



General Assembly

Distr.: General
19 May 2011

English only

Human Rights Council

Seventeenth session

Agenda item 4

Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Written statement* submitted by the Organization for Defending Victims of Violence, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[15 May 2011]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

The ODVV states that although human rights violations have become very normal in most parts of the world, but ignoring accepted human rights standards, particularly in countries that claim to be human rights advocates and have high standards, must be brought to attention and dealt with.

On this basis we believe that although the European Union issues statements in condemnation of human rights violations in other parts of the world, but in practice it does not have a comprehensive and practical solution to change its own human rights conditions. We alongside many other global civil society members believe that the EU's credibility and reputation in human rights, solely depends on paying attention to the human rights violations of its member states. The human rights violation records of the EU include discrimination against migrants, Muslims, the Roma and other groups, improper access to shelter for refugees, human rights violation cases in the war on terror. The EU must make further political commitment towards its own human rights conditions and its international comments.

The human rights conditions in Canada are a cause for concern for us. The refusal of Canadian officials in the accountability for the treatment of detainees in Afghanistan, change of views with regards to the subject of human rights violations of Palestinians, and also Ottawa's failure in filling the income gap between Canadians and the Natives of the country are some of the criticisms made on the human rights conditions of the country.

The violation of economic, social and cultural rights of the citizens – vulnerable communities in particular – of the United States of America is alarming. According to a study conducted by nongovernmental organizations the United States has one of the lowest global standards in family support, in the employment market in particular. According to official figures in more than 19 million American families women play the role of the main or secondary breadwinners, and 70 percent of children live in homes where all the adults work. In spite of all this the US government has left the decision to provide or not provide perks and benefits and also family support facilities to employers and their personal choice. We believe the US government's approaches and policies in this regard will have significant negative consequences in areas such as health and medicine, children drinking their mothers' milk, fair and reasonable wages, and career advancement opportunities.

With regards to civil and political rights, while expressing our grave concern towards America's improper approach towards Guantanamo, and prevention of the inmates from filing their complaints in Federal courts and also delaying the closure of the facilities, the UN special rapporteur on torture's criticism of the holding of Bradley Manning accused of leaking secret information to Wikileaks and America not allowing the special rapporteur to visit him, all indicate that the United States only observes human rights when it is in the interest of its national interest. The special rapporteur has rightly said that private and unmonitored conversations with prisoners or any other individuals who are possibly threatened by torture is a natural due process and US officials must not disagree.

In Saudi Arabia the attitude towards human rights, has taken a more security shape, particularly security forces' treatment of those complaining the lack of basic rights is a cause for concern. In February this year, five political activists were detained for the crime of attempting to register the first political party in Saudi Arabia. This caused a stir among international nongovernmental organizations such as Human Rights Watch. Also the treatment of Shia minority in the country violates their basic rights, and they are always looked upon with suspicion and national security threat, and life is made unbearable for them.

Despite Saudi authorities' promises during the country's UPR regarding the improvement of migrant workers in Saudi Arabia, unfortunately no visible improvements have been made with regards to their conditions. The current weakness in the law in the legislative body of the country, in the treatment of foreign workers deems them in a framework called "kefaleh", and causes the majority of human rights violation cases. Ultimately it results in the torture of workers. According to this law anyone that employs migrant workers, has full control over them, and can treat them anyway they like. These individuals even have control over the migrant workers leaving Saudi Arabia. This is why those migrant workers that are subjected torture and bad treatment, have no means to get help and assistance.

Several humanitarian law violations of people living on the borders of Yemen and Saudi Arabia have been reported by international organizations. Saudi military intervention in the recent Yemeni unrest, regardless of the pretext cannot be a green light for the killing of the defenceless people of the country. According to the US Department of State annual report in a military attack in February 2010 up to 14 Yemenis were killed near the border with Saudi Arabia.

The same thing has also recently happened to Bahrain and the presence of Saudi security forces in the country and their participation in the crackdown on the protestors, is not only the violation of human rights, but it is also the violation of the humanitarian rights of the people of Bahrain and also violation of their national sovereignty. This is something that unfortunately international organizations have been silent on and refrain from adopting measures in condemning these acts.

The Organization for Defending Victims of Violence (ODVV) wishes to express its deep concern over the way the protesters are treated and their citizen's rights not observed, particularly the death of two Shia Bahraini citizens following their arrest, which was probably due to torture. Addressing the Human Rights Council, the High Commissioner for Human Rights recent criticism of the situation confirms this going concern. She called arbitrary detentions, killing of the protesters, assaulting and battering the protesters and medical personnel and attacking hospitals very concerning and unlawful and called for an immediate end to these acts. Also the joint statement of a group of UN Special Rapporteurs and experts on 22 March that included Special Rapporteurs on extrajudicial executions, torture, human rights defenders, and the arbitrary detention working group, Special Rapporteur on freedom of expression and belief, all show that the Human Rights Council's silence towards the treatment of the Bahraini protesters is not justifiable.

While criticising the way Saudi and Bahraini officials have approached the civil unrest of these countries, the ODVV strongly criticises the existing double standards of the big powers – the United States in particular – towards the wave of awareness of the region and Arab countries, calls upon international organizations, particularly the Human Rights Council and the global civil society, in view of the double standards approach with regards to Libya and Bahrain, to try to document the stated violations cases, and prevent the continuation of the crackdowns and the silence of the west.

The ODVV hopes that the processing of human rights violation cases in the Human Rights Council to be managed and organized in such way that not only countries that claim to human rights, but all members of the international community understand that in the monitoring of human rights situations of countries, there are no double standards and selective treatments.