

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



43rd Session of the UN Human Rights Council

24 February 2020 to 20 March 2020

SUMMARY REPORT OF EAFORD'S INTERVENTIONS



Introduction

The 43rd session of the Human Rights Council at the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland was scheduled to hold its meetings from 24 February to 20 March 2020.

However, due to the outbreak of COVID-19, the UN Human Rights Council decided to suspend its 43rd session on Friday, 13th March 2020. The decision resulted in the cancelation of the discussion of at least four agenda items (Item 7- Palestine/Occupied Palestinian Territory, Item 8- Vienna Declaration, Item 9- Racism, and Item 10- Technical assistance). Unfortunately, those four items were planned to take place on the last week of the session.

During the two weeks before its suspension, the Council focused on various serious and urgent human rights issues across the globe, hearing the presentation of numerous reports that addressed a variety of themes and several country-specific situations.

List of Agenda Items

1. Organizational and procedural matters

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



Opening of Session and Council President Welcome

Elisabeth Tichy-Fisslberger



The 43rd regular session of the Human Rights Council was opened by President Elisabeth Tichy-Fisslberger in the morning of the 24th February 2020. The President started her speech with a reminder of the Human Rights Council mandate. She reiterated the importance of the Council to all people affected by human rights abuses and welcomed a record of 100 dignitaries participating in the Council, as well as, 10 least developed countries and small-island States whose participation was possible through the voluntary technical assistance trust fund and its 28 donor countries.

António Guterres – UN Secretary General



António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations started the session by talking about his own past human rights struggles. Mr. Guterres grew up under the Salazar dictatorship in Portugal and experienced first-hand the hardship people face under non-democratic rule. But as he mentioned that dictatorship, like many other issues concerning human rights, it had been overcome. However, there is still much to be done and new challenges arise worldwide. Guterres highlighted especially the issues of war-torn regions, human trafficking, exploitation of women

and girls, persecution of human rights defenders and hate directed at minorities.

Protecting human rights does not necessarily make headlines and a lot of work and actions happen behind the scene. Most people know about the UN sustainable development goals but other initiatives, such as “Human Rights up Front”, are rarely mentioned in media outlets, yet their work is very important and deserves praise.

Tijjani Muhammad-Bande



Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, President of the UN General Assembly, was next in line with his opening statement. He reiterated the importance of civil society’s contribution to and participation in the protection and promotion of human rights stating that not only nation states have the responsibility to protect, but also civil society and the private actors. In his opening remarks, Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, especially highlighted the rights of the child, education, gender equality and refugees to be the most important issues that need to be tackled by all international

and national actors. As far as the focus of the work and efforts of the international community are concerned, he considered that the rights of the child should be among the top-priorities.

Michelle Bachelet



The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, began her statement by mentioning the urgency of certain issues such as climate change. The High Commission recognized peaceful protests of younger generations to be part of the decision-making process now, such as “Fridays for Future”, around the world. She stressed the need to be “good ancestors” that prepare the world for upcoming generations of humanity. She reiterated the need to follow the plans laid out in treaties such as Agenda 2030, the Global Compact on Migration and the UN framework on

Climate Change.

In light of the current Covid-19 crisis, the High Commissioner’s concerns regarding health care and the need of achieving greater access to it, becomes even more prevalent. She emphasized the need for greater transparency within the UN. Transparency is the basis of legitimate decision-making processes. To achieve an atmosphere of agreement, legitimacy and cooperation between all international actors, it is important to have the same access to information available.

EAFORD Participation in the 43rd Session of the Human Rights Council

The International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD) delivered seven joint oral statements addressing human rights violations across a variety of countries and issues.

Oral Statements

ITEM 2 – Interactive dialogue on High Commissioner report on ensuring accountability for all violations of international law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (res. 40/13)

Delivered by: Charlotte Taillon



Thank you, Madam President.

EAFORD and Geneva International Centre for Justice welcome the report by the High Commissioner on ensuring accountability and justice for all violations of international law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. The ongoing protests in Palestine are caused by decades of suppression and violations of international law by the Israeli Government. The people of Palestine protest for the right of self-determination and sovereignty as well as a solution that brings lasting peace, economic development and increased living standards. However, this desperate cry for independence is forcefully suppressed and muzzled by Israel’s armed forces.

The Israeli authorities constantly suppress the political voice of the Palestinians with disproportionate force. In addition, the protesters are accused and restrained with unjust punishments. This violent suppression of the Palestinians violates several treaties of international human rights law and United Nations resolutions. Israel has denied accountability for those violations and will continue to do so in the future. It is the responsibility of the UN and all its member states to hold Israel accountable for violations of international law.

Despite numerous recommendations by the UN and non-governmental bodies Israel has not refrained from the excessive use of force. The non-cooperation by the state of Israel shows their ill-intent and unwillingness to find a solution for peace, which is further exacerbated by the so-called “Peace to Prosperity” plan of the United States in support of Israel.

It became apparent over the past decades that Israel ignores recommendations by the international community. Thus, we call upon the UN to apply more firmly stricter measures that protect the people of Palestine from violence carried out by Israel. Furthermore, we reiterate the need for a lasting solution for peace with justice.

ITEM 2 – Interactive dialogue on High Commissioner report on the situation of human rights of Rohingya Muslims and other minorities in Myanmar (res. 39/2)

Delivered by: Marcel Florian Lohr



Thank you, Madam President.

EAFORD and Geneva International Centre for Justice welcome the High Commissioner report on Rohingya and other minorities in Myanmar, however we identify various issue areas that the report failed to mention.

It is beyond our understanding, how it is possible to not mention “National Verification Cards” that are currently issued by the Myanmar government, particularly when one of the subheadings the report uses is titled “Contemporary Drivers of Discrimination”.

The Myanmar authorities force the Rohingya in Rakhine State to acquire National Verification Cards (NVC), and use excessive force, such as torture or detainment, if Rohingya resist. Officially, the authorities claim this process to be the first step to claim citizenship in the future, but in reality, it renders the Rohingya stateless.

Instead of calling out this serious violation of international law, the report proceeds to blame Facebook and the availability of mobile phones as contemporary drivers of discrimination, when in fact the Myanmar government continuously suppresses the Rohingya population.

It does not come by surprise that the repatriation process failed, considering the ill-intent shown by the Government of Myanmar. Rohingya remain stuck in a vacuum, they live under poor circumstances in refugee camps in Bangladesh yet returning to Myanmar is not an option until government sponsored discrimination stops.

Finally, we want to ask the High Commissioner, if the report has the promotion of human rights and the well-being of the Rohingya as its main priority or is a solely political statement that tries to avoid holding the Government of Myanmar accountable?

ITEM 2 – General debate on High Commissioner oral update, HC/Secretary-General country reports on OHCHR activities in Iran

Delivered by: Marcel Florian Lohr



Thank you, Mr. Vice-President.

We welcome the oral update of the High Commissioner/Secretary-General on the situation in Iran. We want to especially highlight the peaceful protests nationwide of citizens fed up with the deteriorating human rights situation. During those protests, minorities, journalists and human rights activists are targeted by the government with excessive use of force and violence. Many protesters were detained, some injured, freedom of speech and freedom of assembly were restricted to a point that they are practically non-existent.

The violent and disproportionate reaction by the military further legitimizes the roots of the protests. Protestors are calling for a structural change in their national political landscape. The current political establishment violates their basic human rights and international law in various ways.

While EAFORD and Geneva International Centre for Justice denounce all forms of violence against peaceful protesters, we specifically want to focus on the targeting of the Ahwazi Arabs by the Iranian authorities. The persecution and extrajudicial killing of Ahwazis has been a longstanding problem, yet recent protests led to a deterioration of the situation and an increase in the brutality and attacks against Ahwazi Arabs.

Furthermore, we are alarmed by the situation in detention centers and prisons. Men, women and even minors are reportedly being forced to confess, tortured, and executed. We call on the Human Rights Council, as a matter of urgency, to take all available measures to address more firmly such crimes.



ITEM 3 – Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the Sale of Children

Delivered by: Elizabeth Meil Leach



Thank you, Mr. Vice-President.

We welcome the oral update of the Special Rapporteur on the Sale of Children; however, we wish to draw your attention to the sexual exploitation of children for prostitution in Iraq.

The sale of children for sexual purposes is a longstanding problem that already appeared in the early days of U.S. presence as an occupying force in 2003, yet the situation is deteriorating as of recent.

An organized system of prostitution and sexual slavery was created by ISIS with a network of

warehouses to retain, inspect, market and sell victims.

The fostering of the widespread and systematic sale and sexual exploitation of children is due to ongoing poverty, patriarchal structures, humanitarian crises and weak legal frameworks.

Furthermore, EAFORD and Geneva International Centre for Justice are alarmed by the increase of *mutaa marriages*, also known as pleasure marriages, of vulnerable teenage girls to adult men. This abhorrent practice puts male economic benefits over the well-being and human dignity of women and young girls. Additionally, a practice - which is illegal under Iraqi law - allows men to pay for a temporary wife. This procedure is further aided by clerics who abuse Sharia laws while not receiving the prosecution and punishment they deserve.

We call upon the Special Rapporteur to further investigate this issue area since it has not been mentioned in her current report.

Article 35 - State obligations to prevent the abduction or trafficking of children

- State parties shall take all appropriate national, bilateral and multilateral measures to prevent the abduction of, the sale of or traffic in children for any purpose or in any form.



ITEM 3 – General Debate
Fourth phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education (2020-2024)

Delivered by: Mr. Aziel-Pphilippos Ganandris



Joint statement with World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA) on behalf of members of the NGO Working Group on Human Rights Education and Learning including EAFORD

Thank you Madam President.

I speak on behalf of the 12 organizations of the NGO Working Group on Human Rights Education and Learning.

In January 2020 began the fourth phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education, focusing on youth. The Plan of Action adopted **unanimously** during the 42nd session of this Council provides for very specific objectives.

Beyond the setting of principles, these objectives set the goal of reviewing existing education legislation to **expressly** include human rights education. Going **further** than just adapting state legislation, the objectives call for the development of policies that will make human rights education **effectively** accessible to all without any discrimination in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and particularly target 4.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals. Specifically, the Plan of Action aims to make human rights training a **criterion** for State licensing or certification for teaching personnel. In other words, we are setting our focus on making human rights education for, by and with young people a living reality within the education systems of the member-States present here today.

Our working group would like to remind states that human rights education with youth is not a tick box exercise, but rather a necessary condition to prevent human rights violations and abuses, achieve peaceful, inclusive and just societies. Recognizing that “the promotion and protection of human rights and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda are interrelated and mutually reinforcing,”¹ effective coordination among all actors involved is crucial. Our NGO Working Group on Human Rights Education and Learning is fully ready to make meaningful contributions in this regard.

¹ UN General Assembly, Resolution 37/24, “Promotion and protection of human rights and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,” March 23, 2018, <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/RES/37/24>.

ITEM 4 – Discussion on Secretary-General oral update on involvement of UN in Myanmar

Delivered by: Mathieu James Fournier



Thank you, Madam President. We commend this Council for its successful Independent Inquiry mission in Myanmar. Ending the atrocities in the country is the ultimate objective. This starts with the recognition that the conditions for genocide exist. The recent Order for Provisional measures from the International Court of Justice is a step in the right direction.

It should be further noted that, in making its decision, the Court relied heavily on the Inquiry mission report. This is a testament to the efficiency and the objectives of this Council.

We must not stop here though. We are disappointed in Myanmar's negative reaction to the provisional measures. Its government has been ordered to submit a compliance report within four months, then a report every six months thereafter. We fear that any such report, if one is submitted at all, will be incomplete and unspecific.

There is no doubt that the International Court of Justice may refer the enforcement of the Order to the UN Security Council. We live in the aftermath of the events in Yugoslavia and note that the International Court of Justice ordered provisional measures in that case as well, without concrete follow up. As cynical as this may sound, we know what humans are still capable of.

The United Nations and the wider international community should continue to be cautious and keep their eyes peeled on the situation. A proactive approach is necessary to secure an adequate report on behalf of the Myanmar Government. We invite this Council to devote a special discussion at the 44th Human Rights Council Session, focused solely on Myanmar's compliance with the Order.

ITEM 3 – GD Attacks on Human Rights Defenders and Civil Society Activists

Delivered by: Eva Kehoe



Thank you, Madam President.

As the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights defenders mentioned in his report, the State's responsibility to protect defenders of human rights cannot be outsourced or renounced on account of special circumstances.

In this regard, we would like to bring to this Council's attention the number of abductions and assassinations of human rights defenders and civil society activists in Iraq since October 2019. Security forces are not only attacking protests leaders and

activists, but they are also intentionally targeting medics whose only objective is to treat those who have already fallen victim to the violence.

We regret however, that in various press releases, the High Commissioner maintains that the perpetrators remain unidentifiable, and that the OHCHR continues to rely on the government to prevent and punish violations.

In this matter, EAFORD and Geneva International Centre for Justice wish to bring up two issues.

First, the perpetrators are easily identifiable: they are the militias, not vague entities. They are linked to the ruling parties and officially to the Prime minister and have admitted on many occasions that they play a direct role in the crackdown.

Second, the UN cannot rely on the government of Iraq to track and punish the perpetrators. Indeed, given the links between the government and those generally regarded as responsible for the killings, it is unlikely that investigation will bear any fruit.

We urge the High Commissioner and this Council to adopt a more direct approach, less reliant on rhetoric.

Written Statements

The International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD) submitted 11 joint written statements with other NGOs to the 43rd Regular Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC). The statements covered several specific country situations and other human rights violations across the globe.

Occupied Palestinian Territory

The “Peace to Prosperity” Plan and International Law



Under the pretense of a detailed economic vision for the future of Palestine, the Trump administration proposed a “solution” for the ongoing conflict between the state of Israel and the state of Palestine. The plan, called *Peace to Prosperity*, released on 28 January 2020, claims having peace and a better future for Palestine and its citizens at its center, yet it violates existing international law, and restricts the human rights of the Palestinian people. The so-called solution rather resembles a political favor meant to support the Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu in the upcoming election, than a

serious and well-intended proposal for peace and development.

The fact that Palestinian leaders were not consulted in the drafting process of the proposal reveals the true intentions behind the plan. The proposal depicts a dystopian future for the Palestinian people, and a way to further restrict the development of Palestinian economy and statehood. It aims at strengthening the position of Israel in the region. The plan takes away fundamental rights and goes against everything the international community worked for during the past decades. If the plan in its current state would be implemented, Palestine

would not gain any form of State sovereignty but be economically and politically dependent, or in other words, suppressed, by the US and Israeli government.

[Link to full written statement](#)

The Heavy Economic Cost of the Israeli Occupation for Palestine



The economy of Palestine declined considerably after the establishment of the Israeli State in 1948. The Israeli occupation has led to the fragmentation of Palestine, whereby the Palestinians are physically and politically divided. This fragmentation is above all the result of the Oslo Peace Agreement, which laid the foundations for the isolation, and Israel's economic and political control of the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT). The 1994 Paris Protocol also imposed an unbalanced customs union, allowing Israeli businesses straight access to the Palestinian market but restricting the entry of Palestinian goods into the Israel.

Therefore, the belligerent occupation allows Israel to exercise physical control over the Palestinians' daily economic activity and expand its colonization of Palestinian land. Palestinian lives are controlled by a complex licensing system. There are over a hundred different types of permits for moving in and out of the West Bank alone. The most striking fragmentation is in East Jerusalem. The wall dividing and separating East Jerusalem has weakened the economic and political ties between the residents in Ramallah and the West Bank. Over 5,000 small and medium-sized companies have been closed in the years following the construction of the Wall, and the share of people living in poverty has increased from about 60% to 80%.

[Link to full written statement](#)

The Illegality of Israeli Settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory



Israeli settlements have had a devastating impact on the human rights of Palestinians and have received a lot of attention throughout the years by UN bodies and the international community. The right to equality and non-discrimination are among the numerous grave violations, as the discriminatory actions taken by Israel, are based on ethnic, national, and racial factors. The Israeli settlements also result in constant human rights abuses committed by settlers and the Israeli army. Israel's failure to investigate the violence against Palestinians, and the wide range of

legal, economic and procedural barriers in accessing the justice system, severely limits the access of Palestinians to justice.

Furthermore, the Israeli government grants settlers permits to access Palestinian land and natural resources for the benefit of private Israeli companies, while simultaneously denying such permits to Palestinian companies. Settlements have had a compelling effect of fragmenting and changing the demographic composition of the Occupied Palestinian Territory. As such, Palestinians right to self-determination has been utterly compromised.

[Link to full written statement](#)

Iraq

The Plight of Human Rights Defenders and Journalists in Iraq

Opposition parties, human rights defenders and journalists should be free to carry out their legitimate activities without fear of arbitrary detention, lengthy and possibly unfair trials on political charges, or other human rights violations.

Throughout the anti-government demonstrations plaguing Iraq since the beginning of October 2019, threats, kidnappings, and assassinations of civil society activists and media personnel have continued to make headlines. Indeed, tactics of protest suppression have stretched far beyond the indiscriminate targeting of demonstrators, with growing numbers of human rights defenders and journalists being killed under mysterious circumstances or forcibly disappeared, with their dismembered remains often being uncovered nearby. It is almost certain that such activities are being carried out either by the government's own security personnel or by independent militias. This statement considered assassinations and forced abductions of activists and human rights defenders over the course of the 2019-2020 demonstrations. Its objective was to urge the United Nations (UN) and the international community to recognize that such tactics are both longstanding and prevalent in Iraq. Enforced

disappearances, kidnappings and assassinations have been a systematic and strategic feature of the Iraqi system for many years. More importantly, perhaps, this statement aimed not only to report on such violations and bring them to the attention of the Human Right Council and the international community, but also to demand that perpetrators are prosecuted, and the illegal and criminal acts are terminated as soon as possible.

[Link to full written statement](#)

The Persisting Situation of Enforced Disappearances in Iraq

United Nations Secretary-General's message on the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances on 30 August 2019 was welcomed news. In his statement, the Secretary-General called on states to prevent enforced disappearances and bring those responsible to justice. He further called for increased cooperation with UN mechanisms, and urged all states to sign, ratify, and accede to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (CED). The Secretary-General particularly stressed one crucial element: that the international community should not treat enforced disappearances as an issue of the past. Such cases are in fact on the rise. This message has no better application than in the case of Iraq, where enforced disappearances occur on a massive and widespread scale since the United States of America invasion in 2003.

Although Iraq has ratified the CED, entered into force on 23 December 2010, it has not yet provided any effective legislation to implement it. We cannot even find a clear definition of "disappearance" in Iraqi law. The situation in Iraq is admittedly complex and the eradication of enforced disappearances will be a long-term challenge. But

such an endeavor must start with the fight against corruption and impunity that have been plaguing the country for decades.

[Link to full written statement](#)



2019-2020 Protests: The Deadly Price of Freedom in Iraq

Since the beginning of October 2019, Iraq has been racked by protests demanding the overhaul of the corrupt, sectarian-based political establishment that has been in place since 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq. Such protests, with hotspots in the Shia-majority areas of Baghdad and the Southern cities of Basra, Najaf, and Karbala, have been met by violence. Since the very beginning of the demonstrations, protestors have been directly targeted by the government security forces and militias, whose attacks have been both indiscriminate and intentionally fatal. This is despite the fact that the peaceful nature of the demonstrations has been maintained from the start. This has been directly noted by Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Iraq. The press and civil society activists have also been targeted by assassination and abduction attempts.

This statement will cover such tactics of violence, which have undeniably constituted a grave violation of international human rights law. Its objective is to urge the United Nations and the international community to recognize the gravity of the situation and to encourage efforts to both prosecute perpetrators of violence and to work towards protestors' eventual aims.

[Link to full written statement](#)

China

Violations of the Right to Freedom of Religion in China



The Uyghur population in Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, China (Xinjiang) has faced ongoing human rights violations carried out by the Chinese government solely based on religious beliefs and cultural heritage. After the terror attacks of 9/11 a clear rhetorical shift is notable. While previous riots, protests and deaths were blamed on a specific Organization, the East Turkestan Islamic Movement, China officially suggested the existence of the Uyghur to be a terrorist threat to China.¹ This rhetorical shift establishes a clear link of

Islam and violence, a link that violates national as well as international law.

Under the pretense of combating terrorism, China actively suppresses the Uyghurs right to access Islamic knowledge and education. This suppression becomes evident in a tightening of Chinese legislation over the past years. The wearing of religious symbols and engagement in religious activities have been outlawed in all educational institutions in Xinjiang. Furthermore, activities that contribute to the peaceful performance of religion were labelled as “illegal” and “extremist”. Certain ways of wearing a beard or selection of names contribute to the “spread of religious fanaticism” according to China.

It is reported that Uyghurs and other Turkic minorities are being held in so-called counter-extremism centers and/or forced in so-called “re-education camps” for political and cultural indoctrination. Interviews with victims of those detention centers claim prison-like conditions as well as torture.

[Link to full written statement](#)

Lebanon

Environmental Degradation, Corruption and Sectarianism Fuel Lebanon’s Protests

Lebanon is currently facing a major problem regarding pollution and environmental degradation. The situation violates a number of human rights: the rights to life, to health, the rights of the child, as well as, the right to live in a healthy and sustainable environment.

Lebanon’s environmental degradation and the complications associated can be traced back to what seems to be the root of all problems in the country: corruption and sectarianism. Waste management is a profitable business and a big proportion of money invested to solve Lebanon’s environmental problems goes back into the pockets of politicians and their associates. Although Lebanon is a party to the UN Convention against Corruption and it has comprehensive anticorruption legislation in place, the laws are not being enforced effectively.

Thus, the recent unprecedented protests have united all different sections of the society with the aim of ending once and for all the sectarian nature of Lebanese politics and widespread corruption.

[Link to full written statement](#)



Thematic Issues

Neglected Racism and Racial Discrimination in Modern Society

Today, racism and racial discrimination is an overlooked and under-acknowledged human rights violation and threatens the lives of millions of people across the globe. Governments have failed in their decades-long efforts towards eliminating the scourge of racism and racial discrimination. Furthermore, they have also failed across the globe in taking the necessary steps and adequate measures toward properly implementing existing international laws that protect humans against racially based violence, hate crimes, institutionalized racism, and other such race-based acts and fears.

This written statement addressed current instances of racism and racial discrimination that persist in today's society, which continue to devastate innocent individuals, families, and communities. It also addressed concerns that have allowed this scourge to perpetuate in the 21st century.

The 20th Anniversary of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA) will be a momentous opportunity to strengthen the Durban follow-up mechanisms as a means to combatting racism and provide increased publicity and outreach of the DDPA.

[Link to full written statement](#)



**A child dies every five
minutes from abuse.**

Children Exploitation in Situations of Conflict and Humanitarian Crises

Violence against children is a major human rights problem. The impact of violations, abuse and/or neglect in childhood is detrimental to physical, psychological and reproductive health throughout the life-course, yet the high costs to society are avoidable. There are clear risk factors for violence at the level of the individual, family, community and society. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), each year, at least 55 million children in Europe suffer some form of physical, sexual, emotional or psychological violence and these abuses have been widely unreported.

Whether it is during natural disasters, armed conflict or protracted humanitarian situations, crises are accompanied by inequalities and impoverishment affecting child development. Existing vulnerabilities, from gender-based violence to discrimination and lack of economic opportunities, are exacerbated during such crises.

Regrettably, these contexts result in the risks of children being exposed to sale, trafficking and other forms of exploitation, whether in their homes, communities or in places where migrants or refugees reside, including reception centers or refugee camps in source, transit and destination countries. Girls become victims of sexual exploitation, including sexual slavery, forced marriage, forced pregnancy and prostitution.

This statement specifically raised concerns about violence against children and its forms in the scenarios of conflicts and humanitarian crises where children are the victims, and offered a further analysis on the grievous situation in post-invasion Iraqi.

[Link to full written statement](#)

The Rise of Global Corruption

Corruption is responsible for a great portion of global human rights violations. Wherever committed, human rights violations either find their sources, or find their promotion hindered by corruption. However, when it comes to corruption, we cannot simply stop and point to specific countries, namely the “easy targets”, to explain

violations of human rights, or obstacles to their promotion. In fact, one needs to take a step back and understand how corruption affects humanity and the planet.

We are noticing with deep concern a global rise in corruption in all regions and all nations. With this rise, we should not ignore an alarming fact: development is not an immunization against corruption. Many developed countries will be the first to denounce corrupt governments in other regions of the world, conveniently ignoring the issues that they themselves face. Corruption is intimately linked with the overall health of democratic institutions. The countries that are most efficient at tackling corruption are, unsurprisingly, those whose democratic institutions are most protected and independent. Yet we notice the degradation of such institutions even in many countries that have taken a leading role in the promotion of human rights. If this trend continues, it will compromise every effort at making this world a safer place.



[Link to full written statement](#)

EAFORD Planned Side Events at UN

The side events EAFORD planned to hold during the 43rd session of the UN Human Rights Council did not take place due to the cancellation of all side events as part of the measures taken by the UN to combat COVID-19.

Final Words

Many NGOs remain strongly concerned about the shrinking civil society space at the United Nations and especially at the Human Rights Council sessions. This includes severely limited physical space in the Assembly Hall for civil society, limited speaking time and number of speakers' slots during meetings, number of participants per NGO, and invitees to side-events. A large number of NGOs expressed concern that limiting the speaking in the ten General Debates to only five is another feature of reducing Civil Society space at the Human

Rights Council. NGOs are now especially concerned with the decision, taken at the end of 2019, to eliminate the General Debates altogether during the upcoming June 2020 session of the Human Rights Council as part of what the Council considers an “efficiency measure”.

