



## INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION (EAFORD)

The 48th year of *EAFORD's* Dedication  
To Upholding and Promoting the International Convention on the Elimination of  
All Forms of Racial Discrimination



## Introduction

### **Introduction**

The 52nd session of the Human Rights Council was held from February 27th to April 4th 2023 at the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland. During the four weeks the Council reiterated its mandate to promote and protect human rights around the world. During this session the council held 7 panel discussions, 40 interactive dialogues, 13 Universal Periodic Review Outcomes and adopted 43 resolutions.

The Council held meetings on pressing human rights situations and followed-up on the mandated reports by groups of experts and special rapporteurs. Of special attention were the situations taking place in Ukraine, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Palestine and Syria.

The Human Rights Council also held adoptions for the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) outcomes drafted in countries such as Bahrain, Ecuador, Tunisia, Morocco, Indonesia, Finland, United Kingdom of Great Britain

and Northern Ireland, India, Algeria, Philippines, Brazil, the Netherlands, South Africa and Poland. Finally, specific countries were discussed under item 10 for capacity building and technical assistance, such as Haiti, Libya, Mali and South Sudan.

The International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD) participated actively in the 52nd session of the Human Rights Council, in collaboration with other like-minded NGOs, submitting joint written reports to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and delivering joint oral statements.

EAFORD along with NGO partners reiterate that the participation of civil society in the Human Rights Council is crucial for the improvement of human rights everywhere. NGOs publicly monitor and survey government actions. Their call-out power gives a voice to the victims of human rights abuses. Moreover, NGOs represent individuals on the field and articulate the interests of minorities, victims, stakeholders, local populations, grassroots groups, activists, movements and workers, and much more. They bring informed, contextualized perspectives to the table contributing to create solutions tailored to the needs of the various communities and issues of concern.

## EAFORD Participation

During the 52nd Regular Session of the Human Rights Council, the International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD) in collaboration with Geneva International Centre for Justice counted on the dedicated work of a team of interns and volunteers both online and onsite. The team conducted the research for discussion reports, drafted written statement submitted to the OHCHR, and delivered oral interventions on various issues of concern.



## Opening Statements

### Opening statements

On the 27th of February 2023, the President of the Council, Mr. Václav Bálek, opened the session by reminding states that cooperation is essential for the functioning of the Council. He then gave the floor to the President of UN General Assembly, Mr. Csaba Kőrösi. He recalled that in this year 2023 we are celebrating the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However, the festivities are overshadowed by the many crises that the world is still experiencing today. Mr. Kőrösi expressed his concern about the steady decline in protection of human rights.

Mr. António Guterres, UN Secretary-General, began his speech by outlining the various rights contained in the 1948 Declaration before noting that the Declaration is under attack from all sides, notably with the invasion of Ukraine by Russian armed forces. He called for a revitalization of the Declaration, a reaffirmation of the rights it contains and a link to a new generation of rights.

The floor was then given to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Volker Türk. He stated that human rights are the common language of humanity, and that it is therefore essential to overcome the polarizations that the world is experiencing. Mr. Türk expressed the importance of a new global consensus around human rights to put the world back on track for the promise of lasting peace, justice for all and greater solidarity. Finally, he recalled the importance of dialogue between States, even in cases of disagreement.

The Director of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Ignazio Cassis, also addressed the Council. He began by listing the many violations committed in Ukraine, such as massacres, the existence of detention and torture camps and the displacement of children. To avoid this, he gave some guidelines to follow, including the need to document the violations committed in the world, to bring the perpetrators to account, to strengthen multilateralism and focus it on peace.

The President of the Council declared the 52nd Session open, beginning with the high-level segment containing speeches from Presidents, Prime Ministers and Foreign Ministers from around the world.

## List of Agenda Items

1. Opening of Session High-Level Segment
2. Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General
3. Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development
4. Human rights situations that require the Council's attention
5. Human rights bodies and mechanisms
6. Universal Periodic Review
7. Human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories
8. Follow-up to and implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action
9. Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance: follow-up to and implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action
10. Technical assistance and capacity-building

## Oral Statements

### Oral statements

During the 52nd Session of the UN Human Rights Council, the International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD) delivered the following oral statements in collaboration with Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ), International Youth and Student Movement for the United Nations (ISMUN), and the NGO Working Group on Human Rights Education and Learning, as well as, jointly with several other like-minded civil society organizations.

### Israeli Atrocities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory

#### **Item 2: Interactive dialogue on the report of the High Commissioner on the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the obligation to ensure accountability and justice**

03 March 2023

#### **Joint Statement by the International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD)**



*Delivered by Kiyana Newell*

Thank you President,

First, we would like to thank the High Commissioner for his report.

After decades of the illegal occupation of Palestine, the Israeli policies of apartheid have become increasingly apparent. Israeli security forces continue to carry out unlawful killings, arbitrary executions of civilians, and placing the most strenuous restrictions on freedom of movement. Most insidiously of all, transferring more land and property to illegal settlements contrary to international law.

These violations are thoroughly documented – yet the international community in this room continues to fall far short of its obligations to stand up for the Palestinian people.

The lack of accountability and double standards even by the UN compounds the suffering of Palestinian people. The international community is allowing Israeli forces to continually commit these crimes.

In recent weeks – flying of the Palestinian flag has been attacked, it has been forcefully removed from public spaces – falsely described as a symbol of terrorism. The erasure of a population, its people, and its place on the map are coordinated actions that can no longer be tolerated by so-called peace-loving nations.

We need to consider who is causing the real terror in Palestine. Who is the real threat. Who are the real victims. And which states in this room allow it to continue.

EAFORD and Geneva International Centre for Justice strongly denounce Israeli atrocities. States can no longer be complicit in shielding Israel from accountability. Palestine needs international protection. The Human Rights Council must give its fullest support to the people of Palestine.

### **Strengthening Peace-Building Mechanisms in South Sudan**

#### **Item 2: Report of the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan, followed by an enhanced interactive dialogue, which includes the participation of the High Commissioner**

**07 March 2023**

#### **Joint Statement by the International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD)**



*Delivered by Kiyana Newell*

We thank the Commission on Human Rights for their report. We remain concerned about the trajectory of the country's level of violence and insecurity as we enter 2023. The report indicated that the violence felt like armed conflict and that it was usually targeted at civilians in the Upper Nile, Jonglei, and Unity States.

Due to the delay in implementing the peace agreement, more than 20,000 people have been displaced, and at least 166 civilians have been killed since August. The perpetual humanitarian crisis has recently worsened, affecting the most vulnerable individuals and resulting in multiple crises at a time.

Over 74 percent of the population requires humanitarian assistance, and of the newly displaced, many of them are women and children. Food insecurity has also steadily increased, causing chronic malnutrition in over half of the population and one-third of children.

In addition, we are alarmed by the reports of thousands of women and children experiencing abduction, sexual violence, murder, and forced conscription by militias.

EAFORD and the Geneva International Centre for Justice remain deeply troubled by these unceasing human rights violations. For this reason, we ask the South Sudanese government and the International Community to recommit to their obligations to strengthen peace-building mechanisms and to put an end to these human rights violations.

## 13 NGOs Urge OHCHR to Fully Implement the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action

### Item 2: General debate on the oral update by the High Commissioner

8 March 2023



*Delivered by Frizia Rounak*

Joint statement by International Youth and Student Movement for the United Nations (ISMUN), International Federation for the Protection of the Rights of Ethnic, Religious, Linguistic & Other Minorities, Global Action on Aging, Habitat International Coalition, Ma'onah for Human Rights and Immigration, Union of Arab Jurists, International-Lawyers.Org, International Organization for the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD), Meezan Center for Human Rights, International Association of Democratic Lawyers, African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies, Associazione Comunita Papa Giovanni XXIII, Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ)

Mr. President,

I am speaking on behalf of 13 NGOs. We welcome this opportunity to express our expectation that the new High Commissioner will provide leadership in

faithfully implementing the UN resolutions on combating racism.

We recall that both the general assembly and the Council have stressed the importance of fully integrating the matter of combating racism into the commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as Vienna +30.

Both Civil Society and Member States have repeatedly expressed their concern over the failure by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to give justice to the Durban Declaration and programme of Action (DDPA).

At its 51st session the Council requested the UN secretariat and OHCHR to implement fully what the General Assembly had asked them to do already in 2020 for the 20th anniversary of the DDPA, including a public outreach campaign and increasing efforts to promote the true nature of the text of the DDPA.

The Council also requested the OHCHR to publish the adopted Programme of activities for the International Decade for People of African Descent in brochure format, for wide dissemination.

We have waited since the first year of the International Decade for the OHCHR to publish the Programme of the Decade and would expect that now finally in the 9th year of the Decade it will be done, in particular as a specific budget has been provided for it.

## **Investigate and Ensure Justice to Victims of Human Rights Violations in Ethiopia**

### **Item 4: International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia**

**21 March 2023**

#### **Joint Statement by the International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD)**



*Delivered by Tamir Boldbaatar*

We thank the Commission on Human Rights for its report and update on the crisis.

Since November 2020, violations such as extrajudicial killings, rape, sexual violence, and starvation of the civilians have been committed in Ethiopia. Tigrayan forces killed civilians and damaged or destroyed civilian infrastructure and property in Kobo and Chenna in August and September 2021. Killings were accompanied by additional acts of violence and brutality, such as beatings and rapes of women. The effect of rape and sexual violence on survivors has been enormous; they face devastating long-term impacts on their physical and mental health.

The conflict has led to displacement and lack of essential services. There is a dire need of humanitarian assistance and protection. EAFORD and Geneva International Centre for

Justice urge Ethiopia to investigate and bring to justice members of its forces who have committed serious violations of international human rights law and humanitarian law. Some of the reported violations amount to crimes against humanity. The Ethiopian Government urgently needs to commit to peace negotiations in order to bring an end to the conflict.



## **A Call for Further Action Regarding Climate Change**

### **Item 6: Universal Periodic Review of the Kingdom of the Netherlands**

**28 March 2023**

#### **Joint Statement by the International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD)**



*Delivered by Kiyana Newell*

Thank you, vice President.

We welcome the report of the Working group, and we thank the Kingdom of the Netherlands for participating in the Universal Periodic Review.

We commend the Kingdom of the Netherlands for supporting the promotion of the full protection of its territories, including the Caribbean from the negative effects of climate change, and considering fiscal policy creation and implementation, with keeping in mind vulnerable groups as states have recommended.

We also commend the State's objective to eliminate differences in human rights protection and welfare levels between the European and the Caribbean Netherlands.

However, there is still much to be done regarding climate change in the Caribbean parts of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The reports of islands not receiving enough financial or general support in this regard is alarming. Climate change disproportionately affects the most vulnerable groups and currently there are little safety nets to circumvent the impact of climate change to those in the Caribbean.

The International Organization for the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination and Geneva International Centre for Justice call on the Kingdom of the Netherlands to take further action regarding climate change in order to protect everyone including in the Caribbean part of the Kingdom.

Furthermore, we recommend the full implementation of effective measures to mitigate the harmful effects of climate change including on the least socioeconomic resilient groups in the Dutch Caribbean

Climate change is an issue of concern that cannot wait and its impact is deadly on those who need support the most.

## **The Necessity to Identify Existing Racialized Challenges and Barriers**

### **Item 9: Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance**

**General Debate**

#### **Joint Statement by the International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD)**





*Delivered by Mutua K. Kobia*

Thank you President,

We are deeply appalled that the scourge of racism and racial discrimination continues to plague the world today. Systemic and institutionalized racism, various forms of discrimination as well as identifying and addressing invisible challenges and barriers needs much more serious attention. We strongly recommend effective inclusion of victims and affected communities as they are paramount in achieving accountability and redress. Furthermore, we encourage the inclusion of experts in civil, political, social and cultural fields as noted in the Durban Declaration & Programme of Action (DDPA) as well as the need for and incorporation of special measures to combat

racism and racial discrimination.

Mr. President, As we re-emphasize the importance of Item 9 on the agenda of the Human Rights Council (HRC) we would also like to draw attention to the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent. In this regard, we recall the reaffirmation of the full and effective implementation of the DDPA, which is the primary document for the recognition of the rights of People of African Descent. In light of this, we express concern that the Forum is unable to base its work on the full implementation of the DDPA.

In conclusion, EAFORD and Geneva International Centre for Justice, reiterate the paramount necessity to identify existing racialized challenges and barriers that come in various forms including legal hurdles and other types of human rights violations. Finally, we note that the history of justifying and enabling colonial domination together with neo-colonial mind-sets enables the evil of racism to persist.

### **The Importance of Good Faith Implementation of UN Resolutions by the UN and OHCHR**

#### **Item 9: General debate on Xenophobia, Racism, Racial Discrimination and Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action**

#### **Joint statement by the International Youth and Student Movement for the United Nations (ISMUN)**



*Delivered by Frizia Rounak*

Mr. President,

As we are approaching the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration we wish to stress the importance of good faith implementation of UN resolutions by the UN secretariat and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

Both after the 10th anniversary and the 20th anniversary of the Durban Declaration and Programme of

Action (DDPA), the Human Rights Council has felt the need to address the failure by the OHCHR to support these anniversaries. In October 2022 the OHCHR was requested by the Council to fully implement what the General Assembly had requested it to do for 2021, namely a public information campaign and by increasing efforts to promote the true nature of the DDPA.

And of the specific DDPA outreach programme, which the Council decided on in 2021, very little has been seen, in particular with regard to correcting disinformation on the real content of the DDPA.

Despite repeated calls from member states and civil society the OHCHR has so far refused to publish the General Assembly adopted Programme of Activities for the International Decade for People of African Descent in view of the OHCHR difference with the two opening paragraphs of the Programme. At its 51st session the Council made a formal request to the OHCHR to publish the Decade programme in an easily accessible brochure format for wide dissemination. We are still waiting for this request by the Council to be implemented.

## Capacity Building and Technical Cooperation

### Item 10: General Debate

2nd April 2023

#### Statement of the International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD)



*Delivered by Martin Browne*

Thank you,

We welcome the Report of the Board of Trustees and all the work that goes into technical cooperation missions worldwide.

We note the frustrations raised by the Board about some aspects, including sharing of best practice across teams - and the need for greater capacity within the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to better link analysis with programmatic action - to close protection gaps. It is vital that States are open to taking the next steps - to increase the effectiveness of technical cooperation. It is vital that States participating

today - fund this vital work properly.

Capacity Building underpins why we are all here - to ensure universality of the promotion and protection of human rights - in every single country, to elevate these concerns above politics wherever we can.

EAFORD and Geneva International Centre for Justice agree with the Board's conclusion and call on all decisions on policy and programming to include the voices of marginalized peoples left behind or ignored by other politically-driven processes in certain member states.

The Funds would benefit from expanding on how NGOs in Geneva and in the field can assist further in the development of a networked and effective multilateralism to respond to severe challenges in countries covered by the fund such as Yemen, but also those not currently included such as Iraq.

Technical cooperation plays a vital role in protecting civil society particularly by ensuring free assembly and free expression. Civil Society works best when it works free from fear. Our collective work in this room is enhanced when NGOs can go about their vital protection work unhindered.

**The 36th Special Session of the Human Rights Council on the human rights impact of the ongoing conflict in the Sudan**

**11 May 2023**

**Statement of the International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD)**



*Delivered by Farah Caïdi*

Thank you President

We welcome the convening of this session, and wish to insist on the humanitarian emergency in the country.

The numbers reported on the ground are unequivocal in confirming the humanitarian crisis affecting the population, as a result of continued instability for years.

The utmost urgency is to guarantee humanitarian access no matter what, in accordance with humanitarian obligations. Humanitarian actors must be guaranteed the necessary safety to intervene. People in need of assistance reached more than 15 million, the third of Sudan's population. And that was before the current crisis began.

We had too many worrying testimonies of an already fragile economy and precarious healthcare system. Now, health workers also have to deal with water shortage, power outage and lack of basic medical supplies, with the constant fear of being caught in the crossfire as some attacks have been directed to health facilities.

The number of internally displaced people and refugees was high before the conflict. It dramatically increased in the past weeks. We therefore ask for urgent and prompt measures to be taken to assist the displaced and neighboring countries during this period.

EAFORD and Geneva International for Justice insist again that assistance to civilians be the utmost priority of this council. Civilians must be assured a safe evacuation from their home and security must be guaranteed for the tens of thousands that have already left. We join the call for cessation of hostilities, and respect for the principles of international law, by all parties, especially the prohibition to target civilians.

## Do Victims Ever Get Justice?

---





## Written Statements / EAFORD (52<sup>nd</sup> HRC)

### [Collateral Damage of the U.S. Invasion: The Struggle to Combat Enforced Disappearances in Iraq](#)

#### Joint Statement



#### Agenda item 4: Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

##### Executive Summary

Enforced disappearance has been a widespread issue in Iraq since the 2003 United States invasion. The International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP) estimates that between a quarter of a million and one million people are missing in Iraq. The reasons behind the disappearances vary, though they all result from the decades of war, conflict, sectarianism, and suffering that have plagued the country since the U.S. invasion. The Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Interior both play a crucial role in enforced disappearances by conducting widespread campaigns of arrest and detention across Iraq. Most of those arrested are not registered, families are not informed of their whereabouts, and in many cases even the local authorities do not receive sufficient information. Over time, and after many years of CSO's and international bodies urging the United Nations to provide more recognition to enforced disappearances in Iraq, the Human Rights Council and treaty body mechanisms of the United Nations have started to pay more attention. However, despite efforts to curb these

atrocities in Iraq, cases of enforced disappearance only seem to be escalating, and efforts must be increased to put an end to this injustice.

### **Enforced Disappearances in Iraq**

Enforced disappearance is a pervasive challenge in Iraq. Many enforced disappearances took place during the liberation of the country from ISIS by government-controlled security forces. In subsequent years, security forces across the country controlled parts of the regional government and were responsible for further disappearances of individuals not linked to ISIS, but who were targeted for being Sunni. Thus, these security forces pursued a sectarian agenda which aims to systematically destroy entire villages and uproot inhabitants through widespread sectarian cleansing. Documented evidence shows that excessive violence and force, including beatings with rubber batons, stones, and electric sticks as well as the use of live ammunition and tear gas, has been used by security forces during abductions and assassinations. These perpetrators continue to carry out their activities with impunity.

Detestably, the involvement of the Iraqi militia and security forces does not end there. Since October 2019, there have been a growing number of demonstrators, human rights defenders, and journalists forcibly disappeared. More than 700 protestors have been subjected to abduction and torture in different cities as demonstrations took place across the country from 2019 onwards. Most of these abductions occurred while these individuals returned to their homes after attending demonstrations. These abducted detainees were not informed of the reason for their arrest and were carried out without an arrest warrant. Interrogations took place without a lawyer present, and detainees were not brought before a judge in the time required by law. Many of these demonstrators disappeared after their abduction. The whereabouts of these individuals remains unknown, and their families continue to search for their loved ones.

Most victims of enforced disappearance were seen being picked up by police or security forces, others by uniformed militias and thrown into vehicles. This indicates that they are affiliated with government security forces, yet the government simply denies the arrests were carried out by their forces.

One victim of enforced disappearance is Jalal al-Shahmani, an anti-corruption activist that was kidnapped by a militia in September 2015. Jalal al-Shahmani was walking in the street in Al Wazeriya, a neighborhood in Baghdad, when he was stopped by masked individuals in military uniforms, who took him away in vehicles without license plates. His relatives reported his disappearance to the Suleikh police station in Baghdad, but to no avail; they are left without any official information on his whereabouts since the date of his abduction. His case was sent to the UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances, but his fate remains unknown.

The problem of enforced disappearance persists to this day, in part this is due to corruption, impunity, and the multiplication of security agencies. The actions undertaken by the authorities in Iraq are in violation of the fundamental rights of detained persons according to the CED and other human rights instruments, as well as the government's obligations under the Iraqi Constitution and other domestic laws. The perpetrators are enjoying a state of impunity and participating in ongoing human rights violations with large numbers of victims.

### **United Nations Response**

One notable United Nation's mechanism that has recently stepped up to address the issue of enforced disappearances in Iraq is the Committee on Enforced Disappearances (CED).

In its concluding observations to the report submitted by Iraq, in 2015, the CED expressed grave concern at allegations of widespread disappearances and the lack of accurate statistical information produced by Iraq. All the efforts, programmes and laws promoted by the Iraqi government in response to criticisms are designed to deal only with cases of disappearances prior to 2003, or missing persons to the occupation of ISIS.

Disappearances caused and perpetrated by the government and militias are thus of course excluded and are not routinely investigated at all.

The Committee has, through previous communications with the government of Iraq, also highlighted the fundamental failure to incorporate the full offence of enforced disappearances into domestic legislation.

In November 2022, the Committee visited Iraq to identify further means to tackle enforced disappearances in the country. During this time, the Committee visited Anbar, Baghdad, Erbil, and Mosul to meet victims, CSOs, international organizations, and national and human rights institutions. During the visit, the CED delegation received information about hundreds of cases of enforced disappearances from different governorates.

Following the visit, and pending its final visit report, the delegation urged Iraq to establish a centralized and interconnected register to enable reliable identification of enforced disappearance and effective access to information by all institutions in charge of searching for the disappeared and investigating alleged cases of disappearance. They further highlighted the need to address the daily suffering of victims.

Until very recently, when it comes to Iraq, the United Nations has historically failed to ensure the state upholds the basic principles and responsibilities under the Charter. The UN has neglected Iraq, a founding member of the UN, and has failed to address the destruction and suffering of its people. Although steps have recently been taken to address violations in Iraq, there is a lot more work to do.

### **Civil Society Organizations Response**

Throughout recent years, Civil Society Organizations have tried to draw the attention of the UN relevant bodies and representatives to the issue of enforced disappearances in Iraq. In part due to all their efforts, violations against Iraqis have intermittently begun to be addressed by UN representatives and the special mandate holders.

Local CSO activists comment that it is common for the armed perpetrators of these crimes to shoot in the air to prevent people from approaching the scene so as not to film, or record license-plate numbers. This demonstrates the wide participation and collaboration amongst different actors who are agents of the state, which requires a degree of cooperation by state-supported bodies in these semi-formal organized programmes of disappearance.

The lack of a truly independent domestic complaints mechanism with teeth is a clear common concern for CSOs across Iraq. The lack of an effective local follow-up process further compounds the harm suffered by family members and related victims. The failure of Iraq to address issues it is aware of with the lack of a local complaints mechanisms further undermines its own claims that it takes this vital issue seriously and that it has fully considered the rights of families and victims.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Much attention is paid by the international community to the atrocities committed by ISIS, but the CSOs in Iraq encounter individuals who are much more widely affected by the abuses carried out by the militia. The acts of the militias are just as detrimental and harmful, if not worse, to the Iraqi civilian population and society. While the international community touts their dedication to pursuing accountability for human rights violations, these words are not heard or felt by the Iraqi people.

Despite our repeated calls for action, the international community and the United Nations have been complacent in their response. They have not taken the Iraqi peoples' plight and suffering seriously, and it is this laxity which has emboldened perpetrators to not only continue the violations, but to escalate them.

The international community should stop turning a deaf ear to Iraq and finally start examining this issue that so evidently and relentlessly persists in front of them.

We repeat our calls to establish an independent, international Commission of Inquiry to investigate all human rights violations in Iraq since the 2003 United States of America invasion, and to hold all perpetrators accountable. We also call on all UN relevant bodies to take all required measures to put an end to these grave human rights violations.

We will continue to pursue justice for the Iraqi people and demand accountability for the violations committed against them.

### 75 Years of Ongoing Nakba, 75 Years of Ongoing Resistance



#### Joint Statement

For more than 75 years, the Israeli-perpetrated ongoing Nakba has resulted in the protracted forced displacement of 66 percent of the Palestinian people. The ongoing Nakba is maintained by Israel's colonial apartheid regime's policies and practices, namely: land confiscation and denial of use, denial of access to natural resources and services, annexation, suppression of resistance, denial of residency, segregation, fragmentation and isolation, the imposition of discriminatory planning and permit regime, and denial of reparations. The Israeli policies and practices that maintain this system and deny the Palestinian people's rights to return and self-determination go beyond mere human rights violations. Rather, they constitute the Israeli regime's three main pillars: Palestinian displacement and transfer, colonization and apartheid. These pillars, which are translated into Israeli laws, policies and practices, aim to control the maximum amount of land with the minimum number of Palestinians. **Correspondingly, the perpetuation of the Nakba – made feasible by**



**the lack of practical measures to hold Israel accountable for its international crimes – reflects the extent of international complicity with the Israeli colonial-apartheid regime in Palestine.**

As a result of the ongoing Nakba, 9.17 million Palestinians have experienced forced displacement and/or transfer, which includes a total of 8.36 million refugees and 812,000 internally displaced persons, constituting the largest and most protracted refugee population in the world. Meanwhile, Palestinian refugees in exile continue to find themselves in an international protection lacuna. Arab countries, for example, deny Palestinian refugees their human rights, including those stipulated in the Arab League Protocol on the Treatment of Palestinian Refugees (Casablanca Protocol, 1965) to which they are signatories. In Syria, the demographic and political weight of Palestinian refugees has been targeted and weakened during the war and ensuing political strife. In Lebanon, the government treats Palestinian refugees as ‘foreigners’ and deprives them of their civil, economic and social rights to the point that a significant percentage suffers from extreme poverty. These actions are justified under the false pretext of preserving the right of return and Palestinian identity. Depriving Palestinian refugees of their human rights during the period of their refugeehood, however, constitutes a violation of return as it enables the continuation of Israeli policies, and the repeated displacement of Palestinians. At the same time, western states practice discrimination against Palestinian refugees fleeing armed conflicts in a number of Arab countries such as Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Libya.

After 75 years of ongoing Nakba, the international community continues to neglect its legal and moral responsibilities towards the Palestinian people, and to provide support and immunity to the Israeli regime. **Western states have been obstructing the enforcement of international law and accountability mechanisms vis-à-vis the Palestinian people.** This obstruction is exemplified by vetoes of United Nations Security Council Resolutions, the failure to enforce dozens of existing resolutions, undermining ICC investigations, ignoring UNRWA’s chronic funding crisis, neglecting to provide effective protection for Palestinian refugees, and the lack of practical measure to hold Israel accountable, such as arms embargos and sanctions. This lack of action has resulted in an umbrella of political, economic and military impunity for the Israeli colonial-apartheid regime. Moreover, the complicity of Western states is demonstrated in colonial and discriminatory statements made by the presidents of the USA administration and the EU Commission in congratulating the establishment of the Israeli colonial-apartheid regime.

The United Nations, originally responsible for the illegal partition of Palestine, continues to ignore the necessity of a human rights-based decolonization approach and solution to the core issues of the Israeli colonial apartheid regime. The decolonization approach for Palestine is particularly relevant since the UN Conciliation Commission for Palestine, the agency mandated to provide international protection, including the right of return according to UNGA Resolution 194 has been defunct for as many decades as the ongoing Nakba. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Refugees (UNRWA), which is the sole agency responsible for assisting Palestinian refugees, is still regarded as a temporary agency whose budget depends on the voluntary contributions of states, which decreases annually despite the increase in the number of refugees and their growing needs. In the absence of a compulsory funding mechanism, UNRWA is being sabotaged through the imposition of securitization procedures and conditional funding by Israel and the US, particularly with the recently proposed USA draft law. This situation has resulted in the drastic reduction of services as Palestinian refugees’ needs continue to rise. Other strategic attacks on UNRWA that call for transferring its responsibilities to other agencies and organizations constitute unlawful attempts to alter its mandate – the only

way the mandate can be altered is through a UN resolution, which would thereby not only protect UNRWA but also by extension, Palestinian refugees. Such a resolution must necessarily expand UNRWA's mandate to include all Palestinian refugees and provide all the components of international protection (i.e., physical, legal, and humanitarian protection).

The historic and current international response to Palestine is one that is based in a conflict resolution paradigm and a humanitarian approach. The 'conflict' in Palestine is perceived to be between two equal parties with equally valid claims requiring a 'balanced' response. Both the paradigm and the approach are erroneous as they fail to take into consideration Israel's violent colonial origins and have, as such, grievously obscured the root causes and ignored Israel's domination and oppression of the Palestinian people. The reality, however, is that Palestinians are confronted with two Israeli forms of domination – colonization and apartheid – which deny the Palestinian people's inalienable rights to return and self-determination. As such, the right to resist foreign domination and oppression as a means of liberation and in pursuit of the rights of self-determination and return is an irrefutable fact in the case of Palestine.

The only approach and solution to the ongoing Nakba is a comprehensive rights-based decolonization framework. This approach must tackle the root causes of the Israeli colonial-apartheid regime and fulfill the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, specifically the rights of self-determination and return. To decolonize Palestine in a way that will achieve a lasting and just peace means uprooting and dismantling the pillars of the Israeli regime: forced displacement and transfer, colonization, and apartheid.

- Return is our right and our will
- One people, one destiny, and return is certain
- Ensuring a stable and adequate budget for UNRWA without political conditions is an obligatory international responsibility
- Granting refugees their human rights in host countries supports their right to return to their original homes



## The 20th Anniversary of the Invasion of Iraq | A World without Accountability and Justice

### Joint Statement



### **Agenda item 3: Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development**

The 20th of March 2023 will mark 20 years since the invasion of Iraq. 20 years on, Iraqi people are still waiting for justice to be delivered for the violations that flow from decisions made in Washington and London to ignore international law in waging war. The Iraq people's immense suffering must be recognized by the international community and all those responsible for the invasion and occupation must be held accountable.

On 20 March 2003, and in a clear breach of Article 2 (4) of the UN charter accompanied by grave violations of the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the 1977 Protocols, the United States of America together with the so-called "coalition of the willing" launched a war against Iraq with an initial operation, under the name of "Shock and Awe", consisting of a series of devastating airstrikes on the capital, Baghdad, by the use of overwhelming power which would frighten the population, and ultimately paralyze the country's will to fight back. That night marked the start of a devastating occupation that was due to change the face of Iraq forever.

As a military invasion waged without justification the war on Iraq was a war of aggression, which according to the Tribunal of Nuremberg is not only an international crime, it is the supreme international crime that contains within itself the accumulated evil of the whole. An act of aggression is further recognized as an international crime in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the invasion, we stand together to once again, loudly and clearly condemn the invasion and reinvigorate our support for the international rule of law.

The 20th of March 2003 is a watershed moment in international law. Commentators have referred to it as the bookend at which the post-Cold War consensus of resolving disputes consensually through the UN mechanisms came to an abrupt and violent end in a military campaign entitled "Shock and Awe". Despite clear UN Security Council resolutions that did not authorize the use of force, a handful of countries ripped up the international law rulebook and reasserted their might over the importance of the rights of individuals to carry out an unlawful invasion of a sovereign country on exaggerated pretenses. No single person has since been

prosecuted for the unlawful invasion and only a handful of individual soldiers were ever prosecuted for egregious acts of torture. Accountability remains completely lacking.

The invasion was condemned in 2003. We recall the estimated 30 million people who took to the streets in public manifestations speaking out against the threat of a United States of America-led attack against Iraq.

The invasion was condemned in subsequent years as it precipitated a protected armed conflict lasting at least until 2011 and condemned Iraqi people to two decades of sectarian in-fighting. The invasion itself killed and led directly to the deaths of more than two million people. Former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan denounced the invasion as an “illegal act” from which “painful lessons” must be learned, but the United Nations failed to do so.

The invasion of Iraq should have been considered as an aberration, but regrettably and catastrophically it has become a precedent which is relied upon by belligerent countries who seek to justify their wars of aggression and ignore the international rule of law by using battles, bombs and bullets.

Ever since the invasion, the human rights of the Iraqi people have deteriorated. The education system has weakened and is no longer inclusive, vital services like health are much more sporadic such that there is no equal access. The country has been gutted by two decades of foreign wealth extraction by companies ushered in during the wake of the invasion and which were cemented into Iraqi society through horse-trading over newly imposed constitutional settlements. The rights of minorities have been trampled as different factions fight over national and regional power structures and take retribution for perceived historic injustices.

Today, the last effects of the invasion are still strongly felt, mostly poignantly by the Iraqi people. Up to one million enforced disappearances are thought to have occurred since 2003 with little accountability, transparency, or justice with nearly every single family in Iraq affected by violence and injustice. We strongly condemn the estimated \$3 trillion cost of the invasion and prolonged fighting in Iraq and call upon the international community to reflect how much easier it would be to achieve the UN Development Goals if such huge sums could instead be spent on promoting and protecting the human rights of vulnerable people.

For two decades, the population of Iraq is still paying a high price for the brutal invasion and occupation: besides the millions of Iraqis who died during and after the war, millions currently live under the poverty line and the number of orphans who live in the streets has exponentially increased. The invasion has also caused huge amounts of internal and external displacement, making Iraq one of the top 3 migratory countries. IDPs often live in extreme poverty and are unable to satisfy even their most basic needs.

Equally unnoticed goes the plight of those millions of widows who have lost their basic rights and have been left alone in providing for their families while the unemployment rate was on the rise. The situation of the Iraqi people is so devastating that it has reached the level of a humanitarian catastrophe from all points of view.

The contrasting responses of the UN human rights bodies to the Iraq invasion in 2003 and the invasion of Ukraine in 2022 are stark. The divergence deserves appraising. The people of Iraq would have benefitted from an OHCHR Commission of Inquiry, special funding, and resolutions seeking to prosecute the perpetration of international crimes.

There are steps that the international community and the Human Rights Council can take now to help redress the terrible consequences of the Iraq invasion. We call on the international community, states, and civil society to contribute by:

1. Reasserting the supremacy of the UN Charter’s prohibition on the use of force against the sovereign territory of another state.

2. Preventing states from relying on spurious notions of anticipatory self-defense when attempting to justify aggressive wars being pursued for ulterior motives.
  3. Resolving to provide means and the mechanisms by which perpetrators of invasions contrary to international law can be prosecuted without requiring recourse to the International Criminal Court.
  4. Establishing an international and independent tribunal to investigate and prosecute all those responsible for the planning and execution of the Iraq War, and for their violations of International Humanitarian Law and International Criminal Law which include war crimes and crimes against humanity. We call for this international tribunal to be mandated to provide due process to those accused to ensure accountability and bring justice to the people of Iraq.
  5. Addressing governance deficits in UN mechanisms and in countries that have been wrecked by armed conflict such as Iraq, removing structural discrimination and cultures of impunity embedded in Iraqi institutions.
  6. Providing restitution and compensation for violations. All governments of those states comprising the “coalition of the willing” must compensate the Iraqi people for both material and moral injury sustained as a result of the invasion and occupation. This includes the costs of rebuilding Iraqi infrastructure, government institutions, schools, and private property that was bombed or damaged during the war or occupation. It must include addressing the huge environmental damage as a result to the invasion and occupation.
  7. Ensuring equal access to social provisions across Iraq, especially in regions outside the capital to help rebuild post-ISIS including providing primary healthcare, housing, food, water, and education at all levels from school buildings to modern inclusive curriculum and particularized language provision.
- 





### Civil Society Organizations Welcome Barcelona's Suspension of Institutional Relations with Israel

The undersigned 88 Palestinian, regional and international civil society organizations welcome the historic announcement by the Barcelona City Council to suspend all institutional relations with apartheid Israel. On 8 February 2023, the Mayor of Barcelona, Ada Colau, sent a letter to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, officially announcing that the Barcelona City Council will cut ties with Israel and its institutions, including the twinning agreement with the Tel Aviv City Council, “until Israeli authorities put an end to the system of violations of Palestinian human rights”.

We salute the Mayor of Barcelona, Ada Colau, for taking this courageous, principled, and historic step in solidarity with the Palestinian people, and their right to self-determination. Indeed, this decision is a testament to the unwavering commitment of the Barcelona City Council to justice, as it sends a powerful message that Israel’s settler-colonial apartheid regime, and its ensuing human rights violations, will not be tolerated. In her letter, the Mayor of Barcelona said: “[i]t would be a severe mistake to apply a policy of double standards and turn a blind eye to a violation that has been, for decades, widely verified and documented by international organizations”. Through taking this righteous step, the Barcelona City Council leads by example in respecting international law, rejecting the silence in the face of the ever-growing illegal apartheid regime imposed on the Palestinian people, and ensuring accountability is held. Since the courageous announcement by the Mayor of Barcelona, she has been a target of attacks, including baseless antisemitism accusations, which fall under the ongoing and systematic attacks against any voice mobilizing and demanding the rights of the Palestinian people. These attacks, nonetheless, should, and will not, silence virtuous work towards liberation and justice for the Palestinian people and all oppressed peoples worldwide.

Our deepest gratitude and appreciation go to the people of Barcelona as well as grassroots movements, and coalitions who have relentlessly organized, mobilized and advocated for Palestinian rights. This historic action comes in response to the tireless effort and dedication by more than 100 organizations, who launched an official petition under the slogan “Barcelona says NO to Apartheid, Barcelona says YES to human rights”. Such solidarity and mobilization by people, grassroots movements and civil society around the world have been uplifting the struggle of the Palestinian people towards freedom and self-determination. We further reiterate our deepest appreciation to the Catalan Parliament for their adoption of a ground-breaking resolution in June 2022, recognizing that the legal regime in Palestine, constitutes one of apartheid. As Israel’s systematic and institutionalized human rights violations and oppression over the Palestinian people are ongoing, alongside the newly-formed Israeli government – which has been determined to put into practice the guiding principles and coalition agreements; concrete steps must be taken to counter Israel’s impunity. We once again salute the people of Barcelona for this ground-breaking moment, and encourage other cities around

the world to follow suit in taking this essential step, and use their leverage in ending institutional involvement with apartheid Israel.

Dismantling Israel's settler-colonial and apartheid regime necessitates that the international community takes similar steps and further actions in line with their obligations under international law, including their obligation not to recognize the illegal situation stemming from Israel's apartheid regime over the Palestinian people and their obligation to not assist the illegal situation and to cooperate to bring this crime against humanity to an end. This includes the recourse to diplomatic sanctions and arms embargo against apartheid Israel, stopping trade with Israel's illegal colonial settlements, and ending projects and agreements that sustain the illegal situation, including the EU-Israel Association Agreement, the EU-Israel Association Council, international agreements for gas pipes through the Gaza coast, and the Euro-Asia Interconnector project receiving electricity from Israel's colonial settlement enterprise.

[List of endorsing organizations](#)





## Introduction

### Introduction

The Human Rights Council held its fifty-third regular session from 19 June – 14 July 2023, hearing the presentation of the annual report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and holding an enhanced interactive dialogue on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, with a focus on the rights of women and girls.

Volker Türk, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, presenting his global update, said engaging with a stable field presence of his Office was a mark of States that were constructively cooperating to advance human rights. He provided an overview of the situation of human rights in the 95 States or territories that accommodated human rights field presences. He concluded by saying that the budget of the Office needed to be doubled and greater political support was needed.



Opening Remarks by the President of the Human Rights Council

VÁCLAV BÁLEK, *President of the Human Rights Council*, opening the fifty-third session of the Council, said that a constructive, safe and respectful atmosphere was essential for the Council's sessions. Disagreement with mandate holders and their reports could always be expressed, but it was unacceptable that they were insulted or personally attacked or threatened when discharging

their mandates. Along the same lines, the President said he would follow up on all reported allegations of acts



of reprisal and intimidation committed against individuals or groups who had cooperated with the Council, its mechanisms and procedures. There was a focal point for accessibility within the Secretariat. The United Nations, including this Council, had zero tolerance for any form of harassment.



United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Mr. Volker Türk, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights urged States to step up their implementation efforts as an expression of their genuine

cooperation with the Universal Periodic Review. The Council also established 59 Special Procedures mandates and 14 investigative mandates. On average, Special Procedures mandate holders conducted 60 to 80 country visits per year, and 129 States had extended a standing invitation. However, 19 countries had not received any visits in the past five years, despite requests. It was concerning that several mandate holders had been subjected to personal abuse and threats.

The treaty body system faced a significant lack of cooperation from States parties. Only 37 States were up to date with all their reporting requirements to the treaty bodies, and a total of 601 reports by States were overdue. Last year the Sub-Committee on the Prevention of Torture was forced to suspend some of its country visits, due to failure to cooperate by officials at the regional level. As of 30 April, there were 385 State party reports awaiting consideration, and over 1,800 complainants were waiting for a decision about their cases.

The United States was encouraged to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child, along with the five other human rights treaties it had not yet ratified. The Office had grown from just two to 101 field presences in the past 30 years, in 95 countries, and was looking to scale up engagement in several regions. Mr. Türk believed it was important to establish a presence for the first time in China and India. The budget of the Office needed to be doubled and greater political support was needed. There needed to be a human rights office in each country to provide support and learnings.



## EAFORD Participation

The International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD) participated actively in the 53rd session of the Human Rights Council, in collaboration with other like-minded

NGOs, submitting joint written reports to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and delivering joint oral statements.

EAFORD along with NGO partners reiterate that the participation of civil society in the Human Rights Council is crucial for the improvement of human rights everywhere. NGOs publicly monitor and survey government actions. Their call-out power gives a voice to the victims of human rights abuses. Moreover, NGOs represent individuals on the field and articulate the interests of minorities, victims, stakeholders, local populations, grassroots groups, activists, movements and workers, and much more. They bring informed, contextualized perspectives to the table contributing to create solutions tailored to the needs of the various communities and issues of concern.

During the 53rd Regular Session of the Human Rights Council, the International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD) in coordination with Geneva International Centre for Justice counted on the dedicated work of a team of interns and volunteers both online and onsite. The team conducted the research for discussion reports, drafted written statement submitted to the OHCHR, and delivered oral interventions on various issues of concern.

## List of Agenda Items

1. Opening of Session High-Level Segment
2. Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General
3. Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development
4. Human rights situations that require the Council's attention
5. Human rights bodies and mechanisms
6. Universal Periodic Review
7. Human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories
8. Follow-up to and implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action
9. Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance: follow-up to and implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action
10. Technical assistance and capacity-building

## Oral Statements

### Oral statements

During the 53rd Session of the UN Human Rights Council, the International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD) delivered the following oral statements in collaboration with other like-minded civil society organizations.

**53rd session of the Human Rights Council**

**19 June 2023 – 14 July 2023**

**Item 2: Interactive dialogue with the Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem and Israel**

**19 June 2023**

**Statement of the International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD)**



*Delivered by Luísa Barbosa*

Thank you, President

We welcome the report of the Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, East Jerusalem and Israel and commend her work investigating international humanitarian law and human rights law abuses.

However, we stand appalled by its findings. They reveal Israel's grave violations of its commitment under international law and its human rights mechanisms. The Israeli application of its Counter-Terrorism Law to categorize civil society organizations as terrorist associations is only one evidence of that.

We urge this Council, to exert pressure on Israeli authorities to issue visas for humanitarian workers, to allow them to access the Occupied Palestinian Territory and to conduct their work safely and freely, protected from arbitrary detention and persecution, intimidation, and harassment.

EAFORD and Geneva International Centre for Justice remain concerned about restrictions on freedom of expression. The Israeli use of its court system to silence and criminalize Palestinian NGOs cannot be tolerated

by the international community. We appeal to the Human Rights Council to take all the necessary measures to end the use by the occupying power of arbitrary administrative detention to punish Palestinians, civil society members and human rights defenders.

We call on the international community to double its efforts in addressing all the violations of international law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, which have been ongoing for decades, unsanctioned. The silence of the international community only empowers the perpetrators of such violations.

### **53rd session of the Human Rights Council**

**19 June 2023 – 14 July 2023**

**Panel discussion on human rights violations against Rohingya and other minorities in Myanmar  
(res. 50/3)**

**21 June 2023**

**Statement of the International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination  
(EAFORD)**



*Delivered by Eunike Mangampa*

Thank you president

For decades minorities have been sidelined in Myanmar. They have been subjected to systemic discrimination, excluded from economic growth, and their rights suppressed. Minorities have been denied citizenship, often rendered stateless and for decades, the international community has failed to sufficiently protect the minorities living in Myanmar.

Myanmar's discriminatory practices are rooted in a history of underrepresentation. The decades-long persecution culminated in the junta's ongoing military operations targeting in particular the Rohingya people. Acts amounting to genocide formed the core of the junta's brutal campaign which has destroyed hundreds of villages, killed, raped and tortured civilians in the process.

Today, a large portion of Rohingya and Kaman people are confined to overcrowded camps, with poor sanitation, rationed food and yet still remain under constant threat from the military. Appallingly, an overwhelming majority of children in Rakhine camps are without education. The presence of military checkpoints around the camps enforces an arbitrary restriction on movement, as Rohingya people are only allowed to leave with official permission which is rarely given. These policies amount to a conscious effort of segregating minorities, by stunting the development of children, and reinforcing racially divided living areas.

EAFORD and Geneva International Centre for Justice stress that protection of the Rohingya people and other persecuted minorities requires the fullest international support. We urgently call on states to expand their resettlement programmes and enact asylum policies that increase protection of refugees and respect the principles of non-refoulement. As Rohingya refugees face their second food ration cut in the span of a few months, it is absolutely vital that all States financially contribute to the delivery of critical humanitarian aid. We urge the Myanmar government to end all discriminatory policies that restrict minorities' fundamental rights to movement and to obtain a nationality.

### **53rd session of the Human Rights Council**

**19 June 2023 – 14 July 2023**

#### **Item 4: Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar**

**6 July 2023**

#### **Statement of the International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD)**



*Delivered by Batoul Alanany*

Thank you, Mr. President

We thank the Special Rapporteur for his relentless efforts, and we welcome his oral report which details the deteriorating situation in Myanmar, especially after the cyclone Mocha hitting the Rakhine state in May.

This requires urgent renewed attention by UN bodies and States.

At the same time, there were reports of military attacks on locals following the storm.

To this day, there is a lack of effective mechanisms to unite countries to take concrete actions against the Myanmar military and the absence of the rule of law.

As outlined by the Special Rapporteur, Myanmar's military is seeking legitimacy and recognition by the international community, a claim implicitly supported by several States.

But the situation cannot remain hopeless. Action is needed at this Council.

Coordinated action is also needed by States and UN staff who must support the survivors and protect the refugees by providing aid and services to address this crisis.

EAFORD and Geneva International Centre for Justice urge the Council, its mechanisms, and most importantly States to apply all possible forms of pressure on Myanmar military to relent in its campaign of repression against the Muslim Rohingya – AND provide international protection for the targeted refugees and their fundamental rights.



### 53rd session of the Human Rights Council

19 June 2023 – 14 July 2023

#### Item 6: Universal Periodic Review

7 July 2023

#### Statement of the International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD)



*Delivered by Luísa Barbosa*

Thank you, President

We welcome Guatemala's engagement with human rights mechanisms and the progress it has made since the last Universal Periodic Review cycle. However, we remain extremely concerned about the human rights situation in the country.

We are appalled by reports of torture, ill-treatment, sexual violence, and harassment of people in custody and in detention centers. The unlawful extension of the pretrial detention period, especially for minor offences is also an issue that the State must address. We urge Guatemala to reaffirm and uphold the absolute prohibition of torture and investigate reports of such nature. We appeal to the Guatemalan authorities to ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice and victims receive full redress.

We join the calls for the use of alternatives to imprisonment based on the necessity, proportionality and duration of pretrial detention, considering the alarming growth of the prison population, leading to police stations being used as long-term detention centers and the deterioration of imprisonment conditions.



The human rights of indigenous peoples in Guatemala are also being gravely breached. The reports denounce the lack of protection of their lands, territories, and natural resources, their forceful eviction from their territories without legal support and the lack of indigenous participation in measures that affect them. We urge Guatemala to call for an immediate suspension of forced evictions and recommend that it implements resettlement plans and humanitarian assistance for evicted communities.

EAFORD and Geneva International Centre for Justice encourage Guatemala to continue engaging with human rights mechanisms and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). We also strongly recommend that the concerned authorities implement the necessary measures in all government spheres to uphold human rights for the Guatemalan population.

**53rd session of the Human Rights Council**

**19 June 2023 – 14 July 2023**

**Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism**

**11 July 2023**

**Statement of the International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination  
(EAFORD)**



*Delivered by Eunike Mangampa*

Thank you, Vice President. We welcome both reports of the Special Rapporteur. We are plagued by our past. Our past is rooted in a history of colonialism and slavery, where subjugation and exploitation became the modus operandi of the most powerful nations and individuals. Failure to recognize this past has enabled the same cycle of racial injustice to permeate our society at large.

The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA) has long recognized racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and other related intolerances as a direct consequence of this past. Today, we reiterate our call on states to abide by their commitments and take account of their complicity in perpetuating patterns of racial discrimination.

Contemporary manifestations of this gruesome past are seen in all facets of our lives. It is in the racial profiling that killed 17-year-old Nahel Merzouk last month. It has produced racially biased digital technologies that discriminate against people of color. Recognizing these historical roots is the key to fully comprehend the extent of this systemic racism and begin transitional justice processes and historical redress.

The DDPA is an integral instrument in safeguarding people's rights and eradicating all forms of racism. EAFORD and Geneva International Centre for Justice urge states to ensure that all education, healthcare, employment and ownership systems comply with the DDPA. We ask states to examine their current policies beyond the historical vacuum and acknowledge the effects colonialism and slavery has left upon them. We are plagued by our past, but we can choose to stop it from shaping our future.





53rd session of the Human Rights Council

19 June 2023 – 14 July 2023



**Agenda Item 1: Urgent debate to “discuss the alarming rise in premeditated and public acts of religious hatred as manifested by recurrent desecration of the Holy Quran in some European and other countries”**

11 July 2023

**Statement of the International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD)**



*Delivered by Batoul Alanany*

Thank you, Mr. President

We are deeply troubled over the rise of anti-Muslim hatred and the discrimination against Muslim citizens in several European countries.

We believe that such acts are a violation of the principles under the UNDHR, and we urge States to condemn and sanction religious insults and related acts that are offensive against a whole community.

We need a forward-looking text that disallows freedom of expression to be used for denigration of religions and religious symbols.

That’s why we implore this Council to immediately put into effect the 2019 United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech.

States shouldn’t allow for these dreadful acts to go unpunished; they must combat the impunity of these vile provocations that intentionally disturb public order and call for individuals to be subjected to hatred, discrimination, or violence.

20 years after 9/11, Islamophobia continues to increase thanks to media lies and propaganda, further contributing to misunderstandings and misrepresentation of Islam.

The hate crime campaigns cannot be tolerated.

In this regard, EAFORD and Geneva International Centre for Justice urge the Council and the international community to adopt firm action against these increasing violations, by raising awareness and drawing the distinction between freedom of expression and hate speech, to protect the integrity of our democratic society.



## Written Statements / EAFORD (53<sup>rd</sup> HRC)

### Israeli Apartheid Continues with Impunity



The dire human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) is an understatement for the current reality of Palestinians in 2023. For over 75 years, the OPT, including the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza, have been under brutal and violent Israeli occupation by its security forces. The institutional and systemic discrimination, coupled with the erasure of the Palestinian people and their culture, has been considered an act of apartheid by many due to Israel claiming to be the sole governor throughout this area. Under this occupation, Palestinians have faced arbitrary arrests, unlawful killings, and forced displacement, giving Israeli authorities inhumane control over Palestinian livelihoods and enjoyment of their fundamental human rights.

The United Nations International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid declares apartheid as a crime against humanity, meaning that inhumane acts resulting from policies and practices of apartheid and policies and practices of racial discrimination are international crimes. However,

regardless of the violations of international law and the international community's resentment towards these crimes, Israel continues to create policies and harm Palestinians with impunity.

Over 270 Israeli settlements which encroach on Palestinian land have been established, and Israel shows no signs of ceasing its activities in this area. Moreover, the Separation Wall divides Palestinians from each other, further restricting their freedom of movement and right to self-determination. [Link to full written statement](#)

\*\*\*\*\*



## [Hope Denied | Justice for the People of Iraq Twenty Years after the Invasion](#)

Earlier this year, the 20th of March 2023 marked 20 years since the invasion of Iraq by the United States of America and the United Kingdom. 20 years on, Iraqi

people are still waiting for justice to be delivered for the violations that still flow from decisions made in Washington and London to ignore international law and to wage an illegal war based on a flimsy justification that did not hold up to any scrutiny. The immense suffering of the people of Iraq over the subsequent 20 years must be recognized and addressed by the international community, by the UN Human Rights Council and all efforts must be made to enhance accountability for those responsible for violations during the invasion and occupation. Victims and their families have waited too long for justice. It is time to pursue - with vigour - the processes that should have been implemented over the last two decades.

The invasion of Iraq represents a flagrant breach of Article 2(4) of the UN Charter accompanied by grave violations of the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the 1977 Protocols, the United States of America together with the so-called “coalition of the willing” launched a war against Iraq with an initial operation, labelled “Shock and Awe”, consisting of a series of devastating airstrikes on the capital, Baghdad, by the use of overwhelming power which would frighten the population, and ultimately paralyze the country’s will to mount resistance to an invasion that had been pre-planned for months. The attack and devastating occupation changed the face of Iraq forever. There has been little attention paid to the long-lasting impacts that continue until this day. [Link to full written statement](#)

\*\*\*\*\*

## [Letter to MEPs on the Draft Report on the EU Relations with the Palestinian Authority](#)

We, the undersigned civil society organizations and coalitions, address this letter to you having read the draft recommendation [report](#) on the relations with the Palestinian Authority. We commend the references in the draft report to supporting accountability mechanisms including the investigation into the Situation in Palestine at the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the anticipated advisory opinion by the International Court of Justice (ICJ). Further, we strongly welcome the EU call to withdraw the designation of six Palestinian civil society organizations as terrorist organizations, as consistent with international law norms protecting human rights defenders.



Nonetheless, the report contains some problematic framing on the premise of peacebuilding. We highlight, that as a first step, the international community including member states of the EU, have an international responsibility not to recognize as lawful the internationally wrongful acts of Israel, and to intervene collectively to end Israel's international crimes. Only then, can there be promotion of peacebuilding, and not while the grave breaches of international law are ongoing and accelerating. As such, we offer a list of recommendations before the final vote on the report on 12 July 2023, especially in light of the latest and one of the fiercest Israeli attacks in decades in the occupied

West Bank..... Moreover, as Israel continues to violate peremptory norms of international law, including the denial of the Palestinian people to exercise their right to self-determination and the commission of the crime of apartheid, international law obligates third states not assist in maintaining the illegal situation and to positively cooperate to bring the illegal situation to an end. [Link to full letter to MEPs](#)

\*\*\*\*\*



### [Human Rights Violations in the Islamic Republic of Iran](#)

In the Islamic Republic of Iran, the world has witnessed grave violations being committed in the open, with systematic impunity prevailing and no hope for impartial mechanisms to seek justice. The current situation of the Iranian people is an example of the systematic failure in the application of human rights to constrain state power.

From 16<sup>th</sup> of September 2022, when Masha Amini was murdered by members of Iran's Guidance Patrol in Tehran, to March 2023 Iran was gripped by anti-government protests. In response, the government has illegally used lethal and excessive force against protestors contrary to the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force, UN Human Rights Guidance on Less-Lethal Weapons in Law Enforcement, and the ICCPR. Furthermore, there have been a high number of summary executions.

The murder of Masha Amini and the Iranian government's aggressive response caused widespread outrage, inciting nationwide protests where Iranian people came together to protest against the authoritarian regime in a movement that showcased the resilience of women's groups and civil society actors who work to repeal draconian laws and rectify the systematic oppression faced by women in the country. The work thus far, and the courage displayed by women and girls that are leading the revolution in Iran, has been acknowledged by many UN member states.

The Iranian government has regrettably persisted in using the death penalty to punish people for exercising their basic rights of participating in or organizing peaceful demonstrations. This ignores the strong condemnation of the Human Rights Council and Special Procedure mandate holders who called on Iran to facilitate peaceful protests, and restrain its unnecessary use of enforce against protestors. The recent murder of

three participants in the protests - Saleh Mirhashemi, Majid Kazemi and Saeed Yaqoubi - brings the number to a total of 259 executions since January 2023, but the true numbers are expected to be higher. [Link to full written statement](#)



### **Promoting Full Respect for the Rule of Law in Iraq is an Essential Building Block**

Iraq is failing its national and international responsibility to protect because militias affiliated with the government are carrying out grave human rights violations, while the Iraqi judicial system is suffering from political interference and is at continued risk of falling victim to corruption.

Militias are above the law and carry out extensive operations to arrest people under various pretexts. This constitutes a clear violation of Iraq's obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. In May 2023, militias linked with the Popular Mobilization Forces, including the Maqam-al-Dawla militia, arbitrarily arrested a number of lawyers, retired teachers, and civilians. Militias announced that these individuals were arrested on suspicion of association with a political party, the Ba'ath Party.

This comes in light of the fact that the government forces do not intervene to do what they must to ensure the security and protection of civilians. So the Shiite militias, linked to Iran, are taking advantage of the atmosphere of chaos and the absence of the rule of law with unprecedented freedom to attack citizens and their property and carry out kidnappings of whomever they want. Militias continue to commit such crimes with complete impunity. [Link to full written statement](#)

\*\*\*\*\*



## Introduction



### **Introduction**

The 54th session of the Human Rights Council was held from September 11th to October 13th 2023 at the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland.

On 11 September, the High Commissioner Volker Türk opened the session by presenting a global update on the situation of human rights in the world. In his intervention, the High Commissioner focused on the links between development and human rights and referred to several situations around the world that raise human rights concerns. The oral update provided the basis for the general debate under Item 2. During the session, the High Commissioner also provided oral updates on other situations of human rights including the situation in Sudan, as well as, on the drivers, root causes and human rights impacts of religious hatred constituting incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence.

Mr. Türk, said development issues underlined almost every challenge the international community faced. People everywhere had a right to a decent standard of living, including food, access to affordable medical care, education, economic prospects, a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, and justice and police systems

which upheld their rights. But time and again, people were deprived of these rights. Climate change was pushing millions of people into famine. Urgent action was needed now. Instead of unity, the world was seeing the politics of division and distraction.

Mr. Türk said the Food and Agriculture Organization's 2023 global report projected that almost 600 million people would be chronically undernourished at the end of the decade. With the planetary crisis gaining pace, there was also a vital need for a shift to human rights economies that promoted green solutions. He emphasized the need for a rapid, equitable phase-out of fossil fuels. The High Commissioner also spoke about the growing crisis of homelessness, unprecedented water scarcity, and the situation of human rights in a number of countries and territories.



Václav Bálek, President of the Human Rights Council, in opening remarks said that personal insults, attacks or threats against the Council's mandate holders would not be tolerated. Along the same lines, the active participation of representatives of civil society and national human rights institutions was part of the foundation of the Human Rights Council. The President called on everyone to take all necessary steps to prevent any act of reprisal or intimidation committed against individuals or groups who had

cooperated with the Council, its mechanisms and procedures, and in the case that such an act did occur, ensure that it was promptly and seriously addressed. He also emphasized that the United Nations, including this Council, had a zero tolerance for any form of harassment, including sexual harassment, and that all complaints would be dealt with promptly.

- 5 panel discussions were held during the session.
- More than 80 reports under the Council's various agenda items were considered.
- 20 interactive dialogues with Special Procedures mandate holders (14 thematic and six country-specific) took place.
- Six interactive dialogues with investigative mechanisms were held.
- Twelve new Special Procedures mandate-holders were appointed to the following mandates: the Independent Expert on human rights and international solidarity; the Special Rapporteur on minority issues; the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants; the Special Rapporteur on counter-terrorism and human rights; the Independent Expert on sexual orientation and gender identity; the Special Rapporteur on discrimination against persons with leprosy; the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities; four members of the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls and a member to the Working Group on the use of mercenaries.
- The outcome reports of the UPR Working Group of the following 14 States were adopted: Bahamas, Barbados, Botswana, Burundi, France, Israel, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Mali, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Tonga, and the United Arab Emirates.
- 37 texts (36 resolutions and one President's statement) were considered by the Council.
- After adopting 37 texts, the Council established a Fact-Finding Mission for Sudan and a Working Group on the Rights of Peasants; and extended the mandates of thematic mandate-holders (i.e., equitable international order, the promotion of truth and justice, the disposal of hazardous waste, private military and security companies, enforced and involuntary disappearances, unilateral coercive measures and People of African Descent), and country mandate-holders (i.e., Afghanistan, Burundi, Russian Federation, Central African Republic, Somalia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Cambodia).

- 34 of the texts adopted by the Council (92%) had Programme Budget Implications (PBI) and required new appropriations not included in previous Programme Budgets.

The webcast of the Human Rights Council meetings can be found [here](#). All meeting summaries can be found [here](#). Documents and reports related to the Human Rights Council's fifty-fourth regular session can be found [here](#).



## EAFORD Participation

The International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD) participated actively in the 54th session of the Human Rights Council, in collaboration with other like-minded NGOs. EAFORD along with NGO partners reiterate that the participation of civil society in the Human Rights Council is crucial for the improvement of human rights everywhere. NGOs publicly monitor and survey government actions. Their call-out power gives a voice to the victims of human rights abuses. Moreover, NGOs represent individuals on the field and articulate the interests of minorities, victims, stakeholders, local populations, grassroots groups, activists, movements and workers, and much more. They bring informed, contextualized perspectives to the table contributing to create solutions tailored to the needs of the various communities and issues of concern.

During the 54th Regular Session of the Human Rights Council, we counted once again on the dedicated work of a team of interns and volunteers both online and onsite. The team conducted the research for discussion reports, drafted written statement submitted to the OHCHR, and delivered oral interventions on various issues of concern.

## List of Agenda Items

1. Opening of Session High-Level Segment
2. Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General
3. Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development
4. Human rights situations that require the Council's attention
5. Human rights bodies and mechanisms



6. Universal Periodic Review
7. Human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories
8. Follow-up to and implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action
9. Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance: follow-up to and implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action
10. Technical assistance and capacity-building

## Oral Statements

### Oral statements

During the 54th Session of the UN Human Rights Council, the International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD) delivered the following oral statements in collaboration with several like-minded civil society organizations.

#### 54th session of the Human Rights Council

11 September 2023 – 13 October 2023

#### Item 2: Interactive dialogue on OHCHR report on Afghanistan

12 September 2023

#### Statement of the International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD)



*Delivered by Martin Browne*

Those responsible for perpetrating the violations outlined in the OHCHR report are not in the room with us – victims cannot voice their criticism directly to the de facto authorities of Afghanistan.

The return of the Taliban was however linked to policies and military occupation of some States in this room. It is a stain on the human rights records of those States that they do not offer

enough help such as opening accessible safe migration routes available for Afghans to seek asylum in the countries which ruled over them for so long.

Since 2022, reports of attacks against minorities have tripled since the takeover. Ethnic and religious minorities, especially groups such as the Hazara community, are persecuted and severely affected by the endless restrictions on freedom which have not yet culminated, more severe measures are promised every week.

At the intersessional meeting last year on Education in Afghanistan there was widespread agreement on the term ‘gender apartheid’. It is deplorable that so little action has followed those words expressed. The Taliban continue to attack the right to education – chopping off at the knees, the chance, the hope of the next generation that they will be able to live in a better world.

EAFORD and Geneva International Centre for Justice support Afghanis in their long, lonely, fight. We strongly condemn the disproportionate repression of their freedoms. Every State here today, but particularly those with legacies of occupying Afghanistan must share the burden of such failures.

## **54th session of the Human Rights Council**

**11 September 2023 – 13 October 2023**

### **Item 2: General Debate**

#### **Statement of the International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD)**

*Delivered by Martin Browne*

We welcome the High Commissioner’s oral update which was an impressive and pressing survey of the very real challenges facing governments across the world.



The High Commissioner visited Iraq in August 2023 and encountered some of the most hostile conditions that seem to have affected him personally. We work with people living in those conditions daily, facing drastic water shortages, supplies of essential goods syphoned off for government projects or those which are approved by Iranian-backed militias which have de-facto control of delivery of services.

The High Commissioner noted the human rights impact of the environmental disaster that is partly exacerbated by government inaction or mismanagement. His update could have gone further in highlighting - as his statement at the end of his country visit did - on the insidious impact of rampant ongoing enforced disappearances - an issue that was also highlighted by the CED’s country report in April 2023 finding that government inaction actively prevents justice from being achieved.

The High Commissioner did raise the chilling effect of attacks on civil society actors. Those we work with in Iraq report these experiences with regularity that is why we keep raising their voices in this forum on their behalf.

EAFORD and Geneva International Centre for Justice call on the High Commissioner and States here today to consider implementing mechanisms such as Fact Finding missions to ensure accountability for all serious rights violations in Iraq.

**54th session of the Human Rights Council**

**11 September 2023 – 13 October 2023**

**Item 3: Interactive dialogue with the Working Group on Enforced Disappearances**

**Statement of the International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD)**



*Delivered by Martin Browne*

Thank you, President

We thank the Working Group for their report and the work they do helping to attain measures of accountability and justice.

The report ties in with comments made by the High Commissioner on his visit to Iraq in August 2023 which drew attention to the multifaceted reality of enforced disappearances taking place in a vacuum of impunity. At the core is a plea for more to be done to combat attacks that have chilling effects on civil society actors.

Those we work with in Iraq report these experiences with regularity. As mentioned in the Report - militia organizations wield unaccountable power to shield themselves such as unlawful and disproportionate confiscation of mobile phones of bystanders, family members, any attempts to remove witnesses to their crimes. We also work with those facing fabricated charges of supporting terrorism under punitively broad definitions. When all they want to know is where someone is.

What more can be done. It's time for strong resolutions that devote substantial resources to eradicating militias, to establish international mechanisms that people can access when domestic systems are corrupted.

EAFORD and Geneva International Centre for Justice call on States here today to better fund and support the work of the Working Group on Enforced Disappearances alongside widening the scope of Fact Finding and Investigative missions to ensure accountability for all serious rights violations on an equal basis, including in Iraq.

**54th session of the Human Rights Council**

**11 September 2023 – 13 October 2023**

**Item 3: General Debate**

**Proposal for the fifth phase of the World Program for Human Rights Education (2025-2029)**

**Joint Statement with the NGO Working Group on Human Rights Education & Learning**



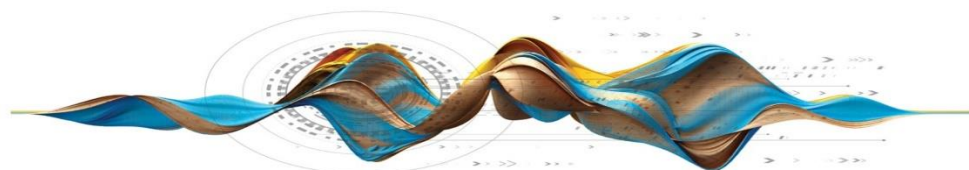
We want to thank the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights for the Report on the views of States and other stakeholders on the target sectors, focus areas or thematic issues for the fifth phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education.



Our group submitted a consolidated written proposal for the fifth phase. Building on the fourth phase we recommend youth and their duty bearers to be the target sectors of the fifth phase, adding a specific urgent theme such as environment and/or gender equality.

Duty bearers would include those in the formal sector, such as teachers and policy makers, as well as those in non-formal and informal education, such as families, caregivers and so on.

Furthermore, we asked to focus specifically on young people from the most marginalized communities which are often overlooked, including but not limited to refugees, migrants, IDPs, indigenous youth, youth with disabilities, youth in extreme poverty, and youth of the Global South. We also recommend the adoption of an intergenerational, holistic, value-based, context-appropriate approach including the use of art and sport as impactful educational methods. In addition, we want to highlight our earnest hope that the upcoming 75th anniversary of UDHR on 10 December creates a more solid momentum for human rights and human rights education which are upheld by everyone and rooted in daily life.



#### **54th session of the Human Rights Council**

**11 September 2023 – 13 October 2023**

#### **Item 4: Interactive dialogue on the High Commissioner's report on the human rights situation in Myanmar**

**26 September 2023**

#### **Statement of the International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD)**



*Delivered by Fernanda Freitas*

More than two years after the military coup and five years since the operations that killed and displaced thousands of Rohingya, violence in Myanmar still runs rampant.

Notwithstanding the efforts of the Myanmar authorities to silence those living within its borders and to curtail access to investigative missions, information on the human rights violations committed is reaching the ears - and the hearts - of the international community.

Evidence of the widespread use of violence against civil society, in general, and minorities, in particular, underpins the report of the High Commissioner and the latest report of the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar. The gathered information indicates a never-ending list of violations: enforced disappearances, gender-based violence, and war crimes, among others.

In this difficult context, EAFORD and Geneva International Centre for Justice stand with the 600,000 Rohingya and other ethnic minorities still in Myanmar, who continue to face grave risks and systemic discrimination. We urge the International Criminal Court, the International Court of Justice, and the Security Council to intensify their efforts to hold the Myanmar authorities accountable for the grave human rights violations taking place in their territory.

We also call on States here today to continue funding humanitarian efforts in Bangladesh and further develop their voluntary resettlement policies. It is vital to protect those in need, and to help the victims achieve justice for the grave violations suffered.

### **54th session of the Human Rights Council**

**11 September 2023 – 13 October 2023**

#### **Item 4: General debate on human rights situations that require the Council's attention**

**27 September 2023**

#### **Statement of the International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD)**



*Delivered by Martin Browne*

The High Commissioner's visit to Iraq this August drew attention to multifaceted violations linked to enforced disappearances in Iraq which still take place in a vacuum of impunity. Those who speak out are silenced. Civil society has nowhere to turn to. Justice is completely absent.

Despite purporting to have a standing invitation to UN Special Procedures, Iraq is a master at raising issues to prevent visits - difficulties related to 'security' always emerge to prevent real scrutiny of their human rights record.

The Committee on Enforced Disappearances who did conduct a country visit last year concluded that the authorities were failing to properly investigate and prosecute grave crimes amongst 140 other recommendations. And that Iraq is currently not in a position to achieve meaningful justice.

Militia organizations wield unaccountable power to shield themselves - threatening witnesses and family members. We also work with those facing fabricated charges of supporting terrorism under punitively broad definitions that make no legal sense.

All these family members want to know is where their loved one is being held, or has been buried.

EAFORD and Geneva International Centre for Justice urge States to bring forward strong resolutions with resources to eradicate such violations in Iraq. Victims need strong international mechanisms as domestic systems are corrupted.

With the end of UNITAD, and with thousands of victims left unaddressed. It is finally time to create an independent mechanism to ensure justice for all violations in Iraq over the last 20 years.

**54th session of the Human Rights Council**

**11 September 2023 – 13 October 2023**

**Item 6: Adoption of Universal Periodic Review Outcomes of Serbia**

**3 October 2023**

## Statement of the International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD)



*Delivered by Manlaibayar Baatarzorig*

Thank you, Mr. President

We thank those who contributed to the UPR of Serbia and the State for engaging constructively through this cycle of reviews.

In Serbia, the implementation of the Law on Residence has led to a troubling pattern of discrimination against ethnic minorities. Predominantly Albanian-populated areas, such as Medvegja and Bujanoc, have been disproportionately affected by a policy of passivization. This policy, while not explicitly discriminatory in its text, is applied in a way that specifically targets these minority communities, who also face discrimination and

disproportionate unemployment. It is critical that State policies do not result in such indirect discrimination of minorities.

The passivization of permanent addresses has been carried out systematically and in coordination by various State organs, including the Ministry of Interior, the judicial system, the electoral commission, and government-affiliated media. The consequences are dire: many Albanians in southern Serbia have effectively become stateless individuals. They are denied essential documentation, including personal IDs and passports, and are arbitrarily removed from voter lists, thus eroding their political representation. Serbia must act to protect all individual residents in the country.

The passivization policy is characterized by a lack of transparency, with authorities failing to provide ethnic breakdown data of passivized cases. Furthermore, independent observers are denied access to voter lists, essential for verifying the scale of discrimination. Serbia should not fear scrutiny.



EAFORD and Geneva International Centre for Justice urgently call for Serbia to address the troubling human rights violations and ethnic discrimination, which represent clear breaches of international standards for equality, non-discrimination, and the fundamental rights and dignity of all citizens, regardless of ethnicity. We implore Serbia to take decisive action while urging the government to conduct comprehensive and impartial investigations into all reported cases of human rights

violations and ethnic discrimination, particularly in predominantly Albanian-populated areas like Medvegja and Bujanoc. These investigations should aim to uncover the truth behind these allegations, provide justice for the victims, and ensure that such violations do not recur.

Furthermore, the Serbian government must take immediate measures to end discriminatory practices, including the passivization policy, which disproportionately affects ethnic minority communities, and ensure that all citizens, regardless of their ethnic background, have equal access to essential documentation, including personal IDs and passports. Additionally, efforts should be made to urgently restore the political representation of ethnic minorities, including Albanians in southern Serbia, ensuring they have equal opportunities to participate in local elections and that their voices are heard in the democratic process.

We emphasize that if these measures are implemented in good faith, Serbia will benefit from the support of the international community in its pursuit of human rights and equality for all its citizens.

### **54th session of the Human Rights Council**

**11 September 2023 – 13 October 2023**

#### **Item 7: Human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories**

**4 October 2023**

#### **Statement of the International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD)**



*Delivered by Charlotte Maher*

Thank you Mr. Vice President

Palestinian workers in the periphery of the Beit Hanoun crossing had been demonstrating for weeks after the closure of the crossing prevented them from working. The unemployment figures in Palestine sits at 50%, a shocking figure for which restrictive border regulations are largely responsible. The experience of living in Palestine consequently amounts to a life of uncertainty. Citizens cannot plan medical appointments, work appointments or even family visits due to indefinite access to their rights of movement. Travel permits could be withdrawn at any moment, which we have seen occur to families of victims of

Israeli military violence.

What is being demonstrated is a delegitimization and silencing of civil society. Injury or death by law enforcement officials is a criminal offence when it is applied outside of circumstances of self-defense. Additionally clear warning must be given in the event that a firearm is going to be used. Time and time again we see these international norms neglected as innocent civilians become victims to violence in their homeland.

EAFORD and Geneva International Centre for Justice affirm that protection of civil society rights in Palestine must be prioritized. We call on governments giving military provisions used in Palestine, to restrict this aid to incentivize compliance. The continued non-compliance with resolutions on this issue, the longest standing case on the international agenda, is compromising human life, fundamental rights, integrity, and the credibility of the UN as a functioning body.



54th session of the Human Rights Council

11 September 2023 – 13 October 2023

Item 9: Interactive dialogue with the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent

6 October 2023

Statement of the International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (IAFORD)



*Delivered by Teboho Mosebo*

Thank you Mr. President

We welcome the report of the Working Group of Experts on the key issue of Economic Empowerment of people of African Descent. We note some crucial recommendations made by the Working Group such as the provision of appropriate resources for the implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

Unfortunately, despite the efforts to accommodate people of African Descent in global markets and the eradication of racist economic systems, the world still witnesses discrimination in wage equality, unequal hiring practices and exploitation of people of African Descent. For many centuries, people of African Descent have been marginalized as part of the legacy of slavery and colonialism.

Those of African descent continue to work in occupations such as domestic and service work. We should value these roles, as it is objectively true that they are economically and socially not valued. The report outlined the view of people of African descent as objects for exploitation, available or disposable sources of labor, intellectual property or other resources, rather than drivers of innovation or leaders in economic development. Honestly, things cannot continue like this, action is needed. People of African descent should be provided with

better access to education, healthcare, global markets, technology and their rights must be protected and respected.

In conclusion, EAFORD and Geneva International Centre for Justice condemn the further exclusion of African descent in economic development. We reiterate the great importance of dealing with prevailing racial challenges. Racism is a disease and the empowerment of African people should be prioritized.

---



## Written Statements / EAFORD (54th HRC)

### [U.S. Arming Apartheid!](#)



**Tell President Biden & Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III: Occupation is Indefensible — Stop Supporting Israeli Apartheid!**

To President Biden and Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III,

Israel has colonized, occupied and oppressed the people of Palestine for 70 years. This has inevitably led to the resistance of Palestinians. For the last 20 years Palestinians have been committed to non-violent activism to raise up their plight, with the increasing violence of the last few years, especially this year there are those who pivoted to resistance on October 7.



The US is directly responsible for the need for Palestinian resistance, considering the significant role it chooses to play as Israel's most powerful supporter. Instead of accountability for the violence of Israel to Palestine, the US delivers more funding and weapons.

Your normalization of Israeli oppression is the narrative responsible for the perpetuation of the occupation of Palestine for the last 75 years. Backing the apartheid state of Israel will only lead to more violence and resistance. We call on you to respect and recognize the rights of Palestinians, and immediately withdraw all US support for Israel, and block any additional aid to the occupying forces. You must call for justice for Palestine that will lead to the much-needed peace in the region.

Your normalization of Israeli oppression is the narrative



The US has had many opportunities to end its support of Israel's violence which is flaunted globally. Let us not forget that the 'terrorist attacks' on the US have been for the liberation of the Palestinians.



To save lives, to end a disgrace of your power you must stop sending weapons, funds and military support and instead support the needed conversation that brings justice and peace to the region.

We, the undersigned, call on you to withdraw all support for Israel and block any additional aid to the apartheid state. We oppose the plan laid out by General Austin to send troops to the Eastern Mediterranean including U.S. Navy aircraft carriers and defense munitions. Escalating what is a resistance of a people to a global war in Palestine is not the path to peace, it is a violation of the human rights of the people of Palestine. And scorches the path to peace that is necessary.



**Do Victims Ever Get Justice?**

---





---



## WORLD BEYOND WAR

[No More Weapons Shipments to Ukraine, Israel, or Taiwan](#)

No More Weapons Shipments to Ukraine, Israel, or Taiwan

Petition to the U.S. Government from the people of the world:  
**Send no more weapons to Ukraine, Israel, or Taiwan. Spend the next \$100,000,000,000 on human and environmental needs.**

 **WORLD BEYOND WAR.org**  
a global movement to end all wars

23.10.2023

**The world's leading weapons dealer, the U.S. government, urgently needs to hear from the people of the United States and the world.**

President Joe Biden has told the U.S. Congress that he will ask for funding to send huge piles of free weapons to Ukraine, Israel, and Taiwan, to prolong two wars and help start a third -- and possibly the world's last. Biden reportedly intends to combine weapons for these three wars, plus additional weapons for further militarizing the U.S. border with Mexico, all in one piece of legislation. The strategic thinking is that various Congress Members who find the nerve to oppose one horrific war will be unlikely to find it to oppose three wars at once.

Regardless of how the legislation is concocted, we need to stop the weapons shipments and replace them with diplomacy and a new focus on the human and environmental crises that these wars defund, distract from, and exacerbate. [SIGN AND SHARE THE PETITION HERE!](#)

---



**[Letter to Member States of the UN General Assembly: Israel's Atrocities in Gaza a Genocide in the Making](#)**

President of UN General Assembly  
Mr. Dennis Francis  
Copy: Member States of the UN General Assembly  
United Nations  
New York, NY 10017, USA

Subject: Urgent Appeal to Declare Israel's Atrocities in Gaza a Genocide in the Making

To Mr. Francis, Excellencies, Representatives of Member States of the UN General Assembly,

We, a group of human rights advocates and experts from across the Middle East and North Africa, are writing to you today to request your immediate action to recognize and declare Israel's atrocities during its military assault on Gaza as constituting a genocide in the making.

As you know, the number of Palestinian non-combatant civilians killed in Gaza in two months has bypassed 19,841, including 8697 children and 4410 women. This figure includes about 6,000 stuck under the rubble of their homes. In addition, about 40,160 people were wounded.



This unprecedented number of casualties in Gaza is taking place alongside vast and systematic destruction and targeting of almost all kinds of civilian infrastructure including schools, universities, hospitals, ambulances, mosques, churches, cultural centers, homes, residential high-rise buildings, shelters, media offices, private businesses, industrial facilities, agricultural lands and greenhouses, international organizations, and even United Nations' facilities and premises.

This is all in addition to forcibly displacing hundreds of thousands of Gazans and imposing a full siege on the entire enclave that includes cutting off all electricity and fuel supplies and banning the entry of food, water and medicine except to a fraction of a bare minimum.



What these acts together are rendering Gaza uninhabitable and constitute a clear genocide in the making aimed at destroying a group in part or whole; creating conditions that would bring about the group's collapse; and inflict serious physical or mental damage on the group.

There are clear and unquestionable features of Israel's genocidal action in Gaza:

- Mass killing,
- Forced displacement,
- Deliberate mass starvation,
- Destruction of vital infrastructure,
- Denial of life saving and urgent critical health care,
- Large volume of children killed,
- Exponentially growing genocidal speech of incitement to

kill and dehumanize the Palestinian population in Gaza (and elsewhere).

As members of the United Nations General Assembly, you have the duty to uphold the UN Charter and fulfill its mandate through the prevention of actions that aim to destroy the existence of a group of people in whole or in part.



There is no shortage of international legal frameworks that mark Israel's action as a genocide in the making, including the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. The events transpiring in Gaza align with the two of criteria outlined in the Convention, indicating a pressing need for the international community to address this crisis urgently. These criteria are "causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group" and "deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part".

We reject that Israel's lethal attacks on Gaza are "indiscriminate" or that they cause "collateral damage" to a significant extent. These are targeted attacks by precision-guided bombs and rockets. They intend, mean and are designed to kill as many as possible of the Palestinian population in Gaza. Simultaneously, no collateral damage could still be considered as such when it becomes a regime of action; a system and methodology to conduct warfare.



We recall the statement of scores of UN Special Rapporteurs on 16 November 2023, in which they called upon the international community to stop a genocide in the making, one that you are observe taking place in Gaza right now. Members of the international community must come forward with a clear stance on the issue of Israel's genocidal actions in Gaza. First, they must declare these actions as such, and provide means to put an end to the atrocities committed by Israel, while aiming, also, at affirming Palestinians alienable rights to exist, survive, live, and prosper as any other nation on

earth deserves. We urge you to demand and work proactively to end the Israeli military assault on Gaza immediately, as well as ensuring the provision of international mechanisms to monitor, observe and ensure Israel's compliance.





## Ending Complicity in International Crimes: A Two-Way Arms Embargo on Israel

8 November 2023

Over 130 organizations demand that States that have provided and continue to provide arms and other forms of military assistance to Israel, adhere to their legal obligations and act resolutely and urgently to prevent Israel from perpetuating further international crimes and other serious violations of international law. This includes their obligations to prevent the commission of genocide.



The undersigned organizations demand that States that have provided and continue to provide arms and other forms of military assistance to Israel, adhere to their legal obligations and act resolutely and urgently to prevent Israel from perpetuating further international crimes and other serious violations of international law. This includes their obligations to prevent the commission of [genocide](#).

We remind these States that their binding obligations under international humanitarian law, international human rights law, international criminal law, and other international law, including the United Nations (UN) Charter, require that they put an immediate stop to such transfers, and suspend all licenses for arms destined to Israel from their jurisdictions.

States parties to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) have additional binding obligations under the treaty, and so do States under relevant regional and national legal instruments on arms control.

We recall that providing arms or military support to Israel may make exporting States complicit in its actions. [Link to urgent appeal and endorsing organizations](#)



### [Charge Israel with Genocide at the International Court of Justice](#)

22.12.2023



Israel's over 75 days of bombing of 2.3 million Palestinians in Gaza, while denying access to water, food, medicine and fuel and no escape from the slaughter, undeniably meets the criteria for genocide.

Urge members of the United Nations to invoke the Genocide Convention at the International Court of

Justice to charge Israel with the crime of genocide in Gaza. [Sign the petition](#) below to UN parties expressing outrage at Israel's bombardment of 2.3 million Palestinians imprisoned in Gaza.

To United Nations Signatory to the UN Genocide Convention:

We urge your country to immediately invoke the Genocide Convention at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to stop Israel's annihilation and genocide in Gaza.

Over 20,000 dead, 50,000 wounded, 1.9 million uprooted.



Our heart aches for Gaza.



Your UN mission, government leaders and populace have rightfully expressed outrage at Israel's bombing of hospitals, clinics, apartments, UN refugee centers and escape routes, disproportionately

killing civilians, many of them children in Gaza's densely packed coastal strip.

We ask your country to take the next step—to file a request with the International Court of Justice (World Court) to investigate and charge Israel with the crime of genocide.

Under the UN Convention on the Prohibition and Punishment of Genocide, the crime of genocide is defined as acts perpetrated to bring about the physical destruction, in whole or in part, of a national, ethnical, racial or religious group.



Israel's imposition of collective punishment on Gaza, relentlessly bombing civilians, denying an imprisoned population water, food, medicine and fuel – making life unlivable—meets the criteria for the crime of genocide.



If after an investigation, the ICJ (World Court) concludes that Israel should be prosecuted for the crime of genocide, the UN General Assembly—even if the US and Israel kick and scream—can pressure the International Criminal Court to prosecute Israel for the crime of genocide in Gaza.

If a majority of the world's nations call for a ceasefire, yet fail to press for prosecution of Israel – what is to stop Israel from ethnically cleansing all Palestinians? For that matter, what is to stop other nations from repeating the same horror? We, the undersigned, urge you to invoke the Genocide Convention to demand Israel be charged and prosecuted.

Take Israel to court for turning Gaza into a graveyard for children.

[STOP the genocide!](#)





# ***white silence = violence***

## [Holding CNN Accountable for Enabling Genocide](#)



Over 19,000 Palestinians in Gaza, nearly half of them children, have been violently murdered by Israel. Over 51,000 have been injured, and thousands more are missing under the rubble, unable to be saved while the carpet bombing continues. Israel is entering the third month of its genocidal campaign, despite overwhelming opposition expressed by the majority of the world.

People have risen up globally calling to end Israel's attack on Gaza, yet CNN has failed to adequately report on these protests. In fact, this media outlet has failed to accurately report on Israel's bombardment in general, especially when it first began. Instead, CNN chose to spread misinformation. Organizers across the globe and Palestinian journalists on the ground have resorted to social media to broadcast their message because CNN failed them.



In a livestream from an Israeli settlement miles away from Gaza on October 11, CNN chief international correspondent Clarissa Ward lied about the threat of Hamas rockets on Israel. She reported while laying on the ground, taking cover from a “massive barrage of rockets”, but footage released later shows Ward being the only one laying on the ground, while others directly near her are standing calmly. In 2018, CNN suspended the contract of commentator Marc Lamont Hill following a speech he delivered at the UN which criticized Israel and advocated for Palestinian human rights.





The fact of the matter is that it's profitable for CNN to sensationalize the media, and it has done so despite the human cost. CNN's viewership rose when the attacks first broke out, a trend this outlet regularly enjoys during major international conflicts, including after 9/11 and during

the wars in Iraq and Ukraine. CNN has proven that capitalizing off the war industry takes precedence over telling the truth! CNN has betrayed the journalists of Gaza such as Bisan, Motaz, Plestia, and many others who have taken on the true embodiment of journalism by risking their lives to show the world the truth. We call on you to look to the journalists on the ground in Gaza who are risking their lives so you can do your work properly—but you refuse.



Not only is it your job to report accurately, but it could save Gaza. Israel has been panicking as it loses hold of its false narrative, mainstream media abandoning Israel's lies could be the push that stops this genocide. CNN has a unique opportunity to educate millions and prove it is a reliable news source.

## Do Victims Ever Get Justice?

---



We, the [undersigned](#), demand CNN take public accountability for its historic lack of journalistic integrity and call Israel's attack what it really is—genocide.

**Do Victims Ever Get Justice?**



## [STOP THE WAR CRIMES AGAINST THE POPULATION OF GAZA](#)



The Israeli occupation has been committing grave violations since the declaration of a comprehensive war by the Israeli occupation army on Gaza, manifested by massive, indiscriminate, and violent bombardments on land, sea, and air throughout the region. Despite the issuance of the General Assembly Emergency Session's resolution on 27 October 2023, which calls for a humanitarian truce, the occupation launched a ground attack on the Gaza strip, criticized the international community's resolution, and refused to abide by it.



The absence of accountability and consequences has emboldened the occupying authorities to persist in their extensive violations against the Palestinians. Today, Israel receives encouragement through positions taken by high-level European officials, whether through visits or statements. This is deeply regrettable, as these officials are complicit in war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. It's well known that all these crimes fall under the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court.

Therefore, we urge you, in line with your responsibilities, to take all necessary actions to compel the Israeli occupying authority to cease its ongoing aggression against Gaza and the Palestinian people as a whole and to require it to halt collective punishments such as cutting electricity and water and blocking the delivery of supplies and humanitarian aid. [Link to urgent appeal and endorsing organizations](#)

## Do Victims Ever Get Justice?

---

## Call for a UN Special Rapporteur on Democracy

Global reports on the state of democracy and human rights indicate that democracy is threatened and authoritarianism is on the rise. Civic space and freedoms are fiercely and increasingly restricted in many countries. In addition, democratic backsliding or a decline in the quality of democracy is occurring in newer as well as long-established democracies across all regions.



In this situation, the United Nations needs to do more to strengthen human rights and democracy. [The undersigned organizations](#) and individuals thus call for the creation of a new mandate by the UN's Human Rights Council: a UN Special Rapporteur on Democracy (UNRoD).

Protecting human rights is a fundamental pillar of the UN and democracy is one of its core

values. The opening words of the UN Charter, "We the Peoples," imply support for democracy. They underscore the central democratic principle that public authority must derive from the will of the people.

A democratic society offers the best conditions for guaranteeing human rights for all, in particular minorities and excluded groups. At the same time, full implementation of human rights is a foundation of a democratic society. The UN needs to recognize the nexus between democracy and human rights and help further strengthen democratic governance. A UN Special Rapporteur on Democracy will serve this purpose.

The new mandate will be based on and guided by principles the UN enshrined in past and present resolutions and instruments, including the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the 1993 Vienna Declaration of the World Conference on Human Rights.

The Rapporteur would be mandated to investigate the state of democracy around the world from a broader perspective, going beyond, complementing and linking together analysis and data on specific issues being



investigated by existing mandates set up by the Human Rights Council that deal with democratic rights such as freedom of opinion and expression; peaceful assembly and association; independence of judges and lawyers; freedom of religion or belief; minority issues; as well as human rights defenders.

The UN Special Rapporteur on Democracy would examine challenges and opportunities related to the realization of democracy. This includes, but is not limited to, constitutional and institutional arrangements such as checks and balances; effectiveness of parliaments; free, fair and competitive

elections and election environments; political participation including of minorities and women; direct and deliberative mechanisms; as well as civic space and freedoms.

The Rapporteur, assisted by an independent advisory board, will gather, manage, and assess information, data and evidence as well as conduct and evaluate research. The mandate holder will engage, as appropriate, with Member States, other Rapporteurs, relevant stakeholders, and the public. In particular, the Rapporteur will seek input from citizens and civil society groups, acknowledging the crucial role of civil society in strengthening and protecting democracy. The Rapporteur will share observations on shortcomings but also on best practices and offer recommendations for improvement, thus serving an important oversight function, among other things.

On the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 30th anniversary of the Vienna Declaration, we call on all governments that are committed to democracy to support the establishment of this new mandate under the auspices of the Human Rights Council. We call on like-minded organizations, policy-makers and individuals to join our cause and endorse this appeal.

---

## Conclusions and Reflections



### **Strengthening Solidarity through Equity and Reciprocity between Generations**

The sessions of the Human Rights Council in 2023 covered many key topics relating to urgent human rights situations. Together with partner organizations, EAFORD successfully participated in the sessions by delivering oral interventions and written reports on topics such as the promotion and protection of human rights while countering terrorism, freedom of religion or belief, enforced disappearances, migration and displacement, the right to development, racism and racial discrimination, foreign invasion and occupation, human rights education, the right to self-determination, as well as, many other related thematic issues and challenges.

EAFORD adopted a critical viewpoint in many of the discussions acknowledging at the same time the progress made by the Council in some country-specific situations and thematic issues. Our team of like-minded NGOs addressed the challenges ahead in ensuring the principles of the UN charter, principles of fairness and non-discrimination, as well as, the promotion and protection of the rule of law and fundamental freedoms.

One of the key issues covered by the Council at the beginning of 2023 was the humanitarian situation in Syria, and Turkey following a series of earthquakes, the situation became ever more painful and tragic for thousands of internally displaced Syrians. The fighting in Sudan rapidly spread throughout many areas across the country raising the alarm on an already dire situation causing mass forced displacement and unimaginable horrors.

Among those who have seen their fundamental rights violated for decades, we remain disappointed in the Council by the slow response to the genocide in Gaza and the urgent humanitarian crisis there with almost two



million Palestinians internally displaced within the Gaza strip. Many international and national NGOs, as well as UN experts, have determined that Israeli policies and practices against the Palestinian people constitute flagrant acts of apartheid and genocide. Grave violations committed by Israel against Palestinians in the aftermath of 7 October, particularly in Gaza, point to a genocide in the making, UN experts said. They illustrated evidence of increasing genocidal incitement, overt intent to “destroy the Palestinian people under occupation”, loud calls for a ‘second Nakba’ in Gaza and the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory, and the use of powerful weaponry with inherently indiscriminate impacts, resulting in a colossal death toll and destruction of life-sustaining infrastructure.



It's not the violence of the few that scares me, it's the silence of the many

*Martin Luther King*

The international community's failure to protect Palestinians from utter destruction casts a chilling question over the efficacy and validity of the international legal system. “Israel's international crimes against the Palestinian people must cease immediately and

permanently. To this end, the international community must not only hold Israel and the Israeli authorities accountable, but address the root causes by dismantling Israel's settler-colonial and apartheid regime, and ensuring that all discriminatory and inhumane laws, policies and practices against the Palestinian people are abolished once and for all. The international community must also urge Israel, the Occupying Power, to immediately and unconditionally withdraw from the occupied Palestinian territory, lift the closure and blockade of Gaza, and enable the Palestinian people to fully exercise their inalienable right to self-determination, including their right to return.”

Even before Israel's recent attacks against Gaza, the Commission of Inquiry in the Occupied Palestinian Territories mandated by the Human Rights Council found that Israel's permanent occupation and de facto annexation of the Palestinian territories is a full-fledged settler-colonial repression of Palestinians that must end.

These and many more issues addressed by EAFORD's interventions were covered throughout the Human Rights Council sessions including the need for greater capacity building and technical cooperation. We acknowledge the work made by the Council to draw attention to some of these issues and take measures towards counteracting human rights violations. We are disappointed that few States continue to regard item 7 on the Council's agenda as politicized, arguing that it draws the attention of the Council more to this “conflict” in comparison to other situations that require its attention. The majority of States, however, have stressed the importance of the discussion under item 7 as long as the Israeli occupation of Palestine continues.

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The duty to respect and protect the fundamental human rights of everyone must transcend the “naming and shaming” of these international mechanisms and be applied on a daily basis. It is necessary to underline the fundamental role of political willingness and international cooperation in the functioning of these mechanisms. Therefore, we call on the international community to double its efforts to promote the principles of the UN Charter towards achieving the highest aspirations of humanity for peace, liberty, and security based on respect for equal rights and the self-determination of peoples.