

Human Rights Council 39th session

ITEM 6- ADOPTION OF THE UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW (UPR) OF BANGLADESH

21 September 2018

Speaker: Joyinola Layonu

Thank you Mr. President,

Bangladesh received two specific recommendations for the protection of human rights defenders and the eradication of impunity. These recommendations are crucial, given the disturbing human rights situation in Bangladesh where defenders are persistently intimidated, harassed, imprisoned, attacked and killed with impunity.

Journalists, lawyers and human rights defenders are threatened, abducted, imprisoned and sexually assaulted for exposing and protesting human rights violations and engaging with the UN. This is facilitated by legal restrictions which restrict the activities of human rights defenders and contribute to the erosion of civil society space in Bangladesh. We urge Bangladesh to amend or repeal all laws that violate the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly.

ISHR is particularly concerned about a lack of progress in the amendment or revocation of the Digital Security Bill of 2018 and the Foreign Donations (Voluntary Activities) Regulation Act of 2016. Bangladesh government has continued using section 57 of the Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) Act to enable the arrest, mistreatment and prosecution of numerous journalists, including Shahidul Alam who was recently detained and tortured.

We are equally concerned about the government's failure to accept recommendations calling for a positive response to pending visit requests by special procedure mandate holders of the Human Rights Council, and the issuance and implementation of a standing invitation to all special procedures. Country visits by UN Special Procedures are crucial to the transparency, accountability and the improvement of the human rights situations of states.

We join the former and present High Commissioners in commending Bangladesh for its efforts in supporting Rohingya refugees, and equally calling on the government to build on this approach to human rights in other areas, by urging Bangladesh to accept all outstanding recommendations pertaining to the protection of human rights defenders and the preservation of their rights.

Thank you.