

UN Sec-Gen | New High Commissioner should be strong, capable, independent and deeply committed to human rights

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Regional and international NGOs urge the UN Secretary-General to appoint a capable, strong and qualified High Commissioner for Human Rights who can ensure the office's independence and ability to operate without interference.



As the search begins by the UN Secretary-General António Guterres (UNSG) for the next High Commissioner for Human Rights, a [group of leading regional and international NGOs sent an open letter](#) to the UNSG emphasising the high expectations the organisations have for the successor to this office, urging him to vigorously defend the office's ability to operate without interference and to select a new High Commissioner capable of ensuring its independence.

'Appointing a capable, strong and qualified High Commissioner is crucial at this time when fundamental principles of human rights are being challenged, and the integrity and independence of the United Nations human rights system is under attack,' said the organisations.

The organisations urged the UNSG to select an exceptionally qualified candidate capable of meeting the demands of this important post from the outset. They highlighted key criteria and qualifications for the new High Commissioner, who should be a human rights champion ready to be independent and outspoken in fulfilling the mandate, a strong leader with a clear vision for the promotion and protection of all human rights, and bring energy, courage and commitment to the position. She or he should especially highlight human rights issues that have fallen beneath the radar, and be ready to hold States accountable without fear of repercussions.

'Most importantly, the High Commissioner should be accessible to victims and others directly affected by human rights violations,' added the organisations.

The organisations stressed that a transparent selection process, based on accountability and professionalism, was essential to identify and appoint the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

'A robust and transparent selection process is key to ensuring the credibility of the appointment, and to identifying the most qualified candidate for the job, and should also include wide consultation with all stakeholders, including civil society,' said the organisations.

Human rights are one of the pillars of the United Nations. The High Commissioner position needs a strong leader for human rights within the United Nations system and throughout the world. As we commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UNSG should put in place a process that reflects the seriousness and significance of this appointment to human rights victims and defenders worldwide.

[Read the full letter here](#)