



DCP urges extension of HRC mandate on the human rights situation in Sudan

Human rights organizations urge the HRC to extend Sudan mandate

The Democracy Coalition Project joined 27 NGOs in a [letter](#) urging member states of the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) to support the renewal of the mandate of the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Sudan.

Signatories to the letter expressed concern for the millions of Sudanese people suffering abuse in the run-up to the referendum on southern self-determination. "The Human Rights Council has a critical role in contributing to an appropriate enabling environment for the referendum and in promoting a peaceful and credible process," the letter states.

On September 17, the Independent Expert on Sudan, Mr. Mohamed Chande Othman, presented his report to the HRC in which he cited continuing human rights violations in Sudan. He expressed particular concern regarding the use of the death penalty, delay in establishing a national human rights institution, continued violence in South Sudan, and attacks on humanitarian workers in Darfur. In addition, he noted that only five out of the 45 recommendations made by the Special Rapporteur have been implemented in the country.

However, during the debate that followed select states, including Sudan, Syria (on behalf of the Arab Group), Pakistan (on behalf of the OIC), North Korea, China, Qatar, Iran and Iraq, argued against the mandate's renewal asserting that improvements have been made in Sudan and that the Independent Expert duplicates existing UN engagement efforts. This argument starkly contradicts the evaluation made by human rights organizations around the globe who have emphasized the importance of an Independent Expert's presence during the upcoming referendum for independence in Southern Sudan.

Organizations calling for the renewal of the mandate include the African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies, Amnesty International, Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, Darfur Relief and Documentation Centre, Asian Legal Resource Centre, Bahrain Center for Human Rights, Damascus Center for Human Rights Studies, Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales, East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project, Human Rights Watch, and the International Service for Human Rights.

DCP calls on governments to oppose Cuban resolution on OHCHR oversight

The Democracy Coalition Project urges members of the UN Human Rights Council to reject a draft proposal at the current session of the HRC which will infringe on the independence of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

The resolution, presented by Cuba and entitled "Strengthening dialogue, coordination and cooperation between the Human Rights Council and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights," does not, as the title suggests, provide added value to the relationship between the two parties. Rather, it attempts to usurp OHCHR's independence by enabling the HRC to exercise administrative and budgetary oversight of the High Commissioner's program plans.

In a [letter](#) addressed to member states of the HRC, 20 NGOs, including the Democracy Coalition Project, state that the resolution fundamentally threatens the High Commissioner's ability to remind governments of their human rights obligations and to recommend specific actions to improve the protection of human rights.

Signatories to the letter, which include Amnesty International, the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, Human Rights Watch and the International Federation for Human Rights, note that the General Assembly did not give the HRC the authority to subordinate the High Commissioner to the Council and that to do so would be a serious mistake.

"The High Commissioner's effectiveness in carrying out her mandate to promote and protect human rights for all requires that she be independent and politically impartial...the draft resolution would seriously threaten that independence and impartiality," the letter states.

US Senators and EU Parliament call for re-establishment of a UN human rights mandate on Iran

A bi-partisan group of US Senators and the European Parliament have called for the re-establishment of a UN mandate to monitor the human rights situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

In a [letter](#) addressed to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, a bi-partisan group of US Senators, led by Carl Levin (D-MI), urged the Obama Administration to support the re-establishment of a human rights monitor to provide accountability for those perpetrating human rights violations in Iran. Senators John McCain (R-AZ), Jon Kyl (R-AZ), Joseph Lieberman (D-CT), Edward E. Kaufman (D-DE) and Lindsey Graham (R-SC) joined Levin in asserting, "We believe such a monitor could help document the regime's ongoing human rights abuses; deter further human rights abuses by the Iranian government; and encourage Iran to come into compliance with its international human rights obligations."

On September 8, 2010 the European Parliament passed a [resolution](#) that expressed concern about the human rights situation in Iran and also urged the re-establishment of a UN mandate for a Special Rapporteur to investigate human rights abuses in Iran. The resolution calls on Iranian authorities to immediately release all imprisoned human rights lawyers and peaceful protestors, and to allow human rights organizations to monitor the situation in the country. In addition, it calls for the expansion of the EU travel ban and freezing of assets to include those responsible for human rights violations in Iran.

Civil society calls on Community of Democracies to take concrete action on women's rights

In timing with the 65th Session of the UN General Assembly currently being held in New York City, the Community of Democracies, along with the Council of Women World Leaders, convened a high-level meeting of the Community of Democracies to discuss the role of women in democratic governance.

Hannah Forster, chairperson of the African Democracy Forum and member of the [International Steering Committee of the Community of Democracies' Nongovernmental Process](#) (ISC/CD), a global network of civil society organizations committed to democracy and human rights, [addressed](#) the Community of Democracies on its theme of "Women as a Critical Force in Democratic Governance." Speaking on behalf of the ISC/CD, Forster called on members of the Community of Democracies to ratify all relevant human rights treaties that impact the human rights of women and girls without reservations; promote gender parity policies in leadership and decision making; increase resources for women's economic, social and political empowerment; eliminate discrimination and violence against women; and provide support for the Community of Democracies working group on gender equality and the rights of women.

"Since peace and democracy are inextricably linked, we must acknowledge that the realization of a sustained peace and democracy cannot be achieved without gender equality and the observance of the human rights of women," said Forster.

Leading the discussion were female presidents and prime ministers, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia, Roza Otunbayeva of Kyrgyzstan, Michelle Bachelet of Chile, Dalia Grybauskaitė of Lithuania, Emily de Jongh-Elhage of Netherlands Antilles, Helen Clark of New Zealand, and Tarja Halonen of Finland.