

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL – 53rd SESSION

Interactive Dialogue with the Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem and in Israel

20 June 2023

In the interactive dialogue discussing the independent international commission of inquiry that took place between November 2022 and March 2023 to investigate human rights violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), including East Jerusalem, **Ms. Pilai**, along with representatives from various countries and NGOs, discussed the restrictions and harassment faced by civil society members. The inquiry revealed that the majority of violations emanated from Israel, **where authorities were found to impose restrictions on civil society to quell dissent and assert authoritarian control**. The implementation of Israel's 2016 civil society laws was criticized for labeling organizations as terrorists and was deemed unlawful. Further, it was highlighted that **security agents in Gaza were responsible for the harassment of journalists**, and both Palestinian and Israeli journalists faced monitoring and harassment. Civil society members were unable to operate effectively due to these restrictions, which included **cyber activity aimed at preventing online activism**. Moreover, the commission shed light on the intersectional harm faced by Palestinian women and human rights defenders, who were particularly targeted due to their perceived challenge to traditional norms. The **lack of accountability for gender-based violence** further compounded the issue.

The commission underlined the urgent need for accountability and protection of civil society members in the OPT. The participants called upon the international community to ensure that Israel complies with its international obligations and ends the occupation. There was an emphasis on measures to ensure that civil society members can operate without restrictions and harassment. The commission also acknowledged the importance of the right to freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly. The discussions were indicative of a pressing need for a comprehensive and long-lasting solution to the human rights violations in the OPT, including ensuring accountability for any violations of international law and securing the rights and protection of the Palestinian people.

Interactive dialogue

50 country delegations took the floor during the interactive dialogue. Representatives from numerous countries voiced concerns about the human rights situation in Palestine. **Venezuela** emphasized the illegal forced settlements and bombings as crimes of war, accusing Israel of aiming to alter the legal status of Palestine. **Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya** echoed the concerns, calling for international law to be emphasized, and condemned the actions of Israeli authorities. Notably, **Korhari**, who is at the helm of the commission, pointed out the positive changes in the commission and urged states to support their work. The issue of **double standards** and the response of states to the crisis was highlighted, with special concern for the media's role and the direct intervention in clashes between Jews and Muslims at the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Women and human rights defenders, who are at the forefront of civil change, face significant challenges, especially online, and there were calls for all duty bearers to participate safely and ensure that perpetrators are held accountable.

Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Bolivia staunchly supported the Palestinian cause, condemning the violations against Palestinians, and calling for steadfast support for their rights. **Russia** raised alarms regarding the negative trend of raids in the West Bank, with women and children being the most affected, and the construction of illegal settlements. **Kuwait and Qatar** emphasized the plight of refugees and the need for international pressure to uphold fundamental rights for the Palestinian people. **North Korea, Turkey, Niger, and Bangladesh** were among the nations that vehemently defended the rights of the Palestinians and condemned the actions of Israel. **South Africa** drew parallels with its own history of apartheid and called the Palestinian cause the greatest moral issue of our time. On the other hand, the **Kingdom of the Netherlands, Australia, and the Sovereign Order of Malta** called for a more balanced approach, highlighting the importance of dialogue, constructive engagement, and humanitarian assistance. **France** advocated for the cycle of violence to end and for both Israelis and Palestinians to have the right to live in peace. **Civil society organizations and NGOs** also played a crucial role in expressing concern and calling for accountability and meaningful consequences for violations of human rights.

The discussions conveyed a deep concern regarding the undermining of civil society's ability to promote self-determination and challenge the occupation. Various participants, including representatives from the **EU, Jordan, Cuba, and Algeria**, expressed concerns about the violations of international humanitarian law, with a particular emphasis on accountability. The EU called for **respect for independence and the fundamental right to freedom of expression**, urging Israel to facilitate access to mandates including the office of the high commissioner. Defense for Children International, an NGO, emphasized the violation of human rights due to Israel labeling civil society organizations as terrorists. **Jordan** advocated for an end to the occupation and the protection of the Palestinian people through negotiations based on a two-state solution with East Jerusalem as the capital. Additionally, **Algeria** stressed the importance of the Palestinian people exercising their rights to self-determination.

Delegations that took the floor during the Interactive dialogue (50 country delegations):

United States of America, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), European Union, Pakistan, Oman, Lebanon, United Arab Emirates, Pakistan, Kuwait, Qatar, Luxembourg, Iraq, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), Sovereign Order of Malta, France, Spain, United States of America, Syrian Arab Republic, Indonesia, Maldives, Malaysia, South Africa, Ireland, Egypt, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Türkiye, Namibia, Bangladesh, Oman, China, Iran (the Islamic Republic of), Libya, Chile, Niger, Senegal, Yemen, Mauritania, Jordan, Cuba, Algeria, Lebanon, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Russian Federation, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, Liechtenstein, Australia, Palestine.

NHRIs and NGOs that took the floor during the Interactive dialogue (10):

Defence for Children International, Institute for NGO Research, Human Rights Watch, United Nations Watch, Norwegian Refugee Council, B'nai B'rith, ADALAH - Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, Amnesty International, Badil Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, International Association of Jewish Lawyers and Jurists.

To watch the full meeting refer to UN Web TV, [Commission of Inquiry on OPT](#).