

#UNGA71 | Last minute attempt to choke UN funding for human rights

22.12.2016

In the very final UN session of the year, a handful of countries seeking to avoid scrutiny of their own human rights records are attempting to cut off essential funding for the UN's independent experts.



UPDATE (23 December, New York) Attempts to defund the mandate of the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity have been voted down finally and determinatively by both the Fifth Committee and the Plenary of the UN General Assembly. The mandate and funding is now - finally - confirmed. A move to stop the funding of a Human Rights Council resolution on Israeli settlements was also rejected. The unprecedented votes at the Fifth Committee prompted calls for the Committee to 'stay out of politics' and concentrate on budgetary issues in line with their mandate. Ultimately, attempts to stop funding of several country mandates were not advanced. However, funding of the restructuring project of the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR) was postponed for another year.

Original article:

States including China, Russia, Israel and Belarus are expected to attempt to block the funding of key UN human rights experts through a resolution at the General Assembly committee which deals with finance and budgetary issues, tomorrow (Friday, 23 December).

The UN's Fifth Committee will decide how much money is provided to finance the work of human rights experts who investigate human rights violations in Burundi, Iran, Syria, the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Belarus, as well as violence and discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans persons.

ISHR's New York Director Eleanor Openshaw said the move is an unprecedented attack on the crucial oversight provided by experts of countries whose citizens face severe and widespread human rights violations.

'The States are trying to abuse the authority of the Fifth Committee in order to cripple the decisions taken by the UN Human Rights Council and the General Assembly. It's a few countries attempting to crush mechanisms that the world has come together on and agreed are essential to confront extremely challenging human rights situations.

'This underhand move is particularly shocking in the case of Syria. Just yesterday, the General Assembly voted to create a mechanism to help investigate war crimes in the country, but today China, Russia, Israel and Iran are trying to impede funding of a UN Commission of Inquiry that has been documenting the situation in Syria since 2011,' said Ms Openshaw.

The assault goes beyond choking funding for work by experts looking at Syria, Burundi, the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Iran and Belarus, it is also an attempt to squeeze the resources and therefore capacity and effectiveness of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

'It's clear that the end goal for these countries is to make sure that the OHCHR and all UN independent experts are unable to do their work, including exposing human rights violations committed within their own borders,' said Openshaw.

Leading human rights organizations have urged ambassadors in New York to block the attack in an [open letter](#) issued today.

'The UN has agreed that this work is urgently needed, so it's imperative that it be properly funded,' said Ms Openshaw.

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