

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL – 54th SESSION

Interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation

21-22 September 2023

In her opening remarks, **the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation, Mariana Katzarova**, began by urging Russia to cease obstructing her mandate and to grant access to the territory. She further discussed her first report, which highlights a deteriorating human rights situation in Russia, including the suppression of civil and political rights such as freedom of opinion and expression, peaceful association, the lack of judicial independence, denial of the right to a fair trial, and the use of torture and arbitrary detention. The report details how recent legislation has severely restricted human rights, resulting in the closure of independent civic spaces. The report emphasizes the erosion of judicial independence and fair trial guarantees. The report highlights arbitrary administrative sanctions against dissenters and the use of force against peaceful protesters. The report also points out legislative restrictions on civil society and anti-war activists, leading to mass arrests, detentions, and harassment. Women, particularly activists and journalists, have faced gender-based violence and intimidation. The report highlights the challenges of seeking remedies due to limited domestic accountability and Russia's withdrawal from the European Court of Human Rights. The report warns that the situation in Chechnya, where law enforcement officials enjoy impunity for crimes against civilians, serves as a cautionary example for the rest of Russia. Finally, the SR called upon the Russian authorities to undertake comprehensive human rights reforms to redress the damage of the past two decades and fulfill its human rights obligations. The SR urged the international community and UN Member States to continue monitoring and advocating for human rights-based solutions in Russia.

The Russian Federation (Country concerned): The Russian Federation did not take the floor.

Interactive dialogue

Several states and state organisations expressed their support of the mandate and condemned Russia's illegal war of aggression against Ukraine. Some states and state organizations such as **Ukraine, the United States of America, Finland, the EU, New Zealand, Georgia, Canada, Albania, Cyprus, Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Montenegro, and the Republic of Moldova** strongly condemned Russia's crackdown on civil society, human rights defenders, independent media, journalists, political opposition, and critical voices within Russia. They denounced the persecution of individuals who oppose the Russian government and anti-war activists, including women who are also being subjected to gender-based violence. They called for the repeal of oppressive legislation, an end to the political misuse of the judiciary, and the release of all prisoners held on politically motivated charges. They urged Russia to create a safe environment for journalists, human rights defenders, activists, and vulnerable individuals, both online and offline. **Japan** expressed concern about the shrinking civil space in Russia since the beginning of its aggression against Ukraine. **Ukraine** condemned Russia's war propaganda, and its denial of the existence of the Ukrainian state and asserted that these violations amounted to acts of genocide. It also raised concerns about the treatment of civilians who had been detained in Russia and called upon the SR to pay special attention to this issue in future reports. **Switzerland** expressed its support for the mandate and condemned violations related to torture and systematic repression of civil society in Russia.

Other states expressed their rejection of the mandate because it doesn't have the consent of the concerned state and urged the HRC to adhere to the principles of the Charter, including non-selectivity, non-interference with internal affairs, and the non-politicization of human rights

situations. **Mali** commended Russia for its ratification of international human rights mechanisms and its progress in safeguarding civil society's rights while condemning double standards and the politicization of the HRC. **China** emphasized impartiality, non-selectivity, and non-politicization in human rights matters, opposing country-specific resolutions and advocating for constructive dialogue with the consent of the country concerned. **Venezuela** expressed the mandate is politicized and biased, fuelling a global anti-Russian media campaign, and stressed the importance of dialogue and cooperation. **Belarus** opposed the politicization of the mandate, expressed it intervenes in sovereign state affairs, and highlighted the assessment against Russia is biased. **Zimbabwe** regretted the absence of consent from the concerned state and called for genuine dialogue and cooperation within a mutually agreed framework. **Eritrea** opposed selective mandates. **The DPRK** expressed its rejection of the mandate that violates the internal affairs of countries and serves the geopolitical interests of hegemonic powers. **Iran** asserted that politicization hampered cooperation and advocated for dialogue, cooperation, and non-selectivity. **Sudan** emphasized the importance of having the consent of the concerned country and promoting dialogue and cooperation. The **Syrian Arab Republic** deemed the mandate politicized and against the council's objectives, viewing the SR report as biased. **Nicaragua** rejected the manipulation of the SR mandate, and **Cuba** opposed a politicized mandate, advocating for constructive dialogue and cooperation while rejecting interference in Russia's internal affairs.

All NGOs condemned Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. They expressed concern over the crackdown on civil society, and repression of anti-war activists, journalists, and lawyers. They further denounced violations of free speech, independent media shutdown, gender-based violence, acts of torture, and illegal detentions. Other NGOs emphasized violations against conscientious objectors and the annihilation of freedom of expression in the country through Russian war propaganda. They also highlighted violations against anti-war activists and opposition figures, who have been harassed, criminalized, and imprisoned. Other NGOs highlighted violations against independent lawyers and human rights defenders in Russia. Another NGO expressed Russia has intensified laws against human rights lawyers, and access to clients has been denied. One NGO denounced violations against healthcare professionals in Ukraine and Syria.

Delegations that took the floor during the Interactive dialogue (47 country delegations):

Finland (On behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries), European Union, Luxembourg, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Portugal, Czechia, Germany, Japan, Austria, United States of America, Croatia, Lithuania, France, Malta, Belgium, Poland, Ireland, New Zealand, Georgia, Canada, Cyprus, China, Zimbabwe, Romania, Australia, United Kingdom and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Spain, Bulgaria, Albania, Belarus, Mali, Montenegro, Ukraine, Greece, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Slovakia, Republic of Moldova, Italy, Eritrea, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Nicaragua, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), Cuba.

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

Human Rights House Foundation, United Nations Watch, Conscience and Peace Tax International (CPTI), International Federation for Human Rights Leagues, Humanists International, Human Rights Institute, Advocates for Human Rights, Lawyers' Right Watch Canada, Amnesty International, Physicians for Human Rights.

To watch the full meeting refer to UN Web TV [part 1](#) and [part 2](#).