the presidential elections of 2020, political opponents and civil society activists were arrested and detained, with the alleged accusation of threatening national security. Release of peaceful protesters should be ensured, and right to due process guaranteed.
- ❖ in **Comoros**, arbitrary detentions of political opponents and unsubstantiated prosecutions of journalists have continued to be reported.
- ❖ in **Cyprus**, rights to free expression, to education, to health, and to seek asylum should be upheld.

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