



United Nations

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UN Human Rights Council : significant steps on country situations and LGBT protection amid double standards

The resolutions adopted by the UN Human Rights Council at the closure of its 17th session, demonstrate a strong commitment by the international community to tackle specific country situations of human rights crises and provide landmark steps to tackle violence and discrimination against LGBTs. Yet, the UN's human rights intergovernmental body also demonstrated significant double standards in implementing its protection mandate.

Country situations FIDH welcomes significant steps to respond to human rights crises as they unravel throughout the world. In particular, FIDH welcomes the adoption of a resolution on the situation of human rights in Belarus, which condemns the violations committed in the aftermath of the Presidential election of December 2010. The level, the duration, and the sheer amount of repression, which targeted human rights defenders, students and political opponents and the relatively illusory freedom of the press seconded by harsh controls and defamation requested a significant mobilisation.

FIDH also welcomed the follow-up given to the examination of the situation in Ivory Coast. Demonstrating its commitment to improve the situation of human rights in the country, the Ivorian authorities initiated the resolution, which was adopted by consensus, establishing an Independent Expert to follow-up on the recommendations made by the Commission of Inquiry set up by the Human Rights Council. FIDH calls upon the government to cooperate with the Independent Expert with the view not only to implement the recommendations of the Commission, but also to put into action its previous commitments, expressed by the highest state authorities, to bring all perpetrators of human rights violations to justice, and to carry out an inclusive reconciliation process.

"These significant mobilisations should not overshadow the absence of effective mobilisation in reaction to the degrading situation in Bahrain and Yemen. The crises unfold under the eyes of the international community without the Human Rights Council's protection mandate being triggered by its members", regretted Souhayr Belhassen, FIDH President. "FIDH takes note of Yemen's decision to invite the OHCHR to visit the country but nevertheless reiterates its call on this body to take immediate action on these dreadful situations. The Council must echo the voices of the victims wherever they are, to meet its responsibility to protect".

Thematic situations In an unprecedented move, the Council adopted today with a slight margin [\[1\]](#) a resolution denouncing the violence and discriminations suffered by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people throughout the world. For the first time in history, an African country took the lead on a text initiating a dialogue within the UN, to fight violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Drawing a parallel with the fight for equality during the Apartheid, the South African Ambassador underlined that all struggles against discrimination are founded on the same core principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. South-Africa faced harsh opposition from member States of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference and of most of the African members of the Council, with the exception of Burkina Faso, Zambia which abstained, and Mauritius who was the only African country standing in favour.

The Council also adopted a resolution through which it endorses a set of "Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights" and established a working group whose mandate is focused on the dissemination and implementation of these principles. FIDH welcomes the creation of the working group but has stated in a separate press release issued today that it regrets the failure of the Council to address the dire need of victims to access effective remedies. FIDH calls on the Council to show leadership on this crucial issue to effectively prevent cases of corporate-related abuses, including through stronger legal protection for victims.

FIDH is also deeply disturbed at the decision of the European Union to call a vote against a resolution on migrants and asylum seekers fleeing from events in North Africa, which emphasised the obligations of states to protect their basic rights, including the rights to seek asylum and receive protection, and reminded states of the absolute principle of "non-refoulement", a core obligation under international human rights and refugee law not to return anyone to places where their lives or freedoms are at risk. "It is highly disappointing that the European Union fails to promote its own values in the main UN body in charge of human rights" Souhayr Belhassen, FIDH President, said.

[1] In Favour (23): Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, Ecuador, France, Guatemala, Hungary, Japan, Mauritius, Mexico, Norway, Poland, Republic of Korea, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland, Thailand, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States of America, Uruguay / Against (19): Angola, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Cameroon, Djibouti, Gabon, Ghana, Jordan, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritania, Nigeria, Pakistan, Qatar, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Uganda / Abstention (3) : Burkina Faso, China, Zambia / Kyrgyzstan absent and Libya suspended

<http://www.fidh.org/UN-Human-Rights-Council-significant-steps-on>