



## **NGOs Applaud US Commitment to Second UN Human Rights Council Term**

We congratulate the US government on the successes that it achieved at the 16<sup>th</sup> session of the Human Rights Council (HRC) and welcome the announcement that the United States intends to pursue a second term on the Council. US leadership since joining the Council has produced significant results, demonstrating both the value of US engagement and the capacity of the HRC to address crisis situations as well as chronic human rights violations worldwide. But many problems at the Human Rights Council remain, underscoring the need for continued leadership and engagement by the United States.

We welcome the resolution to appoint a special rapporteur for the Islamic Republic of Iran as a demonstration of the international community's commitment to address serious ongoing human rights violations in that country. An independent human rights monitor in Iran marks an important step toward holding the Iranian government accountable for its violent and repressive crackdown on political dissent. US leadership at the HRC has helped counter a worrisome trend away from addressing severe country-specific situations. The action on Iran, championed by the US, is the first new country-specific special procedures mandate to be established since the Council's creation and reaffirms the Council's responsibility for monitoring serious human rights situations.

US diplomacy played a vital role in addressing other urgent country situations, including strong resolutions on Cote d'Ivoire, Tunisia, Guinea, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Burma. The creation of commissions of inquiry for Libya and Cote d'Ivoire shows what can be accomplished when democratic countries take the lead. Similarly, US engagement was vital to derailing the dangerous "defamation of religions" concept and replacing it with a resolution on religious intolerance that protects the right of individuals to freedom of belief and freedom of expression.

In less than two years, constructive US engagement has brought about a perceptible shift in culture and agenda-setting at the HRC. Yet, major challenges remain, including eliminating the Council's disproportionate focus on Israel and increasing attention on other ongoing and emerging human rights priorities. Given recent developments in the Middle East and North Africa, both new challenges and opportunities lie ahead and we encourage the United States to continue building broad cross-regional partnerships at the HRC to advance the promotion and protection of human rights worldwide. In the process, the US should continue to lead and energize other Council members to strengthen the HRC and move the body further in the direction of fulfilling its mandate, including by improving its membership. At a time when leadership on human rights is needed, we applaud the decision of the US government to continue to make a difference by seeking a second term on the HRC.

This statement is endorsed by the following organizations:

Better World Campaign

Citizens for Global Solutions

Democracy Coalition Project

Freedom House

Human Rights First

Institute for Asian Democracy

Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights

Open Society Foundations

Physicians for Human Rights

United Nations Association of the United States of America

U.S. Campaign for Burma