

Human Rights Council holds general debate on human rights situations that require the Council's attention

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Hears Presentation of Report on Mali, Concludes Interactive Dialogue with Special Rapporteur on Situation of Human Rights in Iran

The Human Rights Council held a general debate this morning on human rights situations that require the Council's attention. Under the same agenda item, it heard the presentation of the report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on Mali, and concluded its interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran.

Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, Kyung-wha Kang, presenting the High Commissioner's report on Mali, said that the report outlined human rights violations committed primarily by armed groups which controlled Northern Mali, but also raised issues concerning the South of the country. The report also documented allegations of extrajudicial killings and summary executions by the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad and other groups in the name of a particular interpretation of Sharia, and also underlined violations of the economic, social and cultural rights of the population of the North. The recent military intervention in the North was followed by a serious escalation in retaliatory violence by Government soldiers who appeared to be targeting Tuareg and Arab ethnic groups. Inflammatory messages transmitted through the country's media stigmatized members of those communities.

Malick Coulibaly, Minister of Justice of Mali, speaking as a representative of the concerned country, said the report provided substantial and varied information on the human rights situation in the country and showed only too clearly how grave the situation was. This was the result of the unjustified and unacceptable aggression of which Mali had been a victim, due to the illegal occupation by armed groups in the North. It was important to underline that the armed bands had carried out indescribable atrocities in Mali. Since January 2013, some sense of freedom had been achieved thanks to the welcome intervention of France.

Speakers condemned the violence in Mali, particularly violent acts committed by the rebels in the North and reprisals against the civilian population. The international

community should support Mali in the process of national reconciliation, justice system reform and other measures. Those responsible for violations of human rights and humanitarian law must be brought to justice. In this regard, the invitation of Mali to the International Criminal Court to conduct a preliminary investigation was welcome, as was the deployment of United Nations human rights observers. Delegations called on Mali to hold a dialogue involving all members of the Malian society and noted that the humanitarian situation in Mali also required attention.

Speaking in the general debate on human rights situations that require the Council's attention were Ireland on behalf of the European Union, Gabon on behalf of the African Group, Senegal on behalf of the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie, United States, Germany, Czech Republic, Spain, Sierra Leone, Ecuador, Austria, Switzerland, Côte d'Ivoire, Benin, Mauritania, Japan, China, Algeria, Morocco, Norway, Australia, Senegal, Iran, Cuba, United Kingdom, Denmark, Canada, Croatia, Luxembourg, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, France, New Zealand, Netherlands, Belgium, Belarus, Slovakia, Togo and Sweden.

The following non-governmental organizations also took the floor in the general debate: European Region of International Lesbian Federations, World Organization against Torture, Human Rights Watch, International Federation for Human Rights League, Baha'i International Community, Human Rights House Foundation, Verein Sudwind Entwicklungspolitik, Cairo Institute for Human Rights, Save the Children International, Franciscans International, Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l'amitié entre les peuples, Society for Threatened People, Syriac Universal Alliance, Jubilee Campaign, Press Emblem Campaign, International Humanist and Ethical Union, Espace Afrique International, Comité International pour le Respect et l'Application de la Charte Africaine, Centre for Legal and Social Studies, Human Rights Now, Femmes Afrique Solidarité, North-South XXI, Organization for Defending Victims of Violence, CIVICUS, International Association of Democratic Lawyers, Centre Europe Tiers Monde, International Catholic Child Bureau, British Humanist Association, International Fellowship of Reconciliation, International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racism, United Nations Watch, Union of Arab Jurists, World Environment and Resources Council, International Commission of Jurists, World Muslim Congress, France Liberté Fondation Danielle Mitterrand, Amnesty International, Pasumai Thaayagam Foundation, International Human Rights Association of American Minorities, Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada, World Federation of Democratic Youth, Rencontre Africaine pour la défense des droits de l'homme, Centre for Inquiry, Centre for Environmental and Management Studies, International Youth and Student Movement for the United Nations, International Association for Democracy in Africa, International Educational Development, Japanese Workers' Committee for Human Rights, Ingénieurs du Monde,

Organizations pour la Communication en Afrique et de Promotion de Latin America Coopération Economique Internationale, Centrist Democratic International, Indian Council of South America, Liberation, Action Internationale pour la Paix et le Développement dans la Région des Grand Lacs, European Centre for Law and Justice, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, United Towns Agency for North-South Cooperation, International Buddhist Relief Organization, World Barua Organization and Centre for Human Rights and Peace Advocacy.

Ahmed Shaheed, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran, presented his report on Monday, 11 March in the afternoon and a summary of his statement can be found [here](#).

In his concluding remarks, Mr. Shaheed said that in the preparation of the report he had relied on 169 witnesses who had given him evidence, the reports of other human rights bodies and credible international organizations, laws passed by the Iranian Parliament and the Government's statements published in the media. The large number of unanswered communications that he had sent to Iran hampered the reporting process; the Special Rapporteur had received eight replies from Iran, which unfortunately were not in the required format and did not provide the necessary information.

Iran, in concluding remarks, said that the remarks made yesterday by the representative of Iran did not intend to target the personal integrity of the Special Rapporteur, but rather referred to his working methods. Concerning the case of the five persons allegedly arrested for contacting the Special Rapporteur, Iran said that they were criminals arrested for the crimes they had committed, including the crime of terrorism, and they had been sentenced with due process.

In the interactive dialogue with Mr. Shaheed, speakers said that Iranian authorities systematically persecuted ethnic and religious minorities, including Baha'is, Christians, Jews, Sufis, and Sunni Muslims, which was in direct contravention of Iran's obligations under the United Nations Charter. Iran remained a pressing matter for the Council and the establishment of an open, non-politicized and transparent dialogue with Iran should be a priority. Other speakers said that they considered country mandates to be politicized and selective. The Council should have opted for a dialogue with Iran instead. The Universal Periodic Review, in which Iran participated fully, was a far more useful mechanism.

Speaking in the interactive dialogue on Iran were Canada, Maldives, France, China, Slovakia, United Kingdom, Belarus, Slovenia, New Zealand, Cuba, Germany, Belgium, Zimbabwe, Syria, Australia and Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

The following non-governmental organizations also took the floor: Verein Sudwind Entwicklungspolitik, Organization for Defending Victims of Violence, Imam Ali's Popular Students Relief Society, Islamic Women's Institute and Centre for Inquiry.

Nepal, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Sudan, China, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Cuba, Ethiopia, Mauritania, Sri Lanka and Democratic People's Republic of Korea spoke in right of reply at the end of the meeting.

During its afternoon meeting, the Council will hear the presentation of reports by the Independent Expert on the right of minorities, the Forum on Minority Issues, and the Advisory Committee, and will then hold a general debate on the Council's subsidiary bodies and mechanisms.

Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Iran

Canada said that Iranian authorities systematically persecuted ethnic and religious minorities, including Baha'is, Christians, Jews, Sufis, and Sunni Muslims, which was in direct contravention of Iran's obligations under the United Nations Charter. Iran's upcoming presidential election should mark a clear break from calculated efforts to deny Iranians their most basic freedoms. Canada condemned the recent mass arrest of Iranian journalists and bloggers.

Maldives said that the situation in Iran remained a pressing matter for the Council. The establishment of an open, non-politicized and transparent dialogue with Iran should be a priority. Maldives believed that cooperation and mutual respect would be underlying foundations for a productive interaction between the country concerned and the international community, and called on Iran to increase its engagement with the Council.

France said that it shared the concerns of the Special Rapporteur about the violation of the civil, political, economic and social rights of the Iranian population. The number of executions in Iran was alarming. It was also worrying that persons charged with minor offences, often minors, were given death penalty sentences. France called upon Iran to fully cooperate with the Special Rapporteur and give him full access to its territory.

China said it always advocated for all countries to engage in constructive dialogue on the basis of mutual respect and to solve their differences in the human rights field in an appropriate manner. The Human Rights Council should uphold the principles of universality and objectivity and refuse the practice of politicization of human rights issues and the Special Rapporteur should play a constructive role in his actions in Iran.

Slovakia was concerned about the extent of executions carried out in Iran and took negative note of the punitive State action against human rights defenders and members of civil society. Slovakia called on Iran to establish an immediate moratorium on the death penalty, to release all prisoners of conscience, and to pay special attention to the legal framework that discriminated against women and religious and ethnic minorities.

United Kingdom said that the reports of widespread use of torture in Iran and reports that 60 per cent of victims suffered “sexual torture” were horrifying. How had Iran responded to those reports and would it launch investigations? The United Kingdom remained deeply concerned about the persecution of religious and ethnic minorities, and the harassment of women campaigning for improvements of their socio-economic and legal rights.

Belarus said that it considered country mandates to be politicized and selective, and considered the document presented by the Special Rapporteur to be detrimental because it had been compiled by secondary, dubious sources. It was obvious that the Special Rapporteur could not act objectively. The Council should have opted for a dialogue with Iran instead. The Universal Periodic Review, in which Iran participated fully, was a far more useful mechanism.

Slovenia said that it regretted that the Special Rapporteur was not allowed to visit Iran, and called on Iran to fully cooperate with that mechanism of the Council by opening its doors to the mandate holder. Slovenia expressed concern about the prosecution, arrests, and criminalization of members of religious minorities contrary to the internationally recognized right to freedom of religion or belief. Had Iran taken any steps to remedy the situation of the Baha’i people?

New Zealand said that it was gravely concerned about the systematic discrimination faced by religious and ethnic minorities in Iran and about the use of the death penalty for ill-defined crimes. Despite signs that Iran had made progress regarding the access of women to education, more should be done to increase the political empowerment of women. Iran should cooperate with the Council and allow the Special Rapporteur full access to the country.

Cuba said that the existence of the Special Rapporteur on Iran and the interactive dialogue today were evidence of politicization and double standards in the Human Rights Council. Cuba rejected country resolutions and mandates on countries of the South and said that human rights were not the real reason for the way Iran was treated in the Human Rights Council, but this was due to the regime change by the United States.

Germany remained deeply concerned about the increasing repression against Iranian human rights defenders and activists and about signals that pointed to an increase in repressive measures against opposition and critical journalists and bloggers in the run up to the Presidential elections. Iran continued to apply the death penalty in a wide range of criminal offences, including against persons below the age of 18.

Belgium welcomed the fact that the Special Rapporteur sought cooperation of the Iranian Government and was concerned about alarming reports of State action against individuals suspected of communicating with Special Procedures. Belgium shared the alarm over the escalating rate of executions in the county, and about the human rights situation of religious minorities, particularly the Baha'is and Dervishes.

Zimbabwe said that it did not subscribe to the imposition of country specific Special Procedure mandates because they tended to be prosecutorial, politicized and selective. The protection and promotion of human rights should be based on the principles of universality, indivisibility and interdependence. Zimbabwe believed that the Council should promote a spirit of cooperation and constructive dialogue with Iran.

Syria said that Iran had made efforts to cooperate with the Council and had accepted all the relevant mechanisms. The Council was operating under pressure from certain countries, including the United States and Europe. As a result, some of the information included in the report was biased and required further investigation. Syria condemned the singling out of specific States and said that the mandate of the Special Rapporteur should be ended.

Australia remained deeply concerned about the intimidation and arbitrary arrest of human rights and political activists, the suppression of the freedom of assembly, and the treatment of ethnic and religious minorities in Iran. Australia urged Iran to cease all executions, respect the human rights of all detainees and ensure that trials were conducted in a fair manner. The arrest and harassment of journalists was a matter of concern.

Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia said that torture and ill treatment of prisoners continued to be practiced by security forces in Iran and the death penalty remained of deepest concern. According to some reports, more than 900 persons had been executed between 2011 and 2013, while Iran led the world in execution of juvenile offenders. In view of all of this, the mandate on Iran should be extended.

Verein Sudwind Entwicklungspolitik, speaking in a joint statement, expressed its dismay at the increasing presence of governmentally organized non-governmental organizations in the Council. Discriminatory selection procedures for candidates and the restrictions on

freedom of expression and assembly meant that the Presidential elections would not be free. Widespread and systematic torture existed in Iran.

Organization for Defending Victims of Violence said that the human rights situation in Iran should be viewed in the context of imposed military threats and economic and social sanctions. The Special Rapporteur had ignored those immense threats affecting Iran, for example by ignoring the organized crime of drug trafficking.

Imam Ali's Popular Students Relief Society said that the effects of unilateral and coercive sanctions imposed on Iran, which came mainly from the United States and the European Union, had placed enormous pressure on the country. In light of the biased sanctions imposed on Iran, the preparation and submission of a report by Iran was pointless.

Islamic Women's Institute said that three decades of human rights resolutions issued against Iran had only resulted in the deepening of mistrust and had reduced the possibility of mutual understanding. In addition, Iran had had to endure the most damaging and harshest sanctions, particularly from the West. The Council should make use of its Universal Periodic Review mechanism instead.

Centre for Inquiry drew the Council's attention to a report which was published yesterday by an organization called "Freedom from Torture", detailing thousands of torture cases in Iran. The report clearly showed that torture was used extensively in Iran and that it was a State policy.

Concluding Remarks

Iran, in closing remarks, said that the remarks made yesterday by the representative of Iran did not intend to target the personal integrity of the Special Rapporteur, but rather referred to his working methods. Concerning the case of the five persons allegedly arrested for contacting the Special Rapporteur, Iran said that they were criminals arrested for the crimes they had committed, including the crime of terrorism and had been sentenced by due process. On the case of Mr. Beheshti who had died in police custody, Iran said that in every country, people were unfortunately killed in prisons; Iran had arrested the police officers responsible and the due process was ongoing. Torture happened but it was not a policy of the country and was forbidden by its laws.

AHMED SHAHEED, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran, in his concluding remarks, thanked all the delegations and said that in the preparation of the report he had relied on 169 witnesses who had given him evidence, the reports of other human rights bodies and credible international organizations, laws passed by the Iranian

Parliament and the Government's statements published in the media. The large number of unanswered communications that he had sent to Iran hampered the reporting process; the Special Rapporteur had received eight replies from Iran, which unfortunately were not in the required format and did not provide the necessary information. Turning to the question of cultural relativism, Mr. Shaheed said that the right to life was sacred and applied to everybody regardless of their sexual orientation. The Special Rapporteur reiterated his concern about the high rate of imprisonment of journalists which affected the media freedom in the country and said that stoning still existed and juveniles were still executed.

Documentation

The Council has before it the **Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Mali** ([A/HRC/22/33](#)); and a corrigendum to the report of the **High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Mali** ([A/HRC/22/33/Corr.1](#)).

The Council has before it the **Report of the Secretary-General on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran** ([A/HRC/22/48](#)); and an addendum to the report of the **Secretary-General on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran concerning the comments of the Islamic Republic of Iran on the report** ([A/HRC/22/48/Add.1](#)).

The Council has before it a **Note verbale dated 21 February 2013 from the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the President of the Human Rights Council** ([A/HRC/22/G/6](#)).
Presentation of the Report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on Mali

KYUNG-WHA KANG, United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, presenting the report of the High Commissioner on the situation of human rights in Mali, said the report was based on the findings of special missions which were deployed to Mali. The report outlined human rights violations committed primarily by armed groups which controlled Northern Mali, but also raised issues concerning the South of the country. The report also documented allegations of extrajudicial killings and summary executions by the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad and other groups in the name of a particular interpretation of Sharia, and also underlined violations of the economic, social and cultural rights of the population of the North. There were also reports of sexual abuse by rebel groups, and concerns were raised about allegations that members of the military and the police were detained and tortured. The recent military intervention in the North was followed by a serious escalation in retaliatory violence by

Government soldiers who appeared to be targeting Tuareg and Arab ethnic groups. Inflammatory messages transmitted through the country's media stigmatized members of those communities.

The human rights issues requiring urgent attention were: the displacement of populations from Northern Mali; an increase in incidences of ethnically motivated human rights violations, including violence; and the continuing inefficiency of the Government's response to human rights violations. The number of refugees leaving the country had increased significantly, with almost 45,000 persons fleeing to Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Niger. Ms. Kang said that it had been difficult to verify all the allegations of human rights violations given the limited timeframe, and called on the Malian authorities to protect the communities at risk and to ensure that their troops acted in accordance with human rights law and international humanitarian law. Allegations of involvement of members of the Malian army in acts of reprisals against civilians should be investigated.

Statement by the Concerned Country

MALICK COULIBALY, Minister of Justice of Mali, speaking as the representative of the concerned country, said that when the Minister of Justice was faced with grave violations and came three times in less than nine months before the Human Rights Council, it was neither the charm of the city nor the sumptuous nature of this room that drew the Minister to Geneva. The report provided substantial and varied information on the human rights situation in the country and showed only too clearly how grave the situation was. This was the result of the unjustified and unacceptable aggression of which Mali had been a victim, due to the illegal occupation of the North of the country by armed groups. It was important to spell out that they were not talking about isolated cases that would be put before justice and punished, but atrocities that had been committed before justice had had a chance to do its work. Bringing the matter before the International Criminal Court showed that they were dealing with impunity and something had to be done. It was important to underline that the armed bands had carried out indescribable atrocities in Mali. It was also important to recall that more than 10,000 demobilized ex-combatants had been found jobs in the country and many of them now occupied senior posts. Since January 2013, some sense of freedom had been achieved thanks to the welcome intervention of France. Mali was determined to take up challenges in full compliance with human rights and reiterated that it was open to cooperating with the Human Rights Council and other agencies of the United Nations system. It did not wish to simply stand by and observe.

General Debate on Human Rights Situations that Require the Council's Attention

Ireland, speaking on behalf of the European Union, urged the Council to condemn human rights violations in Syria and extend the mandate of the Commission of Inquiry. In light of the gravity and chronic nature of human rights violations in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the European Union and Japan would present a resolution to establish a Commission of Inquiry in that country. The situation in Sri Lanka should remain on the Council's agenda and China should abolish the re-education through labour system.

Gabon, speaking on behalf of the African Group, condemned the violence in Mali, particularly violent acts committed by the rebels in the North. The African Group welcomed the measures the Government had undertaken to bring to account those responsible for violations, the setting up of the Commission for Dialogue and Reconciliation and the decision to hold elections in July. The international community should support Mali in the process of national reconciliation, justice system reform and other measures.

Senegal, speaking on behalf of the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie, condemned the abuses committed in Mali, particularly in the North, and the reprisals against the civilian population. Those responsible for violations of human rights and humanitarian law must be brought to justice. In this regard, the invitation of Mali to the International Criminal Court to conduct a preliminary investigation was welcome, as was the deployment of United Nations human rights observers.

United States said that it remained deeply concerned about the deplorable human rights situations in Iran, Syria and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. In Darfur, Sudan armed proxy militias and sustained a climate of impunity for abuses. Belarus restricted freedoms of expression, assembly and movement. China silenced dissent through arrests, convictions and enforced disappearances. Eritrea, Cuba, Venezuela, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan also limited basic freedoms.

Germany said that the situation of human rights in Eritrea, Burundi and Equatorial Guinea was deplorable. Basic freedoms were restricted by law in Belarus, and in China Tibetans were detained and given harsh sentences. Violations of human rights also occurred in Syria, Iran, Cambodia and Lao People's Democratic Republic. In Nepal, human rights defenders were accused of working against national interests; they were identified as enemies of the people and received threats.

Czech Republic expressed concerns about the violations of human rights and humanitarian law in Syria, and the intimidation of political activists and journalists in Belarus. The deterioration of the human rights situation in China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Eritrea, Iran and the Democratic Republic of the Congo was

alarming. On the other hand, efforts made by Ethiopia and Myanmar to improve their human rights situation were a positive development.

Spain was dismayed at human rights violations in Syria and called for a cessation of violence. It also referred to the worrying situation in Mali and the serious repercussions that the conflict was having on the region. Spain joined calls for Sudan and South Sudan to make all efforts to respect the human rights of its citizens. It also expressed concern with regard to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Iran.

Sierra Leone said, with regards to Mali, that the primary concern of friendly nations had been to bring an end to the conflict. It was obvious that the Government of Mali was willing to cooperate in addressing the human rights concerns in the country. The role of the Human Rights Council should be to provide technical cooperation and support to enable the human rights situation to be brought back to what it was before the conflict.

Ecuador said that the United States' use of drones was the worst example of extra judicial killings, and it was ironic that the United States used drones and then asked transparency of other countries. Ecuador demanded that the Council and Special Rapporteurs carry out transparent and independent investigations on renditions, use of drones and secret prisons where there was torture and denial of human rights.

Austria was concerned about the increasing number of violent attacks on persons belonging to religious minorities and the rising legal restrictions on freedom of religion, including in Iran and Pakistan. The situations of the Tamil minority in Sri Lanka, the self-immolations among Tibetans in China and discrimination against the Rohingya in Myanmar, as well as the use of the death penalty for juvenile offenders, pregnant women and for drug-related offences were issues of concern to Austria.

Switzerland said that the human rights situation in Mali, where violations were committed by all parties to the conflict, had considerably deteriorated. Switzerland opposed the death penalty under any circumstances and was concerned about the increasing number of executions in Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Iran. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea should abolish labour and re-education camps. Cuba and Viet Nam should immediately start serious reforms to ensure civil and political rights.

Côte d'Ivoire deplored the deterioration of the situation in Mali which undermined the situation in the Economic Community of West African States and welcomed the setting up of the Commission for Dialogue and Reconciliation, the establishment of an electoral calendar and the scheduling of an election date in July 2013. Further, the international

community should address the alarming humanitarian situation in Mali.

Benin said that the strategies designed to resolve the crisis in Mali, which had erupted while Benin held the presidency of the African Union, were unable to stop the degradation of the human rights situation in the country. Following the French intervention, the international community was providing assistance to the victims of the terrorist acts which had been carried out in the North. It was vital that Mali organized free and fair elections for the benefit of its people.

Mauritania said that the report on Mali meant that the Council was paying attention to the situation in the country, and condemned all atrocities and violations of human rights committed by terrorist groups in the North of Mali. Mauritania called on the international community to help Mali through an inclusive dialogue involving all members of the Malian society. The humanitarian situation in Mali also required attention.

Japan expressed concern about the systematic and widespread violation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which showed no signs of improvement. Japan raised the issue of the abductions of Japanese and other citizens, and called on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to address this issue. Japan welcomed the improvement of the human rights situation in Myanmar.

China said that it was of the view that in considering agenda item 4, the Human Rights Council should abide by the principles of conducting a constructive dialogue on the basis of equality and mutual respect, and that it should avoid politicization, as well as naming and shaming. Member States should respect different human rights development paths chosen by different countries with respect to their situation.

Algeria condemned the violations and abuses of human rights with regards to the report on Mali. Algeria was particularly concerned about atrocities committed against people in the north of the country and was worried that things would get worse if nothing was done about this. A human rights-based approach had to characterize the end of the crisis in Mali and an inclusive dialogue with all the players was important.

Morocco said the presence of the Minister of Justice of Mali in Geneva, as well as tangible measures taken by the Government, reflected Mali's commitment to human rights. Morocco was concerned by the grave violations of human rights committed by armed groups in the North of Mali, as noted in the report, and welcomed the mobilisation of the international community.

Norway remained deeply concerned about the extensive use of the death penalty,

including mass executions in Iran, and urged Yemen to immediately stop the execution of juveniles and abolish the death penalty. Norway welcomed the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and urged all parties to fulfil their commitments and so contribute to the restoration of security and respect for human rights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Australia deplored widespread human rights violations in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and urged this Government to address the prevalence of hunger and malnutrition and the appalling conditions in political prisons. The situation in Sudan and South Sudan and the atrocities occurring in Blue Nile and South Kordofan were of continuing concern to Australia which deplored rape and other forms of sexual violence endured by the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Senegal said that despite the crisis situation, the Malian authorities showed they were in favour of the efforts of the international community, which was evident in Mali's cooperation with the Universal Periodic Review and the request for an investigation that it had sent to the International Criminal Court. The Council must provide technical assistance to Mali in full compliance for human rights and inclusive political dialogue.

Iran drew attention to the large number of human rights violations by the United States both within and outside its territory, including the use of torture of detainees and the establishment of secret interrogation centres around the world. The United States and several European States, such as the United Kingdom and France, were responsible for discrimination on religious and ethnic grounds. In Canada the human rights of Muslims and of indigenous peoples were being violated.

Cuba said that many industrialized countries, especially the United States, continued to introduce in the Council the harmful practices that had brought the Human Rights Commission into disrepute. Moreover, those States used the Council to promote the intervention in the internal affairs of other countries. Why did the United States remain silent on the use of drones which caused many killings and on the operation of secret detention centres around the world?

United Kingdom said that it remained seriously concerned about reports of widespread and systematic human rights violations in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and about the human rights situation in Syria. Political freedoms were threatened in Sudan, and Iran's human rights record was appalling. The United Kingdom welcomed efforts made by Mali and the international community to restore Mali's territorial integrity.

Denmark said that it was deeply disturbed by the horrific situation in Syria, where the armed opposition had equally committed crimes. Denmark strongly urged the Security Council to refer the situation to the International Criminal Court. In Mali all parties had to respect human rights and international humanitarian law obligations. Denmark also expressed concern with regards to Bahrain, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Sudan and Sri Lanka.

Canada remained alarmed by the Iranian regime's persecution of religious and ethnic minorities. Canada called on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to immediately close all political prison camps. It was also gravely concerned by the worsening human rights situation across Sudan. The Sri Lankan authorities were called upon to establish an independent investigation into credible allegations of humanitarian law and human rights violations committed during the conflict.

Croatia said it was worried by reports that the conflict in Syria was becoming sectarian, with the conduct of parties becoming significantly more radicalized and militarized. Croatia particularly condemned all grave violations committed against children, and was appalled by reports that sexual violence was being used as a weapon of war. The tragedy had a human face, behind the numbers in millions.

Luxembourg said that the humanitarian situation in Syria was worsening on a daily basis and that assistance must reach all who needed it independent of their political affiliations. Luxembourg took positive note of the invitation Mali had sent to the International Criminal Court to conduct preliminary investigations and was ready to join with the funding for the deployment of human rights observers.

Democratic People's Republic of Korea said that the United States and Western countries continued to commit human rights violations throughout the world under the disguise of combating terrorism. Discrimination against indigenous peoples and immigrants, violence against women and other human rights violations went unpunished. The Council should perform its mission on the principles of universality and objectivity.

France said France had come to the aid of Mali which was bruised under the yolk of Islamic terrorism and that the rapid response it had provided should be continued by the Malians themselves, Africans and other nations as a part of the United Nations peacekeeping force. There could be no impunity. Human rights observers must be deployed on the ground and the international community must remain mobilized with regard to the situation in Mali.

New Zealand said that there had been some positive steps but also some disappointing

setbacks in Fiji. New Zealand urged Fiji to uphold freedom of speech, assembly and the media. Recent videos depicting beating and torture of prisoners by security officers had caused widespread concern and New Zealand welcomed that the Government said it would conduct a thorough investigation of the incident.

Netherlands urged the Government of Sudan to grant access to humanitarian organizations to relieve the plight of internally displaced persons. It urged the Syrian authorities to leave the path to self-destruction and to end the ever-growing suffering of its people. The Netherlands called on Iranian authorities to respect fundamental human rights and improve the precarious situation of human rights defenders.

Belgium said that the universality of human rights should guide their actions. The full enjoyment of rights was not so evident, as could be seen in the streets of Tunis, Cairo or Damascus. The rule of law had to prevail and respect for rights was incumbent on all States. Unacceptable situations should be condemned and if necessary the international community should come to the aid of those populations concerned.

Belarus stressed the importance of respectful dialogue on human rights issues based on universal coverage and expressed its concern for human rights violations taking place in a number of countries and the restrictions of economic, social and cultural rights in a number of European Union countries. Belarus was particularly alarmed about the situation of children in Sweden, Denmark and Finland.

Slovakia called for the immediate and unconditional release of those still in detention in connection with the 9 December events in Belarus. Slovakia also called for measures to protect civilians in the East of the Democratic Republic of the Congo who suffered torture and sexual violence. Sri Lanka should implement the recommendations from the report of its Reconciliation Commission

Togo said that Togo was one of the first to draw attention to the criminal networks operating in the Sub-Saharan Africa which risked the stability of the region. Togo welcomed the dynamic nature of the action undertaken to address the situation in Mali and the willingness of Mali to address the issue of accountability and punish perpetrators.

Sweden condemned the appalling developments in Syria and Iran. Sweden urged the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to take serious steps to address the human rights situation in the country. It called for the immediate release and rehabilitation of all political prisoners. It also expressed concern about the human rights situation in China and called upon it to ensure that the rights of persons belonging to minorities were respected.

European Region of International Lesbian Federations said that over the past year the situation of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons had worsened in Russia and Ukraine, which were both attempting to pass deeply worrying legislation, which also contributed to a climate of violence against these persons. It called on the Council to urge Russia and Ukraine to ensure that such laws were not adopted.

World Organization against Torture expressed deep concern about the deteriorating situation in Iran, particularly with regards to the continuing large number of execution sentences. The implementation of execution sentences against juveniles was also of particular concern. It was also deeply concerned that dozens of human rights defenders remained jailed.

Human Rights Watch said that the detention facility in Guantanamo Bay had now entered its twelfth year of operation and 166 detainees still remained there; 86 of those had been designated by the United States for release since 2010 and another 46 had been designated for indefinite detention. The United States should bring an end to those illegal practices by either releasing detainees or prosecuting them in civilian courts.

International Federation for Human Rights League said that women and girls were particular targets of violence during the conflict that ravaged Northern Mali for over a year; the Council should address this issue in its resolution on the human rights situation in this country and the Government should include women's rights into the roadmap for the transition that it had recently adopted.

Baha'i International Community said over the past seven years it had witnessed an upsurge in attacks against Iranian Baha'is. Impunity systematically covered Iranian officials and plainclothes agents and there was no hope for the Baha'is to obtain justice and protection from the system that treated them as enemies of the state.

Human Rights House Foundation said that the right to peacefully assemble was de facto banned in Azerbaijan. Human rights defenders, activists and journalists were arbitrarily arrested at those protests. Ahead of the October 2013 presidential elections, this was worrying. In Russia, laws were adopted last year aimed at criminalising the work and activities of human rights defenders.

Verein Sudwind Entwicklungspolitik said that Iran's continued support of the Syrian Government connected the two countries. The hunger strike of the Arab ethnic group of prisoners sentenced to death was one of the most important concerns relating to political prisoners. Sudwind demanded an international fact-finding committee to shed light on the

truth behind the events that happened at Kahrizad.

Cairo Institute for Human Rights said that a review of the situation in Egypt over the last eight months raised serious concerns about the extent to which the state of human rights had rapidly deteriorated under the current Government. The Cairo Institute called on the Human Rights Council to ensure that the Egyptian Government began to respect its international human rights obligations.

Save the Children International was concerned about the recruitment of children in Mali, their abduction, sexual violence and forced marriage into armed groups. All military forces and civilians deployed to Mali should receive specialized children protection pre-deployment training to prevent and monitor violations against children.

Franciscans International spoke about the human rights situation in the Papuan provinces of Indonesia and the repression of human rights defenders and political activists that was going on under the cover of anti-terrorism. Criminal proceedings must be initiated against the perpetrators to end the climate of impunity.

Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l'amitié entre les peuples appealed to the Council in the light of the ongoing violations of the rights of indigenous peoples in Cajamarca in Peru committed by the mining company Yanacocha. The mining operation was polluting the water with heavy metals and toxic products, making 800 sources and 100 wells unsuitable for human consumption.

Society for Threatened People said that human rights in Tibetan regions had significantly deteriorated since March 2008. It urged China to uphold its international pledges and obligations to protect all human rights, particularly religious freedom and freedom of expression of people in Tibet, Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia. The international community had to hold China accountable to its pledges and obligations.

Syriac Universal Alliance said that there was a real danger that Syria was becoming a battlefield for Islamist militant groups. Speaking for the Aramean Christians of Syria, it requested the combating parties to lay down their weapons. This battle could only be resolved through diplomacy and a focus on a peaceful resolution of the conflict. International governments must halt the supply of weapons to Syria.

Jubilee Campaign called for the establishment of a commission of inquiry on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. With regards to Iran, it referred to an arbitrarily detained individual, for a security offence as a result of his Christian belief, whose beatings were reportedly severe. It urged the Iranian authorities to provide urgent medical

care and recognise the arbitrary nature of this individual's detention.

Press Emblem Campaign said that in Turkey, severe restrictions on freedom of expression caused journalists, particularly those of Kurdish origin, to carry out their activities in extremely difficult conditions. The proceedings of the collective trial against Kurdish journalists in Turkey must be monitored and reported to the Council.

International Humanist and Ethical Union presented the case of a Moroccan person who had publicly declared his atheism and had to flee the country in fear for his life. Why was an atheist not allowed to be a citizen in Morocco and why did the constitution insist that anyone with an Islamic name must be a Muslim?

Espace Afrique International said that sectarian and religious minorities in Pakistan faced killing and rape from Jihadi groups and torture by intelligence agencies. The situation in Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan was even worse and because of the absence of the media it was extremely difficult to highlight the plight of the people in detail.

Comité International pour le Respect et l'Application de la Charte Africaine, expressed its utmost concern about refugees in the Tindouf camps and said the situation was going to get worse. Violations had become very serious and the refugees, especially the elderly, were suffering from malnutrition and high mortality rates. Those responsible for food aid had sold this aid to foreigners. It called on the High Commissioner to at least carry out a census of the inhabitants of the camps.

Centre for Legal and Social Studies drew attention to the situations in Honduras and Paraguay. The history of Latin America showed a relationship between coup d'états and violations of human rights. Both situations were not being covered by debates and it called particularly on the Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries to support the implementation of the recommendations on Honduras, and to closely follow the situation in Paraguay.

Human Rights Now was particularly concerned by the health risks of Iraqi children caused by toxic waste. This year, it had conducted investigations in Fallujah and documented serious birth defects. It urged the Governments of the United States and United Kingdom to investigate all grave human rights violations during the war and occupation in Iraq, and for the United Nations to conduct an independent investigation into violations since the end of the war.

Femmes Afrique Solidarité said that it was deeply alarmed about the war situation which existed in Mali today and which constituted a serious threat to the national and regional

security and peace. Thousands of persons had been forced to leave their homes and the situation in the North of the country had not been made secure. Serious human rights violations had been committed by terrorist and fundamentalist groups in the North against civilians, including women.

North-South XXI expressed concern about the continued impunity for the perpetrators of extremely serious human rights violations in Afghanistan and Iraq. States in the Council continued to provide weapons to rebels in Syria and to fuel the violence in the country. The Council's Commission of Inquiry was being used as a weapon against the people of Syria by some of the same States which had killed 3 million people in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Organization for Defending Victims of Violence said that appropriate and effective measures against terrorists had not been taken yet. As a result, human rights violations continued to occur when countering terrorism. Meanwhile, the adoption of double standards regarding terrorism had allowed terrorists to continue their activities. National and international entities should take effective steps to tackle the problem.

CIVICUS said that it remained concerned about Iran and serious violations of the rights of women and human rights defenders that were going on unabated, and the growing trend of arrests. It was equally concerned about Bahrain and the continuing curb on human rights defenders. It asked the Government, as a sign of attempted dialogue, to unconditionally release two human rights defenders and all peaceful activists.

International Association of Democratic Lawyers expressed dismay about the harsh penalties handed down in a tribunal in Morocco. Observers had observed that the trial was fraught with irregularities and evidence presented was weak. On Colombia, it hoped that discussions on a general agreement on ending the conflict would lead to a negotiated political solution. Violations continued to be carried out with impunity.

Centre Europe Tiers Monde said that many of the people of Tayrona de la Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, Colombia, had disappeared; they had been killed or displaced for having taken a neutral stance against legal or illegal armed groups. Colombia had signed or ratified a number of instruments that recognised the rights of minorities but these regulatory frameworks were not complied with on regular occasions.

International Catholic Child Bureau said that it was impossible for children to enjoy their right to education in the North of Mali because of extremely poor facilities. Many displaced children were not properly registered and lived in precarious conditions in the South. In addition, malnutrition in the country had reached critical levels, while the

recruitment of children as soldiers was continuous. The Council should implement a transitional mechanism to reinforce Malian institutions.

British Humanist Association said that freedom of expression was under sustained attack in Saudi Arabia, Iran, Mauritania, Pakistan and Morocco, where citizens were not allowed to express their views freely and were systematically persecuted. Meanwhile, protests against Islamic extremism were condemned as “Islamophobia”. It was the duty of the Council to uphold the right of freedom of expression at all times.

International Fellowship of Reconciliation drew attention to the plight of those fleeing Syria to avoid armed conflict. Syria imposed conscription on all male citizens and did not recognize the right of conscientious objectors. As a result, many persons in recent years had been forced to turn their guns against their fellow-civilians against their will. No person who had fled Syria should be deported to Syria against his or her will.

International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racism said that the invasion of Iraq was a crime against peace according to the Nuremberg Charter. The human rights of the Iraqi people were being violated all the time. The Human Rights Council had never condemned the illegal invasion and occupation of Iraq. It called for an end of occupation legacies, for an end to impunity, and for the payment of reparations to be made.

United Nations Watch, said she was the daughter of an opposition leader in Cuba. To date the Government had jailed most of Cuba’s opposition leaders. Her father had died in a traffic incident but it had later been confirmed that the murders were not incidental. Security services were threatening her and her family. She called on the United Nations to start an independent investigation into the death of her father.

Union of Arab Jurists, said with regards to Syria, that the report of the Commission of Inquiry on Syria had not only timidly approached the crimes committed by gangs in Syria, but it had also not mentioned the States that funded those gangs, which made the report flawed. If the Commission of Inquiry did not mention those countries then the report would be partial and it would amount to perjury.

World Environment and Resources Council said that Pakistan had transformed itself into a fountain of extremist terrorist groups, including Al-Qaeda. It was not surprising that the international community remained sceptical about Pakistan’s sincerity concerning its efforts to combat terrorism. Pakistan had yet to take action to punish those responsible for the Mumbai terrorist attack still in Pakistani territory.

International Commission of Jurists welcomed the draft resolution which promoted accountability and reconciliation in Sri Lanka. The recent removal of the Chief Justice by actions which were in contravention of the Constitution was indicative of the deterioration of the human rights situation in the country. In its Universal Periodic Review Sri Lanka had rejected recommendations on accountability.

World Muslim Congress said that the human rights situation in the regions of Jammu and Kashmir that were occupied by India required the Council's special attention. Serious human rights abuses were perpetrated by Indian armed forces over the past two decades without any consequences. Over 100,000 killings, 10,000 disappearances, 9,000 rape cases, and thousands of arbitrary detentions had been reported.

France Liberte Fondation Danielle Mitterrand, in a joint statement, said that when persons from Ashraf camp were transferred to Camp Liberty, there had been assurances made for their safety. Last month, Camp Liberty had come under missile and mortar attacks. The death toll would not have been so high had the protection wall not been removed. The group responsible had announced its intention to conduct such attacks in the future.

Amnesty International said that on 14 November 2012 Israeli forces launched a military operation in Gaza. In the same period, indiscriminate rockets were fired into Israel by Hamas. Amnesty International urged the Council to address the human rights situation and violations including crimes under international law committed during this military escalation of the conflict.

Pasumai Thaayagam Foundation said that the ongoing human rights crisis in Syria had reached a catastrophic level but some had remained apathetic. Impunity for war crimes committed in Sri Lanka in 2009 had now led to the unconstitutional expansion of power of the central Government and the deterioration of the rule of law. There was a need for the establishment of an independent international commission of inquiry.

International Human Rights Association of American Minorities said that the human rights situation of those living in Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir had worsened since the protests against the violation of Afzal Guru's rights, after he was denied a fair trial and executed. The crackdown on human rights defenders and political leaders in Kashmir continued unabated and the rights to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression had been muffled.

Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada, in a joint statement, said that it shared the Special Rapporteur's appreciation of the progress towards the recognition of human rights in

Myanmar and joined his call for the speedy release of all remaining prisoners of conscience without conditions. Restrictions on former prisoners of conscience should cease. Lawyers had been subjected to arbitrary revocation of their licences in judicial proceedings conducted privately and without representation.

World Federation of Democratic Youth said that the situation of human rights in Western Sahara had deteriorated significantly because of the escalation of violence employed by Morocco. It was alarming that the situation of human rights in Western Sahara continued to be ignored by the Council, and the United Nations had failed to resolve the problem for over four decades. Given the instability in the broader region, it was imperative that action be taken.

Rencontre Africaine pour la défense des droits de l'homme was deeply concerned about the stepping up of attacks and murders on albinos in Africa. The most recent survivor of such an attack, a 10-year-old boy, had had his arm cut off in a village in western Tanzania. The Human Rights Council must take up this appalling situation.

Centre for Inquiry said that early marriage of girls was one of leading causes of maternal mortality and the appalling statistics showed that 500 girls died every day as a result of early sexual intercourse and pregnancies. This was a human rights issue and the marriage of immature children had no religious justification.

Centre for Environmental and Management Studies said that nations could only progress when religion and diversity made life richer. It was unfortunate that in the modern world religion continued to be one of the most divisive factors and that religious minorities continued to suffer violence and discrimination.

International Youth and Student Movement for the United Nations said that the initiation of a war of aggression against Iraq was the supreme international crime and that all countries which had participated in the war which led to the occupation of Iraq should be held accountable. Human rights had been systematically violated and families had been destroyed and displaced. The time had come for accountability and justice for the people of Iraq.

International Association for Democracy in Africa said that there was considerable speculation about what the future held for Afghanistan and its people. Pakistan was a crucial State geographically and strategically, and internal upheavals in that country had direct consequences for the entire region, including Afghanistan. Military groups were now killing ordinary people in Pakistan, and the issue needed to be addressed.

International Educational Development, in a joint statement, said that mass atrocities had been carried out against the Tamil population in Sri Lanka during the civil war. The international community and the United Nations had failed to assist victims while those atrocities were occurring. The Tamil population was still suffering gross human rights violations and marginalization in Sri Lanka. The international community had a responsibility to act on the matter.

Japanese Workers' Committee for Human Rights said that 200,000 women and girls had been forced into sexual slavery by the Japanese Government and army during World War II, the so-called comfort women. Japan should take full responsibility for the actions of its military, accept legal responsibility and pay compensation to the survivors.

Ingénieurs du Monde said it had demanded a referendum in order for the Cuban people to express their will and had its activists arrested. The lack of civil and political rights was a critical issue in Cuba and the popular movement was being held back by the authoritarian Government.

Organizations pour la Communication en Afrique et de Promotion de Latin America Coopération Economique Internationale commended humanitarian organizations and said that humanitarian assistance must be increased. It asked for a transparent mechanism to be put in place to channel humanitarian assistance to those who needed it in the field.

Centrist Democratic International said that unarmed women and mothers had been attacked in a savage manner by armed military personnel in 2010 and had been killed in Morocco. The Council should condemn those actions and should continue to fight against impunity.

Indian Council of South America said that in Peru the State refused to recognize and respect the right to self-determination and protect the indigenous peoples against exploitation. The United States had removed Alaska and Hawaii in an illegal manner and by an irregular referendum. The Philippines needed to address the extra-judicial killings against indigenous leaders.

Liberation said that the human rights situation of indigenous peoples in North East India was deteriorating, which had disturbed peace and tranquillity in the region for more than six decades. The international community had failed to take decisive action to protect the population of the region. The Council should take action to protect the indigenous people, and India should respect its obligations under international law.

Action Internationale pour la Paix et le Développement dans la Région des Grand Lacs,

presented the case of a 23-year-old woman born in Tinduf camp, who renounced the violation of the rights of the Sahrawi women and the rape by Polisario officials.

European Centre for Law and Justice drew attention to the case of pastor Abelini who had been arrested in Iran while building an orphanage, and convicted to eight years in prison. He had been arrested because of his religion and this was a flagrant violation of the right to exercise a religion of choice.

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom said that the effect of climate change would be most acutely felt by those already vulnerable. The adverse impact of climate change on human rights must be urgently addressed and the Council should establish a Special Rapporteur on climate change and human rights.

United Towns Agency for North-South Cooperation said that human rights violations in Baluchistan amounted to crimes against humanity and were carried out with impunity. Those violations, which included the target killing of journalists, doctors and lawyers, were conducted by the Pakistani army and its sponsored death squads. A large number of families in the region lived below the poverty line.

International Buddhist Relief Organization said that the situation of human rights of women in India required the immediate attention of the Council. The silence kept by the Indian Government on the matter was a reflection of apathy and ignorance. The Council should take notice of such incidents of violence against women and should call on India to take prompt action to punish those involved in such heinous crimes.

World Barua Organization said that the Dalit community in India suffered severe discrimination, and perpetrators continued to violate the human rights of the Dalit with impunity. Women in particular suffered multiple forms of discrimination, including verbal abuse, physical assault and sexual harassment. The Council should take urgent notice of the gross human rights violations perpetrated against the Dalit and should act accordingly.

Centre for Human Rights and Peace Advocacy said that human rights violations were being committed by State and non-State actors in India, including violence against women, discrimination against religious minorities, and forced displacement in the name of development. All this warranted the urgent attention of the Council and India must take note of atrocities against women and urgently investigate rape cases.

Right of Reply

Nepal, speaking in a right of reply, said that despite the difficulty of managing the transition and the peace process, Nepal had been making great efforts in improving the human rights situation in the country. Nepal was a State party to 24 international human rights instruments, including the core ones, and allowed human rights organizations and defenders to operate freely and without restrictions. The statement by Germany made in reference to Nepal was therefore unsubstantiated.

Uzbekistan, speaking in a right of reply, said that statements made about the human rights situation in the country were not based on facts and did not take into account the progress made. There were 2,224 religious organizations carrying out work in Uzbekistan, including Muslim, Christian, Jew, Baha'i and Buddhist organizations. There were no limitations on the number of religious organizations operating in the country.

Venezuela, speaking in a right of reply, said that the North American empire with its policy against Venezuela was interfering in the internal affairs of Venezuela. The entire world knew about the free enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Venezuela, which was never anti-Semitic. No one suffered from censorship and no one was prosecuted for expressing their opinion, as was the case in the United States.

Sudan, exercising its right of reply to statements made by the Netherlands and Canada, said that their information was erroneous and their aim was to slander the Sudanese Government. Sudan drew attention to the violation of the rights of indigenous families in Canada, including the lack of adequate housing and the violation of their right to food. The rights of asylum seekers and migrant workers were also violated in Canada and the Netherlands.

China, exercising its right of reply to statements made by the United States, the European Union and some non-governmental organizations, said that their statements contained false information and that the commitment of China to the promotion of the rights of minorities in the country was clear. Tibetan separatists had used self-immolation in an attempt to advance the division of China. Such actions should be condemned by the international community. The Chinese people enjoyed full freedom of expression, including the right to criticize the Government. However, illegal actions were punished by law.

Turkmenistan, exercising its right of reply to a statement made by Switzerland, said that progress had been made in the promotion of democratic reform, which included the conduct of fair and transparent presidential elections last year, a new law on the mass media adopted this year, and the diversification of the ownership of newspapers and magazines.

Azerbaijan, speaking in a right of reply in response to unfounded remarks made by Norway, reiterated that there were no restrictions on freedom of expression in Azerbaijan. All non-governmental organizations operating in Azerbaijan were requested to comply with national legislation. Azerbaijan assured Norway that such interaction and attitudes against it would not be tolerated and any such remark would not be taken seriously by the Government. It did not understand the statement and remarks made, which were the product of imagination.

Cuba, speaking in a right of reply, said neither the United States nor Sweden could criticize anyone in the area of human rights as their hypocrisy deprived them of any legitimacy. The United States tried to conceal the truth on secret prisons, secret flights, and the assassination of thousands of civilians by drones. An anti-Cuban mercenary addressed the Council to try to blame the Government for the death of her father. This person was accredited by United Nations Watch, which no one took seriously. Ample proof showed that it was a lack of attention and care that led to the death of her father and another individual in an accident.

Ethiopia, speaking in a right of reply, refuted the unfounded allegations made by the Czech Republic. The existing Electoral Law was compatible with the Constitution of the country and was well elaborated to be compatible with the country's international human rights obligations. The electoral system had shown that it guaranteed citizens the ability to freely enact their rights. It also had a code of conduct, signed between political parties, which had now become the law of the land. The reasons behind the allegations made by the Czech Republic were not understood.

Mauritania, speaking in a right of reply concerning claims that a group of anti-slavery activists had been tortured, said that there was no slavery in the country. Slavery was criminalized and the Government was implementing various programmes aimed at the gradual elimination of the practice of slavery. The population of Mauritania was 100 per cent Muslim and accusations of lack of freedom of religion were baseless.

Sri Lanka, speaking in a right of reply, strongly refuted the assertion of attacks on the independence of the judiciary and reiterated that the laws were followed in the case of impeachment of the former Chief Justice. Sri Lanka was a founding member of the Commonwealth and was committed to its values and principles. Its longstanding commitment was demonstrated by the hosting of a meeting of Heads of Government in November this year.

Democratic People's Republic of Korea, speaking in a right of reply, categorically rejected politically motivated accusations and asked the countries concerned to refrain

from politicizing human rights issues. It also rejected accusations concerning abduction issues which had been finally resolved as per the provisions of the Pyongyang Declaration. Japan could not escape its legal and moral responsibilities for crimes against humanity and had no moral standing to take up human rights issues with other countries until it had settled crimes of the past.