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ORAL STATEMENT

ITEM 5 General Debate: Human rights bodies and mechanisms

UN MEMBER STATES MUST PROTECT THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE SPECIAL PROCEDURES

UN Human Rights Council
Forty-sixth session
22 February – 23 March 2021

Madame President,

Amnesty International delivers this statement on behalf of 15 NGOs.

We are deeply concerned by continued attacks on the Special Procedures and efforts to undermine their independence. We urge all states to affirm their commitment to human rights and the effectiveness of the international human rights system, by rejecting and condemning these efforts.

We welcome the continued efforts of the Coordination Committee to address objective non-compliance of mandate holders under the Internal Advisory Procedure, including in response to the failure of the Special Rapporteur on the right to privacy to submit his reports to the Council in time for their consideration at this session. We urge all states to support the Coordination Committee in their efforts to respond to concerns related to the working methods of the Special Procedures, as well as complaints against individual mandate holders.

At the same time, we deplore the efforts of some states to use this process as a cover to undermine the independence and effectiveness of the Special Procedures for political reasons. As on numerous previous occasions, certain states repeatedly accuse the Special Procedures of politicization but fail to substantively address the human rights concerns they raise.

We particularly regret the Russian Federation's efforts, on 5 March, to suspend the HRC session altogether and their continued attempts, together with other states, to introduce unwarranted state oversight on the Special Procedures.

We were also alarmed to witness personal attacks on the Special Procedures, most worryingly against the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, by the Chinese delegation, who during the interactive dialogue accused the mandate holder of 'spread[ing] false information' and 'lack[ing] minimum professional ethics.' Such *ad hominem* attacks are unacceptable, and the Council must respond in the strongest terms to condemn such incidents. They also reveal a broader rejection of dialogue on human rights challenges – despite repeated statements urging the Council to privilege 'dialogue and cooperation' - and a lack of willingness on the part of the state concerned to take action to protect human rights.

It is time for states at this Council to take a strong proactive stand for its independent mechanisms, ensuring that they have the support and resources needed to fulfil their mandates and to hold states accountable when they commit human rights violations.

Thank you.

Amnesty International
ARTICLE 19
Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)
CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation
DefendDefenders (East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project)
Human Rights Watch
International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
International Commission of Jurists
International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)
Privacy International
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
Human Rights House Foundation
Center for Reproductive Rights
International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR)
Forum Menschenrechte e.V.