

27th session of the Human Rights Council

ITEM 5 – GENERAL DEBATE

Speaker: Eleanor Openshaw – check against delivery

Mr President,

The Secretary General's annual report to the Council on alleged cases of intimidation and reprisals shows the range and brutality of these attacks, and that reprisals constitute a systematic and deliberate strategy to deter civil society engagement with human rights bodies.

The report makes evident the consistent failure by States to respond to requests for information on these allegations. The number of cases cited that continue without investigation by States show a remarkable lack of concern and contempt for the Council by States in question. Impunity in cases of reprisals remains the norm and fuels recurrence. The Council must demand States respond to requests for information by itself and its mechanisms.

In his report, the SG documents several cases of reprisals and intimidation against defenders by Sri Lanka. In a joint letter by ISHR and other NGOs addressed to you as the Council's President, the government concerned and all member and observer States of the Council, we have registered our concern over the systematic and ongoing reprisals faced by defenders and victims in Sri Lanka, including whilst cooperating with the OHCHR investigation mandated by this Council.

We also drew your attention to the allegations of reprisals against those in Vietnam who cooperated with the country visit of the SR on freedom of religion and belief. As the office holders charged with upholding the integrity of the Council and protecting those who engage with its mechanisms, we implore you and your Bureau to immediately demand a full investigation and accounting from the concerned States and publicise the results of such a process. The Council also has an obligation to follow up on these allegations.

Finally, Mr President, the General Assembly has failed to conclude the period of uncertainty prompted by resolution 68/144, and implement Council resolution 24/24. Regardless of this, preventing and addressing reprisals must be addressed by this Council with integrity and as a matter of urgency.