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Requests addressed to the Advisory Committee stemming from Human Rights Council resolutions currently under consideration by the Committee

Written statement* submitted by Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights Association, a non- governmental organization with 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.

[10 August 2021]

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



I. Introduction

Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights Association submits this written statement to the Advisory Committee at its 26th session, which will be held in a hybrid format, from 16 August to 20 August 2021. The written statement is on “Agenda Item 2: Requests addressed to the Advisory Committee stemming from Human Rights Council resolutions”.

II. New and Emerging Digital Technologies and Human Rights

The internet has been increasingly important during the pandemic, for it acted as the bridge between online activities and physical isolation. During the pandemic, people across the globe depended heavily on the internet to obtain critical services, access education and/or employment, do business, and communicate with their relatives. Governments misuse technology and instigate internet shutdowns/slowdowns as means to control peaceful protests, suppress political opposition, and silent dissent. This also allows governments to keep the international community in the shadows as to what is really going on within the country. In the year 2020 alone, at least 155 internet shutdowns in 29 countries around the world took place. Despite the fact that the internet was the only tool used to communicate with the outer world and carry on with one’s life in terms of education, employment, etc., countries like Bangladesh, Myanmar, Ethiopia, and others carried out shutdowns that lasted for weeks. **Myanmar’s** government has abused its power to cut off the internet from 1.4 million people living in Rakhine and Chin States continuously since June 2019. Several independent news outlets and websites reporting on the military’s human rights violations against Rohingya and other groups were prohibited, and the Rohingya in Myanmar have not been able to continue their education with the shutdown in effect. In 2020, **Ethiopia** imposed at least four total internet blackouts. One of the four was a more than two-week-long nationwide internet outage that impacted more than 100 million people. In August 2019, during the clash between supporters of former president Almazbek Atambayev and **Kyrgyzstan’s** special forces, the government took down the websites of investigative journalists who disclosed a large-scale corruption ring. So far in 2021, several of the shutdowns have happened around elections too.

Recommendations

1. To refrain states from imposing internet shutdowns/slowdowns in order to direct public opinion or prohibit and silent dissent, it is crucial to set a clear, comprehensive, and binding legal instrument that is publicly accessible, clear, precise, holistic, and non-discriminatory.
2. Civil society organizations, together with other stakeholders, should continue to monitor the impact of Internet shutdowns and play a critical role in pressuring governments to be more accountable and transparent.
3. Along with their peers, the technical community should continue to develop their Internet monitoring and measurement initiatives and make the tools connected with them publicly available.

III. Representation of women in Human Rights Organs and Mechanisms

The lack of gender parity in UN human rights bodies affects not only women’s rights; it is also detrimental to these bodies themselves, as it hinders their impact, effectiveness, and legitimacy, while also leading them to overlook critical gender issues and perspectives. However, in practice, the composition of the United Nations human rights institutions and mechanisms seriously lacks gender parity. Although gender parity has been achieved in some United Nations agencies (and in some cases recently), the representation of women in treaty bodies, mandate holders of special procedures and advisory committees remains insufficient.

Furthermore, the figures show that women's representatives are mainly concentrated in institutions or tasks that deal specifically with issues related to women or children.

Although some treaty bodies have achieved a greater gender balance in their membership over the years, this average level is far from reflecting gender parity. Rather, it shows that the State party's commitment to gender balance in the treaty body has yet to be fulfilled.

Although clearly detailed in the report of the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee on Current levels of representation of women in human rights organs and mechanisms: ensuring gender balance. Many examples, statistics, discrimination in representation on many committees and the impact of such representation have been made clear, but none of these points have brought about the representation of **indigenous and refugee women** and no significant proportion has been made of their representation on the committees. The proportion of indigenous and refugee women is very small or negligible, which may be virtually non-existent in the proper handling of committees or in the representation of any of them.

Recommendations:

To focus on the recommendations of the Advisory committee on this issue, on the representation of indigenous and refugee women in Human rights organs and mechanisms.

IV. Situation regarding racial equality in the world

Racism and discrimination are increasing in the world on the basis of gender, race and color, and countries are enacting municipal legislation and laws to affirm their decrees, such as **Syria**, the Assad administration has enacted discriminatory laws related to women, and there are other violations related to housing and spatial separation. There is also the policy of apartheid practiced by **the occupation authorities in the occupied Palestinian territories**, which is represented in the siege of the Gaza Strip and the displacement and demolition of the indigenous population from their homes and the construction of settlements for the settlers, as well as the apartheid policy in distributing vaccines. In addition, the increase in ethnic discrimination, which affects civil, economic, social and political rights, such as the Uyghur Muslims in **China**, and predominantly against minorities and vulnerable groups.

Recommendations:

The necessity of establishing a law that includes mechanisms guaranteeing the prevention of all practices of discrimination and that the state adopts the spread of human rights culture principles of equality, tolerance and acceptance of the other among the various components and consecrates this in culture, sports, media and health.

V. Negative Effects of Terrorism on the Enjoyment of Human Rights

The main issue here is the lack of an international definition of Terrorism. The political interests of each country make it reluctant to participate in defining a clear and explicit definition of terrorism. Countries need to put aside the disputes between them and their own political interests, to face a bigger problem which is terrorism. And to face terrorism, countries need also an international solidarity to define what is really terrorism and hence, how we can counter it. We need to put on our minds, that Terrorism has negative effects on human rights, but counter-terrorism measures should not have negative effects on human rights. Maat found that many states are using terrorist acts and laws to target oppositions, in **Turkey** and **Iran** for example.

Also, Maat wants to refer to the issue of rehabilitation and integration of women and children who have already been disengaged from terrorist groups and we stress that it's an obligation on the states to bring back women and children from the refugee camps in Syria and to put a

plan to the process of rehabilitation and integration of those women and children. It is a way to refrain from using procedures considered as human rights violation .

When we consider the issue of terrorism, we need to consider the victims of terrorist acts. The humanitarian conditions in al-Hol camp and Roj camp in **Syria**, are very poor humanitarian conditions. They are facing many issues: lack of health care, lack of education and the spread of extremist and terrorist ideas between the children in these camps, which will increase the issue of terrorism again in the future with this new generation. Noting that if the issue is not solved now in these camps, we will see in the upcoming years, these children who are called "cubs of the caliphate" will turn into new ISIS, and the war with them will be fiercer and more intense than the previous war with ISIS. What is happening in these camps is a real human tragedy and we stress that states must receive and rehabilitate these children and women. Finally, children should not be separated from their mothers, states should not only get back children and leave women back in the refugee camps, that affects both children and women in a bad way.

Recommendations:

1. Maat agrees with the report that the adoption of a comprehensive convention on international terrorism would be an important step. So, Maat recommends states to try to put aside their political disputes and cooperate together to reach a definition for terrorism and to agree on some criteria of the counter-terrorism measures.
 2. There should be a working group to consider the possibility of establishing an international fund to compensate victims of terrorist acts and their families.
 3. Urge states to take back their citizens from refugee camps and ensure that children are not separated from their mothers.
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