

## **Human Rights Council: Reject attempts to limit Office of the High Commissioner**

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States should resist attempts to micromanage the UN's top human rights official and fetter his independence and effectiveness, a group of leading human rights NGOs said in [a statement](#) to the Human Rights Council today.



(Geneva) - States should resist Cuban-led attempts to micromanage and fetter the independence of the UN's top human rights official, a group of leading human rights NGOs said in [a statement](#) to the Human Rights Council today.

Delivered by [HRW](#), and supported by [ISHR](#), [Civicus](#), [FIDH](#), [FORUM ASIA](#), [OMCT](#) and [EIPR](#), the statement expressed concern about a resolution under consideration by the Council which proposes to take up recommendations in a recent report - the so-called '[JIU report](#)' - regarding the governance and operations of the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Among its contradictory recommendations, the report proposes a mechanism to enable States to 'direct and monitor' the work of [OHCHR](#) and the High Commissioner himself.

The statement highlighted that creation of the position of High Commissioner for Human Rights was one of the landmark achievements of the Vienna Declaration adopted by all States in 1994. For more than 20 years, successive High Commissioners have provided a strong and independent voice, committed to promoting and protecting human rights around the world, the statement said.

'Today, that independence is under threat. The draft resolution, inaccurately titled "Composition of staff of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights" seeks to affirm and encourage follow-up to the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU), which reviews the "Management and Administration" of the OHCHR,' said John Fisher of HRW delivering the statement.

'The independence of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and his office is axiomatic to his effectiveness. The High Commissioner must be free to speak without fear and without favour, unconstrained by the political agenda of any State or group of States,' said ISHR's Michael Ineichen. 'This report must not be permitted to be used as a subterfuge to constrain the High Commissioner and his office at a time when both their monitoring and reporting, and their advice and technical assistance, are needed perhaps more than ever before.'

'It is inconceivable that the Human Rights Council can address, or will be allowed to address, questions relating to management and administration of the Office,' the statement said, quoting the President of the Human Rights Council and the JIU report itself.

While recognising that the Council is often guided by political considerations, the statement highlighted that earlier in the session, numerous foreign ministers and high-ranking officials expressed concern at global human rights crises taking their toll in every region of the world. In the view of the sponsoring NGOs, this underscored the critical need for a High Commissioner who can stand outside the politics of the Council and provide a principled independent voice to remind the world all of the human rights standards that the Council is sworn to uphold.

The statement finished by urging States to reject the damaging provisions in the proposed resolution, and defend the independence and effectiveness of the OHCHR.

See the full statement [here](#).

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