

NGOs warn against potential reprisals at meeting with President of Human Rights Council

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The President of the Human Rights Council, Ms. Laura Dupuy Lasserre, held a meeting with NGOs on 5 September 2012 to discuss the 21st session of the Human Rights Council (10-28 September). Participants in the meeting expressed concerns relating to the NGO participation, including the potential for reprisals against human rights defenders attending the session.

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Reprisals were mentioned as a particular worry in the case of those participating in the UPR adoption of Bahrain in the light of threats made against defenders [during the UPR of Bahrain](#). There was a suggestion made by an NGO that a general statement condemning reprisals against those who cooperate with UN human rights organisations be made at the opening of the session, as a preventative measure. NGOs noted that the Office of the President has a duty to ensure that civil society has a voice in the UN free from threats.

There was some concern expressed that Russia's preemptive push for a resolution on traditional values shows disrespect for institutional procedure, given that the study requested from the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee on the subject, which was due to be presented to this session of the Council, will be delayed until March 2013.

A key focal point of the discussion was the nominee for election to the Advisory Committee from Bahrain, Mr Saeed Mohamed Al Faihani. Mr Al Faihani is currently the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and has served for many years in various Government positions, including as Ambassador to the UN in Geneva.

There was a push by various NGOs that Mr Al Faihani should be excluded as a candidate because he holds a decision-making position in government. The Council's institution-building package ([resolution 5/1](#)) states in relation to elections to the Advisory Committee that, '[i]ndividuals holding decision-making positions in Government or in any other organisation or entity which might give rise to a conflict of interest with the responsibilities inherent in the mandate shall be excluded'. The President commented that it would be necessary to look in more detail at what is meant by a 'conflict of interest'.

The 21st session will be Ms Lasserre's last session as the Council's President with the next president coming from the Eastern European Group.

Registration for NGO speakers for this session opens on Friday 7 September at 2pm Geneva time; registration can be completed using the link [here](#). Note that there have been changes in registration for the UPR adoptions, which should now be signed up for on Friday 7 September at 2pm along with all other speaking slots.