

## **Alert | GA 74th Session Third Committee**

01.10.2019

**Coming right on the back of last week's UN General Assembly's 74th session high-level week, today the work of the UN General Assembly's Third Committee kicked off. This year's session will run for eight weeks from 1 October to 21 November. The Committee will be chaired by Christian Braun from Luxembourg.**



The Third Committee brings together a wide array of Special Procedures mandate holders, including Special Rapporteur, independent experts, and chairs of working groups that are mandated by the Human Rights Council to discuss some of the most pressing human rights concerns and present findings and recommendations to the Third Committee. These findings should in turn play a role in shaping the focus of resolutions negotiated at this session.

Similar to the seventy-third session, this year's Third Committee is expected to consider approximately 60 resolutions on a range of topics, including:

- the advancement of women
- the rights and protection of children
- the rights of refugees
- the elimination of racism
- self-determination
- and social development, amongst others.

ISHR will be closely monitoring the work of the Third Committee as well as relevant developments in the plenary of the General Assembly and will report on key developments. Follow us on Twitter at [@ISHRglobal](#) using #UNGA74 for the latest updates. Formal meetings of the Third Committee can be watched live on the [UN Web TV](#).

### **ISHR Events**

- **Ending impunity for violations against Human Rights Defenders** - Impunity fuels attacks against human rights defenders. In 2018 alone, 321 human rights defenders were assassinated, 49% of whom had previously received direct threats that had not been investigated. ISHR, together with Amnesty International and the Permanent Mission of Norway, will be hosting an event with the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders to discuss how to deal effectively with impunity. The discussion will be held on 16 October at 1:15-2:30pm in Conference Room 11, UNHQ.
- **Book Launch** - ISHR will also be hosting a launch of Hurst Hannum's new book 'Rescuing Human Rights: A Radically Moderate Approach' on 18 October at 1:15-2:30pm. Please contact Marina Wilbraham at [m.wilbraham@ishr.ch](mailto:m.wilbraham@ishr.ch) if you are interested in attending.

You can also catch ISHR at the following events:

- **Venezuela on the Brink: The urgency of an appropriate international response to the crisis**, where Eleanor Openshaw will be discussing the implications of Venezuela being re-elected to the Human Rights Council. 2 October at 10am in the Church Center, 777 UN Plaza.
- **Breakfast reception to mark the launch of URG's new yourHRC.org Guide to the 2019 Human Rights Council Elections**, where Madeleine Sinclair will be discussing [ISHR's 'scorecards' for each of the States seeking election](#) to the UN Human Rights Council for 2020- 2022. October 10 at 8:30 am in Conference Room 6, UNHQ.

### **Overview of Key Resolutions**



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## RESOLUTIONS TO WATCH

### THEMATIC

#### Human Rights Defenders

*Lead Sponsor: Norway*

#### Terrorism and Human Rights

*Lead Sponsors: Mexico and Egypt*

#### Safety of Journalists

*Lead Sponsors: Argentina, and France*

### COUNTRY

#### Democratic People's Republic of Korea

*Lead sponsor: European Union*

#### Islamic Republic of Iran

*Lead sponsor: Canada*

#### Crimea

*Lead sponsor: Ukraine*

#### Myanmar

*Lead sponsor: Organisation of Islamic Cooperation*

#### Syria

*Lead sponsor: Saudi Arabia*

### Thematic resolutions

- **Human Rights Defenders** (Lead Sponsor: Norway) - This year Norway will present the biennial resolution on human rights defenders. One year after the twentieth anniversary of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, implementation of the Declaration unfortunately remains far from adequate in a number of States. ISHR therefore welcomes the resolution's continued focus on the Declaration's implementation and urges States to ensure that the resolution includes calls for concrete activities and mechanisms to monitor and facilitate the implementation of the Declaration and previous resolutions on human rights defenders.
- **Terrorism and Human Rights** (Lead Sponsors: Mexico and Egypt) - The Third Committee will consider a resolution relating to Terrorism and Human Rights. Previous resolutions on the topic have condemned terrorist acts as criminal and unjustifiable, and expressed concerns about their detrimental effects on the enjoyment of all human rights. The resolution is the result of the combination of two previously separate resolutions on the "[Protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism](#)" and the "[Effects of Terrorism on the Enjoyment of Human Rights](#)" led by Mexico and Egypt, respectively. Civil society remains concerned that the combined resolution compromises language on State obligations to protect human rights by prioritising the impact of terrorism on human rights. ISHR hopes that language in the original resolution led by Mexico is not compromised and that this resolution upholds State responsibility and the rights of victims.
- **Safety of Journalists** (Lead Sponsors: Greece, Argentina, Austria, Costa Rica and France) - A resolution on the safety of journalists is expected to be advanced at this session. ISHR will be watching this negotiation closely and hopes the resolution will be used to expand, rather than restrict, space for civil society and strengthen protections for human rights defenders.
- The Third Committee will once again consider a resolution on **national human rights institutions** (NHRIs). It appears no progress has been made since the last resolution adopted in 2017 called on 'all relevant UN forums and meetings' to provide for the engagement of 'A' status national human rights institutions

### Country specific resolutions

Several country resolutions are expected again this session. For the 17th year, Canada will present a draft resolution on the **Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran** spotlighting the continued dismal human rights situation and lack of progress over the last year. The European Union will again lead on a resolution on the **Democratic People's Republic of Korea**, similarly underlining the lack of human rights progress. Ukraine will again present a draft resolution condemning Russia's activities in **Crimea**. Resolutions on the human rights situation in **Myanmar** and **Syria** are also expected to be led by the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation and Saudi Arabia respectively.

### Other key issues

ISHR remains concerned that China will again attempt to insert the seemingly harmless language of 'win/win' language in resolutions, which in fact focuses only on intergovernmental dialogue and cooperation, rather than actual human rights violations or accountability. This language risks shrinking space for civil society and roll back human rights norms across a number of resolutions.

Several resolutions are expected to become battle grounds regarding references to **gender**, and **sexual and reproductive health and rights**, including resolutions on the Improvement of the situation of women and girls in rural areas, Violence against women migrant workers, Rights of the Child, The girl child, The human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation,

As the Third Committee takes place in the wake of the catastrophic event of Hurricane Dorian and the UN Climate Action Summit, we expect to see climate change addressed in a number of discussions, particularly relating to sustainable development, even if there is no resolution specific to the issue. ISHR supports the protection of all persons and communities suffering negative effects from the climate crisis and hopes the momentum from last week's summit will not be lost at this year's Third Committee session.

**Elections for the Human Rights Council** are set to take place in mid-October as part of the General Assembly. ISHR is once again disappointed that this year a number of regions have presented closed slates. ISHR has published 'scorecards' for each of the States seeking membership. These provide a brief overview of their human rights records, cooperation with civil society, past roles in the Council, and past engagement with UN human rights mechanisms.



### Overview of Reports and Dialogues with UN Experts:

The UN Special Procedures - Special Rapporteurs, independent experts, and working groups - will report to the Third Committee and hold interactive 'dialogues' with member States. Several of this year's reports reflect concerns about increased attacks on human rights defenders and emphasise the critical importance of creating and maintaining space for civil society. Click [here](#) for a list and schedule of dialogues.

- **Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders** - Combatting the currently widespread impunity for human rights violations that target human rights defenders is, according to Special Rapporteur Michel Forst's report (A/74/159), "an essential prerequisite to guarantee human rights and to advance towards equal societies that are free from fear and violence." He outlines a regulatory framework on the right to access to justice, including due diligence in investigations and elaborates on the de facto and legal barriers to access to justice. He offers essential guidelines for ensuring due diligence in the investigation of such violations. Good practices implemented by States and civil society are also described. He will present his report and an interactive dialogue will be held on 15 October 2019 at 3pm.



- **Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context** - In the context of her report on the right to housing of indigenous peoples ([A/74/183](#)), Special Rapporteur Leilani Farha underlines the fact that indigenous peoples are disproportionately victims of extreme violence simply for defending their rights to land: approximately 40% of the environmental and land defenders assassinated in 2016 and 25% of those assassinated in 2017 were indigenous. The Special Rapporteur will present her report and hold an interactive dialogue on 18 October 2019 at 3pm.
- **Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran** - At least 32 Iranians have been arrested as a result of viral social media campaigns against compulsory veiling laws, such as the #whitewednesdays and "Girls of Revolution Street." Human rights lawyer and defender Nasrin Sotoudeh was sentenced to 148 lashes and 38 years in prison last March for defending some of these women. BBC Persian staff have suffered reprisals for engaging with UN human rights mechanisms. These are only some of the attacks on human rights defenders that Special Rapporteur Javaid Rehman flags in his report ([A/74/188](#)), which calls on Iran to stop violating the rights of human rights defenders through intimidation, harassment, arbitrary arrest, deprivation of liberty, among other arbitrary sanctions. The Special Rapporteur will present and discuss his report on 23 October 2019 at 10am.
- **Report of the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity** - In his report ([A/74/181](#)), Independent Expert Victor Madrigal-Borloz exposes the ways in which socio-cultural norms and discriminatory laws continue to marginalise and exclude LGBT persons. In order to become fully inclusive of LGBT individuals, he stresses that States cannot overlook the "vital role" of partnerships with civil society. He cites a number of partnerships in the fight against HIV/AIDS as particularly strong examples of this. Independent Expert Madrigal-Borloz will present his report and hold an interactive dialogue on 24 October 2019 at 10am.
- **Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism** - How can States truly integrate human rights into the global fight against terrorism that is increasingly shaped by elusive norms of 'soft law'? According to Special Rapporteur Fionnuala Ní Aoláin's report ([A/74/335](#)), one of the keys is for States to engage with and create space for civil society, non-governmental organisations, and human rights defenders to participate in the shaping of these counter-terrorism norms. Her report maps out how civil society access to these processes can be transformed from "ad hoc and inconsistent" to consistent and meaningful, ensuring that soft-law counter-terrorism norms are not at odds with human rights. The Special Rapporteur's report will be presented and discussed on 16 October 2019 at 10am.
- **Report of the Special Rapporteur on the issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment** - Special Rapporteur David R. Boyd clarifies the obligations of States and businesses under a human-rights based approach to climate change in his report ([A/74/161](#)). These obligations include providing strong protections for environmental and environmental defenders who work on issues relating to climate change. In addition, the report examines how UN human rights mechanisms can be empowered to better address climate change. The Special Rapporteur will present his report and an interactive dialogue will be held on 24 October 2019 at 3pm.
- **Interim report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food** - Special Rapporteur Hilal Elver's report ([A/74/164](#)) stresses just how interrelated the Sustainable Development Goals and human rights are. If States are to enable the universal enjoyment of the right to food and successfully use the Sustainable Development Goals as a tool to realise this right, populations that are traditionally left behind must be engaged in the policy process. Similarly, Special Rapporteur Elver concludes that "creating safe spaces for media actors, journalists and human rights defenders to investigate and report on progress" are some of the keys to holding States accountable for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. She will present her report and hold an interactive dialogue on 24 October 2019 at 3pm.
- **Report of the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief** - Special Rapporteur Ahmed Shaheed expresses alarm in his report ([A/74/358](#)) about the rise of anti-Semitism around the world and the ways in which the underreporting of these hate crimes and lack of mechanisms to monitor them enable anti-Semitic hate crimes. The report finds that a lack of Jewish civil society engagement with UN human rights monitors only exacerbates this issue and calls on States to work more closely with Jewish communities and organisations to create mechanisms that fill this void. Special Rapporteur Shaheed ends his report with the recommendation that the Office of the UN Secretary-General appoint a senior-level focal point specifically responsible for monitoring and engaging with Jewish communities on this issue. He will present his report and hold an interactive dialogue on 17 October 2019 at 3pm.

- **Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences** - In her report ([A/74/137](#)), Special Rapporteur Dubravka Šimonović stresses the need to address mistreatment and violence against women in reproductive health services from a human rights perspective. The report therefore calls for the creation of human rights-based accountability mechanisms and greater State collaboration with civil society organisations to address violence and mistreatment in reproductive and obstetric care. The Special Rapporteur will present her report and hold an interactive dialogue with the Third Committee on 4 October 2019 at 10am.
- **Report of the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights** -Special Rapporteur Karima Bennouna urges States, in her report ([A/7/255](#)), to protect and promote cultural rights in public spaces through policies that “give clear priority to messages that promote human rights and inclusion and find ways to respond to and challenge anti-rights or exclusionary agendas.” How can States do this? The Special Rapporteur cites the display of rainbow flags on public buildings and allowing socially-engaged artists to promote human rights as two simple examples of the many ways in which public spaces can be made inclusive and can foster civic mobilisation. The Special Rapporteur will present her report and an interactive dialogue will be held on 22 October 2019 at 10am.

*Photos: ISHR*

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