

Human Rights Council 31st session

Check against delivery

ITEM 5 - GENERAL DEBATE, 16 MARCH 2016

Thank you Mr President, Mr Addo,

Last week, the High Commissioner spoke of ‘persistent reprisals’ against those cooperating with the UN. In this regard, we welcome the adoption of a standard operating procedure by the annual meeting of Special Procedures, and encourage the coordination committee to continue developing its response to reprisals. We share your view that reprisals against persons cooperating with SPs amount to an attack on the system itself, and reiterate your call for the speedy appointment of a UN wide focal point *to meet the organisation’s moral and legal duty to promptly and effectively address reprisals.*

In line with the SG’s request, ISHR considers that States should use Item 5 to update the Council on progress in ensuring accountability for alleged cases of reprisals. In this regard, we call on the Government of China to update the Council on steps taken to independently investigate the death of human rights defender Cao Shunli. Failing that, we call on you, President Choi, to clarify what steps have been taken or will be taken by your office and the Bureau to ensure that Cao’s tragic death is investigated, and that accountability and appropriate remedies are ensured.

ISHR also welcomes the *Special Procedures’* joint communications report *contained in document 31/79.*

It provides a troubling picture of threats and attacks against *human rights* defenders, particularly those working on land and environment issues. In Indonesia, environmental *human rights* defenders were allegedly beaten, abducted and murdered by private security guards hired by a pulpwood supplier company. We welcome the practice of the mandate holders to communicate directly with the concerned company, and note the thorough response by APP in this regard. In India, two women *human rights* defenders, Ms. Roma Mallik and Ms. Sukalo Gond, were allegedly arrested and detained before taking part in a protest against forcible land acquisition.

Neither of these emblematic cases received a reply from the concerned government.

We’re dismayed that of the 74 States listed as having yet to respond to some allegations, 24 are Council members, including: Bangladesh, Burundi, China, Congo, Ethiopia, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Morocco, Mexico, Mongolia, Panama, Paraguay, Philippines, *Republic of Korea*, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, UAE, Venezuela and Vietnam. *We appreciate that some States may have responded since the report’s publication.*

Council members are required under GA Resolution 60/251 to ‘fully cooperate with the Council.’ A lack of timely and substantive response to Special Procedures not only undermines the integrity of this forum, but is plainly incompatible with membership. GA members should actively consider this fact when electing members to this Council.

Thank you.