

For immediate release - 12 June, 2009

States Attack Human Rights Experts at UN Rights Body

In an open letter to the United Nations Human Rights Council, thirty-five human rights organisations from every region of the world warned that recent “extraordinary attacks” by states on United Nations human rights experts at the Human Rights Council was “severely eroding the Council’s legitimacy and credibility.”

According to this global group of NGOs, which included international NGOs such as Amnesty and Human Rights Watch, as well as regional and national NGOs like the Asian Forum for Human Rights (Forum Asia) and the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, state delegations at the Council are carrying out “what appears to be a coordinated effort to intimidate” human rights experts, “individually and collectively.”

Such attacks at the ongoing 11th session of the Council “have focused in particular on the current Special Rapporteurs on freedom of expression and on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions. These Rapporteurs were subjected to threats of disciplinary action because they offered their expert analysis and recommendations on important human rights issues that they brought to the attention of this Council.”

The group of NGOs contend that these “political attacks” are “fundamentally an attack on and threat to the Council itself,” and go on to “appeal, in the strongest terms” for states at the HRC to refrain from undermining the independence of UN human rights experts, and “ensure that the long term integrity and credibility of the Human Rights Council itself are not sacrificed to political expedience.”

NOTES TO EDITOR:

- For more information please contact Nicola Spurr, Nicola@article19.org
- A full version of the letter with a complete list of all NGO signatories can be seen at: <http://www.article19.org/pdfs/letters/hrc-open-letter-on-mandate-holders.pdf>
- ARTICLE 19 is an independent human rights organisation that works around the world to protect and promote the right to freedom of expression. It takes its name from Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees free speech.