

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



44th Session of the UN Human Rights Council

30 June 2020 to 17 July 2020

SUMMARY REPORT OF EAFORD'S INTERVENTIONS



Introduction

The United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC) held its 44th regular session at the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland from 30 June to 17 July 2020. During the 44th Session, the Council focused on various serious and urgent human rights issues across the globe. The Council heard the presentation of numerous reports over four weeks that addressed a variety of themes and several country-specific situations.

Two weeks prior to the 44th session, the 43rd session resumed as it was initially postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This report will also cover those meetings.

The Human Rights Council was heavily impacted by COVID-19 with its influence visible throughout the 44th session. The prestigious Room XX of the Palais des Nations has been a staple for human rights discussion. Its unique ceiling art has become a trademark for human rights since its inauguration in 2008. However, the discussions at the 44th Session took place at the Assembly Hall, which was better equipped to accommodate the safety measures required in light of the pandemic.

In addition to various changes in the code of conduct, the thematic issues during the 44th Session were also influenced by the pandemic. It comes as no surprise that many statements, dialogues, and discussions addressed COVID-19. The pandemic has steered the international community and indeed, the entire human rights and international law apparatus into unprecedented and uncharted territories. Nevertheless, thematic issues unrelated to COVID-19 remain of grave importance and must be kept central in discussions. The Human Rights Council must continue to remain apprised of all developments in human rights issues and country specific situations that require its attention.

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 Session and High Commissioner Annual Report

Elisabeth Tichy-Fisslberger



The 44th session of the Human Rights Council was opened by President Elisabeth Tichy-Fisslberger in the morning of 30th July. As usual, the session started with “housekeeping” remarks by the President, although this time around those remarks were more extensive due to the newly implemented Covid-19 regulations. Tichy-Fisslberger elaborated on the changes in the code of conduct and procedural matters due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, she explained that some country specific issues were postponed to the 45th session.

The President further stated that the 44th session would not have any official side-events held at the Palais de Nations and external side-events will not appear on the official schedule of the 44th Session. She advised that the new set of rules and procedures will only apply to HRC sessions during the COVID-19 pandemic and in due course, the Council will eventually revert to its usual workflow.

The President firmly cautioned that no forms of sexual harassment will be tolerated and affirmed that the Palais and everything surrounding the Council were safe spaces in which all allegations will be investigated, including allegations of intimidation towards members of the civil society.

The President finished her opening remarks by welcoming the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, to the 44th HRC session.

Michelle Bachelet



The High Commissioner, Michelle Bachelet, commenced her address by highlighting the connections between human rights and the COVID-19 pandemic. She reiterated that strong and united leadership is necessary to battle COVID-19 on a national and international level. She emphasized that this kind of leadership must be grounded in clarity, evidence, and principle. She reverberated that governments and leaders must not use the COVID-19 to violate human rights, particularly freedom of speech and expression, and condemned the crackdowns on civil society members under the false pretense of battling the virus.

The High Commissioner mentioned several societal groups that are heavily influenced by the pandemic such as people of color, people of African descent, women and children. She compared the pandemic with a heat-seeking device that exposes and worsens already existing human rights violations across the globe. Those existing violations and miseries around the world are bound to get worse during and after the pandemic. The High Commissioner highlighted that millions of children across the globe will experience extreme poverty and hunger if the international community does not step up their efforts to protect them. She called for the full attention of the international community towards battling the virus and joined the UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, in his call for a global ceasefire.

The High Commissioner further discussed country and thematic specific issues that her report will subsequently elaborate on. She concluded her statement by calling upon the international community to uphold human rights during the pandemic.



EAFORD Participation at the Resumed 43rd Session of the HRC

Oral Statements

Item 9 - Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance, follow-up and implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action

Modern Day Racism

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

Delivered by: Mutua K. Kobia



Thank you Mr. Vice-President,

Despite a number of international treaties that outlaw racism and racial discrimination, including one of the most comprehensive and important documents in the Durban Declaration and Program of Action (DDPA) and its Programme of Activities, discrimination based on race in many cases across the world continues to grow and

worsen in multiple facets. Moreover, many governments are reluctant to properly implement already signed and agreed on legislation and policies and instead of eliminating racism they actually perpetuate the scourge of racism with impunity.

The recent international outcry and worldwide protests against racial inequalities, police brutality against minority ethnicities, and the continuous failure of justice systems to bring the perpetrators to account and redress for the victims are testament that people are fed up and demand immediate change. Furthermore, root causes are not being addressed and at times are outright ignored. The DDPA addresses such causes and has laid out effective strategies to achieve full and effective equality.

Mr. Vice-President, As we welcome the result of the 17th Session of the Intergovernmental Working Group (IGWG) on the effective implementation of the DDPA, we regret that the conditions under which the meetings were held were not as constructive and successful as it could have been.

Finally, EAFORD and Geneva International Centre for Justice strongly believe that the 20th Anniversary of the DDPA will be a momentous opportunity to strengthen the Durban follow-up mechanisms as a means to combat racism and provide increased publicity and outreach of the DDPA.

In conclusion, we urge all member states to fully implement the DDPA and to eliminate any ideology that promotes racial superiority and racial bias.

Urgent Debate on the current racially inspired human rights violations, systemic racism, police brutality and the violence against peaceful protests



Urgent Debate on Systemic Racism and Police Brutality

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

Delivered by: Mutua K. Kobia

CALL IT OUT

Racism, racial discrimination and human rights



Thank you Madam President,

We welcome this urgent debate but believe that had the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA) not been undermined and instead been fully implemented by all, we would not be in this critical moment today.

Recently, we witnessed large protests in several countries in response to police conduct towards racial minorities that led to the recent murder of George Floyd by a police officer. Sadly, this is not a new phenomenon. Injustices involved in racial profiling are embedded into criminal justice systems and have resulted in the deaths of countless people of African descent in the United States and elsewhere.

EAFORD, International-Lawyers.Org, and Geneva International Centre for Justice, believe that this global wave of activism and international outcry is pivotal because each country has their own history of inequality and racism. This is evident as countries that have legacies of colonialism are tearing down monuments, changing street names, and demanding change within their own police systems.

We have also seen criminal justice systems protect criminals and are thus in desperate need of reform. For instance, the 'Qualified Immunity', a legal doctrine in the United States, allows police officers to only be convicted if they went against a "clearly established" constitutional right. This lets police officers commit acts of misconduct with impunity.

This lack of accountability leads to these same actions of wrongful killings and discrimination to repeat themselves.

Madam President, In conclusion, we call on all UN Member States to implement the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA) and its 'programme of activities' towards ending racial discrimination and injustices. Every country must adopt concrete equal opportunities for all peoples especially at the social, cultural, economic, and political level.

EAFORD Participation at the 44th Session of the HRC

Oral Statements

Item 3 - ID with the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons

Summary

The Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons, Cecilia Jimenez-Damary, delivered two separate reports, A/HRC/44/41, and A/HRC/44/41/Add.1, at the 44th session of the Human Rights Council. The former report discusses persons with disabilities in the context of internal displacement; the latter presents an overview of the situation of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Iraq.

Regarding her first report, she encourages States and other actors to shift from awareness of disabilities to a proactive human rights-based disability inclusion strategy. IDPs with disabilities should enjoy the same equal rights of participation in decision-making processes.

The Special Rapporteur highlighted the main difficulties and obstacles facing the internally displaced in Iraq, such as the lack of documentation, discrimination (especially against minorities), and collective criminal responsibility. The Special Rapporteur calls on the government of Iraq to ensure that returns are safe, voluntary, informed, and dignified. As the country concerned, Iraq responded that the government is taking enough measures to protect and support the IDPs in Iraq. Much of what has been said by the delegation of Iraq does not reflect reality or what the Special Rapporteur had highlighted.

Several countries and groups supported the strategy of a proactive human rights-based disability inclusion strategy.

The African Group were united in their statements, mostly mentioning terrorism as a root cause of displacement. Therefore, African countries also paid attention to the Kampala Convention for the protection and assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa. This reflects a good collaboration at a regional level.

Internally Displaced People on Sectarian Basis

Joint Oral Statement by EAFORD

Delivered by Mr. Mathieu J. Fournier



Thank you, Madam President,

We welcome the report of the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally displaced persons for her report and for the report about her visit to Iraq, in which she addresses important issue related to the continued plight of Internally Displaced Persons in Iraq.

As the Special Rapporteur mentioned in her report, many Internally Displaced Persons fled conflicts zones due to the government's own operations against ISIL. Armed groups, namely the militias have committed heinous violations against Internally Displaced Persons, including killings and abductions, and until nowadays, they are preventing many of them from returning to their homes

Unfortunately, the Iraqi government is based on a sectarian system, which is reliant on the militias. Such a system is ill-suited to resolve any issue, including of person displaced on sectarian basis. We note, however, that this discussion is absent from the report and other UN reports.

It must be understood that without profound change of the sectarian system, the Iraqi government will not have the capacity of resolving this complex issue, nor will it have the political will to do so.

EAFORD and Geneva International Centre for Justice therefore call on this Council to recognize the dilemma and increase its focus on the human rights situation in Iraq, including those Internally Displaced Persons who have disappeared after being abducted, and those who are prevented to return by the militias.

Item 3 – Interactive Dialogue with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children

Summary

The Special Representative of the Secretary General for violence against children (SRSG), Ms. Maalla M'jid, submitted her report on the increased risk of violence to children around the world due to the COVID-19 pandemic and urged member states to ensure that essential child protective services remain accessible to all children during the crisis. She also commented on the recent report published by her office, which focused on the impact of violence on the mental health of children. She encouraged member states to prioritize access to mental health services and other forms of rehabilitation in communities, healthcare structures, and in humanitarian situations. The Special Representative was joined in calling for the elimination of stigmas on mental health by member states, including representatives from the Arab Group, the Nordic and Baltic states, a group of Latin American countries, and the European Union. The remarks by individual countries mainly focused on the potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on violence against children, echoing the concerns shared by the Special Representative that violence, abuse, and neglect will increase during the ongoing crisis. Delegates also drew attention to the issue of violence towards children on digital platforms and urged both the Special Representative and member states to consider how violent extremism, racism, discrimination, and climate change will impact violence against children.

In a joint statement, EAFORD and Geneva International Centre for Justice, said that children impacted by violence suffer lifelong consequences. The experience of violence impacts children's social, emotional and physical development and well-being. Violence against children poses a great concern and obstacle for meeting the 2030 sustainable development goals.

Violence against Children during COVID-19

Joint Oral Statement by EAFORD

Delivered by Ms. Eva Kehoe



We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary General on the update on the current situation concerning violence against children and the results achieved on national and international level. Children impacted by violence suffer lifelong consequences. Violence affects children's social, emotional and physical development and well-being.

Violence against children poses a great concern and obstacle for meeting the 2030 sustainable development goals. Children all around the globe in different social,

cultural and environmental settings are exposed to many forms of direct and indirect violence.

The Covid-19 pandemic, the combination of economic and social stresses, as well as, the lockdowns have been followed by a global surge in domestic violence directed towards women and children - almost in all countries. This has extremely negative consequences on the mental health of children experiencing such situations. Thus, we wish to ask the Special Representative what are current trends concerning the protection of children during the Covid-19 pandemic?

In conclusion, we call on the international community to:

- Help eliminate all forms of violence against children, direct and indirect.
- Continue working on implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 16 (End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children. Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all).

Item 3 – Interactive Dialogue with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict

Summary

The Special Representative of the Secretary General for children and armed conflict (SRSG), Ms. Virginia Gamba, submitted her annual report on the grave risks facing children, who were the primary victims of armed conflict in 2019. She specifically addressed two issues that are worsening: rape and other forms of sexual violence against conflict-affected children, and attacks against schools and hospitals. These are egregious crimes that greatly affect the mental well-being and development of children across the globe. The Special Representative also commented on the large number of children detained in the past year for alleged association with armed groups or other national security threats, and urged States to treat these children as victims first and foremost instead of violating their liberty through detention. Finally, she pressed States to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict if they have not already done so, a message she was joined in by groups of countries including the European Union, the Africa Group, and groups from Latin America. Remarks from individual states echoed and reinforced the

comments of the Special Representative, particularly on the importance of rehabilitation and reintegration programs for children involved in armed conflict.

The International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD) appreciates the Special Representative's commitment to the Optional Protocol and joins the calls of the Special Representative and Member States for universal ratification. The issues addressed by the Special Representative in her report, particularly those of sexual violence and attacks against schools and hospitals, threaten the mental health and well-being of children across the globe. EAFORD urges the Special Representative to place greater emphasis on the mental health of children in her research and advocacy. Children who are victims of sexual violence or targeted attacks on non-military institutions are at great risk of mental health challenges. EAFORD urges the Special Representative to use her position to further de-stigmatization through mental health awareness; healthcare is a human right, and mindfulness and treatment of mental health should be included as such.

Children in Armed Conflict: We cannot afford a “lessons learned” approach anymore

Joint Oral statement by EAFORD

Delivered by Mutua Kobia



Thank you, Mr. President,

EAFORD and Geneva International Centre for Justice welcome the report of the Special Representative of the Secretary General. The report identifies the progress made so far without minimizing the efforts that still need to be done.

Conflicts have an appalling impact on communities, and this is most notable against children who remain vulnerable and defenseless. Whether in Syria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, Iraq, or Yemen, the situation of children in conflict zones is most urgent. Any report stating difficulties of access to information cannot at the same time claim progress.

More alarming, the protection of children in armed conflict has been a subject discussed for decades. We cannot afford a “lessons learned” approach anymore. According to the report of the Secretary-General, 24,422 violations were committed against children in 2019, about 7,747 were recruited in armed conflicts, and some 10,173 children have been killed or maimed. These are not numbers of an international community that has learned its lesson.

Now, non-state actors are posing a significant obstacle to an international order based on state actors. We encourage all efforts to tackle this predicament. It is not sufficient to only rely on, and discuss with, states and

regional security mechanisms. The international community needs new, bold, and innovative strategies. Such strategies were needed yesterday.

On the other hand, we remain confused as to the Secretary General's decision to remove from its shame list some of the violators. Nothing justified such a move and we now fear a trend towards neglect of the issue.

Item 3 – Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on trafficking of persons, especially women and children

Trafficking in Conflict Zones

Joint Oral statement by EAFORD

Delivered by Mr. Mutua K. Kobia



We thank the Special Rapporteur for her report on “Trafficking in persons, especially women and children” and note the mention of forced labor in the context of trafficking as a massive widespread phenomenon.

We also recognize that racism and xenophobia further exacerbate the plight of persons in trafficking and creates additional vulnerabilities especially in armed conflict situations. In light of this, EAFORD and Geneva International Centre for Justice would like to draw the attention of the Special Rapporteur to the specific situation of trafficking in regions and areas of conflict where women, children, and men of specific ethnic groups are trafficked for sexual exploitation, sexual gifts, child soldiers, removal of organs, forced labor and forced marriage. Often, the

purposes are either to further exacerbate conflict by drawing in capital and by using the trafficked persons in labor, or to serve the perpetrators.

In the report, concerns are raised on the issue of how conflict fuels trafficking in persons, however, it is also important to note the impact of various forms of discrimination and xenophobia in this situation.

We would like to ask the Special Rapporteur if there are any significant trends or links regarding various forms of discrimination and xenophobia in conflict situations where trafficking of persons occurs?

In conclusion, our organizations maintain that trafficking is a multi-faceted issue and trafficking prevention must begin with proper research into local conditions. Furthermore, States should review laws and administrative practices to eliminate discriminatory bias that adds barriers for trafficking victims who are women or racial minorities.

Item 9 – Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on Racism

Summary

An interactive dialogue was held under Item 9 to discuss reports submitted by Ms. E. Tendayi Achiume, the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance.

Her first report, “Racial discrimination and emerging digital technologies: a human rights analysis” (A/HRC/44/57), emphasized that new emerging digital technology reproduces all existing inequalities within the society. It is often designed and used in a racial way and ethnic minorities are rarely involved in the decision-making roles. The Special Rapporteur encouraged States to act immediately by ensuring minorities and racial discrimination experts have a seat at the table. Accountability, impact assessments, effective remedies, and minority inclusion should be obligations for all States and companies involved in emerging digital technologies. Digital transformation should benefit all people.

The Special Rapporteur also submitted a report on “Combating glorification of Nazism, neo-Nazism and other practices that contribute to fueling contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance” (A/HRC/44/58). She emphasized that a new surge of anti-Semitism, hate speech used by politicians, and the glorification of Nazism is occurring in many nations. With today’s normalization of hate speech and discriminatory behavior, States agreed that they must eradicate the spread of neo-Nazism by condemning racial discrimination and racism in all its forms. Many advocated that in order to fight racism, education is key to raising awareness, promoting dialogue, and changing discriminatory behavior.

Racism, Nazism and Digital Platforms

Joint Oral statement by EAFORD

Delivered by Ms. Daniela Donges



Thank you, President,

We commend the Special Rapporteur’s report on racial discrimination and digital technologies, emphasizing that racial discrimination is embedded in emerging digital technologies such as artificial intelligence. We agree that technology produces racial inequalities and that urgent action is needed to include minorities, assess human rights impacts, and provide effective remedies.

EAFORD and Geneva International Centre for Justice call on all Member States to make efforts in order for the digital platforms and big data, to be used to expose inequalities and serve as a platform to contribute to an end of racial divisions.

Regarding the report on Nazism and neo-Nazism, we share the concern about the rise of antisemitism, and agree that more concrete steps need to be taken in addition to the existing international human rights laws. We stress the Special Rapporteur's point that education is vital to address racism.

To this end, we would like to ask the Special Rapporteur, if the Durban Declaration and Program of Action (DDPA) is comprehensive in eliminating the evils of racism, why has the DDPA still not been implemented by all States? And, what is currently being done to ensure effective commemoration of its 20 Year Anniversary?

To conclude, we urge all Member States to:

- Assume responsibility and stay committed to combatting all forms of racism.
- Collect, analyze, and make available reliable data on racial discrimination.
- Lastly, we strongly recommend States to support, adopt and fully implement the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

Written Statements

The International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD) submitted eight joint written statements with other NGOs to the 44th 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.

Human Rights and the Impact of COVID-19 on Rohingya Refugees

Upholding human rights appears to become secondary to some governments in times of crisis. Thus, the already poor and neglected in society experience worse effects in critical times as they are further pushed aside. This situation is affecting Rohingya refugees right now, leaving devastating impacts as they are pushed further away from receiving any help or attention in these dire times.



Starting in 2019, the Myanmar authorities “punished” residents of the Rakhine State with internet shutdowns. Those shutdowns stand in direct opposition to Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which protects freedom of expression and grants the right to “receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.” The scope of internet shutdowns became worsened during COVID-19. Information on proper hygiene and social distancing measures is essential for saving lives during the pandemic and shutdowns deny citizens the information they need to protect themselves.

We further remind the international community that COVID-19 is not the only crisis that humanity faces today. There are individuals and groups that need special protection; thus, States must comply with existing international law despite the pandemic. The government of Myanmar has proved over the past years that they are not interested in finding a peaceful solution and the authorities continued to develop new tools to oppress the Rohingya Muslim minority. The International Criminal Court (ICC) decision to approve an investigation is a step in the right direction.

[Link to full written statement](#)

Justice for George Floyd and other black Americans whose stories are becoming much too familiar

The systematic injustices embedded in the American criminal justice system are being held under a microscope. People are growing tired of the injustices against black communities. In the United States of America, black people face daily prejudices because of the color of their skin. Some of the injustices committed are becoming tragically normal. Structural racism is becoming an ever more apparent reality.



The world has seen a black handcuffed man pleading to breathe beneath the knee of a white police officer. This has resulted in omnipresent anger, peaceful as well as violent protests, and a demand that the officers involved face criminal charges. Civil society demands justice for George Floyd, his family, and the lives of other black Americans who have been mistreated and violated by the current criminal justice system. We believe the institutional racism embedded into America’s criminal justice system can be changed, and this starts with making perpetrators of all acts of police brutality accountable for their actions. The devaluation of human lives is unacceptable and must never be tolerated. We urge the international community to demand and insist on accountability. [Link to full written statement](#)

War-Created and Conflict-Mediated Environmental Pollution

In the illegal U.S. invasion of Iraq referred to as the 2003 Iraq War, weapons of mass destruction were used on a large scale across the country. The killings, atrocities, and grave human rights abuses against innocent civilians have been widely reported. However, the impact it has had on the environment has often been overlooked. Contamination, pollution, tons of war debris and toxic waste has resulted in an environmental disaster leaving high levels of radiation, extensive PCB and sulphur contamination and several toxic stockpiles amongst others. To date, the polluters have yet to be held accountable and humanitarian responses and clean-up efforts are insufficient.



Furthermore, the explosions of bombs, release of ammunition, firing of bullets, and other such lethal activity during the war has exposed millions of innocent and vulnerable civilians to neurotoxins and other such hazardous substances. This devastation continues to have serious environmental and subsequently public health crises.

We call upon the Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment as well as the Special Rapporteur on the implications for human rights of the environmentally sound management and disposal of hazardous substances and wastes, to launch deeper investigations into war-created and conflict-mediated environmental pollution in accordance with their mandates and to report on the findings and conclusions. In addition, we implore that such an investigation be carried out in relation to the illegal 2003 invasion of Iraq (so called Iraq War). Such an investigation will greatly improve the humanitarian response efforts and reduce health-risks during clean-up efforts for workers as well as the overall population, including innocent children across Iraq.

[Link to full written statement](#)

Iraq: The Ongoing Plight of Demonstrators

Despite the spread of the COVID-19 and subsequent lockdowns and curfews, demonstrations remain strong and the pandemic has not eliminated protesters' demands. Thus, the Human Rights Council must remain vigilant. The new Iraqi government appointed on 7 May 2020, changed its rhetoric and promised ambitious policies, but has yet to put such words into action. Since the protests began in October 2019, they have been met with a violent

and indiscriminate response. During her briefing to the Security Council on 3 December 2019, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Iraq observed that the government's response was unprovoked and targeted what was largely a peaceful protest.



The protests have evolved into a call for a transition to a true democratic and sustainable political system, free from sectarian influences. The protesters are also demanding the end of the Iranian influence within the government and the armed forces. It is crucial for the international community to understand that what is needed and demanded by the protesters is not just a change of Prime Minister but a fundamental change of system, free from sectarian quota.

The international community must understand that the Iraqi judiciary is incapable of holding the government and the militias to account. We affirm that firm words by the Security Council and promises by the new Prime Minister will not achieve stability in Iraq unless all human rights violations are addressed in a comprehensive way and until a special international tribunal is established to bring to justice all perpetrators, especially those responsible for the killing, abduction and torture of peaceful demonstrators.

[Link to full written statement](#)

Environmental degradation, growing economic hardship, corruption and sectarianism continue to fuel Lebanon's Protests

The Republic of Lebanon's substantial environmental problem concerning pollution and environmental decline has made a startling reappearance in the midst of the COVID-19 public health emergency. The state of environmental degradation and rubbish crisis, which has been an ongoing issue, violates several human rights including the right to life and health. The unfortunate phenomena of sectarianism, corruption, and cronyism are central to this crisis. Management of waste continues to be a major "money-maker" and, consequently, much of the financial investment aimed at solving the problem is misappropriated by the local politicians and their

associates. The COVID-19 health emergency has made Lebanon's controversial laissez-faire approach to rubbish disposal considerably more acute and life-threatening.



We are deeply concerned about the corruption, cronyism, and environmental degradation in Lebanon, and we urgently recommend to the Human Rights Council the following:

- Support the people's call for an end to the sectarian power-sharing system and replace it with one based on democratic values.
- Investigate and punish individuals responsible for acts of corruption and ensure that stolen assets are recovered.
- Call on the government of Lebanon to establish a body of independent experts to monitor waste management systems.
- The government should ensure that waste management contracts are awarded to reputable companies without links to members of the government.
- The government should fully cooperate with international mechanisms and organizations that provide technical expertise to resolve the country's political and environmental crisis.

[Link to full written statement](#)

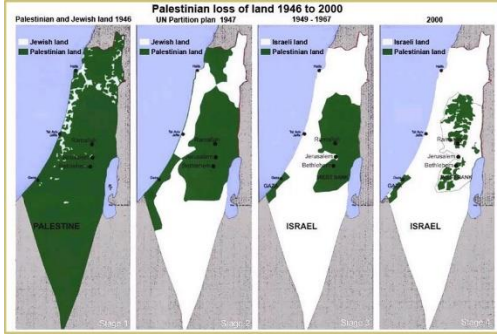


The Annexation Planned by Israel Constitutes a Gross Violation of International Law



The Government of Israel threatens to annex the West Bank, which is part of the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT). The United States of America, a permanent member of the Security Council, has fully supported the annexation. This was confirmed by the so-called Trump Peace Plan, which seeks to legitimize Israel's constant and ongoing systematic violations of international human rights and humanitarian laws in the OPT for generations. There are numerous reasons for Israel to abandon this destructive path. The obvious reason being that annexation by force is a flagrant violation of international law. The occupation of the West Bank has been a *de facto* annexation, prohibited by the Charter of the United Nations and the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949.

Currently, Israel is searching for ways to prolong its imposed authority over the OPT via a *de jure* annexation, which would put the occupied West Bank under Israeli law and relegate Palestinians to the highly populated areas. If pursued, these deplorable actions by Israel would further accelerate and intensify the ongoing human rights violations in the OPT, destroying any hope of restoring the right of Palestinians to self-determination. These as well as numerous other gross violations are well-known to the international community and have been captured by a voluminous mountain of documented evidence, including the work of UN special mandate holders and numerous accounts brought to light by human rights defenders.



It is important to note that Israel has annexed territory in the past despite international objections. Israel annexed East Jerusalem after seizing it, declaring the entire city as its united capital. In addition, Israel annexed the Golan Heights in 1981, which it had captured from the Syrian Arab Republic in the 1967 war. It is also important to recognize that the US administration has endorsed both of these prior annexations. Therefore, Israel's threat to annex the West Bank must be taken seriously and requires urgent action to prevent its realization.

[Link to full written statement](#)

COVID-19 and Human Rights Education

During the 42nd session of the Human Rights Council in September 2019, States unanimously adopted the Plan of Action for the fourth phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education, which provides specific objectives for human rights education at the national level. In January 2020 began the fourth phase of the World programme focusing on Human Rights Education with youth. Within a few weeks, COVID-19 swept around the world, severely impacting everyone, but especially vulnerable groups including children, women, people with disabilities and refugees, many of whose basic needs are not being met. The response to the pandemic has starkly revealed the deep inequalities in our societies and could end up being the greatest challenge to human rights in a generation.



In this context, we would like to highlight four key points that need prompt action by States and civil society. Firstly the rise of racism, hate crime, xenophobia, and discrimination highlights the urgent need to accelerate the process of integrating human rights education for young people into national curricula, to foster a future generation that can uphold and defend the rights of others, standing up against injustice and develop a sense of common humanity. Second, as we look to build a new future in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, the participation and voices of youth is essential, particularly those who are most vulnerable, in the spirit of 'leave no-one behind'. Third, access to funds and resources for organizations working on human rights education with youth should be guaranteed, especially in these crucial times, ensuring that existing and future programmes are prioritised and funding ring-fenced. Fourth, states must ensure all people, without discrimination, have access to accurate, reliable, and timely information about COVID-19 and to education about their human rights.

[Link to full written statement](#)

Coalition Letter – Request for U.N. Independent Inquiry into the Escalating Situation of Police Violence and Repression of Protests in the United States

We are deeply concerned about the escalation in violent police responses to largely peaceful protests in the United States, which included the use of rubber bullets, tear gas, pepper spray and in some cases live ammunition, in violation of international standards on the use of force and management of assemblies including recent U.N. Guidance on Less Lethal Weapons. It is well established that neither the use of violence by a small number of people or damage to property suspend the right to protest of all those gathered and do not provide a license to escalate police responses and use of excessive or deadly force. In all circumstances, the police response must remain within the limits of the law and seek to de-escalate situations rather than inflame them by resorting to life-threatening weapons.



The right to peaceful assembly and demonstration must be protected. This mandate is even more compelling with regard to the rights of minority communities, especially people of African descent, to speak out against racist practices they have endured for centuries. Recent police killings of unarmed Black people as well as police

use of excessive force and repression of protests violate United States obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD).

[Link to full written statement](#)

Online Seminar

The seminar featured expert discussion on the factors that increase the risk of COVID-19 spreading among Palestinian prisoners, and the safeguards that must be taken to guarantee their protection. The online seminar was followed by an interactive dialogue.

Organisers

Logo: VISO (International for Rights and Development)

Logo: GICJ (Geneva International Centre for Justice)

Logo: LAW FOR PALESTINE

Logo: EAFORD

Online Seminar On
THE IMPACT OF COVID-19
ON PALESTINIAN PRISONERS
THE URGENT NEED FOR INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

The seminar will feature expert discussions on the factors that increase the risk of COVID-19 spreading among Palestinian prisoners, and the safeguards that must be taken to guarantee their protection, and will be followed by an interactive dialogue.

Speakers

Moderator

Michael Lynk
The UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Palestinian Territories Occupied since 1967

Naji Haraj
Executive Director of Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ)

Qadri Abu Baker
Head of the Commission of Detainees and Ex-Detainees' Affairs /Palestine

Ihsan Adel
Chair of Law for Palestine Organisation (LFP)

Abeer Baker
Lawyer of Palestinian prisoners and detainees

Thursday 6th Aug-2020

Jerusalem 6 :00 pm | Geneva 5:00 pm | Ottawa 11:00 am | New York 11:00 am

Watch the broadcast in Arabic and English

LIVE

Logos: Facebook, GICJ, UN, LAW FOR PALESTINE, Twitter, VISO