

Human Rights Council 24th session

End of session statement

Joint statement on behalf of International Service for Human Rights, Amnesty International, Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS), Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network, Civicus World Alliance for Citizen Participation, Conectas Direitos Humanos, International Federation for Human Rights, International Commission of Jurists, International Lesbian and Gay Association, International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims, East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project, Human Rights House Foundation

Al-Karama supports the views expressed.

Mr President,

This session, sadly, has again shown the critical need for a more tangible response by the Council to reprisals and intimidation, as several human rights defenders have been harassed, blocked from attending, or even disappeared for trying to engage with the Council. It is therefore particularly timely that the Council has taken a key step towards ending the disturbing pattern of attacks, harassment and reprisals against human rights defenders and others who cooperate with the UN.

The resolution is clear political signal that reprisals are unacceptable, and must end. It is now key that the SG move swiftly on the Council's request to designate a high-level UN senior focal point to coordinate the international response to reprisals, and intervene in alleged cases.

We also warmly welcome the adoption by consensus of the resolution promoting and protecting space for civil society. Civil society has a critical role to play in promoting human rights, the rule of law and development.

This resolution is an important contribution to creating an enabling environment for the work of civil society and human rights defenders, and highlights the commitment of the overwhelming majority of members of the Council for a free and vibrant civil society.

The series of amendments presented on both of the above resolutions are a clear indication that some States, including regrettably some members of the Council, are unwilling to move beyond lip service about the crucial role of civil society and human rights defenders in promoting and protecting human rights. We urge all States to return to prioritising the protection of those who enable the Council and the UN system to function in a way that reflects the reality of human rights violations on the ground. It is unworthy of members of the United Nations top human rights body to do anything less.

Mr President,

Let me highlight some other resolutions and debates that have marked the session – positively or negatively:

1. Its regrettable that the Council once again failed to respond robustly to widespread and systematic violations continuing in Sudan, with a resolution that is far from reflecting the situation on the ground.
2. While we welcome the two-year renewal of the Cambodia mandate, we regret that the deteriorating situation on the ground is not adequately reflected.
3. Positive signals were given by the high-level discussion and resolution on Somalia but concrete steps to improve the situation on the ground must follow. A similar assessment can be made on Yemen.
4. By proposing the establishment of a mandate on the Central African Republic, the African Group has shown its leadership in urgently addressing one of the most forgotten human rights crises.
5. We were deeply disappointed by the lack of any formal action by the Council in relation to the grave situation for human rights in Egypt.

Finally, Mr President, thank you for steering us through this session and cycle of the Council's work, and for raising your voice – now and in the future – when civil society and defenders are under threat.