



20 February 2018

His Excellency Mr. António Guterres
Secretary-General of the United Nations
Room S-3700
New York, NY 10017

Open letter on the selection process of the next High Commissioner for Human Rights

Dear Secretary-General,

As you begin to search for the next High Commissioner for Human Rights, we emphasize the high expectations that our organizations have for the successor to this office. Appointing a capable, strong and qualified High Commissioner is crucial at this time when fundamental principles of human rights are being challenged, and the integrity and independence of the United Nations human rights system is under attack. We urge you to vigorously defend the High Commissioner's Office's ability to operate without interference, and select a new High Commissioner capable of ensuring its independence.

Criteria /Qualifications for appointment

Our organizations consider that the next High Commissioner needs to be someone of the highest international standing and integrity, with a proven record of bold and principled public advocacy for human rights. She or he should be a human rights champion ready to be independent and outspoken in fulfilling the High Commissioner's mandate. The High Commissioner should be a strong leader with a clear vision for the promotion and protection of all human rights, and bring energy, courage and commitment to the position. The High Commissioner should especially highlight human rights issues that have fallen beneath the radar, and be ready to hold States accountable without fear of repercussions. She or he should be able to inspire those working for the promotion and protection of human rights and the broader international community, and be able to navigate effectively within a complex human rights community that comprises governments, civil society and other stakeholders.

Most importantly, the High Commissioner should be accessible to victims and others directly affected by human rights violations. We urge you to select an exceptionally qualified candidate capable of meeting the demands of this important post from the outset.

Selection process

The process that led to your own appointment as United Nations Secretary-General was the most transparent to date, and we believe a similar approach should be used to identify and appoint the High Commissioner for Human Rights. A robust and transparent selection process is key to ensuring the credibility of the appointment, and to identifying the most qualified candidate for the job. Transparency, accountability and professionalism are important values in the United Nations, and we urge you to strictly apply these principles to the selection of the next High Commissioner.

We recommend that a formal person specification be formulated and made public. We consider such a specification would assist in the identification of candidates and the assessment of their competencies. The selection process should include wide consultation with all stakeholders, including civil society. We consider it would be beneficial for there to be a set timetable for nominations, shortlisting and final selection to facilitate participation by all stakeholders in the selection process and ensure transparency.

Human rights are one of the pillars of the United Nations. It is vital that the next holder of this position be a compelling leader for human rights within the United Nations system and throughout the world. In the year of the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we urge you to put in place a process that reflects the seriousness and significance of this appointment to human rights victims and defenders worldwide.

Yours sincerely,

Amnesty International

Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies

Civicus

Forum-Asia

Human Rights Watch

International Commission of Jurists

International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)

International Service for Human Rights