



UN Human Rights Council Elections: Clean Slates Mar Election Process

Maldives tallies highest vote count; major rights violators draw least amount of support

The UN General Assembly elected fourteen states today to a three-year term on the UN Human Rights Council, despite the poor rights records of many of the candidates.

This was the first time since the Council's founding that all five UN regions presented non-competitive "clean slates" of the same number of candidates as seats available. As a result, serious rights abusing states such as Libya, Malaysia, Angola, and Qatar were comfortably elected to the Council.

"The lack of competition in today's election brings into question the commitment of UN member states to a credible election process and to a Council capable of carrying out its mandate," said Dokhi Fassihian, Executive Director for the Democracy Coalition Project. "One need look no further than Iran's withdrawal to understand that competition is critical to upholding the UN's own human rights standards."

African group candidates - Libya, Angola, Mauritania and Uganda - drew the least amount of votes across all regional slates, reflecting concerns that Africa had failed to put forward the region's strongest rights performers. In March, African NGOs expressed concern about the nomination process and [called](#) on the African Group to ensure states are elected based on their human rights commitments.

The Maldives, a country demonstrating major strides on human rights in recent years, drew the highest number of votes in Asia and in the election as a whole; outstripping Thailand, Malaysia, and Qatar.

Other countries elected today included Ecuador and Guatemala from the Latin American Group, Moldova and Poland from the Eastern European Group, and Spain and Switzerland from the Western European and Others Group. Human rights organizations have [criticized](#) these regional groups for abandoning the spirit of contest.

The NGO Coalition for an Effective Human Rights Council [called](#) on several candidates to take steps to meet the standards for Council membership, and in the case of Libya, urged states to withhold votes if strong commitments were not made. Libya drew the least amount of votes in today's race.

Today's election results mirror the 2009 elections when, after international human rights organizations raised serious concerns over the poor human rights records of Azerbaijan, China, Cuba, Russia, and Saudi Arabia, the General Assembly voted to defeat Azerbaijan and placed Saudi Arabia, China, and Cuba at the very bottom of



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their regional slates. Previous campaigns against severe rights abusing states running in competitive slates led to the defeat of Belarus in 2007 and Sri Lanka in 2008. Fearing similar defeat, Iran withdrew from its 2010 HRC bid after strong global opposition over serious human rights abuses inside the country.

NGOs propose structure for HRC 2011 Review

In 2011, the United Nations General Assembly is scheduled to review the UN Human Rights Council's work and functioning. In preparation for the review, a global coalition of civil society members, including the Democracy Coalition Project, has submitted a proposal to member states on a specific structure to carry out the review.

The [proposal](#) came in response to the emerging consensus among member states that renegotiating the Council's institutional framework should not be the basis of the review process. Instead, the coalition argued, the review process should only supplement this framework where necessary to ensure that the Council fulfils its mandate to promote and protect human rights. The NGOs' proposal would enable member states to clearly identify the challenges, best practices, and areas of improvement related to the fulfilling the mandate of the Council.

To see the proposal please visit:

[http://www.demcoalition.org/pdf/pdf/NGO_Proposal_Council_Review_Process_May_2010_final%20\(2\).pdf](http://www.demcoalition.org/pdf/pdf/NGO_Proposal_Council_Review_Process_May_2010_final%20(2).pdf)

US must lead by example on human rights

In an [article](#) published in today's Global Post, DCP Board Member Ted Piccone discusses regression in the Human Rights Council elections process and the need for the US to do more to show leadership on human rights.

"The Obama administration is off to a good start...in its re-engagement policy at the U.N. Human Rights Council, but it must do much more, starting with our own actions at home. Seen from the eyes of human rights defenders on the ground, the most important thing Washington can do is to lead by example.

This is particularly true in the area of counter-terrorism. Harsh U.S. tactics against terror suspects hand repressive governments an easy pretext to defend their own actions to muzzle opposition and jail dissidents on trumped-up charges that they are threats to national security. U.S. influence to create a safer world is greatest, they argue, when it upholds its own cherished principles of freedom and justice for all."

To read the article in its entirety please visit:

<http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/worldview/100512/UNHRC-human-rights-UN-iran-counterterrorism?page=0,1>