

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL – 51st SESSION

Opening Segment¹ (12 September 2022)

The President of the UN Human Rights Council (HRC), **H.E. Mr. Federico Villegas**, opened the 51st session. The Council held a moment of silence in memory of **Her Majesty Queen Elisabeth II**. The United Kingdom thanked the Council Members for their condolences, tribute, and support. Another moment of silence was held in memory of the Ambassador of the Central African Republic, **H.E. Mr. Léopold-Ismaël Samba**, who had passed away on 2 September.

The President extended his warm congratulations to **Mr Volker Türk** for his recent appointment as the next UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and looks forward to working with him. Until then, the Council will count on the work of the Acting High Commissioner for Human Rights, **Ms. Nada Al-Nashif**. Mr. Villegas also welcomed the 15 government officials whose participation in the session has been made possible by the Voluntary Technical Assistance Trust Fund to support the participation of LDCs/SIDS. Mr. Villegas recalled the extraordinary modalities in place for the session as outlined in the [Organizational meeting](#) held on 30 August 2022. **Ms. Nada Al-Nashif**, on behalf of the OHCHR, also extended a welcome for Mr. Volker Türk, before presenting the High Commissioner's oral update.

H.E. Mr. Alphonse Charles Wright, Minister of Justice of Guinea addressed the Council after the Oral Update by the Acting High Commissioner. He highlighted the Council's important role in upholding human rights and supporting States in this regard. He referred to importance of State's ownership of a democratic culture stating that working on factors indispensable to consolidating the process of democratization is a core challenge for humanity. The issue of promoting and protecting human rights isn't a utopia, but a requirement for any society that has the ambition to seeking to establish genuine democracy that fosters the expression of all rights and the full exercise of public freedoms. Promotion or protection of human rights is not possible if the authorities responsible for protecting them are unable to put their own interests aside, nor if protected entities or NGOs abuse principles of freedom of association and expression for political ends. We must collectively and individually be able to subject ourselves to the same principles, whether favourable or unfavourable. The Republic of Guinea is committed to observing its human rights commitments.

Item 2: Annual report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General

Oral Update by UN Acting High Commissioner for Human Rights

Ms. Nada Al-Nashif, the UN Acting High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Acting High Commissioner in her Oral Update, drew attention to the continuing **suffering of the civilian population** and to the **serious global socio-economic consequences** of the war, which has led to severe fuel shortages and threats to food security in some of the poorest countries. The **landmark agreement** involving Russia, Ukraine, the United Nations and Türkiye in July is welcomed and must be fully respected, allowing allowed the resumption of shipments of grain and other food supplies from Ukrainian ports. The international community must ensure the food reaches the people who need it.

The Acting High Commissioner drew attention to the **risk of backtracking on environmental goals** in the face of soaring energy prices and urged the **EU Member States** to accelerate development of **energy efficiency projects and renewables**, and steer clear of turning towards further investments in

¹ Full video recording of this and subsequent Oral Updates are available on UN WebTV. [1st, 2nd, 3rd Meeting, 51st Regular Session Human Rights Council](#)

fossil fuels infrastructure. She encouraged all States to **seek for an ambitious outcome** at the **UNFCCC COP27**. Extending her sympathies and solidarity for all those affected by the **floods in Pakistan**, she asked: *“How many more tragedies of this sort do we need before the urgency of the moment jolts us into action?”*

Highlighting the importance of multilateral action and of building bridges versus division, Ms. Al-Nashif reminded of the **Call to Action for Human Rights** and **Our Common Agenda** setting the framework for these shifts to take place. While inclusive participation and stronger institutions are needed, fuller use should be made of the international human rights mechanisms, including the treaty bodies, UPR and the special procedures.

The Acting High Commissioner focused on the following **country-situations**, noting that the country situations of **Afghanistan, Belarus, Cambodia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Georgia, Myanmar, Nicaragua, Philippines, South Sudan, Sri Lanka** and **Ukraine** will be addressed in separate discussions during the 51st session:

- **Angola and Kenya:** the Acting High Commissioner welcomed the recently concluded peaceful and inclusive elections.
- **Burkina Faso:** increase in human rights violations during security operations and the rise in hate speech and incitement to violence against ethnic minorities is worrisome.
- **Burundi:** deteriorating situation and shrinking civic space is concerning, including the Secretary-General of the ruling party calling on the *Imbonerakure* to continue night patrols and to kill any “troublemakers”. The Acting High Commissioner called on the Government to cooperate with the newly appointed UN Special Rapporteur.
- **Central African Republic:** defence and security forces and foreign private military contractors to immediately cease violations of human rights and IHL, including targeted attacks against Muslims and any other minorities.
- **Chad, Guinea, and Sudan:** in the context of ongoing transitions taking place all alleged violations committed during military operations or in the context of protests must be investigated.
- **Eswatini:** the shrinking of civic space is worrisome. Political instability and civil unrest reportedly met with excessive use of force by security officers.
- **Ethiopia:** encouraging announcement by the authorities in **Tigray** of readiness to abide by an immediate cessation of hostilities and to participate in a peace process under the auspices of the African Union (AU). The Government should cooperate with and allow the International Commission of Human Rights Experts access to Tigray. Killings and inter-communal violence in the **Benishangul-Gumuz, Gambella, Oromia** and on the border of the **Afar and Somali regions**.
- **Libya:** civilian casualties and the destruction of civilian infrastructure due to recent violent clashes in Tripoli. Alleged abductions, enforced disappearances, arbitrary detention, including of women human rights defenders, and violence against women continue
- **Mali:** alleged violations committed during military operations conducted by Malian defence and security forces, in some instances operationally supported by foreign private military contractors.
- **Mozambique:** the Government must investigate and hold to account perpetrators of human rights violations, and of threats and intimidation against human rights defenders, making the findings public. Cooperation with the country and OHCHR has grown in the past years.
- **Sierra Leone:** the Government must hold prompt, impartial and thorough investigations into the violence and fatalities during public protests on 10 August.
- **Somalia:** the peaceful transfer of power and the formation of a new Federal Government is welcomed. Severe drought with a threat of famine in the coming months calls for international support to avert a catastrophe.

- **Tunisia:** executive interference with the judiciary, including summary dismissals and the launching of criminal proceedings against judges. Civilians, including journalists, are increasingly being referred to military courts, which fail to meet international standards of fair trial. The imposition of arbitrary travel bans targeting especially members of the opposition.
- **Haiti:** unbearable levels of violence and human rights abuses involving heavily armed gangs continue. Recent decision of the Security Council to extend and reinforce the mandate of the UN Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH) is an important step to address SGBV and tackle arms smuggling. Strengthening accountability should include a robust oversight mechanism over the police. A specialized judicial task force to tackle sexual, financial, and urban violence crimes related to gangs should be established.
- **Colombia:** Rising levels of violence by non-state armed groups and criminal organisations. The Government's strategy to seek "total peace" is encouraging. The Office is ready to support these efforts and will continue to report to the Council on the status of the peace agreement. Announcements to reform the security sector and to shift the drug policy from a punitive to a more social and public health approach are welcomed.
- **Ecuador:** widespread protests and loss of lives in June. The dialogue between the Government and the indigenous movement (CONAIE) is an opportunity to find a peaceful solution.
- **Honduras:** the Office has continued to record attacks against rights defenders. Out of a total of 120 victims, two thirds are environmental defenders, and many of them indigenous or afro Hondurans. As a positive example of cooperation between OHCHR and the Government, the Acting High Commissioner highlighted the design of a new framework for the selection of Supreme Court Judges, which is likely to strengthen the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary.
- **Bangladesh:** polarising environment ahead of the next elections. During the first visit by a High Commissioner to Bangladesh last month, including to the Rohingya refugee camps in **Cox's Bazar**, the former High Commissioner offered OHCHR's support to review restrictive laws governing on-line expression. The establishment of an independent, specialised mechanism to investigate allegations of human rights violations by law enforcement agencies was encouraged.
- **China:** the Office published the assessment of human rights concerns in the **Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region** of China on 31 August.
- **Indonesia:** the Office has received reports of intensified violence, including clashes between the Indonesian security forces and armed groups, in the **Papua region**, resulting in civilian casualties and internal displacement. Shocking reports of dismembered bodies of four indigenous Papuan civilians found outside Timika in West Papua Province on 22 August.
- **Iraq:** political deadlock, economic challenges, shrinking space for freedom of expression, and the severe impact of climate change continue to cause suffering on the people. In August tensions culminated in violence, with 34 people dead and injury to nearly 300. The participation of all groups, in particular women and civil society, in national dialogue processes must be ensured.
- **Nepal:** the Office is closely following the transitional justice agenda and legislative amendments.
- **Occupied Palestinian territory:** targeting of human rights defenders including the apparently arbitrary closure orders of seven Palestinian human rights and humanitarian organizations in **Ramallah**. A disturbing increase in the number of Palestinians, including children, killed and injured by Israeli forces. Israel has not renewed the visas for OHCHR international staff in their Palestine office. In the context of the Israeli military investigation of Ms. Shireen Abu Akleh's killing and Mr. Ali Sammoudi's injury the Acting High Commissioner called for a criminal investigation compliant with international law standards.
- **Singapore:** recent executions for drug-related offences, and pressure against journalists, legal professionals, and human rights defenders who peacefully advocate against the death penalty. The Government to immediately impose a moratorium on the use of the death penalty, especially for non-violent drug crimes.

- **Vietnam:** growing restrictions on civic space and fundamental freedoms. Sentencing of people on charges related to their human rights work and efforts to promote a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment.
- **Yemen:** a decline in reported casualties from conflict-related violence since the UN mediated truce. Reopening of Hudaydah port has resolved the fuel crisis. More than 24 million Yemenis depend on humanitarian assistance, with current levels of funding below 50% of what is needed. The killing of a senior judge following his abduction on 30 August in Sanaa. The Supreme Judiciary Council resumed its work in August and has appointed its first female member. Women's participation is fundamental to transform the truce into a peace process and should be reflected in the political leaderships in Aden and Sanaa. Women must be able to participate in humanitarian work without restrictions or obligation to have a male escort [mahram]. The Acting High Commissioner reiterates the call for the immediate release of OHCHR and UNESCO staff members, arbitrarily detained by Ansar Allah (Al Houthis) since November 2021.
- **Bosnia and Herzegovina:** during the former High Commissioner's visit in June 2022, strong messages were conveyed ahead of the October general elections, which are taking place in a polarized context. The UN and the Office are ready to continue to support the country towards an inclusive and democratic future.
- **Russian Federation:** intimidation, restrictive measures and sanctions against people voicing opposition to the war in Ukraine. Pressure against journalists, blocking of internet resources and other forms of censorship. Measures taken to expand the 'foreign agent' label to include individuals considered to be "under foreign influence", and to criminalize undeclared contacts with representatives of states, foreign or international organizations deemed to be directed against the "security" of the Russian Federation.
- **Tajikistan:** harassment of human rights defenders and journalists and recent prosecution requests for 25 year or life term prison sentences in some cases particularly in the **Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast**. The detention and deportation of Afghan refugees and asylum seekers including families with children in violation of the principle of non-refoulement.