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Update for the Human Rights Council

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Committee Overview

Recent Developments

During the Human Rights Council's (HRC) 25th special session on 21 October 2016, members discussed the deteriorating human rights situation in Aleppo, Syria, and urged all parties involved to immediately cease hostilities.¹ The Council also tasked the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, a commission established by HRC in 2011, to investigate the events that happened in Aleppo.²

On 5 December 2016, HRC elected its new bureau, leading to the appointment of Ambassador Joaquín Alexander Maza Martelli from El Salvador as HRC President for 2017.³ The new President, in his first remarks, noted the importance of respecting HRC's institutional structure in a more transparent way, in order to ensure the universality and impartiality of all human rights.⁴ More precisely, the new President discussed the need to make HRC run more efficiently, in order to be able to address violations in a timely manner.⁵ In his first address, Martelli also noted that budgetary constraints should not restrict the Council in fulfilling its main task of promoting universal human rights.⁶ These remarks remain especially significant in light of the 50th anniversary of the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR) (1966) and the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (ICESCR) (1966) in 2017.⁷ HRC will use the 50th anniversary of the Covenants to further highlight issue areas where improvements need to be made and to reemphasize the role every citizen plays in ensuring the full enjoyment of human rights for everyone.⁸

In the following weeks, HRC also worked on the renewal and reaffirmation of several sub-committees' mandates.⁹ In particular, HRC reaffirmed the mandate of the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan.¹⁰ This reaffirmation was preceded by a special session of HRC on the human rights situation in South Sudan, resulting in the adoption of HRC resolution S-26/1 on the topic.¹¹ In this resolution, HRC deplores the ongoing human rights violations perpetrated in South Sudan, including targeted killings and sexual and gender-based violence.¹² The resolution also reaffirmed the mandate of the Commission and instructed it to focus on the newly uncovered abuses in order to ensure government accountability.¹³ Further, the mandate of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances, which was established through the *International Convention for the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearances* (ICPPED) (2006), was extended.¹⁴ This decision was made at the first Conference of the States

¹ OHCHR, *Human Rights Council concludes Special Session on the deteriorating situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic, and the recent situation in Aleppo*, 2016.

² OHCHR, *Human Rights Council mandates Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria to conduct special inquiry into events in Aleppo*, 2016.

³ OHCHR, *Human Rights Council elects new President and Vice-Presidents for 2017 - Joaquín Alexander Maza Martelli of El Salvador Appointed as President-elect*, 2016.

⁴ OHCHR, *Remarks by Ambassador, Permanent Representative of El Salvador, Mr. Joaquin Maza Martelli on the occasion of his appointment as President of the Human Rights Council*, 2016.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ OHCHR, *Press briefing notes on Myanmar, Colombia and 50th Anniversary of the Human Rights Covenants*, 2016.

⁸ OHCHR, *About the Covenants*.

⁹ OHCHR, *The Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances commends the decision of the State Parties to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance to extend the mandate of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances*, 2016; OHCHR, *Human Rights Council reaffirms mandate of the Commission on human rights in South Sudan and concludes special session*, 2016.

¹⁰ OHCHR, *The Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances commends the decision of the State Parties to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance to extend the mandate of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances*, 2016.

¹¹ UN HRC, *Situation of human rights in South Sudan (A/HRC/RES/S-26/1)*, 2016.

¹² Ibid., p. 3.

¹³ Ibid., p. 4.

¹⁴ OHCHR, *The Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances commends the decision of the State Parties to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance to extend the mandate of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances*, 2016.

parties to the ICPPED, where they recognized the vital role the Committee has played in monitoring forced disappearances and raising awareness about the causes and consequences of forced disappearances.¹⁵

In moving forward, HRC has identified multiple areas that still require its attention, such as the rights of persons with disabilities, combating trafficking of persons in the United States of America, and the situation of human rights defenders in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (oPt).¹⁶ The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities noted on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (2007) that, although states show a willingness to implement the Convention, they lack effective implementation through state policies.¹⁷ In particular, social exclusion and a lack of access to the labor market remain challenges for persons with disabilities.¹⁸ Further efforts must also be made in order to protect the rights of victims of trafficking in the United States of America, especially labor trafficking and sexual exploitation.¹⁹ The Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, upon finishing her visit to the United States of America in December 2016, noted in this regard that the focus should be on preventing trafficking by adopting adequate measures such as temporary work permits.²⁰ The visit was made following an invitation by the American government for an official visit by the Special Rapporteur.²¹ With regards to the situation of human rights defenders in the oPt, the responsible Special Rapporteurs noted that activists increasingly face legal consequences that are directly related to their tasks in the field.²² They noted that they have received reports of arbitrary detentions and instances of intimidation against Palestinian activists by Israeli authorities.²³ HRC will be holding its next regular session from 27 February to 24 March 2017.²⁴

Annotated Bibliography

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. (2016). *About the Covenants* [Website]. Retrieved 7 January 2017 from: <http://2covenants.ohchr.org/About-The-Covenants.html>

This website, created for the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the ICCPR and the ICESCR by OHCHR, presents information on different aspects of the Covenants, such as the history of the Covenants and the main rights assured by them. It also offers information on what events are being organized in the course of 2017 to raise awareness about the Covenants, and offers insight into what action can be taken to support the UN in its campaign. Delegates can use this resource as an inspiration on what tools HRC can use to counter human rights violations.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. (2016, December 5). *Remarks by Ambassador, Permanent Representative of El Salvador, Mr. Joaquin Maza Martelli on the occasion of his appointment as President of the Human Rights Council*. Retrieved 7 January 2017 from:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=21066&LangID=E - sthash.qjJaI8dv.dpuf>

¹⁵ Conference of States Parties to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances, *Summary record of the first meeting (CED/CSP/SR.1)*, 2016, p. 11.

¹⁶ OHCHR, *Disability rights still lagging 10 years after convention, says UN expert*, 2016; OHCHR, *UN expert calls for continued efforts against trafficking in persons in the US, with a stronger focus on labor exploitation*, 2016; OHCHR, *Human rights defenders under growing legal pressure in the OPT – UN rights experts*, 2016.

¹⁷ OHCHR, *Disability rights still lagging 10 years after convention, says UN expert*, 2016; OHCHR, *Statement to mark the 10th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, 2016.

¹⁸ OHCHR, *Disability rights still lagging 10 years after convention, says UN expert*, 2016.

¹⁹ OHCHR, *UN expert calls for continued efforts against trafficking in persons in the US, with a stronger focus on labor exploitation*, 2016.

²⁰ Ibid.; OHCHR, *End of visit statement, United States of America (6-16 December 2016) by Maria Grazia Giammarinaro, UN Special Rapporteur in Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children*, 2016.

²¹ OHCHR, *UN expert calls for continued efforts against trafficking in persons in the US, with a stronger focus on labor exploitation*, 2016; OHCHR, *End of visit statement, United States of America (6-16 December 2016) by Maria Grazia Giammarinaro, UN Special Rapporteur in Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children*, 2016.

²² OHCHR, *Human rights defenders under growing legal pressure in the OPT – UN rights experts*, 2016.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ UN HRC, *34th Session of the Human Rights Council (27 February to 24 March 2017)*, 2017.



These remarks, delivered by the newly elected President of HRC, are an indication of the direction HRC will take under this presidency. Martelli notes his priorities for the months to come, including a focus on transparency and efficiency in HRC's work and a thematic focus on vulnerable groups. It is a useful resource for delegates, as it offers them an overview of the global setting HRC's work will be footed in during 2017, and allows delegates to gain a better understanding of the language HRC officials use.

United Nations, Human Rights Council, Twenty-sixth special session. (2016). *Situation of human rights in South Sudan (A/HRC/RES/S-26/1)* [Resolution]. Retrieved 7 January 2017 from: <http://undocs.org/A/HRC/RES/S-26/1>
This resolution, adopted at a special session on the situation in South Sudan by HRC, is an example of a resolution addressing and re-assessing an ongoing human rights crisis. It first offers suggestions on how to handle the human rights violations, such as measures that should be taken by the authorities. It also reaffirms the mandate of the Commission on the human rights situation in South Sudan, thus showing how HRC can use its special procedures to ensure compliance with human rights norms. It offers delegates an example of how to utilize HRC's resources in an ongoing human rights crisis.

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Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. (2016, December 13). *Disability rights still lagging 10 years after convention, says UN expert* [Press Release]. Retrieved 7 January 2017 from: <http://www.ohchr.org/SP/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=21020&LangID=E>

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. (2016, December 19). *End of visit statement, United States of America (6-16 December 2016) by Maria Grazia Giammarinaro, UN Special Rapporteur in Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children*. Retrieved 7 January 2017 from: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=21049&LangID=E>

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. (2016, October 21). *Human Rights Council concludes Special Session on the deteriorating situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic, and the recent situation in Aleppo* [Press Release]. Retrieved 28 January 2017 from: <http://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=20738&LangID=E>

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. (2016, December 5). *Human Rights Council elects new President and Vice-Presidents for 2017 - Joaquín Alexander Maza Martelli of El Salvador Appointed as President-elect* [Press Release]. Retrieved 7 January 2017 from: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=20989&LangID=E>

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. (2016, October 21). *Human Rights Council mandates Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria to conduct special inquiry into events in Aleppo* [Press Release]. Retrieved 28 January 2017 from: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=20737>

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. (2016, December 14). *Human Rights Council reaffirms mandate of the Commission on human rights in South Sudan and concludes special session* [Press Release]. Retrieved 7 January 2017 from: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=21036&LangID=E>

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. (2016, December 16). *Human rights defenders*



under growing legal pressure in the OPT – UN rights experts [Press Release]. Retrieved 7 January 2017 from: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=21041&LangID=E>

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. (2016, December 16). *Press briefing notes on Myanmar, Colombia and 50th Anniversary of the Human Rights Covenants* [Press Release]. Retrieved 7 January 2017 from: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=21043&LangID=E>

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. (2016, December 5). *Remarks by Ambassador, Permanent Representative of El Salvador, Mr. Joaquin Maza Martelli on the occasion of his appointment as President of the Human Rights Council*. Retrieved 7 January 2017 from: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=21066&LangID=E-sthash.qjJaI8dv.dpuf>

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. (2016, December 13). *Statement to mark the 10th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. Retrieved 7 January 2017 from: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=21018&LangID=E>

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Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. (2016, December 20). *UN expert calls for continued efforts against trafficking in persons in the US, with a stronger focus on labor exploitation* [Press Release]. Retrieved 7 January 2017 from: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=21050&LangID=E>

United Nations, Human Rights Council. (2017). *34th session of the Human Rights Council (27 February to 24 March 2017)* [Website]. Retrieved 28 January 2017 from: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session34/Pages/34RegularSession.aspx>

United Nations, Human Rights Council, Twenty-sixth special session. (2016). *Situation of human rights in South Sudan (A/HRC/RES/S-26/1)* [Resolution]. Retrieved 7 January 2017 from: <http://undocs.org/A/HRC/RES/S-26/1>

I. Protecting and Promoting Human Rights to Prevent and Counter Violent Extremism

Recent Developments

At the 71st session of United Nations (UN) General Assembly, the President of the General Assembly, Peter Thompson, stressed his concern over the rise of violent extremism and the growing resentment against migrants, minorities, and refugees being felt around the world.²⁵ During meetings of the General Assembly's Sixth Committee, the need to respect the rule of law and human rights in counter-terrorism policies was discussed.²⁶ Furthermore, reacting with harsh policies was seen as aiding terrorist organizations in building a narrative helpful to their cause.²⁷ In this session, delegations stressed the importance of abiding to the international legal framework, including humanitarian law, to avoid fostering violent extremism and resulting acts of terrorism.²⁸ In addition, the European Union (EU), Belgium and Jordan organized a high-level event, parallel to the Global Counterterrorism Forum Ministerial Meeting and the 71st session of the General Assembly, with the goal of including youth organizations and young people in the development of strategies to combat the spreading of violent extremism.²⁹ During this event, Neven Mimica, the EU Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, explained that the intention of the meeting was to include young people in the solution-finding process as they are often targeted by violent extremists' recruiting strategies.³⁰ The event provided a fruitful platform for debates and concluded with several recommendations, such as the development of initiatives that take into account community-specific problems, the promotion of a dialogue between youth civil society and government entities, and the encouragement of research on youth radicalization.³¹

In November, the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) published a strategy recommendation to counter violent extremism, *Turning Point*, in which the necessity to adhere to human rights, as well as the correlation of human rights abuses and a high number of terror attacks, and the need for religiously and cultural-sensitive approaches was emphasized.³² The strategy concluded that respecting human rights is vital to combat violent extremism and ultimately terrorism.³³

On the occasion of Human Rights Day on 10 December 2016, the Coordination Committee of Special Procedures, which consists of six experts and facilitates the work of the Human Rights Council's (HRC's) Special Procedures, emphasized that populist movements have boosted discrimination, including xenophobia, sexism, and racism, worldwide by profiting from economic difficulties and increasing nationalist tendencies.³⁴ As an example, some political parties in Europe seized momentum after the terrorist attack in Berlin, Germany, to promote restrictive migration policies by relying on negative stereotypes and anti-refugee sentiments.³⁵ This has also fostered racism and xenophobia in the region.³⁶

The Security Council adopted resolution 2322 (2016) on "Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts" to strengthen international judicial cooperation to further counter terrorism.³⁷ In it, the body reiterated the need to comply with human rights law and reassesses counter-terrorism mechanisms.³⁸ Moreover, the

²⁵ UN DPI, *Amid Rising Violent Extremism, Intolerance, Speakers at General Assembly Commemoration Urge Upholding of Key Human Rights Covenants (GA/11842)*, 2016.

²⁶ UN DPI, *Human Rights Must Be Core in Fight against Terrorism, Sixth Committee Hears, as It Takes Up Ongoing Stalemate of Draft Convention to Eliminate Global Threat (GA/L/3517)*, 2016.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ European Commission, *Joining efforts to promote the role of youth in preventing and countering violent extremism*, 2016.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Counter-Terrorism Monitoring, Reporting and Support Mechanism, *Global Efforts in Integrating a Youth Dimension in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism*, 2016.

³² Center for Strategic and International Studies, *Turning Point: A New Comprehensive Strategy for Countering Violent Extremism*, 2016.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ OHCHR, *Human rights under increasing attack worldwide*, 2016.

³⁵ Noack & Zaitoun, *Refugees in Germany fear backlash after Berlin truck attack*, *Washington Post*, 2016.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ UN Security Council, *Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts (S/RES/2322 (2016))*, 2016.

³⁸ Ibid.

importance of providing counter-narratives while respecting human rights and including civil society actors was underlined.³⁹ Similarly, on 1 February 2017, UN Secretary-General António Guterres addressed the topic of reactive counter-terrorism measures that are being implemented worldwide and cautioned Member States against implementing policies that may further terror recruitment initiatives.⁴⁰

In the fight against violent extremism and terrorism it remains pivotal to incorporate new approaches, as well as to include youth organizations and other civil society actors in the development of more holistic strategies.⁴¹ At the General Assembly High-level Dialogue on “Building Sustainable Peace for All: Synergies between the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Sustaining Peace,” which took place in January 2017, the role of women and youth for peace, especially in the fight against violent extremism, was highlighted.⁴² Exclusion was seen as a main driver of rising violent extremism.⁴³ The debates addressing the prevention and countering of violent extremism all emphasized the importance of including groups representing women, young people, and minorities, as well as the positive effects that protecting and promoting human rights have in countering extremism.⁴⁴

Annotated Bibliography

Center for Strategic and International Studies. (2016). *Turning Point: A New Comprehensive Strategy for Countering Violent Extremism*. Retrieved 28 January 2017 from: <https://www.csis.org/features/turning-point>

This report by the Center for Strategic and International Studies provides good overview information regarding violent extremism. Furthermore, statistical analysis regarding the quantity of terrorist attacks, their geographical location, violent extremism as global threat, perceptions, possible future developments, and policy implications. In addition, policy suggestions are provided based on the presented analysis. This report will assist delegates with an overview of the topic and possible policy revisions, which could increase the effectiveness of counter measures.

Counter-Terrorism Monitoring, Reporting and Support Mechanism. (2016). *Global Efforts in Integrating a Youth Dimension in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism*. Retrieved 28 January 2017 from: http://ct-morse.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Global-efforts-on-youth_outcome-report.pdf

This outcome report by the Counter-Terrorism Monitoring, Reporting and Support Mechanism provides background information regarding the High-level event “Global efforts in integrating a youth dimension in preventing and countering violent extremism,” which took place in September 2016. It provides insights into the issues discussed at the event, as well as policy recommendations to improve the integration of youth groups into the development of policy strategies. The outcome report provides Delegates with important lessons learned by experts and topics encompassed in the debate.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. (2016, December 10). *Human rights under increasing attack worldwide* [Press Release]. Retrieved 03 January 2017 from:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=21009&LangID=E>

This is a comment by the Coordination Committee of Special Procedures, a body of six independent experts, regarding the human rights situation worldwide. In addition, the dangers posed by policies, which do not consider human rights principles, are depicted. Moreover, possible future worrisome developments in this policy sector are outlined, such as the dangers posed by mass surveillance. Delegates should read it in detail to further their understanding of the broad connection between the protection and promotion of human rights and preventing and countering violent extremism.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ UN DPI, *US should lift measure suspending refugee resettlement, says UN chief Guterres*, 2017.

⁴¹ Lebada, *High-level Dialogue Addresses Roots of Sustaining Peace*, *International Institute for Sustainable Development*, 2017.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. (2017). *Human rights and preventing and countering violent extremism* [Website]. Retrieved 28 January 2017 from: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/RuleOfLaw/Pages/PCVE.aspx>

This website from the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights gives an overview of the topic at hand. Links to important statements, best practices, contributions by states, UN agencies and non-governmental organizations. A short introduction regarding the panel discussions at the Human Rights Council addressing the topic at hand is provided. This website provides delegates with a starting point to have an overview about the conceptualization of the topic by different UN, international, national and non-state actors. Furthermore, a quick access to important statements and documents is provided.

United Nations, Department for Public Information. (2016, October 19). *Amid Rising Violent Extremism, Intolerance, Speaker at General Assembly Commemoration Urge Upholding of Key Human Rights Covenants (GA/11842)* [Meetings Coverage]. Retrieved 7 January 2017 from: <http://www.un.org/press/en/2016/ga11842.doc.htm>

This meeting of the UN General Assembly provides delegates with an overview regarding the proceedings at the 71st session of the General Assembly. Several remarks regarding violent extremism and human rights aspects in this area were made. Furthermore, the interrelation between human rights and policies countering violent extremism is exemplified. Delegates can utilize this meeting coverage as example of the several opinions represented at the UN regarding this topic.

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Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. (2016, December 10). *Human rights under increasing attack worldwide* [Press Release]. Retrieved 3 January 2017 from: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=21009&LangID=E>

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. (2017). *Human rights and preventing and countering violent extremism* [Website]. Retrieved 28 January 2017 from: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/RuleOfLaw/Pages/PCVE.aspx>

United Nations, Department for Public Information. (2016, October 19). *Amid Rising Violent Extremism, Intolerance, Speaker at General Assembly Commemoration Urge Upholding of Key Human Rights Covenants (GA/11842)* [Meetings Coverage]. Retrieved 7 January 2017 from: <http://www.un.org/press/en/2016/ga11842.doc.htm>



United Nations, Department for Public Information. (2016, October 3). *Human Rights Must Be Core in Fight against Terrorism, Sixth Committee Hears, as It Takes Up Ongoing Stalemate of Draft Convention to Eliminate Global Threat (GA/L/3517)* [Meetings Coverage]. Retrieved 28 January 2017 from: <https://www.un.org/press/en/2016/gal3517.doc.htm>

United Nations, Department of Public Information. (2017, 1 February). *US should lift measure suspending refugee resettlement, says UN chief Guterres* [News Article]. Retrieved 4 February 2017 from: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=56087#.WJZ3mbYrJmA>

United Nations, Security Council, 7831st meeting. (2016). *Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts (S/RES/2322 (2016))* [Resolution]. Retrieved 28 January 2017 from: [http://undocs.org/S/RES/2322\(2016\)](http://undocs.org/S/RES/2322(2016))

II. Contribution of Firearms Regulation to the Protection of Human Rights

Recent Developments

In recent months, the international community has worked diligently to protect human rights by regulating the misuse and trafficking of firearms. The importance of restricting small arms and light weapons (SALWs) has become more urgent since the rise of terrorism and the increasingly volatile situation in Syria.⁴⁵ Disarmament serves as a foundation for future social and economic development, contributes to sustainable peace, and remains a prerequisite for attaining other Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).⁴⁶

The Sixth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the *Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat, and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons In All Its Aspects* occurred in June 2016 at the United Nations (UN) Headquarters.⁴⁷ The outcome report encourages all Member States to adopt appropriate legislative and administrative measures that comply with international human rights laws to regulate small arms misuse and protect human rights.⁴⁸ Furthermore, the report recommends that national governments commit to combat illicit manufacture, transfer, and circulation of SALWs as means to fight human rights violations and financing terrorist organizations.⁴⁹

In October 2016, the UN Secretary-General presented his report on the Sixth Biennial Meeting, encouraging Member States to develop comprehensive plans and to work closely with UN country teams on capacity building programs such as police training, security sector reform, and women's empowerment.⁵⁰ Furthermore, the document built a solid foundation for the Third Programme of Action Review Conference to be held in 2018, by stressing the need to recognize the link between illicit trade in SALWs and human rights violations as well as providing a platform for all parties to report their progress on small arms regulations and capacity building programs.⁵¹ During its 71st session the UN General Assembly First Committee speakers reiterated the importance of combating illicit trade of SALWs and encouraged Member States to concentrate more effort on regulating the illicit trade of SALWs and actively participate in the Open-ended Working Group on the Fourth Special Session of the General Assembly devoted to Disarmament.⁵²

In November 2016, Andrew Gilmour, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, briefed the Human Rights Council on his visit to the Democratic Republic of Congo.⁵³ Gilmour expressed deep disappointment in the misuse of weapons by defense forces against demonstrators that killed 50 demonstrators with live ammunition.⁵⁴ Gilmour echoed the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, Maina Kiai's, statement that firearms should have never been used to silence protesters.⁵⁵

⁴⁵ UN DPI, *Amid Growing Global Refugee Crisis, Terror Attacks, General Assembly Appoints New United Nations Chief, Begins Implementing Sustainable Development Agenda (GA/11883)*, 2016.

⁴⁶ UN DPI, *Disarmament Efforts Must Support, Not Thwart, Push for Global Social, Economic Development, Speakers Tell First Committee (GA/DIS/3549)*, 2016.

⁴⁷ UN General Assembly, *Report of the Sixth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (GA/A/CONF.192/BMS/2016/2)*, 2016.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.; UNODA, *Small Arms*.

⁵⁰ UN General Assembly, *The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects: Report of the Secretary-General (A/71/438)*, 2016.

⁵¹ UN DPI, *Spotlighting Human Costs of Wide-spread Arms Transfers, First Committee Delegates Say States Must Bolster Global Response to Effectively Stem Illicit Flows (GA/DIS/3558)*, 2016.

⁵² UN DPI, *States Must Be Flexible, Creative in Finding Common Ground to Resuscitate Nuclear Disarmament Efforts, First Committee Told, as General Debate Opens (GA/DIS/3545)*, 2016.

⁵³ OHCHR, *Informal briefing to the Human Rights Council: Statement by Andrew Gilmour, Assistant Secretary General for Human Rights*, 2016.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ OHCHR, *DRC: UN human rights experts deeply condemn new violent repression of protests*, 2016.

In December 2016, the United Nations Office of Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) celebrated its 30th anniversary and reflected on its achievements to improve world peace and security through regional disarmament.⁵⁶ Since 2006, UNODA has trained over 20,000 personnel in arms and ammunition management, has assisted Member States in destroying approximately 176,000 SALWs and 132 tons of ammunition, and helped to mark over 13,000 weapons.⁵⁷ Moreover, over 400,000 teenagers have participated in disarmament and non-proliferation education programs from UNODA.⁵⁸ In January 2017, UNODA and the World Customs Organization signed a memorandum of understanding on combating the trafficking of SALWs.⁵⁹ This memorandum not only formalizes the existing cooperation between the two organizations, but also demonstrates their further commitment to regulate firearms misuse, and protect human rights.⁶⁰ The memorandum highlights both organizations' support of Member States' efforts in strengthening cross-border arms regulation to fight against SALWs trafficking.⁶¹ Both entities have agreed to share knowledge in building the capacity of arms and ammunition management and create joint trainings programs about arms regulations for customs officers.⁶² As such, the officers can more effectively prevent illicit SALWs from entering their countries and stop small arms misuse, which leads to human rights violations.⁶³

Additionally, on a regional level, the European Parliament and European Council reached a provisional political agreement on tighter gun controls in December 2016.⁶⁴ The series of proposals aim to raise the threshold for acquiring high capacity weapons, protect citizens in the European Union (EU) from terrorist attacks and gun violence, and strengthen cooperation among all EU members.⁶⁵

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European Commission. (2016, December 20). *Firearms: Agreement on Commission proposal to increase citizens' security*. Retrieved 23 January 2017 from: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-16-4464_en.htm

This document shows the EU's positive efforts in gun controls and commitments in protecting human rights. The report shows that EU members recognize the nexus between human rights violations, terrorism activities, and the illegal proliferation of SALWs. It provides reasons why the EU decided to move to this direction such as reducing shooting in schools, increase burden for getting high capacity weapon legally, and decrease illicit trade of SALWs.

United Nations, Department of Public Information. (2016, October 7). *Disarmament Efforts Must Support, Not Thwart, Push for Global Social, Economic Development, Speakers Tell First Committee (GA/DIS/3549)* [Meetings Coverage]. Retrieved 3 January 2017 from: <https://www.un.org/press/en/2016/gadis3549.doc.htm>

This article includes statements from different Member States regarding the connection between development and disarmament. Many Member States have highlighted how the proliferation of SALWs impacted some countries negatively and the cost of innocent human lives. This report shows delegates the willingness of Member States to combat SALWs for socioeconomic development.

United Nations, Department of Public Information. (2016, October 20). *Spotlighting Human Costs of Wide-spread Arms Transfers, First Committee Delegates Say States Must Bolster Global Response to Effectively Stem Illicit Flows (GA/DIS/3558)* [Meetings Coverage]. Retrieved 3 January 2017 from: <https://www.un.org/press/en/2016/gadis3558.doc.htm>

This article highlights statements from different Member States regarding the protection of human rights and the proliferation of SALWs. Many Member States emphasized the urgent need of

⁵⁶ UNODA, *UNODA Celebrates the 30th Anniversary of the Regional Centres*, 2016.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ UNODA, *Side Event: Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals- The Role of the Office for Disarmament Affairs Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament*, 2016.

⁵⁹ UN DPI, *Office of Disarmament Affairs, World Customs Organization Sign Memorandum of Understanding on Combating Trafficking in Small Arms, Light Weapons (DC/3679)*, 2017.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Nastranis, *UN Boosts Fight Against Small Arms, Light Weapons Trafficking*, *IDN-InDepthNews*, 2017.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ European Commission, *Firearms: Agreement on Commission proposal to increase citizens' security*, 2016.

⁶⁵ Ibid.; *Europe Takes a Braver Stance on Gun Control*, *The New York Times*, 2016.

strengthening relevant international agreements to protect innocent people and recommended other possible plans that different countries can implement at national level to build capacity of arms and ammunitions management. This report can help delegates gain a holistic view of the different concerns and recommendations of different states to stem arms transfers.

United Nations, General Assembly. (2016). *Report of the Sixth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (GA/A/CONF.192/BMS/2016/2)*. Retrieved 23 January 2017 from: <http://undocs.org/A/CONF.192/BMS/2016/2>

This outcome report provides detailed information about the major achievements from the Sixth Biennial Meeting and recommends the actions that Member States should take to regulate SALWs. The document also stresses the importance of sharing best practices among the international community and building capacity for arms and ammunitions management. The report provides a foundation for further negotiations among Member States and prepares more materials for the Third Programme of Action Review Conference in 2018. Delegates will benefit from these articles as it should provide material to help them think about the future of regulating SALWs.

United Nations Office of Disarmament Affairs. (2016, December 8). *UNODA Celebrates the 30th Anniversary of the Regional Centres* [News Article]. Retrieved 3 January 2017 from: <https://www.un.int/news/unoda-celebrates-30th-anniversary-regional-centres>

This report outlines the major achievements of UNODA in the past decades and summarizes many important programs that UNODA conducts in various different categories, for example, by conducting disarmament educational programs and arms management. The article highlights the importance of the UNODA's role in combating current global security threats. It helps delegates to understand the practical functionalities of UNODA, and its significant contribution to the present issue.

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III. Human Rights Violations and Abuses against Rohingya Muslims and Other Minorities in Myanmar

Recent Developments

The treatment of the Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar continues to be scrutinized by the United Nations (UN) and the international community. On 9 October 2016, violence erupted in the Rakhine State of Myanmar near the border with Bangladesh.⁶⁶ The region is home to nearly 1.1 million mostly Rohingya Muslims who have been denied citizenship.⁶⁷ It was the largest violent event in the region since a string of violence erupted in 2012.⁶⁸ A senior military official of Myanmar blamed the Rohingya Solidarity Organization (RSO), a small Rohingya armed group that had been active in the 1980s and 1990s.⁶⁹ However, a report by the International Crisis Group stated that no evidence was found to substantiate this claim and many international organizations have long believed the RSO to be non-operational.⁷⁰ The violence ended in the deaths of nine Myanmar military police officers and also precipitated the rape and sexual assault of young girls and women in northern Rakhine State according to Zainab Hawa Bangura, UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict.⁷¹ She called on the government of Myanmar to investigate the alleged violence and said the incident was not an isolated case, but rather part of a larger pattern of ethnically motivated violence against the Rohingya Muslims.⁷²

Following the violence, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) issued a statement directed at the government of Myanmar on 9 November 2016 calling special attention to the plight Rohingya children face in Rakhine State.⁷³ The statement expressed that the worsening of violence had heightened the risk of violence within the community and, as a result, had put children at risk of greater danger and of a decrease in living conditions.⁷⁴ Within that statement, UNICEF called for a full reinstatement of humanitarian services within Rakhine State.⁷⁵ This would require the Myanmar government to lift its current restrictions on the movement of health professionals and other personnel so they could safely reach these populations.⁷⁶ In early November, Myanmar allowed the World Food Programme (WFP) access to four villages in Rakhine State, but no regular access to the area has been granted to other UN or humanitarian groups.⁷⁷ Despite the restricted access to Rakhine State by the government of Myanmar, Human Rights Watch compiled a report using satellite imagery to detail some of the damage done during reported burnings of Rohingya homes and structures between 10 and 18 November.⁷⁸ Both UNICEF and Human Rights Watch called on the government to support independent investigations into the alleged violence.⁷⁹

During the 70th session of the General Assembly's Third Committee, UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Myanmar, Yanghee Lee, expressed deep concerns over the violence that erupted in Rakhine State in October.⁸⁰ Additionally, Lee pointed to the escalating violence in other regions, including the Shan, Kachin, and Kayin States that have also faced a disruption in humanitarian aid services.⁸¹ Her main concern has been the lack of legal and constitutional reforms, which currently allows for 25% of Myanmar's parliamentary seats to be reserved for members of the military.⁸² On the same occasion, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al

⁶⁶ *Attack kills Myanmar police on Bangladesh border*, Al Jazeera, 2016.

⁶⁷ Hla Tun, Myanmar says nine police killed by insurgents on Bangladesh border, *Reuters*, 2016.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Attack kills Myanmar police on Bangladesh border*, Al Jazeera, 2016.

⁷⁰ Hla Tun, Myanmar says nine police killed by insurgents on Bangladesh border, *Reuters*, 2016.

⁷¹ *Attack kills Myanmar police on Bangladesh border*, Al Jazeera, 2016; UN DPI, *Myanmar: UN envoy urges investigation into alleged sexual assaults after violence flares in Rakhine State*, 2016.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ UN DPI, *UNICEF sounds alarm over safety of children in Myanmar's Rakhine state*, 2016; UNICEF, *UNICEF statement on grave risks to children in Rakhine State, Myanmar*, 2016.

⁷⁴ UN DPI, *UNICEF sounds alarm over safety of children in Myanmar's Rakhine state*, 2016.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ Lewis, Myanmar allows food aid delivery to conflict-torn region, *Reuters*, 2016.

⁷⁸ Human Rights Watch, *Burma: New Wave of Destruction in Rohingya Villages*, 2016.

⁷⁹ UN DPI, *UNICEF sounds alarm over safety of children in Myanmar's Rakhine state*, 2016.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ UN DPI, *UN expert urges international community to continue to address human rights challenges in Myanmar*, 2016.

⁸² *Ibid.*

Hussein, stated that the government of Myanmar has largely failed to follow recommendations made by the UN in June 2016.⁸³ Myanmar's response to international calls for reform has been nominal as the military political party continues to hold significant power within the country.⁸⁴ With decades of mistrust between the military's and the League for Democracy's political parties, it has been difficult to create a strong, central, mandate within Myanmar.⁸⁵

In late December, a video was released showing what appeared to be a group of Rohingya Muslims seated on the ground while several members of Myanmar's military police beat them during a security operation.⁸⁶ Four days after, the office of Aung San Suu Kyi, the State Counselor to Myanmar and human rights activist, stated that four border police had been detained and would "be punished" for their actions in relation to the incident.⁸⁷ A subsequent open letter signed by over 20 Nobel Prize Laureates from various categories, called on the President of the Security Council to help bring an end to the violence perpetrated against the Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar.⁸⁸

UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Yanghee Lee, embarked on her fifth trip to the Kachin and Rakhine States from 9-20 January 2017 to gather information regarding the government of Myanmar's response to the violence in the regions.⁸⁹ Before the visit, Lee expressed her hopes to assess the progress being made towards recommended benchmarks made to the government by her office and to reach an agreement with the government that includes identifying areas for improvement and concrete steps to make towards their accomplishment.⁹⁰ A report of this visit is to be made to the Human Rights Council in March.⁹¹

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The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights released a statement on the continued human rights abuses reportedly affecting the Rohingya Muslims. Here, the Commissioner calls on the government of Myanmar to address these alleged abuses and asserts why he believes it was important these issues were addressed immediately as an escalation of violence could precipitate the inaction from government officials to carry out justice. Delegates will benefit from seeing the High Commissioner's most recent thoughts on the situation which can provide insight into how one of the lead representatives perceives the situation in Myanmar and could provide clues as to how HRC may be able to discuss the situation.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. (2017, January 7). *Myanmar: UN rights expert launches new official visit to assess recent developments in the country* [News Article]. Retrieved 7 January 2017 from: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=21069&LangID=E>

This is the latest event undertaken by HRC to investigate and further address the alleged abuse of human rights of the Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar. The article details the time frame and purpose of the Special Rapporteur's visit to Myanmar and gives some information about how she will accomplish the goals of this visit. There is also some insight into the desired outcomes of the visit. Learning about HRC's various branches of operations, including how its Special Rapporteurs carry out their duties will be highly beneficial to delegates as it helps to build an understanding of the kinds of solutions and actions HRC can take in addressing human rights abuses,

⁸³ OHCHR, *Press briefing note on Myanmar, Mosul and Syria*, 2016; OHCHR, *"Callous" Approach to northern Rakhine may have grave repercussions - Zeid*, 2016.

⁸⁴ Macleod, *Rakhine state violence threatens Myanmar's reform*, *Global Risks Insights*, 2016.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Myanmar says 'no evidence' of Rohingya genocide*, BBC News, 2017.

⁸⁷ Ives, *Myanmar Holds Officers After Video Purports to Show Police Beating Rohingya*, *New York Times*, 2017.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

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United Nations, Department of Public Information. (2016, November 11). *Myanmar: UN envoy urges investigation into alleged sexual assaults after violence flares in Rakhine State* [News Article]. Retrieved 5 January 2017 from: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=55540#.WHFpqSMrKP8>

Alleged sexual assaults taking place within Rakhine State against Rohingya Muslim women are highlighted in this article. The article discusses reports of sexual abuse and how these crimes can be severely torturous to the victims. Delegates will benefit from yet another perspective on tackling human rights abuses and will be encouraged to continue to consider the needs of all different types of groups within a community who suffer human rights abuses.

United Nations, Department of Public Information. (2016, October 28). *UN expert urges international community to continue to address human rights challenges in Myanmar* [News Article]. Retrieved 7 January 2017 from: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=55429#.WHFiriMrKP8>

This news article details some of the grievances the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Myanmar has had with the recent situation of human rights abuses in Rakhine State and in other regions of Myanmar against the Rohingya Muslims. The Special Rapporteur's comments reflect the continued scrutiny of the government of Myanmar's response to the crisis and details some of the human rights abuses expected to have taken place in these regions most recently. Delegates will benefit from this source by gaining further understanding of how the UN Special Rapporteur's work functions within the UN and how their work is presented to the UN General Assembly.

United Nations, Department of Public Information. (2016, November 9). *UNICEF sounds alarm over safety of children in Myanmar's Rakhine state* [News Article]. Retrieved 5 January 2017 from: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=55511#.WHFpDyMrKP8>

This article details UNICEF's concerns over the state of children exposed to violence in Myanmar. Additionally, it provides details on ways in which UNICEF believes the rights of children can be respected. Delegates will find this perspective useful, particularly as it addresses an even more vulnerable population within the Rohingya Muslim community. This can serve as a reminder of the importance to address human rights abuses holistically, with attention to the specific needs of different groups.

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