



# GICJ Report

## The 34<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Human Rights Council

27 February – 24

March, 2017



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# Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ) Report on the 34th Regular Session of the Human Rights Council

## Opening Statement by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

The 34th regular session of the Human Rights Council was held in Geneva from 27 February - 24 March 2017. The Council adopted 41 resolutions on a variety of issues, as well as the Council's report for the session, and the outcome of the Universal Periodic Review of 11 countries. Moreover, 3 Special Procedures mandate holders were appointed.

In his opening statement, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, brought to the attention of the Council an emerging pattern, whereby political leaders are increasingly denying universal human rights. He stated there is a need for these political actors to understand that only by accepting fundamental human rights will durable peace and success in development be possible. He further asked the Council to ensure the rights of all are upheld, warning that "our rights, the rights of others, the very future of our planet cannot, must not be thrown aside by these reckless political profiteers."

## Council Resolutions

At the end of the session, a number of resolutions were adopted by the Council, addressing different pressing issues. The Council decided to urgently dispatch an independent international fact-finding mission to Myanmar to investigate the facts and circumstances of the alleged recent human rights violations by both military and security forces. In the same resolution, the Council extended by one year the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar.

The Council also extended the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Council called upon the Government of South Sudan to investigate all violations and abuses of human rights, and extended the mandate of the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan, composed of three members. The Council also decided to extend the mandate of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, and decided to

transmit all reports and oral updates of the Commission of Inquiry to all relevant bodies of the United Nations.

The Council further adopted four resolutions related to the occupied Palestinian territory: on ensuring accountability and justice for all violations of international law; on the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination; on human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territory; and on Israeli settlements. A text was also adopted on human rights in the occupied Syrian Golan.

The Council also voted to renew the mandate of the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Effective Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action; and of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. Another text related to the elaboration of complementary standards to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. The Council further recommended that the United Nations General Assembly establish a forum on people of African descent.

Finally, a number of resolutions which demanded all States to implement comprehensive transitional justice strategies and to develop mechanisms to address the past atrocities, as well as promoting and protecting all human rights, were also adopted by the Council during this session.

## GICJ Participation

GICJ participated in the 34th session of the Human Rights Council by delivering 14 joint oral statements and submitting 11 joint written statements. GICJ further co-organised two side events on different topics, one covering the human rights situation in Palestine, and the other on human rights education and the obligation of governments to prevent incitement to racial hatred and hate speech. The official copies of the written reports submitted to the Human Rights Council will be available to download at the bottom of the page, along with the summaries and videos of the side events.

### Oral Statements

GICJ delivered several joint oral statements under items 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10 of the agenda of the Council. GICJ also delivered two high-level panel statements, one joint statement during the interactive dialogue, and two panel statements. The oral statements which were delivered by GICJ, jointly with other NGOs, can be watched in the next section.

#### **Biennial High-Level Panel Discussion on the Question of the Death Penalty**

Statement delivered by Dr. Fatima Al Ani

This statement is intended to bring to the attention of the Council, the concern of the civil society around the world with regard to the negative impacts of the so-called “war on terrorism.”

Since 2001 – the war on terror has resulted in the deaths of thousands of civilians, and destroyed the infrastructure of several countries. However, it has not eliminated terrorism, or terrorist organisations. On the contrary, we have witnessed the emergence of a new criminal terrorist group called ISIL, as well as a number of armed militia groups.

The counter-terrorism military campaigns have provoked political turmoil and killed thousands of civilians in the targeted countries. Yet despite the acknowledged link between the global war on terror, and the surge of violent extremism, world leaders have failed to modify their strategies. With the destruction of several cities in Syria and Iraq just the most recent examples of a disorganised and non-prioritised war on terror.

Mr President, distinguished member,

Our main concern, is that in the modern war on terror, there is no differentiation between armed terrorists and innocent civilians. Thousands of civilians have been trapped in the besieged cities, where humanitarian access is denied, including essential supplies of food and water - resulting in a multitude of deaths. Besides being deprived of basic medical care, education, and housing, they are then continuously subjected to bombing and shelling.

The media has shown disturbing images of women and children, trapped under the bricks of their homes. Yet the international community has failed, again, to halt the international and government-led coalitions from targeting civilian-inhabited areas, and to respect human rights and the humanitarian law.

Even those who manage to escape the fighting are never safe, as they either face persecution by the terrorists, or by governmental forces and their affiliated militias. If captured alive, they are at risk of being tortured or subjected to the most cruel and degrading punishment.

Mr President,

While we are aware of the threat that terrorism poses to the world, we do not think it should be dealt with by aggressive military intervention and the violation of human rights. On the contrary, a comprehensive strategy should be developed, in order to address the root causes of this global crisis. Alongside this, a development plan should be enacted, and measures should be taken to fight corruption, which has deprived the people of their basic rights.

Finally, we cannot defeat terrorism by the creation of unlawful militias, whose actions are casting doubt on who is the real terror threat. Instead of fostering hatred and sectarian discrimination, we must strengthen the affected societies and invest in education, health, and fighting unemployment.

It should be recognised that although States are sovereign to undertake their own counterterrorism measures, they have an equal duty to maintain and uphold their human rights obligations. Any deviations must, and shall, be accounted for.

[Link to video statement](#)

**General debate on Item 2: Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General**

Statement delivered by Lisa-Marlen Gronemeier

Thank you,

This is a joint statement by EAFORD and Geneva International Centre for Justice.

We appreciate the reports and oral updates by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

We would like to express our serious concerns regarding the grave systematic human rights violations by the Iranian government.

We are alarmed by the continuous persecution and abuse of ethnic and religious minorities in Iran and in the region. The groups targeted by the government include the Hazaras, Pashtuns, Balochs, Azeris, Baha'is, and ethnic Arabs on its soil. Furthermore, every attempt at peacefully denouncing these violations results in more people injured or killed. Particularly disturbing is the treatment of ethnic Arabs in Al-Ahwaz province. They are subjected to various human right violations, from forced displacement to mass killing, including denial of the right to education and to access to healthcare.

Under the pretext of fighting Daesh, Iran has put in place a militarised security structure to export the so called "Islamic revolution" which results in terrorising non-Shiites in the neighbouring countries. The Iranian government provides support to the armed groups in Lebanon, the Popular Mobilization militia in Iraq, the Houthis in Yemen and similar sectarian groups in Syria. It is well-known that these parties commit serious crimes against the civilian population.

Iran should stop implementing its sectarian agenda in the Middle East as it aggravates the tensions and further violates human rights in several countries. The international community should take effective measures in this regard.

[Link to video statement](#)

**General Debate on Item 3 - Promotion and Protection of all Human Rights, Civil, Political,  
Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Including the Right to Development.**

Statement delivered by Ms. Alice Wickens

Thank you Mr President.

This is a joint statement by EAFORD, International-Lawyers.org and Geneva International Centre for Justice. We ask the Council to remember that in ten days time, the people of Iraq will commemorate 14 years since the illegal invasion and destruction of their country by the United States and its allies.

The aggression towards the people of Iraq was against a sovereign State, which was one of the founding Members of the United Nations. Beyond the deaths of a reliably estimated 1.5 million Iraqi people, it has since affected all of their fundamental rights. As a result, even in 2017, Iraqi's are still being deprived of their most basic needs.

Before sanctions were imposed in 1991, Iraq's health and education systems were among the most developed in the world. Today, with its schools and universities leveled, illiteracy has become higher in Iraq than it was 25-years-ago, unemployment is increasing, and hospitals lack basic drugs, equipment, and health professionals.

Iraqis only want what most people anywhere want - education, a good job, and a safe home to raise their children. Iraqis have the right to truth, the right to justice and the right to reparations. How many more years must pass, how many more Iraqis blood must be shed, and how much more must conditions of life deteriorate, before this Council takes action to insist on the accountability of those who caused these human rights atrocities? We ask you, please do not let it be another 14 years before the Council breaks its silence.

Thank you

[Link to video statement](#)



## **Panel Discussion on Climate Change and the Rights of the Child**

Statement delivered by Mr. Mutua Kobia

Thank you Mr. Vice-President,

This is a joint statement by EAFORD with Geneva International Centre for Justice.

We thank the panelists for their presentations and especially for integrating a human rights-based approach to climate change. Climate change is directly and indirectly linked to all human rights issues. The rights of the child and climate change are intrinsically related in a myriad of ways, most notably, physical and mental health of children, their development, exposure to disease, housing and education among others.

Agricultural based communities rely heavily dependent on predictable and stable weather patterns. Constant droughts abate traditional farmers' and indigenous communities' access to grazing lands and clean water. In Kenya, rising average temperatures and unpredictable rain patterns accelerates desertification making shelter and nutritious food sparse for children. As well, in Bangladesh, groundwater depletion, exacerbated by climate change, unfavourably reduces food production and nutrition for children. Water availability and quality will also be adversely affected.

Furthermore, this phenomenon adds to the loss of livestock and cattle, a main source of income for pastoral and agricultural livelihoods; hence, families and communities are unable to generate capital to sustain their children in terms of food, schooling, or ensuring their security and access to adequate health care services as per the Convention of the Rights of the Child.

Climate change also adds the dimension of "food stability and systems" in that changes in climate and weather upsets the stability of people's and government's food security strategies generating inconsistent and inadequate, availability and utilisation of nutritious food towards children.

We recommend to:

- Address children from agriculturally based communities who are negatively affected by climate change;
- Provide necessary and relevant safe havens and appropriate and accessible education to children on the phenomenon of climate change;
- Provide adequate, regular, and nutritious food to children affected by climate change through community food banks close to affected livelihoods;
- Engage and involve children and young people in the climate change dialogue.

We thank you

[Link to video statement](#)

### **Interactive Dialogue with the Commission on South Sudan**

Thank you Mr. Vice-President,

Statement delivered by Mutua Kobia

Grave human rights violations in South Sudan persists and spreads to previously unaffected areas where farmers are expelled from their residence and more civilians are discriminately targeted, attacked, and killed based on ethnicity and/or allegiance as indicated in numerous reports.

Property, homes, humanitarian goods, livestock, farming land, and villages are looted and torched. Escalating severity and scale of sexual violence, rape, and gang rape on women and girls by warring parties cause severe mental and emotional breakdowns and trauma. Victims were selected by ethnicity or allegiance regardless of age while perpetrators enjoyed impunity.

Altogether, reported crimes constitute 'genocide' as defined under Articles 1a through c of the 'Convention on Genocide' warranting immediate peaceful action and justice in solidarity with South Sudanese people. Notwithstanding atrocities and difficulties in bringing about peace, acknowledgement of on-the-ground peace, reconciliation, and empowerment organizations and programs is essential.

Accountability is two-fold; the UN and global community must protect civilians and hold perpetrators accountable. To reiterate Stephen O'Brien of OCHA, further reports on violations are futile; action or non-action will be testament to our efficacy, responsibility, and worth.

NGO signatories to this statement recommend:

The South Sudanese government:

- To uphold the "Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan" for immediate and permanent Cease-fire;
- Ensure all South Sudanese women their right to be actively involved in and engaged with the peace process, especially at the discussion and decision-making table for a gender-responsive peace agreement;

- Enforce Geneva Convention (IV) relative to “Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.” specifically Article 27 for protection of women against sexual violence and Increase security on sites of refuge;

That the Council:

- Pressure all relevant parties to impose immediate arms embargo as in Annex of Security Council Resolution 2304; including targeted sanctions and freezing of assets that fund the war;
- Enhance psychosocial and mental health care services for victims of all trauma;

That the Commission and international community:

- Reach out, support, and engage local grass roots peace and reconciliation organizations, projects, and forums.

[Link to video statement](#)

### **High Level Panel Discussion: Human Rights Situation in the Syrian Arab Republic**

Statement delivered by Ms. Giulia Squadron

Thank you Mr. President

This is a joint statement by EAFORD and Geneva International Centre for Justice

Our organisations are dismayed by the consequences of the bloody conflict that has been tearing Syria apart for almost six years. All parties have breached international humanitarian law and international human rights law, and have provoked unthinkable suffering to the civilian population. Thousands of people have died, millions have fled the country, many more are internally displaced, and the majority of the population is suffering for the lack of basic infrastructures.

The gravity and scope of human rights violations committed by all actors involved in the conflict have reached new lows, and urgent actions are needed to prevent a complete destruction of the country. The future of Syria and its inhabitants depends on the ability of the international community to acknowledge that the pretext of combatting terrorism cannot be used to indiscriminately hit civilian-inhabited areas and deploy weapons of mass destruction. Even the countries claiming to be intervening following the request of the government should be held accountable for the violations they continue to commit on a daily basis.

Civilians suffer the dramatic consequences of the use of cluster munitions, barrel bombs and incendiary weapons, which are extremely inaccurate and provoke substantial damages in widespread areas. The destruction of entire villages and the blockage of humanitarian convoys is further deteriorating the situation: millions of people are deprived of basic supplies, including water, food and health care, and the conditions of life in the IDPs and refugee's camps are below all international standards.

While we welcome the new recent rounds of peace talks, we wish to express our deepest concerns for the conditions of the millions of Syrians internally displaced and for those who are forced to leave their country. We call on this Council and all Member States to take immediate measures to prevent security and opposition forces as well as militias from breaching international law and international human rights law. We further urge the Syrian government to provide immediate redress to all victims and to allow humanitarian convoys to reach all areas.

Thank you

[Link to video statement](#)

#### **General Debate Item 4: Human Rights Situations that Require the Council's Attention**

Statement delivered by Ms. Giulia Squadrin

Thank you Mr. President,

This is a joint statement by International Lawyers and Geneva International Centre for Justice.

March 20 will be the anniversary of one of the darkest events of our modern history. On that date, in 2003, a coalition led by the United States initiated an unlawful war against Iraq, which resulted in a destructive occupation. We want to ask to everyone in this room, when will these issues become part of the Council's agenda?

The US-led invasion has created a political, social and economic turmoil in Iraq. The entity of the destruction and the illegality of the occupation have become apparent. Yet, justice, reparation and accountability have not been granted.

Accountability is crucial for two reasons: Iraqi victims should receive compensation and reparation for the crimes and violations endured, and the international community should show that no State can act above the law without bearing responsibility for its acts. Iraqi civilians should receive official apologies, and the invading powers should provide financial and structural compensations: hospitals,

education buildings and public structures should be rebuilt, and adequate funding should be allocated for the depuration of the environment where depleted uranium and toxic agents have been inconsiderately used.

Finally, the international community should acknowledge that the political and institutional vacuum created by the U.S. actions in Iraq has facilitated the emergence of the brutal Iraqi militias. The reparation process should include the condemnation of such actions and the effective investigations of the violations perpetrated.

Thank you

[Link to video statement](#)

#### **General Debate Item 4: Human Rights Situations that Require the Council's Attention**

Statement delivered by Ms Alice Wickens

Thank you Mr. President,

This is a joint statement by EAFORD and Geneva International Centre for Justice.

In 5 days time, the people of Iraq will commemorate 14 years since the illegal invasion and occupation of their country by the United States and its allies. Yet while those responsible are free to earn millions of dollars as after dinner speakers, this Council should not forget the 1.5 million innocent Iraqi's who died as a result. Nor should we forget the devastation and instability it has caused to Iraq.

Mr President,

There aren't many things which are more corrosive to democracy than impunity. Yet, so far, the international community has failed to hold those responsible to account, and 14 years later, it must still be asked, where is the justice for Iraq?

This war was waged on a false pretext, on one of the founding members of the UN. It left behind a devastated country, and a shattered society. It caused not only deaths, but total destruction, whereby schools, hospitals and homes were leveled. It also created a power vacuum that has fuelled and spread terrorism across the region, with ISIS now ensuring there is no end to the suffering of the Iraqi people.

But in 2017, an official apology has never been delivered, an adequate compensation has never been paid, and responsibility has never been taken. The Iraqi people deserve truth, they deserve justice,

and they deserve reparations - and for the sake of an entire nation, it is high time the Council takes action.

Thank you.

[Link to video statement](#)

### **Panel Discussion on Racial Profiling: Debate on Racial Profiling and Incitement to Hatred, Including in the Context of Migration**

Statement delivered by Mr Mutua Kobia

Thank you Mr. President,

This is a joint statement with international-lawyers.org and the Geneva Centre for Justice.

The current worldwide migration phenomenon is linked to a myriad of human rights issues. It is imperative to address root causes as well as current drivers of mass migration, such as environmental degradation, climate change, and types of conflict to better understand and manage migration flows. Among migrants and refugees, children, women and people with disabilities are most vulnerable, and most targeted regarding abuses and violence. Additional burdens include race, ethnicity, and religion.

Promotion of best practices and added values, such as valuable knowledge and experience, various skill sets, and culture of migrants can curtail and eliminate racial profiling, hatred, xenophobia, racism, discrimination and intolerance towards migrants. As well, enhancing and encouraging quality and accurate human rights education and of the host countries' local norms and laws, practices and cultural values towards migrants and refugees ensures raised awareness and familiarity of their host environment and lifestyle.

To better protect migrants, we must keep in hindsight that migration and integration, migrants and hosts are in and of themselves two-fold and interrelated.

To the members of the Council, we recommend pursuant to several human rights laws and obligations:

- Provide quality human rights education and training for border patrols and law enforcement and increase international communication and cooperation on border control and management;
- Provide accessible education and information on local norms and laws to migrants and refugees upon arrival;

- Promote two-way education and learning by establishing migrant cultural hubs as platforms for communication and assistance with integration;
- Provide opportunities for migrants and refugees to exercise their freedom and right of being active participants in society including peace and reconciliation processes;
- Convene close collaborative work with the SR on torture regarding the link between migrants and torture;
- Provide adequate and appropriate specialized health care services for victims of abuses and crimes on transit;

Thank you

[Link to video statement](#)

### **General Debate on Item 6: Universal Periodic Review Outcome**

Statement delivered by Ms. Lisa-Marlen Gronemier.

Dear Mr. President,

This is a joint statement by EAFORD and Geneva International Centre for Justice.

Half a century has elapsed since Israel established its brutal occupation of Palestine and seven decades have passed since the Palestinian Nakba. Since then, all efforts by the international community to effectively address Israeli violations, including Palestinian inalienable rights, are consistently undermined by Israel's non-cooperation.

After having failed to appear in the UPR of January 2013, Israel's subsequent actions were marked by non-compliance. Contrary to recommendations, Israel consistently fails to cooperate with human rights mechanisms and to recognize and abide by its international obligations as Occupying Power.

Israel rejected all recommendations containing the term "State of Palestine" – an absurd move that reflects Israel's longstanding, strategic, and organized negation of Palestinian legitimate national claims. In direct contravention to UPR recommendations, Israel persists in its illegal occupation, including the suffocating Gaza blockade, and subjects Palestinians on both sides of the Green Line to a system of apartheid and institutionalized discrimination affecting all spheres of life. In breach of UPR recommendations, Israel has issued anti-democratic laws and increasingly persecutes human rights defenders, including Jewish Israeli dissidents, as public enemies.

Israel's complete disregard of UPR recommendations renders its contempt for human rights blatant. The international community must now take forcible measures to compel Israel to cease its violations and to hold Israel accountable for its complete intransigence and disrespect for all of its obligations to give way to real democracy and just peace in the region.

[Link to video statement](#)

#### **General Debate Item 7: Human Rights Situation in Palestine and Other Occupied Arab Territories**

Statement delivered by Mr. Naser Abuhammoud

[Link to video statement](#)

#### **General Debate Item 9: Racism, Racial discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Forms of Intolerance, Follow-Up to and Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action**

Statement delivered by Ms. Lisa-Marlen Gronemier.

Thank you Mr. President,

This is a joint statement with International-Lawyers and Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ).

International-Lawyers.Org views the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action as the guiding international instrument for the global action against discrimination. We welcome the High Commissioner's report requested by the Council under its resolution 31/26 (document 34/35), but we regret the failure of the OHCHR to prepare and submit at this session the Report of the 14th Session of the Inter-Governmental Working Group on the Implementation of the DDPA.

We must leave no doubt that the goals of DDPA, which the United Nations Member States adopted, must be achieved. Indeed, the DDPA is the guide for the global struggle against discrimination. For this reason, we express our concern at the fact that this Council has ignored the UN General Assembly's call in its Resolution 71/181, paragraph 23, that the Human Rights Council consider at this, its thirty-fourth session, and I quote paragraph 23, "developing a multi-year programme of activities to provide for the renewed and strengthened outreach activities needed to inform and mobilize the global public in support of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and to strengthen awareness of the contribution that they have made in the struggle against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance." (end quotes) We urge the Council to respond to the General Assembly's



invitation and to urgently prepare a multi-year programme of activities as just described without further delay.

[Link to video statement](#)

**General Debate Item 9: Racism, Racial discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Forms of  
Intolerance, Follow-Up to and Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of  
Action**

Statement delivered by Mr. Mutua Kobia

Thank you Mr. President,

This is a joint statement by EAFORD and Geneva International Centre for Justice.

We believe that it is high time to implement the programme of activities set forth in the International Decade for People of African Descent, particularly on capacity-building, empowerment, and awareness raising. In past years there have been numerous consultations but not enough substantive results. The more time given to discussions on informalities, language, and other such matters we forget there are people relying on our diligent support and protection.

There is a shared concern over the lack of activities and mandate of the independent experts and the working group. Moreover, we fail to see the relevance of an eminent independent expert as they lack resources, have no secretariat support and do not hold annual meetings.

While the addition of a forum, as discussed in recent meetings, may be of added value we must take into consideration implementation strategies. Civil society organisations are particularly concerned whether relevant parties to the establishment and modalities of the forum are prepared to provide the necessary funding for its proper functioning. Additional costs must be considered and co-sponsors to the Durban Declaration must be ready to cover such costs if the forum is even to be discussed at this point.

Lastly, more attention must be paid to the visibility of the International Decade, the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, and people of African descent through various types of media, campaigns, and promotion of already published materials.

Thank you

[Link to video statement](#)

## **General Debate Item 10: Technical Assistance and Capacity-Building**

Statement delivered by Ms. Alice Wickens

Thank you,

This is a joint statement by EAFORD and Geneva International Centre for Justice.

We wish to thank the High Commissioner for his update on Yemen. Our organisations remain deeply concerned about the dramatic worsening of the conditions on the ground, and moreover, by the failure of the international community to take effective measures in this regard.

Today, the escalation of the conflict has provoked an unprecedented humanitarian crisis in Yemen, only worsened by the famine and the shortage of food supplies. To date, more than 4 in 5 Yemenis need some type of humanitarian assistance, 28 million people are short of food, and 1 in 5 children are now underdeveloped because of chronic malnutrition. This is a result of the decimation of water and sanitation infrastructures during the conflict, the restrictions on imports which have caused a water and fuel shortage, and the extremely limited access to health care and functioning hospitals.

Furthermore, Iran, which was accused of initiating the conflict by arming and funding al-Houthi militias, still remains deeply involved in Yemen, and is hindering the achievement of peaceful settlements. The international community must take all the necessary measures to stop such an illegal interference.

Finally, we believe it is important to enhance the effectiveness of the existing human rights monitoring mechanisms in Yemen, and we urge all Member States to take action to alleviate the civilians' suffering.

[Link to video statement](#)

## Written Statements

During the 34th Session of the Human Rights Council, Geneva International Centre for Justice co-submitted eleven written statements, addressing the most concerning cases of human rights violations and abuses occurring in Syria, Palestine, Iraq, Iran, South Sudan, and Myanmar. The written statements also tackle the issue of children in armed conflict – including the appalling violence and deprivations to which children are subjected in war-torn countries – and analyse the implications of indiscriminate attacks conducted within the framework of the “war on terror”. Each statement concludes with a series of recommendations that GICJ, and the co-signatories NGOs, wish to address to the UN bodies, and particularly to the Human Rights Council.

### **Civilians in Conflict: Human Rights Violations in the “War on Terror”**

As outlined in this statement, civilians in the Middle East have become side casualties of merciless and indiscriminate attacks perpetrated in name of the “war on terror”. The recent destruction of Aleppo in Syria, and Fallujah, Ramadi, and Mosul in Iraq are among the most appalling examples of the worst implications of disorganised and inconsiderate military campaigns. Such attacks have been conducted in blatant disregard of international law, and have caused thousands of civilian casualties as well as a multitude of other human rights violations, including destruction of civilian-inhabited areas and forced displacement. The statement recommends immediate cessation of indiscriminate attacks, and calls for the implementation of special measures to protect civilians while countering terrorism. Particular emphasis is given to the necessity of conducting effective investigations in order to ensure accountability and reparation.

[Link to full statement](#)

### **Conditions of Children in Armed Conflict: An Overview**

This statement outlines the dire impact of armed conflict on children. All over the world, minors are killed, wounded and maimed, and they suffer for the lack of adequate health care facilities and supplies. Moreover, millions of children are out of school and are forcibly recruited to serve as soldiers during combat. Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Yemen, and South Sudan are among the worst cases: here, violence against children has reached new lows. This statement calls for the immediate

implementation of special measures to ensure the protection of children, as well as for the cessation of forced recruitment and sexual violence against minors.

[Link to full statement](#)

### **The Devastating Effect of the Syrian Conflict on Women**

The statement denounces the mass-scale human rights violations committed in the Syrian Arab Republic. The six-year-long conflict has provoked unthinkable suffering and losses to the Syrian populations: civilians have been killed, abducted, tortured, arbitrarily arrested and subjected to all kinds of inhuman treatments. Moreover, gender-based discrimination and violence against women, in particular sexual violence and social stigmatisation, have dramatically increased since 2011. Being one of the most vulnerable segments of societies during war time, women suffer for the lack of appropriate health care supplies and medical facilities, and for the absence of legal and psychological assistance. This statement recommends the immediate cessation of gender-based violence – in particular of sexual violence – and calls for the provision of adequate redress and protection for victims.

[Link to full statement](#)

### **Iran: Sectarian Mastermind of the Middle East**

The statement addresses Iran's interference in the region in pursuit of the militarism policy, which involves widespread and systematic violations of women's rights, torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment and punishment, death penalty, forced displacement and limitations to freedoms of expression, association and assembly, lack of accountability and malfunctioning rule of law system. Urgent recommendations to the Human Rights Council, treaty bodies and special-mandate procedures are outlined at the end: monitoring and supervision of the international community are fundamental in this context, and Iran should immediately halt its military involvement in the region which is further deteriorating the humanitarian crisis in the Middle East.

[Link to full statement](#)

### **Incessant Absence of Human Rights**

This statement outlines Israel's consistent and blatant disregard of all its international obligations with regards to the inalienable rights, including the right to self-determination and fundamental human rights, of the Palestinian people since its establishment. Thereby, it continuously derails all peace efforts, intensifies human misery, and undermines the viability of a future Palestinian state. The statement therefore recommends the HRC and other competent UN bodies to take all necessary measures to make Israel abide by its international obligations and cease its prolonged occupation as well as all other violations of Palestinians' inalienable rights.

[Link to full statement](#)

### **Our Reality Here, Daily, is a Violent Reality**

This statement addresses the situation in occupied Palestine in which a defenceless civilian population faces a vast and powerful military apparatus under Israel's prolonged illegal military occupation, which is marked by disproportionate, excessive use of force in blatant violation of Israel's obligations as Occupying Power, in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention. In view of this, this statement recommends that the international community spare no efforts to ensure Israel's recognition and application of human rights and international humanitarian law, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention, in occupied Palestine.

[Link to full statement](#)

### **Threshing Arms of Occupation**

In this statement, it is argued that the prolonged illegal Israeli occupation of Palestine is intricately linked with Israel's historically rooted apartheid system as well as with Israel's increasingly anti-democratic policies and practices targeting Israeli dissidents. All efforts to effectively address the violations are consistently undermined by Israel's non-compliance and non-cooperation with UN stakeholders and mechanisms. The statement therefore recommends the UN to take all necessary measures to ensure Israeli cooperation and compel Israel to implement all relevant UN resolutions and recommendations, including by calling on Member States to end all forms of cooperation with the Israeli authorities and to impose political and economic sanctions on Israel.

[Link to full statement](#)

### **South Sudan Genocide**

This statement examines the status of civil war in South Sudan where civilians are indiscriminately targeted, attacked, and killed as assaults and sexual violence escalate and spread across the country. The UN Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan's Report (2016) recognised "targeted killing of Dinka women and children" illustrating attacks are ethnic based. On a whole the crimes committed amount to 'genocide' as defined in the 'Convention on Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide'. This statement calls for immediate cease-fire and urgent protection of civilians and initiation the Hybrid Court of South Sudan to hold perpetrators accountable.

[Link to full statement](#)

### **Myanmar (Burma)**

The statement outlines the general human rights situation in the country, with a particular focus on widespread and systematic violations against the Rohingya Muslim community – which amount to genocide. Rohingya face brutal threats and violence, including mass killings, rape, extrajudicial executions, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention, torture, segregation, denial of citizenship, restrictions on freedom of movement, and limited access to education. Given the clear intent to destroy, the statement addresses fundamental recommendations to the Human Rights Council and the Burmese government calling for immediate action and cessation of violence are made.

[Link to full statement](#)

### **Human Rights Violations in Iraq**

This statement assesses the key human rights challenges existing in Iraq - including systematic and institutionalised violations. It criticises the endemic corruption, which has not only allowed the government to deprive the people of their basic needs, but has also been used to authorise high execution rates, arbitrary arrests and to justify the detention and violence against peaceful demonstrators - all under the guise of "fighting terrorism." It further examines the climate of impunity in Iraq, which has allowed these serious abuses to occur. Finally, the statement calls for an independent and impartial inquiry into the gross human rights violations in Iraq - to ensure accountability and justice.

### **The US: Abuse in the Name of “Anti-Terrorism”**

This statement examines President Donald J. Trump signature of Executive Order (EO) 13769 entitled “Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States” that bans almost all citizens from seven Muslim-majority countries. The EO violates the right to non-discrimination, threatens the right to freedom of religion, and breaches principles of non-refoulement and non-discrimination contained in the Convention of Refugees among violating several other international and federal laws. This statement calls for a block on EO 13769, and urges all Member States to respect their international human rights commitments, including international refugee law and its principle of non-refoulement.

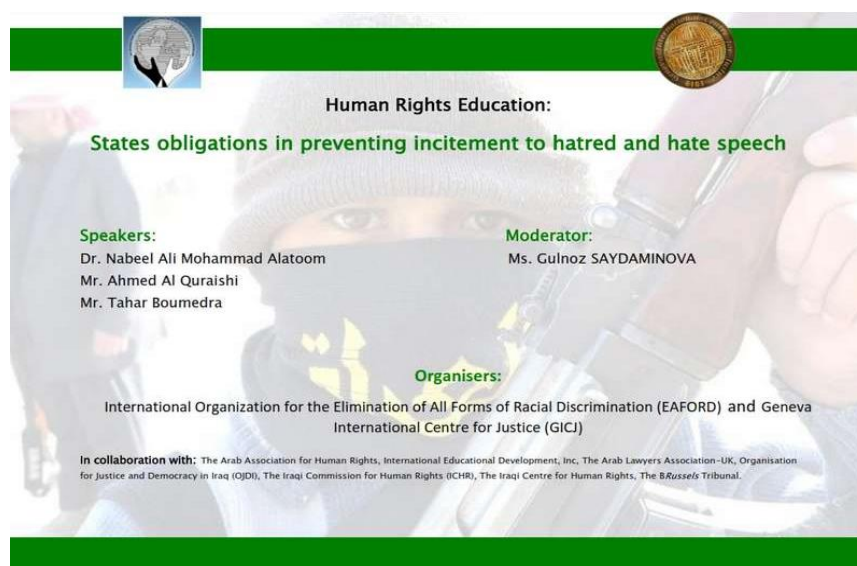
## GICJ Side-events

Geneva International Centre for Justice, in co-operation with several other NGOs, such as EAFORD, the Muezzin Organization for Human Rights, and International-Lawyers organised two side events. The topics discussed were human rights education and the Israeli settlements and violence in the occupied Palestinian Territories and Israel.

More information about each side event can be found in the links below, along with the video recordings:

### **“Human Rights Education - States Obligations in Preventing Incitement to Hatred and Hate Speech”**

United Nations - 16 March 2017



On 16 March, Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ), in co-operation with the International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD), organised a side event during the 34th session of the UN Human Rights Council titled “Human Rights Education - States Obligations in Preventing Incitement to Hatred and Hate Speech.”

[LINK TO ARTICLE](#)

and

[LINK TO ONLINE VIDEO](#)



## **“Israeli Settlements and Violence in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Israel”**

United Nations - 17 March 2017



**Israeli Settlements and Violence in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Israel**  
17 March 2017, 11h30-13h00, Room XXIII  
Palais des Nations, Geneva

**Speakers:**

- Mr. Omar Khamaisi, Opening Remarks, Director, Meezaan Organization for Human Rights
- Mr. Naser Dawabshih, Representative of the Dawabshih Family
- Mr. Ra'afat Badran, father of 15-year-old Mahmoud Badran, killed by the Israeli security
- Dr. Daud Abdullah, Director of Middle East Monitor, London
- Ms. Lisa-Marlen Gronemeier, Geneva International Centre for Justice

**Moderator:**

- Dr. Ahmad Amara, Legal Adviser, Meezaan Organization for Human Rights

**Organisers:**

Meezaan Organization for Human Rights, International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD), International-Lawyers.org, Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ)



On 17 March 2017, Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ) and the Meezaan Organization for Human Rights co-organized, with the participation of the International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD) and International Lawyers, a side event entitled “Israeli Settlements and Violence in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Israel”.

[LINK TO ARTICLE](#)

And

[PHOTO GALLERY](#)

