

## [UNGA75 | Country-specific mandates discuss increased persecution and detention of journalists and defenders](#)

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**This month, Special Procedure mandate holders focused on Burundi, Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), Eritrea, Iran, Myanmar and Somalia. They presented their reports on the human rights situations in these countries to the Third Committee.**



In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, interactive dialogues between country-specific mandate holders and member States took place in a virtual setting. While several important issues were discussed during these dialogues, technical issues posed challenges for those monitoring, as well as States participating.

Arbitrary detentions, enforced disappearances and imprisonment of political prisoners were discussed in several dialogues. The **Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in [Eritrea](#)** noted the lack of progress in the situation of political prisoners in the country. The Special Rapporteur lamented those languishing in prisons with no prospect of release. Concerns were also voiced by the **Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the [DPRK](#)** who called for the release of all political prisoners. A call that was supported by several States, such as the Czech Republic and the EU, while Germany expressed concern about female detainees particularly vulnerable to sexual violence. The **Chair of the Commission of Inquiry on [Burundi](#)** stated that freeing defenders, journalists, political prisoners and prisoners of conscience, and guaranteeing the freedom of press and assembly were necessary steps to improve the human rights situation. In the run up to parliamentary elections in Somalia, the **Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in [Somalia](#)** called on the government to strengthen democratic space by protecting the right to freedom of expression and assembly, free from harassment, intimidation or arbitrary arrest.

The protection of human rights defenders was another predominant theme in the interactive dialogues. The **[report](#) of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran** focused on intimidation, harassment, arbitrary arrests and detention, and execution of protesters, defenders, environmentalists, and women human rights defenders. The Special Rapporteur regretted that in spite of steps to temporarily release prisoners since the COVID-19 outbreak, others had not been released, resulting in death. The Special Rapporteur called for the urgent release of human rights lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh, currently imprisoned under abysmal conditions, while Switzerland welcomed the release of defender Narges Mohammadi. Norway and the Czech Republic denounced the harassment and detention of defenders and called for their release, while Canada and Germany expressed concern about reprisals against defenders and their families.

**Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in [Eritrea](#)** stated that there would be no long term change to the human rights situation unless journalists and defenders were able to carry out their work. The **Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in [Myanmar](#)**, the Special Envoy of the Secretary General on Myanmar, the EU, UK, US and Czech Republic spoke about the deteriorating situation for journalists, defenders, and civil society, including persecution, criminalisation and attacks in a culture of impunity. The Special Rapporteur expressed gratitude to defenders for their first-person perspective and role in fulfilling her mandate.

Once again we heard certain countries voice their opposition to these integral and important mandates - including Belarus, Burundi, China, Cameroon, DPRK, Eritrea, Russia, Iran, Nicaragua, and Venezuela. We encourage all States to cooperate with these all Special procedures mandate holders.

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