

## 30<sup>th</sup> session of the Human Rights Council

Item 5 – General debate

*Joint statement on behalf of 15 organisations, including International Service for Human Rights, Amnesty International, ARTICLE 19, Asian Legal Resource Centre, Association for the Prevention of Torture, East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project, Geneva for Human Rights - Global Training (GHR), Global initiative For ESC Rights, Human Rights House Foundation, Human Rights Watch, International Commission of Jurists, International Federation for Human Rights Leagues, International Lesbian and Gay Association, Reporters without Borders, World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies (ACDHRS)*

*Check against delivery*

Mr President,

In his seventh annual report to the Council on alleged cases of reprisals and intimidation, the Secretary General shares that the types of acts reported ‘seem to have become more varied and severe’ and target ‘not only individuals or groups concerned but also their families, legal representatives NGOs and anyone linked to them’.

It is clear from the report that reprisals constitute a systematic and deliberate strategy to deter civil society engagement with human rights bodies. While the UN’s response remains inadequate, impunity reigns and sustains this disturbing status quo.

*The report evidences the consistent failure by States to respond to requests for information on allegations. The number of cases cited that continue without investigation by States shows a remarkable lack of concern and contempt for the Council by States in question.*

Perhaps most disturbingly, the SG documents several cases of reprisals and intimidation by Member States of this Council — Members who are meant to ‘uphold the highest standard in the promotion and protection of human rights’ and ‘fully cooperate with the Council’.

Beyond the abject failure of China, Kazakhstan, Maldives, Russia, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Venezuela, and Viet Nam, among others, to meet these membership standards, the Human Rights Council is failing to carry out its own institutional mandate, which obliges it to promote the full implementation of States’ human rights obligations and to review States’ compliance with such obligations.

To discharge this obligation, including the obligation to prevent reprisals against individuals who cooperate with UN human rights mechanisms, the Council should:

- (1) Heed the Secretary-General’s recommendation that the Council “devote sufficient time to the discussion of the present report” by scheduling a stand-alone interactive dialogue;
- (2) Seek information concerning action taken by States cited in the report to prevent and ensure accountability for reprisals, *assess that State’s compliance with its international human rights obligations and call on that State to take further action where it falls short of meeting those obligations*; and
- (3) ensure that States mentioned in the SG’s report inform the Council regularly and in a timely manner of steps taken to investigate cases of reprisals, prosecute perpetrators, and provide remedies to victims.

Mr President, we welcome the steps taken by you and your Bureau to better address reprisals, as positively noted by the SG, and urge your successor to build on this practice. For their part, however, Member States of this Council must confront the reality that by failing to take adequate or concrete steps to prevent, condemn, investigate, ensure accountability, and end impunity for reprisals, they are complicit in undermining the system they have created to promote and protect human rights.