

New York, 26 October 2015

To: Member States candidates to the UN Human Rights Council

Cc: Member States of the UN General Assembly

Open Letter to candidates to the Human Rights Council

Excellency,

We are a diverse group of non-governmental organisations from all parts of the world working at national, regional and international levels who have contributed to the Human Rights Council (the Council) and its work since its establishment. We write to you regarding your candidacy for membership of the Council in 2016.

In establishing the Council in 2006, the General Assembly provided that Council members "shall uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights" and "fully cooperate with the Council" (GA Resolution 60/251).

We are concerned about the clear failure of some candidate countries to fully comply with these criteria. Failure by Council members to take effective measures to address violations of human rights for which they are responsible, particularly of a gross or systematic nature, or to fully cooperate with the Council and its mechanisms undermines the ability of the Council to promote and protect human rights and to demand full state cooperation with its mechanisms. While this letter focuses on three important requirements that help measure candidates' suitability as a Human Rights Council member, a more detailed assessment of each candidate's record in the promotion and protection of human rights and cooperation with the Human Rights Council must be made on a case-by-case basis by members of the General Assembly before they cast their votes.¹ This should also include consideration of the level of ratification of core international human rights treaties.

We are also concerned at the failure of some candidates to respect and enable the important role played by civil society, national human rights institutions, non-governmental organisations and human rights defenders in the promotion and protection of human rights at the national and international levels, including in the Council (Article 38 of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, GA Resolution 60/251 and the Human Rights Council's Institution Building Package).

We expand on each of these areas of concern below.

Cooperation with Special Procedures

As a candidate, it is incumbent on every State to set an example by cooperating fully with the Council's human rights mechanisms, in particular by:

¹ Information on Candidate States' human rights record based on two key criteria– outstanding requests for country visits by Special Procedures, and whether the State has been cited in the Secretary General's annual report on reprisals- is contained in annexes to this letter.

1. Issuing and honouring an *effective* standing invitation to the Special Procedures. This requires responding promptly to all requests for visits by providing one or more sets of specific possible dates within two months, and facilitating such visits in accordance with the Terms of Reference on Fact-finding Missions by Special Procedures;
2. Acting responsibly and respectfully in relations with Special Procedures and refraining from all attempts, by word or action, to interfere with the independence of mandate holders or to otherwise undermine their work;
3. Regularly providing information to the Special Procedures and to the Human Rights Council on how the recommendations arising from country visits have been implemented, and any obstacles to implementation;
4. Responding promptly and substantively to urgent appeals, letters of allegations and other communications by Special Procedures, taking into account the urgency of the communication; and
5. Supporting the creation of a mechanism to review and assess, on an annual basis, the degree of State cooperation with the Council and the Special Procedures, both in relation to Council members and candidates for Council membership.

Reprisals and intimidation

We are gravely concerned about acts of intimidation and reprisals against individuals and groups who seek to cooperate, have cooperated, or cooperate with the UN human rights system, including the Council, as well as against relatives of victims of human rights violations or those who have provided legal or other assistance to victims. In his most recent reports on 'Cooperation with the United Nations, its representatives and mechanisms in the field of human rights'* the Secretary General noted that "all acts of intimidation and reprisal, no matter how subtle or explicit, are completely and utterly unacceptable and should be halted immediately and unconditionally."

The Council depends heavily on the free and safe cooperation of human rights defenders for its effective functioning. It has a concomitant duty to prevent and immediately respond to threats and reprisals against those who cooperate with it. A group of 65 States made a clear statement in this regard at the 30th Session of the Human Rights Council, where it was noted that whilst States have the primary duty to prevent reprisals, the Human Rights Council itself has not only a moral but a 'legal duty to address reprisals'. The prevention of and effective response to reprisals requires a coordinated, systematised approach by the UN. In line with Council resolution 24/24, we consider that the Secretary-General should now appoint the focal point on the issue of reprisals as a means to safeguard the collaboration between human rights defenders and UN human rights mechanisms, taking into consideration the concerns raised by some States on some of the provisions in the resolution.

Ending reprisals and intimidation requires ongoing action and effective responses by all stakeholders. In particular, each candidate State should:

1. Take positive steps to facilitate safe and unimpeded access to the UN human rights mechanisms by all individuals and groups, and in particular human rights defenders;
2. Take all necessary measures to prevent intimidation and reprisals against human rights defenders and take appropriate action to provide remedies for all acts of intimidation and reprisals;

3. Inform the Council through its President and on an ongoing basis of steps taken to protect individuals mentioned in the Secretary-General's report on reprisals and to provide remedies, reparations and guarantees of non-recurrence;
4. Support recent initiatives by the President of the Council calling on States to immediately put an end to intimidation and harassment of individuals and groups cooperating or seeking to cooperate with the UN human rights mechanisms;
5. Support initiatives taken by the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner for Human Rights in their role in exposing reprisals and ensuring that States prevent and address them adequately and effectively; Cooperate fully with the focal point once established;
6. Commit to and call for enhanced monitoring and action by the Council of cases of intimidation and reprisals, including by considering the development of an online and regularly updated registry of allegations of intimidation and reprisals, as proposed by several of the panellists during the Council's panel on reprisals;
7. Maintain pressure on States that commit or tolerate reprisals, including by using bilateral and multilateral dialogue to raise cases of intimidation or reprisals as documented in the Secretary-General's report and discussing follow-up;
8. Prioritise protection for all human rights defenders including those who cooperate with the UN, through missions in Geneva and embassies around the world. This should be done in close coordination with all stakeholders involved in protecting human rights defenders, including the UN, regional and national actors;
9. Consider establishing focal points at the national level to address acts of intimidation and reprisals;
10. Review and where necessary change legislation, policies and practices that have the effect of undermining unhindered access to and communication with international human rights bodies and mechanisms and avoid adopting any such new legislation;
11. Take legislative and other measures to ensure the full and effective implementation of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders at the national level; and
12. Prevent the occurrence of intimidation or reprisals, including, where necessary, by developing and implementing specific legislation and policies and by issuing appropriate guidance to national authorities.

Respect for effective civil society participation

Human rights defenders, and national human rights institutions and independent civil society play a critical role in promoting human rights, development and the rule of law (see, eg [HRC/RES/24/21](#) and [HRC/RES/27/31](#)) and related accountability measures. Free and vibrant civil society participation at all levels is therefore essential, including at the local, national, regional and international levels. This implies that each candidate should:

1. Ensure that domestic legal and administrative provisions and their application enable , promote and protect an independent, diverse and pluralistic civil society; and
2. Support the full and effective participation of civil society in the work of the United Nations and the Human Rights Council in particular, including by guaranteeing right of everyone, individually and in association with others, to unhindered access to and communication with the United Nations, its representatives and mechanisms.

Your Excellency, we urge you to consider the above mentioned elements in the pursuit of your country's candidacy for membership on the Human Rights Council and would very much welcome your response to these recommendations at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,

African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies (ACDHRS)

Alliance for Democracy in Laos

Article 19

Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)

Asian Legal Resource Centre

Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies

CIVICUS

Conectas Direitos Humanos

East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project (EHAHRDP)

Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights

Four Freedoms Four

Front Line Defenders

Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Hawaii Institute for Human Rights

Human Rights Watch

INDIGENOUS

International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)

International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)

Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights

West African Human Rights Defenders Network (WAHRDN)

ANNEX I

A. Outstanding requests for Special Procedure Country Visits*

Bahamas (Visits undertaken: 1; visits outstanding: 1)	% visits carried out:	50%
Belgium (Visits undertaken: 3; agreed: 2)	% visits carried out:	60%
Burundi (Visits undertaken: 8; visits outstanding: 3)	% visits carried out:	73%
Cote d'Ivoire (Visits undertaken: 12; agreed: 5; visits outstanding: 2)	% visits carried out:	63%
Ecuador (Visits undertaken: 9; visits outstanding: 4)	% visits carried out:	69%
Ethiopia (Visits undertaken: 2; visits outstanding: 10)	% visits carried out:	17%
Georgia (Visits undertaken: 6; agreed: 3)	% visits carried out:	67%
Germany (Visits undertaken: 5; agreed: 1)	% visits carried out:	83%
Kenya (Visits undertaken: 9; agreed: 3; visits outstanding: 7)	% visits carried out:	47%
Kyrgyzstan (Visits undertaken: 4; agreed: 3; visits outstanding: 4)	% visits carried out:	36%
Lao DPR (Visits undertaken: 1; agreed: 1, visits outstanding: 3)	% visits carried out:	20%
Mongolia (Visits undertaken: 5; visits outstanding: 1)	% visits carried out:	83%
Pakistan (Visits undertaken: 2; agreed: 1; visits outstanding: 12)	% visits carried out:	13%
Panama (Visits undertaken: 2; visits outstanding: 1)	% visits carried out:	67%
Philippines (Visits undertaken: 4; agreed: 1; visits outstanding: 15)	% visits carried out:	20%
Republic of Korea (Visits undertaken: 12; agreed: 4; visits outstanding: 1)	% visits carried out:	71%
Slovenia (Visits undertaken: 2; visits outstanding: 0)	% visits carried out:	100%
Switzerland (Visits undertaken: 1; agreed: 2)	% visits carried out:	33%
Togo (Visits undertaken: 3; agreed: 1; visits outstanding: 3)	% visits carried out:	43%
UAE (Visits undertaken: 4; agreed: 1; visits outstanding: 6)	% visits carried out:	36%
Venezuela (Visits undertaken: 0; agreed: 1; visits outstanding: 9)	% visits carried out:	0%

*Requests submitted since inaugural session of HRC in June 2006. See Annex II for more details.

B. Reprisals

*The following candidate countries have been singled out by the UN Secretary-General in his reports on reprisals:**

- **Burundi**
- **Kenya**
- **Pakistan**
- **Philippines**
- **United Arab Emirates**
- **Venezuela**

* Based on Secretary-General's reports on reprisals from 2013-2015. See Annex III for more details.

ANNEX II

Outstanding Country Visit Requests by UN Human Rights Experts and Working Groups
(Requests submitted since inaugural session of HRC in June 2006)

Ordered by regional groups

COUNTRY	OUTSTANDING REQUESTS
African Group	
<p align="center">Burundi</p> Visits undertaken: 8 Outstanding requests: 3 % visits carried out: 73%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ IE on minority issues (requested in 2009) ▪ RSG on Internally Displaced Persons (requested in 2010) ▪ WG on enforced or involuntary disappearances (requested on 27.05.2009, reminder in 2010, and on 18 August 2011)
<p align="center">Cote d'Ivoire</p> Visits undertaken: 12 Visits agreed: 5 Outstanding requests: 2 % visits carried out: 63%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ SR on violence against women (agreed) ▪ SR on torture (agreed, reminder sent in 2013) ▪ SR on summary executions (agreed) ▪ SR on migrants (agreed) ▪ SR on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence (agreed, postponed) ▪ Follow-up visit SR on IDPs (requested on 19.05.14) ▪ SR on contemporary forms of slavery (requested on 30.09.14)
<p align="center">Ethiopia</p> Visits undertaken: 2 Outstanding requests: 10 % visits carried out: 17%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ SR freedom of expression (requested in 2002 and renewed in 2005) ▪ SR on education (requested on 16 April 2013, reminder on 27 August 2013) ▪ WG on arbitrary detention (requested in 2005 renewed in 2007, 2009, and 2011) ▪ SR torture (requested in 2005, 2007, 2010, and 2013) ▪ IE on and foreign debt (requested in 2006 - renewed in 2007 and 20 May 2011) ▪ SR on freedom of religion (requested in 2006) ▪ SR on the right to food, follow-up visit (requested in 2008) ▪ SR on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions (requested in 2008) ▪ SR on freedom of association and assembly (requested in 6 September 2011, reminder on 30 Oct. 2013) ▪ SR on adequate housing (requested on 16 March 2015)
<p align="center">Kenya</p> Visits undertaken: 9 Visits agreed: 3 Outstanding requests: 7 % visits carried out: 47%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ SR on freedom of peaceful assembly and of association (agreed on 10 June 2014; reminder request on 8 April 15; A on 27 May 2015) ▪ SR on independence of judges and lawyers (agreed) ▪ SR on freedom of opinion and expression (agreed on 27 May 2015) ▪ SR on human rights defenders (requested in 2003, reminder in 2004)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ SR on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence (requested on 2 Dec.2013) ▪ SR on extreme poverty (requested in 2007) ▪ IE on minority issues (requested in 2009) ▪ SR Torture (R in 2010, reminder in 2013) ▪ WG on enforced disappearances (requested on 19 Feb. 2013) ▪ SR on hazardous substances and waste (requested on 6 February 2015)
<p style="text-align: center;">Togo</p> <p>Visits undertaken: 3 Visits agreed: 1 Outstanding requests: 3 % visits carried out: 43%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ SR on summary executions (agreed) ▪ SR on independence of judges and lawyers (requested in 2012) ▪ SR on contemporary forms of slavery (requested on 30.09.14) ▪ SR on extreme poverty (requested on 2 Sept. 2015)
Asia Pacific Group	
<p style="text-align: center;">Kyrgyzstan</p> <p>Visits undertaken: 4 Visits agreed: 3 Outstanding requests: 4 % visits carried out: 36%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ WG on enforced disappearances (agreed) ▪ SR on freedom of peaceful assembly and of association (agreed on 15 Nov. 2011) ▪ SR on the situation of human rights defenders - during 2015 (agreed on 8 May 2015) ▪ SR on freedom of religion (requested in 2004) ▪ SR on adequate housing (requested in 2008) ▪ SR on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions (requested in 2008) ▪ SR on the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation (requested on 5 Feb. 2015)
<p style="text-align: center;">Lao People's Democratic Republic</p> <p>Visits undertaken: 1 Visits agreed: 1 Outstanding requests: 3 % visits carried out: 20%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ SR on cultural rights (agreed) ▪ SR on summary executions (requested in 2006) ▪ SR on adequate housing (requested in July 2009, and 27 Aug. 2014 for Nov. 2014) ▪ SR on freedom of peaceful assembly and of association (Reminder on 30 Oct. 2013)
<p style="text-align: center;">Mongolia</p> <p>Visits undertaken: 5 Outstanding requests: 1 % visits carried out: 83%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ SR on human rights defenders (agreed in 2012)
<p style="text-align: center;">Pakistan</p> <p>Visits undertaken: 2 Visits agreed: 1 Outstanding requests: 12 % visits carried out: 13%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ SR on freedom of expression (agreed) ▪ SR on human rights defenders (requested in 2003, reminder in 07, 08, 10) ▪ SR on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions (requested in 2000, follow-up R in 2005, Reminders in 2008, 2009 and 2012) ▪ SR on racism (requested in 2004, reminder in 2006) ▪ SR on freedom of religion (requested in 2006, and on 03.10.13) ▪ SR on human rights and counter terrorism (requested 2006, reminder in 2008, 2010 and 2012) ▪ SR on adequate housing (requested in 2006, reminder in 2008) ▪ SR on torture (requested on 22 Dec. 2010) ▪ SR on food (requested on 2 February 2011)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ SR on human rights of IDPs (requested on 6 April 2011) ▪ SR on freedom of association and assembly (requested in 16 September 2011, reminder on 30 Oct. 2013) ▪ IE on minority issues (requested in 2013) ▪ WG on discrimination against women in law and in practice (requested on 21 May 2014; reminder in August 2015)
<p style="text-align: center;">Philippines</p> <p>Visits undertaken: 4 Visits agreed: 1 Outstanding requests: 15 % visits carried out: 20%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ SR on adequate housing (agreed) ▪ SR on migrants (requested in 2006) ▪ SR on toxic waste (requested in 2005) ▪ SR on freedom of expression and opinion (requested in 2004) ▪ WG on enforced and involuntary disappearances (requested on 3 April 2013, reminder on 18 Sept. 2013) ▪ SR on human rights and counter terrorism (requested in 2005, reminder in 2007, 2010, 2011, and 2012) ▪ SR on extreme poverty and human rights (requested on 16 Sept. 2011, reminder on 27 March 2012) ▪ SR on human rights defenders (requested in 2008, reminder in 10 and 12) ▪ WG on arbitrary detention (requested on 13 May 2011) ▪ SR on independence of judges and lawyers (requested in 2006, reminders in 2011, 2012, and on 27 March 2014) ▪ SR on health (requested Jan. 2011, renewed in Apr. 2011) ▪ IE on minorities (requested 21/02/2011) ▪ IE on cultural rights (requested on 7 Oct. 2010) ▪ SR on freedom of association and assembly (requested in 16 September 2011, reminder, reminder 30 Oct. 2013) ▪ IE on foreign debt (requested on 24 May 2012) ▪ WG on discrimination against women in law and in practice (requested on 27 Sept. 2013)
<p style="text-align: center;">Republic of Korea</p> <p>Visits undertaken: 12 Visits agreed: 4 Outstanding requests: 1 % visits carried out: 71%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ SR on migrants (agreed on 27 May 2014, visit dates to be agreed upon) ▪ SR on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association (agreed, scheduled for 18 to 28 January 2016) ▪ SR on human rights and hazardous substances (agreed, scheduled for 12 to 23 Oct 2015) ▪ WG on business (agreed, scheduled for 23 May to 1 June 2016) ▪ SR on adequate housing (requested on 16 March 2015)
<p style="text-align: center;">UAE</p> <p>Visits undertaken: 4 Visits agreed: 1 Outstanding requests: 6 % visits carried out: 36%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ WG on transnational corp. and business enterprises (agreed) ▪ SR on education (requested in 2005) ▪ SR on the situation of human rights defenders (requested in 2012) ▪ SR on freedom of expression (requested on 3 Sept. 14) ▪ SR on contemporary forms of slavery (requested in 2008) ▪ SR on counter-terrorism (requested in 2013, reminder in 2014) ▪ WG on disappearances (requested on 13.09.13)
Eastern European Group	
Georgia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ SR on independence of judges and lawyers (agreed)
Visits undertaken: 6	

<p>Visits agreed: 3 % visits carried out: 67%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ SR on sale of children (agreed on 19.12.14, scheduled April 2016) ▪ SR on the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation (agreed on 8 May 2015, scheduled for November 2015)
<p>Slovenia Visits undertaken: 2 Outstanding requests: 0 % visits carried out: 100%</p>	<p>NA</p>
<p>Latin American and Caribbean Group</p>	
<p>Bahamas Visits undertaken: 1 Outstanding requests: 1 % visits carried out: 50%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ SR on violence against women (requested on 27.08.2013)
<p>Ecuador Visits undertaken: 9 Outstanding requests: 4 % visits carried out: 69%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ SR on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions (requested in Feb 2010) ▪ SR on cultural rights (requested in June 2010) ▪ SR on freedom of association and assembly (requested on 14.02.14, reminder on 08.04.15) ▪ SR on cultural rights (requested on 2 February 2015)
<p>Panama Visits undertaken: 2 Outstanding requests: 1 % visits carried out: 66%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ IE on minority issues (R in 2007)
<p>Venezuela Visits undertaken: 0 Visits agreed: 1 Outstanding requests: 9 % visits carried out: 0%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ SR on right to food (agreed in 2011) ▪ SR on the right to freedom of opinion and expression (requested in 2003, reiterated in 2009) ▪ SR on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions (requested in November 2006) (Reminder in 2008) ▪ SR on human rights defenders (requested in 2007, reminder in 08 and 10; R on 3 Feb. 2015) ▪ SR on independence of judges and lawyers (requested in 2011, reminder on 27 March 2014) ▪ SR on freedom of association and assembly (requested on 23 September 2011, reminder on on 30 Oct. 2013) ▪ WG on arbitrary detention (requested on 13.05.11, reminders on 06.08.13 and 15.09.14) ▪ SR on violence against women (requested 01/03/12) ▪ SR on torture (requested in 2013) ▪ WG on Business and Human Rights (requested on 19 Dec. 14)
<p>Western Europe and Others Group</p>	
<p>Belgium Visits undertaken: 3 Visits agreed: 2 % visits carried out: 60%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ SR on toxic wastes (agreed*) ▪ WG on mercenaries (agreed for 12 to 16 Oct. 2015)
<p>Germany Visits undertaken: 5</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ SR on independence of judges and lawyers (agreed)

Visits agreed: 1 % visits carried out: 83%	
Switzerland Visits undertaken: 1 Visits agreed: 2 % visits carried out: 33%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ IE on human rights and extreme poverty (agreed on 5 Nov. 2010) ▪ SR on trafficking (agreed)

* Indicates country agreed to country visit in principle but has not yet set a date.

ANNEX III: REPRISALS

Excerpts from the Secretary-General's reports (2013-2105):

Burundi

- The Committee against Torture, in its letter on reprisals of 25 November 2014, referred to allegations of serious threats against Pacifique Nininahazwe, President of Forum pour la conscience et le développement, following his briefing to the Committee in relation to its consideration of the second periodic report of Burundi at its fifty-third session (CAT/C/BDI/2). On 28 November 2014, the Committee addressed a second letter to the Government in which it stated that it had also been informed of serious threats against Mr. Nininahazwe's family. In its reply of 5 December 2014, the Government denied the allegations, stating that while no one would be prosecuted for the legal exercise of their human rights work, no one was above the law and the defence of human rights could not be invoked as grounds for violating the law. **(A/HRC/30/29)**

Kenya

- In early July 2013, police officers requested over 20 families of persons who had disappeared in the context of a joint operation by the military and police known as "Okoa Maisha" to report to the police station. The police allegedly questioned the families about their engagement with United Nations human rights mechanisms in Geneva, and compelled them to sign written statements, the contents of which they were not allowed to read. On 5 July 2013, a local NGO issued a press release calling for investigations into the reported harassment and for protection of the families. Subsequently, several members of the NGO were subjected to harassment by and threats from the police. Some of the military personnel who were allegedly responsible for the disappearances were reported to have been redeployed to the area. Following those events, at least 28 families reportedly left their houses for fear of reprisals. No reply had been received from the Government of Kenya to a joint communication sent on 31 July 2013 by a group of special procedures mandate holders. **(A/HRC/27/38)**
- On 17 September 2013 in the Western Province of Kenya, human rights lawyer Peter Wanyama Wanyonyi was shot dead by unknown gunmen as he was returning home from a meeting. Mr. Wanyonyi had reportedly been assisting with documenting the aforementioned cases of enforced disappearance, a number of which were relayed to the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances. According to the SG's report, no reply had been received from the Government to a joint communication sent on 26 September 2013 by a group of special procedures mandate holders by the time of the report's finalization. **(A/HRC/27/38)**

Pakistan

- Following a meeting with the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances during its visit to Pakistan in September 2012, Nasrullah Baloch, Chair of Voice for Baloch Missing Persons, and his Vice-Chair, received threats from one or several unknown individuals. When they attempted to register a First Information Report with the police, the station house officer reportedly refused to act. After families of disappeared persons had launched a march

from Quetta to Islamabad to raise awareness about enforced disappearances on 27 October 2013, two of Mr. Baloch's brothers were reportedly beaten and warned by personnel of State intelligence agencies that he should stop his activities. In March 2014, after attending a hearing at the Supreme Court in Islamabad, Mr. Baloch was also threatened by personnel of State intelligence agencies. The Government acknowledged receipt of a joint communication sent by seven special procedures mandate holders by letter dated 4 April 2014. **(A/HRC/27/38)**

Philippines

- It is alleged that Panalidan! Mindanao's Secretary-General, Ms. Matutina, has been subjected to several incidents of threat and harassment and that, since she was a member of the Philippine UPR Watch delegation to discuss the human rights situation in Mindanao in the context of a side event during the nineteenth session of the Human Rights Council, members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines accuse Ms. Matutina of being a member of the New People's Army, the armed wing of the communist party. **(A/HRC/24/29)**

United Arab Emirates:

- A series of communications by several special procedures mandate holders has raised concerns over the alleged unfairness of the trial and the harsh treatment in detention of 94 civil society actors calling for change in a peaceful way in March 2013. In response, the Government called these allegations "far removed from the truth and unfounded in virtually every detail", particularly in regards to the allegations pertaining to torture, physical abuse and beatings. **(A/HRC/24/29)**
- Osama Al-Najjar is an activist and blogger, and son of Mr. Hossain Al-Najjar, who was tried in a case referred to as "UAE 94" mentioned in the SG's previous report. Mr. Al-Najjar met with the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers during her visit to the country between 28 January and 5 February 2014. On 17 March 2014, the day after Mr. Al-Najjar had allegedly expressed criticism via Twitter in relation to the broadcasting of a radio interview with the Ruler of the Sharjah Emirate, he was taken by a dozen men and transferred to a secret detention centre controlled by State security services. He was allegedly interrogated and tortured for four days, and a request by the detention centre's doctor to transfer him to hospital was denied. In a response received on 13 May 2014 to a joint communication sent on 16 April 2014 by several special procedures mandate holders, the Government requested a two-week extension to allow the competent authorities to complete their full investigation into the case. However, at the time of finalization of the SG's report, no further response had been received. **(A/HRC/27/38)**
- On 20 June 2013, a group of special procedures mandate holders raised allegations of acts of intimidation and reprisal against Ahmed Mansoor, a blogger and member of the Human Rights Watch Middle East and North Africa Advisory Committee, following his participation by means of a video statement in a side event during the second universal periodic review of the United Arab Emirates. Mr. Mansoor was reportedly prevented from attending the second review of the UAE in person as his passport had been confiscated by the authorities. He has allegedly been under surveillance, his e-mail account has been accessed without authorization, and he was physically attacked twice, including on the day his video statement was shown at the side

event. At the time of finalization of the SG's report, no reply had been received from the Government. **(A/HRC/27/38)**

- As a follow-up to the UAE 94 case, relating to a group of 94 civil society activists calling for change in a peaceful manner in March 2013 who were subsequently arrested and detained, Waleed al-Shehhi, a member of the legal team of UAE 94 during their trial, was arrested on 11 May 2013 in relation to remarks made on social media about irregularities in the UAE 94 trial. On 2 July 2013, 69 of the 94 defendants were sentenced to long prison sentences for plotting to overthrow the State and 25 were acquitted. A reply to the joint communication sent by special procedures was received on 20 November 2013, in which the Government indicated that the allegations were highly inaccurate and misleading. In opinion No. 60/2013, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention found the detention of 61 individuals of UAE 94 arbitrary and called for their release. **(A/HRC/27/38)**
- Osama al-Najjar has reportedly become the subject of reprisals after meeting with the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers during her visit to the United Arab Emirates in February 2014. The Special Rapporteur, in her oral statements to the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly in 2014, called on the authorities to take immediate measures to release Mr. Al-Najjar and open an independent investigation into the circumstances of his arrest and the serious allegations of torture. On 2 April 2015, mandate holders raised further allegations concerning Mr. Al-Najjar with the Government (A/HRC/30/27, case ARE 2/2015). On 25 November 2014, after a trial that reportedly lacked respect for the most basic due process and fair trial guarantees, Mr. Al-Najjar was sentenced to three years in prison and fined 500,000 Emirati Dirhams (about 136,000 USD) on charges of, inter alia, contacting foreign organizations and presenting inaccurate information (ibid.). The Government, in its response of 30 April 2015, listed procedural guarantees that had been in place in the case of Mr. Al-Najjar (ibid.). In his report of 4 March 2015, the Special Rapporteur on the situation on human rights defenders recalled that the Government had not responded to the earlier communication dated 16 April 2014 and stated that he was still awaiting a detailed response from the Government to the allegations and questions raised (A/HRC/28/63/Add.1, paras. 554-555). **(A/HRC/30/29)**

Venezuela

- Judge Afiuni was arrested on 10 December 2009 after she ordered the conditional release of an individual whose detention the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention considered arbitrary. President Chavez reportedly publicly demanded that she be sentenced to 30 years imprisonment. In September 2010, the Working Group, in its opinion No. 20/2010, concluded that the detention of Judge Afiuni was arbitrary. She has been subjected to assault, acts of intimidation and rape by a government agent, which resulted in pregnancy and a miscarriage while in detention. **(A/HRC/24/29)**
- The Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment stated that no investigation into the reports of torture of Judge Afiuni had taken place. He also reiterated that the Government of Venezuela must ensure the investigation and prosecution of the alleged perpetrators. **(A/HRC/27/38)**

- Allegations of acts of intimidation and reprisal against Alfredo Romero, Executive Director of Foro Penal Venezolano, a non-governmental organization representing victims of arbitrary detention and torture, his family and members of the organization were addressed to the Government on 19 February 2015 by a number of mandate holders (A/HRC/29/50, case VEN 2/2015). Mr. Romero travelled to Geneva in November 2014 to meet with representatives of the United Nations human rights system. After his return, he, his family and the organization Foro Penal Venezolano were mentioned repeatedly on a Venezuelan television programme, “Con el Mazo Dando”, during which they were reportedly referred to as conspirators against the system in the light of their cooperation with international human rights instruments and suspected of receiving funding from foreign countries. In addition, Foro Penal Venezolano reportedly received anonymous threats via Twitter. **(A/HRC/30/29)**