

## Human Rights Council 29th session

*Check against delivery*

ITEM 5 - GENERAL DEBATE, 25 JUNE 2015

Mr President,

The special procedures' latest joint communications report,<sup>1</sup> which ISHR welcomes, provides a troubling picture of threats and attacks against civil society actors and human rights defenders, whose work and safety is critical to healthy societies that respect human rights and the rule of law.

Take for example a communication to Malaysia regarding its 1948 Sedition Act, alleging the silencing of people like Eric Paulsen, co-founder of Lawyers for Liberty and Zulkiflee Ulhaque, human rights defender and cartoonist, who were arrested and detained for Tweets critical of the Malaysian governmental apparatus. Take two Bahraini women, Zainab Al-Khawaja, a human rights activist absurdly sentenced to more than 4 years prison last year for tearing up a picture of the King and insulting a public servant, and Ghada Jamhseer, Head of Women's Petition Committee, repeatedly arrested and detained for criticising alleged corruption in King Hamad hospital in Bahrain.

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

For this session, 36 States have not responded to communications; 10 are Council members including: India, Indonesia, Kenya, Pakistan, the Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, Venezuela and Ethiopia. We appreciate that some States have responded since the report's publication, and encourage them to update the Council on this during the session.

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

We also note the positive cooperation by many States who responded promptly and substantively. While ISHR does not necessarily endorse the substance of communication replies, we applaud them for their prompt and substantive engagement

ISHR respectfully suggests that States that have *not* substantively responded to a communication, be given the floor first during future interactive dialogues with relevant mandate holders – much like when mission reports are presented – with the expectation of a meaningful response here in Room 20.

Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> Presented under item 5 contained in document 29/50