

HRC34: Joint civil society end of session statement - 24 March 2017

International Service for Human Rights, Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA), Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, Human Rights House Foundation, CIVICUS, International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA)

Thank you Mr President,

FORUM-ASIA, ISHR and other NGOs welcome the renewal of key Special Procedures mandates, and in particular that of the Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders. At a time when defenders are under an unprecedented attack and killings of defenders are on the rise,¹ the united stance of the Human Rights Council is key.

While we welcome the restoring of consensus to this key resolution, we deeply regret the fracturing of the same on the right to food resolution, particularly given the increasing interrelationship of food insecurity, conflict and human rights violations.

At the outset of this session, High Commissioner Zeid has described 2017 as a pivotal year for the Council, and has diagnosed an attack on the entire rights-based system.

The Council can only be a credible part of this system, and rise to the world's challenges, if it strikes a balance between appropriately engaging the concerned States, and responding firmly to human rights violations and victims' demands for accountability.

Some actions at this session have struck this balance in part; others – such as the decision hastily ending the mandate on Haiti – have not. The Council still fails to bring needed attention to a range of violations in countries such as Azerbaijan, Bahrain, China, Egypt, Philippines, Turkey and others.

The urgent dispatch of a Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar is a welcome step. We now look to you, President, to consult, including with civil society, on the appointment of the FFM's members. But we regret the dissociation of Myanmar from the resolution, and call on Myanmar to fully cooperate with the FFM. We look to all States, including in particular those with investment, trade and business relationships with Myanmar, to fully facilitate the work of the FFM.

We commend the Council for recognising the fundamental relationship between violations of human rights and the commission of mass atrocities, including by advancing accountability for such crimes in the DPRK, South Sudan, Sri Lanka and Syria.

Finally, Mr President, we are again concerned about allegations of intimidation and reprisals against defenders from Myanmar, Bahrain and Sri Lanka, including during the current session. In line with your legal obligation, we urge you to take these cases seriously, follow-up thoroughly on the allegations, and ensure that all those who engage with the body you preside over can do so safely. Thank you.

¹ <http://www.ishr.ch/news/human-rights-defenders-global-crackdown-threatens-democracy-and-development>