



GENEVA CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
ADVANCEMENT AND GLOBAL DIALOGUE

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association

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PRESENTATION OF THE THEMATIC REPORT

Ms. Gina ROMERO, Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association

The SR introduces her first thematic report on the **impact of the 2023–2025 ‘super election’ cycle on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association**. Half of the global population elected local national and international representatives in 2024. The 2023-2025 electoral cycle was decisive for democracy and civic space globally. The report is not an assessment of the integrity of national elections, but it does present concerning **global trends related to systematic repression** of the exercise of the right to peaceful assembly and association and the adverse impact on the right of people to elect, be elected, and participate.

The rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association are crucial for democratic governance. **Freedom of assembly** is connected with elections, including debates on public matters. **Freedom of association** covers the right to form associations and join them, including those related to political matters such as parties and movements, and their right to act freely based on their goals. These freedoms are crucial to guarantee transparent, credible, **and**



inclusive elections. Given their crucial role during elections, the threshold for imposing legitimate restrictions on these rights should have been stricter than usual, and the tolerance towards gatherings and peaceful process greater, but in reality the threshold and tolerance were below the minimum.

Society including grassroots play a vital role in elections. They promote electoral integrity, advocate for human rights-compliant legal frameworks, support free and pluralistic debates, educate voters, promote voting rights, prevent electoral violence, boost inclusive political participation and oversight, raise awareness about election integrity, and enhance transparency and public trust in electoral outcomes and systems. But instead of being protected, the misuse of restrictive laws, smear campaigns and disinformation targeting civil society intensified globally in the super electoral cycle, undermining electoral participation and freedom of association. Civil society activists and election observers recognised as **human rights offenders** have also faced harassment, arbitrary detention, torture and even killings.

Criminal justice systems have been instrumentalised to **repress opposition political parties**, especially opposition parties. Their leaders, members and candidates often face undue restrictions and political persecution. This includes burdensome registration requirements, high registration fees, restricted funding and state control over internal procedures, hindering party operations and creating intimidation. Opposition parties leaders and members face repression and violence from state and non-state actors before and after elections including arbitrary arrest, disappearance, torture, ill-treatment and killings.

During the cycle, **protests worldwide pushed back** against electoral violations and agendas undermining human rights. Many protests were driven through due to elect fraud, exclusion on opposition parties, and societal issues including corruption, inequality, climate justice, and the call of end for wars and genocide. In response, many governments imposed administrative restrictions, arbitrary arrest, excessive force, and the misuse of less lethal weapons to suppress these protests. Protests were met with **heavy repression and police violence** including lethal force, in some cases supported in expanded police powers adopted before and after elections. In some countries, opposition parties assemblies were also intentionally disrupted. Foreign agent laws and other restrictive legislation were often introduced before elections and tools to silence advocacy and dissent to stigmatise and limit independent civil societies work through vague definitions of engaging in political activity to disqualify candidates and dissolved parties. These laws continue to be imposed post-election to curtail these freedoms.

Some elections took place under **total civic space suppression**, seriously undermining the right to vote and political participation. When political parties, civil society and peaceful assemblies are suppressed, genuine political pluralism and competition cannot exist. The use of emergency measures, growing military regimes, occupations and conflicts are incompatible with free and genuine elections and risk legitimising undemocratic rule.

The representation of **women in political leadership** continues to be very limited and the rights of **LGBTIQ persons**, associations and meetings were also under attack during the electoral super cycle. Both groups were subjected to political physical and virtual violence that limits inclusion and drives a rapid deterioration in their rights. After the cycle, the incremental use of certain



technologies without due control and legal supervision threatens the rights of peaceful assembly, association and participation. Before the elections, it is a disincentive to participation in party meetings and civil society. During the elections, it influences participation and afterwards, it allows reprisals. The use of biometric registers for voters and surveillance technologies such as facial recognition are a matter of concern.

While the world faces multiple crises and a rapid deterioration in democracy, rights and freedoms are exacerbated by the electoral cycle. The SR provides some **key recommendations** for protecting freedom for assembly and association.

- Before elections, legal procedures should support pluralism, protect the action of civil society and the rights of parties. Obstacles to registration and work of parties and civil society should be eliminated. We must protect their work free from stigmatisation. Stigmatising repressive laws such as on foreign agents must be repealed.
- During the electoral process, there must be a guarantee of inclusive political participation with the adoption of non-discriminatory frameworks, support to marginalise groups, protection against violence. After the election, states must consult parties to assess the enjoyment of rights and ensure accountability.
- Freedom of assembly must be facilitated through the use of de-escalation and dialogue. Digital technologies must be regulated according to human rights standards, including the model protocol and its digital component, avoiding the undue use of monitoring and prohibiting the use of mass surveillance with biometric identifiers. The intimidatory effects must be considered.
- Finally, the authorities must show greater tolerance and be open to receiving and considering criticism from the public, the media, civil society and other associations. Dissension is part of democratic societies.

PRESENTATION OF COUNTRY VISIT REPORTS

Turning to the country visit to **Bosnia and Herzegovina** conducted by her predecessor in April 2024, the report indicates that the rights of freedom of assembly and of association are not sufficiently protected in legislation and practise.

Many **laws remain inconsistent** with international human rights obligations. Especially concerning are laws and practises in Republican Srbska, including the use of the stigmatisation of dissenting voices and the promotion of ethno-nationalist and anti-gender and homophobic narratives. Some of the restrictive laws adopted after the visit such as the law of non-profit organisations have been suspended by the constitutional court and then therefore should not be implemented. Civil society organisations, human right defenders, journalists and environmental activists are all affected, limiting their ability to operate freely and safely. Her predecessor called for a **harmonisation of laws** across entities and cantons.

Urgent action is needed to address the **inability of institutions to provide accountability** and justice for the unlawful use for police force and the failure to protect peaceful assemblies. The glorification of convicted war criminals and the denial of atrocity crimes further creates a hostile environment for survivals, right to victims associations, and civil society actors promoting transitional justice. Equal electoral rights should be ensured.



The SR welcomes the opportunity to further the dialogue with the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina. She will also monitor and follow-up the report's recommendations.

REMARKS BY THE SR ON ID TIME REDUCTION

In closing, the SR laments that the reduction of time for this interactive dialogue (ID) is not only an obstacle to significant exchange on the reports, but it also limits participation by civil society. The SR considers the lack of funding as a fundamental **threat to the sustainability of multilateralism** and the relevance of the United Nations as well as the 2030 Agenda, global peace, civil society and social movements. In a time of **profound systemic crisis**, we must have the possibility to have more dialogue and hear more voices, not less.

REPLIES AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

On the **abuse of new technology** and the identification of good practises, it is important to say that these are trends of the use of surveillance targeting activists, oppositions, and civil society is not only related to the electoral cycle. The SR has been identifying worldwide this growing trend and its chilling effect on freedom of assembly and association and also on the right to participate, which can ultimately affect the sustainability of our nations and democracies. States need to exercise **stricter due diligence** and ensure **the trade of surveillance tools** do not end in a state misusing them against civil society activists and dissents. Making reference to the implementation of the digital tool of the modern protocol that was presented by her predecessor last year, the SR welcomes any volunteer to test the implementation, which will be a useful experience, also because she has decided to do a has report on this specific topic.

With regard to the **criminalisation and stigmatisation of CSOs** with the use of fabricated charges and the weaponization of certain legislation including the foreign agent laws, the SR recalls her report on stigmatisation that was presented to the UNGA last year. The interrelation between stigmatisation and criminalisation is very pressing, they go hand-in-hand. Her mandate is paying attention to these legislations and documenting this. The SR has been engaging with many states to reform laws, but unfortunately, there have been not many positive impacts. The SR remains open to work on the review of these legislations, but states need to open the door for that and just to try to implement the changes.

Foreign agent laws must be repealed, especially if adopted to curtail civil society and dissent, which is the case in many countries such as Georgia as mentioned by states and civil society. Noteworthy to mention that these foreign agent laws are also intended to defend and eliminate the voices of dissent and also attacks and restricts all their associations, not only civil society, also faith based organisations, cultural associations unions, etc. For these reasons, such laws are very dangerous laws and need to be repealed.

Turning to the **implementation of the modern protocol**, the baseline is that states need to ensure that laws and protocols are in line with the modern protocol, and then enabling the legal framework on freedom of protest and institutions to actually uphold them. The SR is always open to provide technical support on this issue. Some states mentioned reforms of law enforcement actions including Mozambique and Zimbabwe. The SR invites states to allow her to be part of that process to implement together the modern protocol with states' engagement. The



implementation of the modern protocol is especially relevant in the **pro-Palestine protests** worldwide.

Impunity is a chronic problem worldwide that also affects the ability of victims to access justice and redress for violations of freedom of assembly and association. The UNHRC needs to use its mechanisms to pressure states to provide accountability and justice for victims.

The SR calls on **India, Russia and China** to refrain from EU's potential money laundering allegations for suppression of civil society organisations as well as to repeal the foreign agent laws and national security laws that are being adopted to suppress dissent. Voicing concern at hundreds of political prisoners in **Belarus and Azerbaijan**, the SR calls for their release. Furthermore, she encourages **Jordan** to reform the law to explicitly ensure the rights of locals and citizen observers to participate in the entire electoral process.

On the case of **Venezuela**, last year the SR addressed a letter with many requests for information about what had happened during the elections. Seven months on from that, she has not received any response. If you want Special Procedures to act with **verifiable sources**, then you have to respond to their letters so that there is openness to dialogue. On **El Salvador**, several countries expressed concern during the latest UPR over the repetitive use of a state of emergency. Hence, the SR is not the only one who has raised this point.

The 'super-electoral' cycle must be turned into an opportunity to end and **reverse the global trends restricting freedom of assembly and association**, taking into account that elections are happening all the time. Standing in solidarity with peoples from all around the world protesting despite the threats of arrest and police violence to defend and preserve our human rights and to push back against human rights erosion, the SR reminds states that the UNHRC needs to remain a place for open dialogue and safe space for civil society participation, **free from reprisals** and the harassment that she has been seeing this week after presentations delivered by civil society.

VIEWS EXPRESSED BY BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA AS CONCERNED COUNTRY

The delegation of **Bosnia and Herzegovina** was not present in the room.

INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE

Views Expressed by State Delegations

Afghanistan explains that since the military takeover, the Taliban *de facto* authorities have shut down all the spaces for dialogue and dismantled any form of democracy with violence. They leave neither room for any election to be held neither spaces for inclusive dialogue. A significant portion of the population including women and minority communities and other marginalised groups has been entirely excluded from the social and political life of the country. The full participation of civil society is essential. Yet, the targeted repression of women human rights defenders, activists and civil society members who courageously continue to fight for rights despite fear of reprisal continues with greater systematicity and intensity too. Many of those daring to dissent have already suffered and continue to suffer various forms of violence, harassment, physical assault, torture and enforced disappearance - all too often meet with total impunity.



Algeria notes that while the thematic report it is based on the electoral context, its must conclusions and recommendations are relevant outside of that particular context as they cover fundamental principles. Algeria reaffirms its commitment to promoting fundamental freedoms and human rights as an ongoing priority of the Algerian President. This commitment has been implemented through the visit of the SR to Algeria and its readiness to implement the ensuing recommendations. Algeria thanks the SR for her support in the process of legislative reform underway, particularly as regards the organic law on associations in order to align it with international obligations. Algeria calls on the SR to continue upholding the freedoms of peaceful assembly and association, particularly in the context of foreign occupation where all human rights are systematically violated.

Argentina underscores that the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association are essential elements of its identity. Since its historic assembly of 22 may 1810 which led to the first patriotic government and the constitution of 1853 still in force, these rights are pillars of its national institutions. Current president Javier Milei was elected in a transparent process, which reflects the solidity of the democratic country. Despite the social economic crisis when taking office, there has been a reduction of poverty from 53 to 38 in one and a half years. Argentina values and backs all peaceful protests. However, Argentina lamented that there has not been a prior consultation on events that - far from peaceful protests - were violent episodes that threatened the operations of the Congress, democratic principles, and the obligation of preserving order to protect the institutions. Argentina reiterates its willingness to engage in constructive dialogue with the SR.

Azerbaijan attaches importance to dialogue with the special procedure mandate holders of the human rights council and response to enquiries and communications received from them on a constructive basis. Azerbaijan believes that presenting the shortcomings of the countries with a constructive approach in a broad context would be more pertinent and it would be more useful for mandate holders to avoid the practise of naming and shaming the states. This being said, it is regrettable to see that some sections of the current report contain certain allegations towards Azerbaijan, some of which even do not coincide with the scope of the mandate and are already being discussed with relevant mandate holders. To avoid duplication and ensure coherence with the requirements of the mandate, Azerbaijan recommends the SR take into account resolution 15/21 in particular section 5 requesting SR to work in coordination with other mechanisms of the UNHRC and to take all necessary measures to avoid unnecessary duplication in her activities. It is also unfortunate to see that while certain joint communications in relation to allegations concerning Azerbaijan are referred to in the report, responses duly provided to those joint communications are not mentioned, which is contrary to the spirit of constructive cooperation. This is why Azerbaijan considers the report biased and rejects it.

Belarus believes that the SR's report must be a personal opinion by the author that cannot have legal consequences for state obligations under articles 21 and 22 of the ICCPR on the rights to peaceful assembly and association. References to previous press releases as a source of information show that the SR is not interested in an independent study of the data and in presenting an independent objective view topic. The assessments of electoral process in Belarus are deliberately biased and we to reject them. Belarus's elections are in full compliance with national legislation and international standards and the will of the Belarusian people and not



adapted to please her political elites. Belarus asks the SE in the future to make her recommendations in line with the mandates of the international organisation – for instance, as far as known, the United Nations has no mandate for electoral monitoring or to have an impact on the right obligations of states regarding public security.

Cambodia emphasizes its unwavering commitment to liberal pluralistic and democratic past, and its continuous efforts to create a more vibrant and constructive environment favourable for the freedoms of peaceful assembly and association. Citizens are free to form an association, to demonstrate, to participate in political life, to vote and to be voted - with the exception that this has to be done peacefully, within the limit of laws and without causing any harm to public safety, public order, or the rights and freedom of others. Cambodia's progress is justified by the presence of over 6,000 national and international non-governmental organisations being registered in the country, the increasing number of political parties contesting in the elections and the higher voter turnout rate in the recent national election in 2023. Once again, Cambodia stresses that democracy and human rights thrive when the rule of law exists. Rights and freedom come with responsibility and must be exercised within the boundary of the law.

China strongly objects to the reports comments on the national security law and election system in Hong Kong. The latter is part of China, whose central government upholds and promotes democracy in Hong-Kong. The national people's congress is acting in good faith and with a sense of responsibility for improving Hong Kong's election, in the very spirit of the principle 'one country two systems', fostering long-term prosperity and patriots governing Hong-Kong. This fully reflects the will of all, the including those in Hong Kong. It is the right of every state to use force in case of severe criminal acts which challenge the constitutional order and the national security. Following those two legislative moves, Hong-Kong has moved from disorder to stability, paving the way for a new period of prosperity, where the people of Hong Kong are exercising greater rights and freedoms in a more secure and orderly environment. China urges the SR to pay attention to basic facts on the ground and authoritative information provided by the government rather than hearsay, and to carry out her mandate fairly and objectively to gain the trust of all countries.

Colombia is concerned at the shrinkage of civic space and reaffirms its commitment to protecting it. In 2026, Colombia will hold presidential elections. With the support of the Commissioner, Colombia updated security protocols, made progress on police reforms and strengthened citizens' participation in line with recommendations by the Truth Commission. After the 2021 protests, Colombia focused on dialogue, the prevention of institutional violence and respect for protests, allowing demonstrations with broad freedom of expression which were protected by the law and order law enforcement authorities as this week with the silent march throughout the country and many others over the past 35 months. Colombia reiterates its commitment to participative democracy where differences are listened to and protests are not punished.

Costa Rica stresses that in this intense electoral period, the world faces great challenges such as transnational repression and threats to CSOs. Sharing with the SR that free speech, free of reprisals and freedom of association are essential to democracy, states must guarantee these rights without unjustified restrictions, allowing for an inclusive and pluralistic. Costa Rica underscores the challenging threats against journalists and the press that are covering electoral



processes, and considers it worrisome the repression of protests during pre-electoral process and the use of labels such as foreign agents extremism and national security to attack political parties, their members and their sympathisers. These are used to detain, try and disqualify arbitrarily different candidates and to toss out elected representatives. The active participation of civil society and the press and respect for dissident opinions are essential for authentic elections and for the effect of enjoyment the right to participate in the public process and freedom of speech. Costa Rica calls for the strengthening of the independence of democratic institutions, ensuring legal frameworks that help avoid arbitrary restrictions and facilitate the participation of civil society and electoral observers.

Czechia on behalf of a cross-regional group¹ expresses its full support to the SR's work and mandate of crucial importance, especially considering the current effects on the freedoms of assembly and association in all regions of the world. Therefore, the group will submit during this Council's session once again the resolution on the extension of this mandate for further three years, hoping to adopt the resolution as in previous sessions by consensus. The core group further welcomes the focus of the SR's current report and agrees that there is a link between limitations of freedom of assembly and association and the integrity of electoral processes. Unfortunately, we are witnessing too many instances of democratic backsliding, often connected with violations of fundamental rights such as electoral rights and freedom of assembly and association.

The **Democratic Republic of the Congo** believes that in all democracies freedom of peaceful assembly and association are pre-conditions for ensuring free credible and participatory elections. The importance of these freedoms for holding elections involves a clear definition of the role of civil society and peaceful assemblies. In the DRC, freedom of peaceful assembly and association are guaranteed by the constitution and covered by laws and regulations to uphold public order and safety. The DRC calls on states to continue ensuring respect for international obligations on freedom of peaceful assembly as recognised by international instruments on human rights for effective exercise of the right to participate in public and political life.

The **Dominican Republic** agrees with call to reduce restrictions that are an obstacle to significant participation by civil society, especially in contexts where there is hate speech, stigmatisation and authoritarian trends. States must create safe environments for everyone to exercise their right without fear of reprisals. In the Dominican Republic, these rights are protected through a democratic order that respects civil and political rights. The country is working on a draft law on freedom of expression and the media in order to update its legal frameworks and international standards. In 2024, the Dominican Republic was high in the global press freedom index. The Dominican Republic calls on all member states to strengthen dialogue to guarantee fundamental freedoms, particularly for peaceful demonstrators.

El Salvador reaffirms its commitment to the promotion and protection of the rights to peaceful assembly and association as essential to democratic society. These rights are fully guaranteed its domestic legislation and are enjoyed with freedom throughout El Salvador. The presidential

¹ Cross-regional core group of the resolution on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association comprised of Chile, Czechia, Iceland, Indonesia, Lithuania and the Maldives.



elections of 2024 reflected this commitment as they were held in a pluralistic, peaceful and broadly recognised electoral process by the international community. El Salvador facilitated the work of more than 3,000 observers from more than 81 organisations and mechanisms for reporting irregularities in the electoral process. The population expressed its desire resoundingly in favour of the re-election of the President with 80.7% - the highest level in the country's history of the country for any candidate. El Salvador laments that the report submitted does not reflect that factual and verifiable information shared in a timely manner with the SR. Instead, it adopts a perspective that is totally distant from the national reality.

Ghana on behalf of African group welcomes the report's recommendations, among which the group highlights the strengthening of legal and institutional mechanism for the protection of civil space, the call for accountability for acts of repression and political violence, and the need to ensure safe and inclusive environment for the exercise of rights and peaceful assembly and protest. The African group reaffirms that the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association is one of the cornerstone of democratic societies enshrined in article 21 ICCPR. It is the spirit that the African Commission on Human Rights and People's Rights adopted in 2017 the guidelines on freedom of association and assembly in Africa, reaffirming the obligation of states to protect these rights against a lawful interface including by third parties. According to these guidelines, any restriction must be necessary, proportionate, prescribed by law and aimed at achieving a legitimate objective. The African group calls for firm commitment including respect for political pluralism, protection of civil society, and the strengthening national mechanisms for enhancing the right to peaceful assembly based on dialogue, legality and human rights.

Guatemala shares the concern of the global trends with a slippage of democracy, undue and restrictive laws, stigmatisation of civil society and the repression of political and social actors. This threatens citizens' participation and accountability the world. In Guatemala, peaceful protests led by Indigenous peoples and social sectors represented a legitimate army and an example of civic sense of rule of law. During more than 100 consecutive days, thousands of citizens protested peacefully on the country, requiring respect for electoral results, the end of political persecution and the guarantee of a democratic transition. These actions were key in safeguarding of the popular will and allowed for the swearing-in of President Alvarado and Vice-President Karin Herrera.

India stresses that its constitution guarantees the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association as fundamental rights. These are actively upheld through its independent judiciary and a robust electoral framework. India's election commission ensures free and fair elections through transparent and inclusive mechanisms. The 2024 general elections - the largest democratic exercise in human history with about 970 million eligible voters - stand as a glowing testament to India's commitment to democratic values and human rights. It was therefore surprising to find a reference in the report that in the form of an ill-informed general comment seemed to cast unwarranted on a process that is widely regarded as a global benchmark for democratic values. It also overlooked the vital role of India's independent judiciary and robust institutional mechanisms that safeguard these principles. India firmly rejects such unfounded insinuations and urges that the future assessments be guided by thorough due diligence in order to uphold the credibility and integrity of this important exercise. India agrees that digital technologies can amplify civic engagement but also pose serious risks when misused to spread



disinformation, incite violence or interfere in democratic processes. Encouraging the SR to examine these threats with nuance and objectivity, India remains committed to safeguarding civic space and enabling democratic participation both offline and online in line with its constitutional values.

Iraq thanks the SR for her report focussing on challenges to freedom of peaceful assembly and association. These rights are constitutional in Iraq, whose government guarantees them and ensures that there are appropriate circumstances for participation by all members of society. Iraq believes that participation is a basis for all democratic regimes. It allows for sovereignty and respect for the rights and freedoms. Iraq strongly condemns the genocide against the Palestinian people by the Occupying Power.

Ireland stresses that civil society plays a vital role during elections and must be free to operate safely to protect public participation in elections and contribute to the pursuit of election transparency. Ireland shares the concerns expressed in the report regarding the rise of foreign agent laws, particularly those created before elections which are utilised to undermine participation in elections and interfere with election monitoring. By adopting these laws, states also impose intrusive restrictions on the right to assembly and association that have a chilling effect on public engagement in democratic processes. Ireland is gravely concerned by the reported police violence against peaceful protests and the targeting and arbitrary arrest of peaceful protesters states have a positive duty to protect peaceful protesters from violent actors. Ireland echoes the SR's call for states to facilitate peaceful assemblies including by refraining from deploying military or militarised forces in response to peaceful protests.

Jordan stresses the country has an independent electoral commission supported by the constitution, building on parliamentary work and community participation. The commission works to further empower women youth and parties with the diverse components of its rich society. The national legislation governing the election stipulate that accreditation of oversight entities should be done in line with instructions. There is a platform in Arabic and English. The country issued badges for oversight entities and accredited 11 international institutions as observers, for a total number of 432 observers. There are also local observers. No request was rejected. The observer missions of the EU and the League of Arab states praised the transparency. Jordan remains committed to the transparency and integrity of elections and wants to ensure these by working together with international and national partners. This is the path to realise the aspirations of the people of Jordan and to ensure prosperity in the country.

Lebanon recognises that when restrictions are systematically placed on the rights to peaceful assembly and association, this could usher into shrinking civic space and democratic backslide. We should make sure that these fundamental rights remain protected during elections and also in the context of large peaceful protests. Against the backdrop of large crisis or global issues like Palestinians ongoing hardships and hazard, security and stability are legitimate government's concerns, but they shouldn't nevertheless trample upon the rights to peaceful assembly and association. Subjected to consistent intimidation and denials of freedom, citizens could lose confidence in democratic procedures and legitimate institutions which doesn't bode well for political and social stability. No political system could pretend being absolutely immune of these worrying trends. As the world is facing tectonic shifts at multiple levels, this requires from all of



us a pushback against nihilistic trends through more international dialogue and domestic inclusive efforts to restore trust into politics rule of law and human rights.

Lithuania on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries notes with alarm significant concerns outlined in the report at the erosion of democratic freedoms during the 2023-2025 ‘super election’ cycle. They voice particular concern at the weaponization of foreign agent and anti-terrorism laws by some governments to stifle independent civil society and justify excessive use of force against peaceful protesters and crackdown on peaceful protests by some governments. These have a detrimental impact on meaningful democratic participation. Transnational repression has intensified, with some governments targeting political dissidents and human right defenders beyond their borders using spyware, physical attacking, kidnapping, and torturing in violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms, thereby creating a climate of fear and hindering political pluralism. The Nordic-Baltic countries are gravely concerned about the lack of accountability. When governments fail to address and properly investigate human rights violations, this impunity erodes public trust in democratic processes and institutions and leads to further human rights violations.

Malawi agrees that the rights of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association are fundamental to any democracy and for free fair credible and participatory elections. The constitution of Malawi provides for the right of peaceful assembly. Further, the police act of 2010 clearly spells out procedures to be followed by those organising assemblies and demonstrations and the role of law enforcement agencies. The right to assemble and its attendant right to demonstrate must be enjoyed with a sense of responsibility and within the requirements of the law. Namibia takes note of the SR’s call for states to ensure throughout the election cycle in law and in practise that the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association play a decisive role as avenues for genuine and inclusive dialogue pluralism tolerance and inclusion where dissenting views or beliefs are respected and considered.

The **Maldives** welcomes the SR’s thematic report, her initiative to engage with members of the global pro-Palestinian solidarity movement and her recommendations to academic institutions to safeguard the rights to freedom of assembly and association for pro-Palestinian student movements in accordance with international human rights law. States have an obligation to facilitate the work of grassroots civil society and social movements by ensuring safe and enabling environments for the exercise of these fundamental freedoms. The Maldives concurs with the SR that the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association are fundamental to any democracy and are prerequisites for guaranteeing free, fair, credible and participatory elections. These rights allow all individuals to express their views in civic life and contribute meaningfully to political discourse. The government of Maldives remains committed to creating a conducive environment for civic engagement and exercising individuals’ rights to peaceful assembly and association. The Maldives remains steadfast in its commitment to promoting and protecting human rights the rule of law and democratic principles for all its people.

Mongolia has long prided itself on its democratic achievements including the peaceful transition of power and the protection of civil liberties. Mongolia is actively working to strengthen the legal framework around the right of peaceful assembly. In this regard, the government has drafted and submitted to the state great power of the parliament earlier this year a revised law on the freedom



of assembly which aims to better safeguard this right, while balancing public order concerns. Most importantly, the proposed law seeks to replace the current approval-based registration system with a notification-based system to ensure that the right of peaceful assembly is not restricted, except for those necessary for national security, public order, public health or the protection of other fundamental rights, and to recognise spontaneous assemblies on an equal footing with pre-notified ones. Mongolia looks forward to hosting a visit SR next year in Mongolia where the SR will have the opportunity to engage in in-depth discussions on these and other pertinent reforms aimed at fostering an environment where peaceful assembly and political participation are safeguarded as essential pillars of democracy.

Morocco joins its voice to this call to uphold these rights during elections and ensure inclusivity and transparency, with the involvement of civil society at all stages to participate in political debate, upholding the voting conditions and in the assessment. Laws and regulations that seek to shrink civic space can be considered as a threat to the holding of the voting exercise and the attack on basic rights of civil society and the population as a whole. Fully committed to democratic values and civic participation, Morocco ensures respect for the provisions of the constitution of 2011 and the electoral code which guarantees civil society, freedom to participate in public affairs including elections. To illustrate this, at the 2021 elections, the number of national observers reached 5032 with 44 associations and 152 observers from 19 foreign NGOs.

Mozambique recognizes that as in many democratic contexts, the post-election in the country period was marked by violent demonstrations promoted by some segments of society, particularly opposition political parties. During these demonstrations, the country tried to guarantee public order, protect the integrity of institutions, and safeguard the fundamental rights of all citizens. Mozambique is aware about incidents that have raised concerns, including allegations of excessive use of force by law enforcement officers which are being investigated by the competent institutions for the purpose of accountability. In this context, the government has made a number of commitments, emphasising the strengthening of police forces capacity in terms of crowd management and the proportional use of force in line with international human rights standards. Mozambique believes that the exercise of freedom of peaceful assembly should be protected and encouraged, provided that the principles of mutual respect and non-violence are observed. The democratic process is strengthened when all actors – government, political parties, civil society and citizens participate in a constructive and respectful manner.

Namibia points out that during the ‘super-electoral’ cycle, Namibia conducted successfully its 2024 national election, which resulted in the election of the first ever female president of the Republic. Namibia continues to promote the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association through its international regional and national obligations and laws. The Namibian constitution guarantees the right to assemble peacefully and without arms as well as freedom of association. The soon to be amended public gathering proclamation of 1989 provides for the procedure to be followed to hold a public gathering. In conclusion, Namibia urges all state parties to comply with their international human rights obligations.

The **Netherlands on behalf of the Benelux countries** notes that in 2024, around half the world’s population had a chance to vote. However, many of them lived in countries where the basic conditions for free and fair elections were not met before, during or after polling day. We cannot



speak of genuine democracy when fear or widespread systematic barriers stand between the people and the ballot or when restrictive legislation, disinformation, polarising political rhetoric and smear campaigns are used to target civil society and independent institutions. Yet there are also narratives of hope by exercising their right to peaceful assembly people have been able to successfully defend democracy and protect fundamental freedoms. States have the responsibility to safeguard this essential role of civil society, especially during elections both online and offline.

North Macedonia stresses that democracy is one of mankind's greatest achievements largely resting on the election of legitimate representatives at the local and national level. In this sense, the impact of the 'super-election' cycle 2023-25 is of great importance for democratic processes in a country and beyond. North Macedonia remains firmly committed and dedicated to the principles enshrined in the universal declaration of human rights. The protection and promotion of the freedoms of peaceful assembly and of association is essential for any democratic society and is a guarantor of free fair and credible elections. North Macedonia supports the SR's recommendations on removing of the impediments to the registration of work of political parties and calls upon countries to introduce electoral policies that ensure parity of women representatives as well inclusive practises for minorities and for other marginalised groups.

The **Republic of Korea** stresses that democratisation has taught the country that the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association are fundamental pillars of democracy. They enable all persons to express their opinions and aspirations, thereby ensuring free and fair elections. The recent political turmoil in Korea once again underscores the critical importance of these rights and maintaining democratic resilience. In the face of challenges to democracy, the Korean people came together to defend its democratic values through peaceful protest and active civic engagement. As a UNHRC member, Korea is committed to promoting these rights and democratic values. The far-reaching impact of new and emerging digital technologies presents both opportunities and challenges. They can enhance access to information and participation in public life. The rapid advancement of these technologies however raises concern about potential misuse to suppress political opponents and civic activists during elections. In this regard, taking note of the SR's recommendations, we all seek to explore ways to harness these technologies to promote peaceful assemblies while addressing potential risks.

The **Russian Federation** cannot agree with the main thesis of the report, namely a sort of sacralization of the rights to freedom of peaceful association and assembly. This right is not absolute and can be limited in line with the law when needed to protect public safety, public order, public health and morality and/or the rights and freedoms of others as enshrined in the ICCPR. The SR's labelling of sovereign states as authoritarian regimes is a violation of the SR's mandate and the Special Procedures' Code of Conduct. The reference to the ECtHR's practise to justify the growing relevant NGOs is also inappropriate since most member states of the United Nations are not members of that politicised court. The Russian delegation categorically reject the accusations against Russia, whose constitution guarantees the rights of freedom association and assembly and human rights as a whole as a supreme value. The report reaches heights of bias and selectivity with its lack of information on the recent odious persecution of the heads of political parties or in France, Germany and Romania to stop them being elected.



Rwanda points out that the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association are constitutionally guaranteed and supported by legal frameworks that enable diverse actors, including civil society faith-based groups, trade unions, and political parties, to operate freely and contribute to national development. In Rwanda, political parties are free to hold regular meetings and engage in a political dialogue. Many NGOs both national and international are active in Rwanda working across sectors including health, education, justice and human rights in general. Rwanda reiterates its steadfast commitment to upholding the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association in line with national laws and its obligations under international law, including the ICCPR. Rwanda remains open to constructive engagement aimed at advancing these rights both regionally and globally while taking into account country-specific contexts.

South Africa shares it is one of the countries that held a free and fair election during this ‘super-election’ cycle, and agrees with the SR that the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association are fundamental to any democracy and are prerequisites to guaranteeing free, fair, credible and participatory elections. These rights allow all persons to express their opinions and aspirations, ensuring inclusive political dialogue. Sections 17 and 18 of the constitution of South Africa guarantees citizens their rights to freedom of assembly and association. These intrinsically connected rights form the tenets of South Africa’s constitutional democracy and are key rights for accountability and advancement of rights. In this regard, South Africa coincides with the SR’s report that civil society plays a vital role during elections by contributing to promoting and protecting human rights and the democratic freedoms and ensuring inclusive political participation. In South Africa, the independence of civil society and public sphere is guaranteed by the constitution. South Africa civil society has become the line of defence fighting and advocating for ordinary citizens against corruption, service delivery failure, and realisation of basic rights.

Spain stresses that the rights to freedom of association and peaceful assembly are crucial for fair and transparent elections, particularly in the ‘super-electoral’ cycle. Spain voices concern at the increasing use of anti-terrorist laws, national security and foreign agents laws to shrink fundamental freedoms, which in turn have an undue influence on electoral processes. Similarly worrisome are arbitrary detentions, excessive use of force, hate campaigns and fake news. Spain welcomes the report’s recommendations, including those on strengthening women’s participation and those concerning LGBTI persons and historically marginalised groups. Inclusion and pluralism are the cornerstone of democracy.

The **State of Palestine** thanks the SR for her report and her efforts to highlight the global repression of pro-Palestine voices. Palestine is deeply concerned by some governments’ attempts to silencing pro-Palestinian solidarity movements calling for the end of the genocide. The SR rightly notes that protests advocating for Palestinian rights whether in Europe, North America or elsewhere are being met with undue restrictions, criminalisation. and excessive force. In some states, peaceful demonstrators face home raids, deportations and systematic defunding of civil society organisations, all of which erode the right to peaceful assembly and expression. This global silencing mirrors the repression in occupied Palestine where peaceful protest is met with lethal force. In 2018, occupation forces have killed over 120 unarmed protesters in Gaza alone with thousands injured, including children and medical personnel. Civil society actors - Palestinian and international actors - are subjected to harassment, arrests, travel bans. and



deportation. These attacks on peaceful advocacy aim to isolate the Palestinian people, suppress solidarity, and shield Israel from accountability.

Switzerland shares the view that the ‘super-electoral’ cycle coincides with the slippage of numerous fundamental rights in numerous areas, including the rights of freedom of peaceful assembly and free association. These are essential to ensure the participation of the citizenry and transparency in electoral processes. Switzerland is concerned over the restrictive laws targeting civil society, political parties, and electoral observers - this often justified by national security interests. These restrictions are problematic for the organisation, communication, and mobilisation that are essential for these liberties. Switzerland condemns arbitrary arrests during peaceful protests that in many cases lead to enforced disappearances, acts of torture, sexual violence and gender-based violence. Switzerland calls upon states to create environments that are safe and allow citizens to meet freely and contribute to public debate without fear of reprisals.

Tanzania points out that the right to peaceful assembly is enshrined in the national constitution and other legislations such as the NGO Act, the Companies Act, the Employment and Labour Relations Act and the Political Parties Act. People are free to gather, associate, cooperate, debate and join associations and organisations to further their beliefs, interests and other causes. The application of these rights extends to political parties that conduct public rallies. In organising such rallies, parties are required to notify the police as they would do in other jurisdictions so that the necessary arrangements may be made for their safety and that of others. The same applies to civil society and other groups. Tanzania’s commitment to this right is therefore undeniable.

Türkiye converges with the SR that freedom of assembly is essential in the effective exercise of the right to participate in public and political life, including in electoral processes. To this end, Türkiye has resolutely expanded the scope of the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association in electoral processes - including lowering the national electoral threshold, so that a wider cross-section of the society and more political parties will be represented in the Parliament. Türkiye remains concerned at restrictions on pro-Palestinian advocacy and speech. Between 19 March and 1 April 2025, around 1500 demonstration were had in all province of Türkiye with the participation of almost one and a half million individuals. Due to the group's attempt to disrupt public order, a total of 150 law enforcement officials were injured across the country. During these demonstrations, law enforcement authorities have acted in accordance with the law to prevent damage to public property and order. Judicial proceedings should be faced by all without any interference.

Venezuela points out that articles 53 and 68 of the constitution of the Bolivarian Republic set out that all people have the right to meet freely publicly or privately without permission and to peaceful protest with to licit ends and without weapons. Under article 132 all people can participate with solidarity in the civil, political and community life in Venezuela, thus defending human rights and peaceful democratic coexistence and social peace. The objective three of the government is aimed at perfecting a model of citizens’ coexistence, guaranteeing justice and human rights and safeguarding peace and social peace. Venezuela energetically rejects the references made in the report to the Bolivarian Republic, which lack reliable base and are guided only by politically motivated and non-verifiable sources. This is a violation of the UN Charter and the Special Procedures’ Code of Conduct.



Zimbabwe reaffirms its unwavering commitment to upholding the right to peaceful assembly as enshrined in section 58 of its national constitution. This fundamental freedom is respected and safeguarded in its legal framework. Any limitations that may be imposed are regulated in accordance with the principles of necessity, proportionality, and legality to ensure public safety and security. Zimbabwe has recorded meaningful progress in consolidating the democratic space. The operationalisation of the independent complaints mechanism has gained traction and now functions as a trusted and accessible platform for investigating alleged violations by security or law enforcement agents, thereby contributing to building public confidence. Zimbabwe continues to guarantee the right to peaceful assembly for all citizens regardless of political affiliation, belief or background. The national police are taking continuous capacity-building initiatives aimed at enhancing crowd management practises, promoting human rights awareness, and fostering non-discriminatory engagement with members of the public during assemblies. Zimbabwe remains resolute in its efforts to promote inclusive participation, deepen the democratic governance, and uphold the freedoms of assembly and association as essential pillars of peace, development, and national unity. In closing, it reaffirms its readiness to engage constructively with international partners.

Views Expressed by Intergovernmental Organizations and UN Agencies

The **European Union** stresses that the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association play a fundamental role in building and sustaining a healthy democracy. The EU condemns intimidation, threats and violence against peaceful protesters. The realisation of democracy goes beyond the polling day. The EU shares the SR's concerns about the growing number of restrictive legislations and narratives which aim to curtail independent civil society and silence critical voices. We need to ensure that people's voices are heard including through diverse and vibrant civil society and independent and pluralistic media. In 2024, EU citizens elected members of several national parliaments as well as members of the European Parliament. The OSCE's special election assessment mission found that the European elections were genuinely competitive professionally organised and inclusive. The EU itself has so far deployed over 180 election observation missions worldwide contributing to a free and fair election process in line with international standards.

The **Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)** regularly conducts election observation missions across its member states, including during the 'super-election' cycle to support credible and transparent electoral processes. However, ensuring the integrity of elections also requires protecting the broader democratic space. The SR rightly highlights growing restrictions on peaceful assembly. Particularly alarming is the treatment of protests in solidarity with Palestine which were often met with police violence, home raids, criminal charges and deportations, frequently accompanied by Islamophobic and racial profiling. In contrast, far-right marches held in major European cities - some displaying nazi symbols - continue under police protection and even receive public funding, despite their clear incitement to hatred. This double standard in democratic systems deepens exclusion. As stressed by the SR, the freedoms of assembly and association must be safeguarded not only during elections, but also as a core element of political participation without discrimination. This contrast is starkly illustrated in the occupied Palestinian territory where settlers acting as tools of ethnic cleansing continue to carry out horrific acts of violence with the full support and complicity of Israeli authorities. These attacks



aim to erase the Palestinian presence and deny them the ability to exercise their fundamental rights on their own land.

UNICEF states that children around the world are undertaking courageous and creative actions to voice their opinions on critical issue including human rights and democracy. They have successfully demonstrated their ability to lead movements that can be catalysts for local national and global change. UNICEF recalls that children's rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association including in the context of elections as protected in article 15 of the CRC. This article is particularly important for children as it will often be one of their only means to participate in public life and to shape the society they live in. UNICEF expresses deep concern regarding barriers to the exercise of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association, including the continued human rights violations suffered by children participating in peaceful protests. Restrictions on civic space can be even more harmful for children as they already face disproportionate barriers in expressing themselves, including due to social norms that challenge their agency and right to participate in public life. These risks are intensified by children's ongoing physical and psychological development and can have long-lasting negative impacts on their lives and well-being. UNICEF calls on states to ensure that all children can enjoy their rights to participate in public life and to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association equally and safely. UNICEF stands ready to support.

Views Expressed by Non-Governmental Organizations

Human Rights House Foundation aligns with the warning in the thematic report that elections cannot be genuine where the rights to peaceful assembly and association are repressed. In Georgia, those rights were already under strain before the 2024 elections, denounced by civil society as deeply flawed, and have further deteriorated since then. Georgia's new foreign agent law exposes NGOs to punitive fines, asset freezes, and suspension, and now threatens criminal liability for non-compliance. Yesterday, five Georgian civil society organisations reported receiving court orders at the request of the authorities, demanding that they hand over sensitive information, including confidential data on individuals under their legal protection. In addition, Baia Pataraiia the head of Union Sapari and member of Human Rights House Tbilisi, was fined more than 1,200 euros for insulting a Georgian Green Member of Parliament. This equates to around twice the average monthly salary in Georgia. The politically motivated action was in response to social media posts criticising the ruling party's MP. The Foundation echoes the High Commissioner's call in his report on Georgia this session to repeal the foreign agents law, as well as guaranteeing peaceful assembly and halting arbitrary arrests.

The **Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights** recalls that the 14th Dalai Lama approaches its 90th birthday on 6 July, which should be a moment of celebration for Tibetans and Buddhists worldwide. Yet, inside Tibet, even marking this peaceful occasion remains a criminalised act. The Foundation recalls the imprisonment of three Tibetan monks sentenced to 14, 13 and 12 years in prison for organising a simple celebration of the Dalai Lama's 80th birthday in 2015. Ten years later, they remain behind bars, denied medical care and contact to their families. This constitutes a clear violation of international law, notably Article 18 of both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights, which guarantees the rights to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, including the freedom to manifest one's



religion, to worship, observance and practise. Since 1991, several UN Special Rapporteurs have expressed concern over China's interference in Tibetan religious affairs, including the enforced disappearance of the 11th Panchen Lama and Beijing's attempts to control reincarnation processes. The Foundation urges the Chinese government to release these three monks and all Tibetans detained for peacefully exercising their fundamental rights. It further calls on all states to defend the rights of Tibetans to freely honour their spiritual leader without fear of reprisal.

Conectas Direitos Humanos draws the Council's attention to the increased use of a racial recognition system in Brazilian public security. There are currently 408 activity projects. This situation raises serious concerns about the potential for persecution in the context of peaceful demonstrations, as well as the racist bias embedded in the database of which such technology training operates. It illegally criminalises especially black people, who are already the main victims of police lethargy and mass incarceration in Brazil. Additional data on technology-based stops and intentions are not recorded. Conectas requests to prohibit the use of facial recognition for public security purposes as enshrined in Bill 2338 of 2023. It also calls for the adoption of an AI regulation that emphasises transparency, democratic oversight, respect for fundamental rights, and safeguards to ensure that these technologies are not used in a discriminatory or invasive manner. In closing, Conectas urges the Brazilian authorities responsible for implementing the law to be encouraged to adhere to the recommendations outlined in the model protocol developed by the SR.

Peace Brigades International (PBI) denounces that in Guatemala, freedom of association is being threatened by the Attorney General and a justice system co-opted by powerful corrupt sectors. In April 2025, Deputy Minister of Development Luis Pacheco and other members of Indigenous authorities who led peaceful protests in 2023, vital for safeguarding electoral integrity, were accused and detained. The EU and other international community actors have expressed their deep concern over those arrests and the instrumentalization of the justice system against elected officials, human rights defenders, journalists, indigenous leaders and justice operators. This judicial instrumentalization under Attorney-General Consuelo Porras aims to silence civil society, notably ahead of the upcoming elections for magistrates of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal, the Constitutional Court and the Attorney General itself. In Kenya, PBI shares the SR's concern over the reported enforced disappearances and arbitrary arrests of protesters in 2024. The coalition Missing Voices reported that most documented extrajudicial killings last year were linked to protests, with 38 in June alone. As Kenya marks one year since the 2024 protests, there has been little to no accountability for the human rights violations committed. Nationwide protests are ongoing, with reports of individuals being hired to infiltrate and disrupt demonstration. In this context, PBI stresses that the right to peaceful assembly and association is universal and must not only be respected, but actively protected by the state.

Aula Abierta emphasizes that universities cannot be divorced from the societies in which they exist. The production of scientific knowledge, fostering civic education and critical thinking are aimed at the individual development of human beings, but they also impose a correlative moral duty to put what one has learned at the service of society. Between 2023 and 2025, Aula Abierta documented many acts of reprisal against Latin American academics who took part in discussion of public issues. In the context of electoral processes, 86 professors and students were victims of forced disappearances, arbitrary detention, their ID documents were cancelled, they were



removed from academic programmes and other such practises were noted. These reprisals were a punishment because they questioned, on the basis of their academic knowledge or civic education, the violations of the transparency of the electoral process, both before and during the elections, and in some cases, also when the results were announced. Very often, the state narrative said that this civic participation was an act of political party participation in order to justify their repression. Aula Abierta commends the SR's report and echoes her recommendation to protect the capacity of civil society and of academia, in particular, to take part in the promotion of free elections.

The **Association for the Prevention of Torture (APT)** is deeply concerned that across various contexts, civil society actors, political opponents, and protesters are alleged to face torture and ill-treatment, particularly during election periods. The prohibition of torture and ill-treatment is absolute. No political crisis, public emergency, or electoral instability can justify its use. The thematic report documents widespread and great abuses against protesters, activists, and opposition voices that may amount to torture or other ill-treatments. Statements ensure that law enforcement officials operate in full compliance with the Modern Protocol for Law Enforcement Officials and other international standards. The APT echoes the call to regulate the trade in law enforcement equipment used to suppress peaceful dissent and the adoption of a global torture-free trade treaty to prevent abuses. Torture and ill-treatment must never be tolerated, nor before, during, or after elections, even when protests are no longer peaceful.

FSL welcomes the SR's timely report and its intersectional analysis of the obstacles LGBTI and other vulnerable groups face in exercising peaceful assembly during elections. Globally, anti-LGBTI rhetoric is increasingly used during elections to deflect from real issues and fuel prejudice, with trans women often singled out for hate and scapegoating by politicians. Authoritarian regimes use anti-LGBTI policies and narratives to restrict civil society and frame gender diverse identities as threats to the state. This repression is compounded by the lack of legal gender recognition, which excludes trans people from voting, running for office, and safely participating in political life. FSL is deeply concerned by the legal development, such as Uganda's Anti-Homosexuality Act, and similar legislative trends in Nigeria, Ghana, and Bolivia. These measures severely restrict freedom of assembly and set dangerous precedents. Cuts to development aid and harmful foreign agents law further suppress dissent and impact LGBTI communities, undermining democratic engagement.

CIVICUS commends the SR's report. Over the past year, the right to freedom of peaceful assembly has faced escalating threats. Voter suppression has become normalised, with authorities deploying excessive force, mass arrests, and restrictive legislation to silence dissent. The troubling rise in unjustified bans on demonstrations, digital surveillance, news information, and the criminalisation of dissent. In several countries, these violations have intensified during electoral processes. In Georgia and Tunisia, for instance, violations of peaceful assembly rights have been coupled with attempts to undermine the right to freedom of association, discrediting and isolating civil society associations through foreign influence legislation. While in Slovakia, foreign agent law was recently adopted. In some electoral contexts, civic space proved to be particularly dangerous for historically excluded groups, such as indigenous peoples in Guatemala. Other global trends include the widespread use of arbitrary detention as a prominent tactic to punish protesters and or prevent mass protests, such as in the case of Mozambique,



Indonesia, and Venezuela. CIVICUS is also gravely concerned about the current crackdown in Tanzania, with reports of enforced disappearances, uncommunicative detentions, torture, and killings, which appear to be escalating ahead of the October elections. CIVICUS urges states to promote full accountability for grave human rights violations associated with the exercise of peaceful assembly and association rights, including during electoral contexts. It further calls on the UNHRC to renew the crucial mandate of the SR for a further period of three years.

The **International Centre Against Censorship** welcomes the SR's report, which shows how freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of expression are essential for sustaining democracy. During the super-election cycle, however, governments have cracked down on protests through killings, excessive use of force, arbitrary detention, restrictive laws, and surveillance. Too often, the military is deployed to police protests. Across the Americas, the repression of protests and its criminalisation continue to be used to intimidate and silence dissident voices during and after elections. In Argentina, during 2024, more than 93 people were arbitrarily detained for participating in protests, and over 600 were injured. The escalation of violence by the Argentine state and the rhetoric of destabilisation shrink civic space in the country. In Venezuela, 226 protests were repressed, resulting in at least 25 deaths and more than 2,000 arbitrary detentions. In the USA, President Trump called the National Guard and the Marine Troops to Los Angeles streets and threatened to use very big force against any protests in the future. In a region with a legacy of authoritarianism, the Centre urges all governments and political leaders to fully implement the recommendations of the report.

Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada, IBAHRI and ISHR share the SR's concern about governments' attempts to consolidate power through crackdowns on dissenters' freedom of peaceful assembly. The United States government is conducting a concerted attack on the rule of law, threatening human rights defenders, lawyers, judges, and civil society groups that uphold human rights. Peaceful pro-Palestinian protests have led to thousands of sometimes violent arrests, cuts of funds to universities allowing peaceful protests, and deportation proceedings against foreign students and academics lawfully in the US. Lawyers who challenge the administration and judges whose rulings protect rights of detained protesters have been subjected to public vilification and threats. During recent civil society protests against militarised crackdowns against migrants, hundreds of individuals have been arrested and falsely labelled as insurrectionists. Violence during arrests has been reported, and many detained protesters have been denied prompt access to lawyers. Workers' rights and migrant rights advocates have been arrested, threatened with surveillance and investigations, and subjected to violence. Universal human rights standards apply equally to all countries. They urge the UNHRC to avoid double standards and condemn these deplorable acts that are now becoming widespread and systematic.

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