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## Introduction

The Thirty-Seventh Regular Session of the UN Human Rights Council (Council or HRC) was held at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, Switzerland from 26 February to 23 March 2018. The Council addressed numerous grave human rights situations across the globe in a number of sessions with independent human rights experts, commissions of inquiries, working groups, investigative bodies, and advisory committees. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March an urgent debate was held on the deteriorating situation of human rights in Eastern Ghouta and on the 5<sup>th</sup> of March adopted an orally revised resolution that requested the Commission of Inquiry on Syria to immediately conduct a comprehensive and independent inquiry that is to be presented to the Council in its June Session. Three High-Level Panel Discussions were held on Syria on the seventieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. 91 dignitaries gave a statement during the high-level segment.

This 37th session of the Council, and the three-day high-level segment, was opened by Ambassador **Vojislav Šuc of Slovenia**, President of the Council. He stressed that to make human rights a reality for everyone, the international community must invest in human rights and recognize them as values and goals in themselves. The next speaker was **Mr. Miroslav Lajčák**, President of the General Assembly of the United Nations. Mr. Miroslav Lajčák highlighted, among other things, the importance of creating a better connection between the different UN offices and the work that is done in the field. Further, he urged to link the three pillars of the UN better to each other. **Mr. António Guterres**, Secretary-General of the United Nations, stated that the Syria resolution (and other resolutions) are only meaningful if they are respected by all parties. Guterres emphasised that it is our time to stop this hell on earth.

**Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein**, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, brought to the attention of the Council the emerging pattern, whereby political leaders are increasingly denying universal human rights. He stated that there is a need for these political actors to understand that only by accepting fundamental human rights durable peace and success in development will be possible. Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein further asked the Council to ensure the rights of all, 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."

Finally, **Ignazio Cassis** - Federal Councillor and Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland, addressed the Council during the opening session. He focussed on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and reassured that this declaration still has reason to exist.

The Council adopted 42 resolutions on a variety of issues and also adopted the outcomes of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of 14 states; the Council extended six Country Mandates; renewed

the Mandates on the Right to Privacy, on Human Rights and the Environment, on Cultural Rights, and on People with Albinism; and also decided to hold a High-Level Panel on the Legacy of Nelson Mandela on 27 April 2018.

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

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, in his Opening Statement to the Thirty Seventh Regular Session of the Human Rights Council, began by welcoming the unanimous decision by the Security Council in relation to a 30-day ceasefire in Syria while requesting caution noting that airstrikes continued in Eastern Ghouta that very morning. He went on to express concern about the human rights situation in other regions of the globe; *“other besieged areas in Syria; Ituri and the Kasais in the DRC; Taiz in Yemen; Burundi; Northern Rakhine in Myanmar”* saying that the horrors that have actualized because not enough was done early and in a collective manner to prevent them from taking place. He reiterated the efforts of his Office in bringing attention to the international community of violations of human rights but time and again little to no effort took place; time and again no preventive action was enforced.

**“Time and again, my office and I have brought to the attention of the international community violations of human rights which should have served as a trigger for preventive action. Time and again, there has been minimal action.”**



UN Photo/Violaine Martin – UN High Commissioner for Human Rights addressing the 37<sup>th</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council

Blunt but brave the High Commissioner in addressing the Council's March Session for the last time said:

*“Second to those who are criminally responsible – those who kill and those who maim – the responsibility for the continuation of so much pain lies with the five permanent members of the UN Security Council. So long as the veto is used by them to block any unity of action, when it is needed the most, when it could reduce the extreme suffering of innocent people, then it is they – the permanent members – who must answer before the victims.”*

The High Commissioner continued by juxtaposing the will of physicists at CERN who dig deep, analyse, and investigate at the deepest level of science to understand the universe but we don't do the same to understand the human world. He said we must scrutinize at the level of the individual as the starting point of peace begins with “the rights of individuals”.

He brought to attention that *“Some States view human rights as of secondary value”* and this is evidenced in the budget and focus on geopolitics or GDP growth and the condescending view that Geneva is weak and not serious enough for those at the UN Security Council. When those in New York refuse to address a subject because it is “too sensitive” this usually means rights are involved and those unwilling to address such issues are often guilty in some fashion. Furthermore, oppression is again becoming fashionable and fundamental rights are taking a back seat. Xenophobia and racism are rising as evidence in Europe.

Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein gave specific examples of grave and serious human rights violations that are repeated around the world such as arbitrary arrests, people who are deemed terrorists for criticizing the government, people awaiting execution for crimes they committed when they were a child, and black sites where people are tortured and killed. He also noted that women and the poor suffer terribly because of their situation or who they are; journalists are imprisoned for doing their job. He questioned the Council that despite all these examples, why do we do so little to stop them?

In conclusion, the High Commissioner, paid gratitude to *“our humanitarian colleagues that tend to the victims”* and human rights defenders; and that we will celebrate and defend most vigorously **70 years of the Universal Declaration for Human Rights** than ever before as it “incarnates” the most common rights and to stand up for these rights with moral courage, self-sacrifice, and the love for all human beings is “a very human thing to do”.

*“Artificial intelligence will never fully replicate the moral courage, the self-sacrifice and, above all, the love for all human beings that sets human rights defenders apart from everyone else.”*

**Do they not know what happens to minorities in societies where leaders seek ethnic, national or racial purity? ... we give this disgraceful calumny so little attention, the question must be asked: have we all gone completely mad?**

## Council Resolutions and Decisions

On 22 and 23 March, the Council adopted 41 resolutions; the resolution on the deteriorating situation in Eastern Ghouta in Syria was adopted on 5 March.

Resolution ([A/HRC/37/L.1](#)) on **the deteriorating situation of Human rights in Eastern Ghouta, in the Syrian Arab Republic**, was adopted by a vote of 29 in favour, 4 against and 14 abstentions as orally revised, the Council requested the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic to urgently conduct a comprehensive and independent inquiry into the recent events in Eastern Ghouta and provide an update to the HRC at its thirty-eighth session.



### Action on Texts under Agenda Item 3 - Promotion and Protection of All Human Rights, Including the Right to Development

*Noteworthy resolutions:*



A resolution ([A/HRC/37/L.10](#)) on **the right to privacy in the digital age** was adopted without a vote and the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the right to privacy was extended for three years. Regarding **the integrity of the judicial system**, a resolution ([A/HRC/37/L.11/Rev.1](#)) was adopted and the Council requested the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to prepare a comprehensive study on the implications of the lack of integrity of the judicial system for human rights, in particular for persons kept in detention facilities outside the territory of States, and to submit the study to the Human Rights Council at its forty-third session.

In resolution ([A/HRC/37/L.12](#)) on **the adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and the right to non-discrimination in this context**, the Council requests the Special Rapporteur to participate in relevant international dialogues and policy forums relating to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the New Urban Agenda, and to undertake thematic research with a view to advise



States and other stakeholders on how to effectively respect, protect and fulfil the right to adequate housing, and non-discrimination in this context.



The Council decided to convene a high-level intersessional panel discussion on the life and legacy of Nelson Mandela on Friday, 27 April 2018 under resolution ([A/HRC/37/L.26](#)) on **High-level intersessional discussion celebrating the centenary of Nelson Mandela** and requests the Office of the High Commissioner to prepare and submit a summary report at the thirty-ninth session of the Human Rights Council.

([A/HRC/37/L.35](#)) on the **equality and non-discrimination of persons with disabilities and the right of persons with disabilities to access to justice (articles 5 and 13 of the CRPD)** (where the Council decides that an annual interactive debate on the rights of persons with disabilities will be held at its fortieth session focusing on article 26 of the CRPD, and an interactive debate on the rights of persons with disabilities will be held at its forty-third session, focusing on article 8 of the CRPD on awareness raising); Under a resolution ([A/HRC/37/L.33](#)) on the **rights of the child: protection of the rights of the child in humanitarian situations**, The Council decides to focus its next annual full-day meeting on the rights of the child on the theme “Empowering children with disabilities for the enjoyment of their human rights, including through inclusive education” and requests a report on this theme by the UNHCHR to be presented at its fortieth session.



In a resolution ([A/HRC/37/L.32](#)) on the **negative impact of corruption on the right to be free from torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment**, States are urged by the Council to adopt, implement and comply fully with legal and procedural safeguards against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and ensure that these safeguards are not compromised by any form or practice of corruption. The Special Rapporteur on **human rights and unilateral coercive measures** is requested by the Council to focus on the resources and compensation necessary to promote accountability and reparations for victims in his next report to the Council and to the General Assembly and to present appropriate elements on the negative impact of UCMs on the enjoyment of human rights under an adopted resolution ([A/HRC/37/L.34](#)). Two one-day intersessional meetings for dialogue and

cooperation on human rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was decided by the Council in a resolution ([A/HRC/37/L.37](#)) on the **promotion and protection of human rights and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, whose focus will reflect the stated themes of the 2019 and 2020 high-level political forums on sustainable development.

The Council requests the OHCHR to organize a high-level panel discussion to commemorate the seventieth anniversary of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide



at its thirty-ninth session under resolution ([A/HRC/37/L.44](#)) on the **prevention of genocide** and also requests the Secretary-General to draw up a roster of focal points and networks on the prevention of genocide with updated information from Member States. Finally, in a resolution ([A/HRC/37/L.50/Rev.1](#)) on **terrorism and human rights** the Council requests

States to refrain from providing support to entities or persons involved in terrorist acts, including support in establishing propaganda platforms advocating hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility, or violence.

*Other resolutions adopted:*

Other resolutions adopted were ([A/HRC/37/L.12](#)) on the **adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and the right to non-discrimination in this context**, where the Council requests the SR to participate in relevant international dialogues and policy forums relating to implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the New Urban Agenda, and to advise States and other stakeholders on how to effectively respect, protect and fulfil the right to adequate housing, and non-discrimination in this context; ([A/HRC/37/L.15](#)) on the **role of good governance in the promotion and protection of human rights**; ([A/HRC/37/L.16](#)) on **promoting human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals through transparent, accountable and efficient public services delivery**, ([A/HRC/37/L.22](#)) on the **effects of foreign debt and other related international financial obligations of States on the full enjoyment of all human rights, particularly economic, social and cultural rights**; ([A/HRC/37/L.24](#)) on the **question of the realization in all countries of economic, social and cultural rights** (with addition of a special focus on the role of economic, social and cultural rights in empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality); ([A/HRC/37/L.28](#)) on the **right to work** (where the Council requests an analytical report on the

relationship between the realization of the right to work and the enjoyment of all human rights by young people, with an emphasis on their empowerment); [\(A/HRC/37/L.31\)](#) on **promoting human rights through sport and the Olympic ideal**; [\(A/HRC/37/L.36\)](#) on **promoting mutually beneficial cooperation in the field of human rights** (where a study on the role of technical assistance and capacity-building in fostering mutually beneficial cooperation in promoting and protecting human rights was requested by the Council); [\(A/HRC/37/L.41\)](#) on the **contribution to the implementation of the joint commitment to effectively addressing and countering the world drug problem with regard to human rights**; [\(A/HRC/37/L.42\)](#) on the need for an integrated approach to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development for the full realization of human rights, focusing on all means of implementation.



### Action on Resolutions under the Agenda Item 4 on Human Rights Situations that Require the Council's Attention

The Council decides to extend the mandate of the Special Rapporteur of the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for a period of one year under a resolution [\(A/HRC/37/L.29\)](#) on **the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea** and also requested the High Commissioner to provide a full report on the implementation of the recommendations by the group of independent experts on accountability in its report to the Council. The Council also extended the mandate of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic for one year under a resolution [\(A/HRC/37/L.38\)](#) on **the human rights situation in the Syrian Arab Republic** and also invites Member States to support actively the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism including by considering the provision of information and data on the most serious crimes under international law committed in the Syrian Arab Republic; requests the Commission of Inquiry (COI) to provide an oral update to the HRC during the interactive dialogue at its thirty-eighth session and present an updated written report during an interactive dialogue at the thirty-ninth and fortieth sessions; and decides to transmit all reports and oral updates of the COI to all relevant bodies of the United Nations.

The mandate of the SR on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran was extended for a period of one year by the Council under a resolution [\(A/HRC/37/L.39\)](#) on **the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran** and also requests the SR to submit a report on the implementation of the mandate to the HRC at its fortieth session and to the General Assembly at its seventy-third session.

The Council extends the mandate of the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan for a period of one year under a resolution (A/HRC/37/L.40) on **the situation of human rights in South Sudan** and requests the Commission to present an oral update to the Council at its thirty-ninth and a comprehensive written report at its fortieth session.

Finally, the Council also extends the mandate of the SR on the situation of human rights in Myanmar for a further one year period under a resolution (A/HRC/37/L.43) on **the situation of human rights in Myanmar** and also requests the SR to present an oral progress report at its thirty-eighth session and to submit a report to the Third Committee at the seventy-third session of the General Assembly and to the Council at its fortieth session.

### Action on Resolutions under the Agenda Item 7 on Human Rights Situation in Palestine and Other Occupied Arab Territories

In a resolution (A/HRC/37/L.18)<sup>1</sup> on **human rights in the occupied Syrian Golan** the Council calls upon Israel, the occupying Power, to desist from imposing Israeli citizenship and Israeli identity cards on the Syrian citizens in the occupied Syrian Golan and requests the Secretary-General to bring the present resolution to the attention of all Governments, the competent United Nations organs, specialized agencies, international and regional intergovernmental organizations and international humanitarian organizations. Additionally in a resolution (A/HRC/37/L.46)<sup>2</sup> on the **right of the Palestinian people to self-determination**, the Council reaffirms the inalienable, permanent and unqualified right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and urges all States to adopt measures as required to promote the realization of this right and to render assistance to the United Nations in carrying out the responsibilities entrusted to it by the Charter regarding the implementation of this right.

The Council also demands that Israel cease its policy of transferring prisoners from the Occupied Palestinian Territory into the territory of Israel under a resolution (A/HRC/37/L.47) on **human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem** and demands and urges Israel to ensure that any arrest, detention and/or trial of Palestinian children is in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, including by refraining from holding criminal proceedings against them in military courts.

Regarding **Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan**, the Council under a resolution (A/HRC/37/L.48) calls upon the relevant United Nations bodies to take all necessary measures and actions within their mandates to ensure the implementation of the United Nations “Protect, Respect and Remedy” Framework, which provides a

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<sup>1</sup> 25 in favour, 14 against and 7 abstentions

<sup>2</sup> 43 in favour, 2 against and 1 abstention

global standard for upholding human rights in relation to business activities that are connected with Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem; and requests the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to report to the Human Rights Council on the implementation of the provisions of the present resolution. Finally, the Council under a resolution **(A/HRC/37/L.49)** on **ensuring accountability and justice for all violations of international law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem** calls upon the parties concerned to cooperate fully with the preliminary examination of the International Criminal Court.

### Action on Resolution under the Agenda Item 9 on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance

In a resolution **(A/HRC/37/L.17)** on **combatting intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against, persons based on religion or belief**, the Council requests the High Commissioner to prepare and submit to the HRC at its fortieth session a comprehensive follow-up report with elaborated conclusions based upon information provided by States on the efforts and measures taken for the implementation of the action plan [to foster a domestic environment of religious tolerance, peace and respect] outlined in paragraphs 7 and 8, and views on potential follow-up measures for further improvement of the implementation of that plan.

### Action on Resolution under the Agenda Item 10 on Technical Assistance and Capacity Building

The Council decides to extend the mandate of the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Mali for a period of one year and decides to assess the evolution of the human rights situation in Mali at its fortieth session under a resolution **(A/HRC/37/L.14)** on **technical assistance and capacity-building for Mali in the field of human rights**, that will focus on the fight against impunity. As well, a resolution **(A/HRC/37/L.27)** on **cooperation with Georgia** was adopted; and lastly the Council requests the High Commissioner to present an oral update on the situation of human rights in Libya and the implementation of the present resolution to the Human Rights Council at its thirty-ninth session and a report on the situation of human rights in Libya and efforts to prevent and ensure accountability for violations and abuses of human rights at its fortieth session in a resolution **(A/HRC/37/L.45)** on **technical assistance and capacity-building to improve human rights in Libya**.

## Participation by Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ)

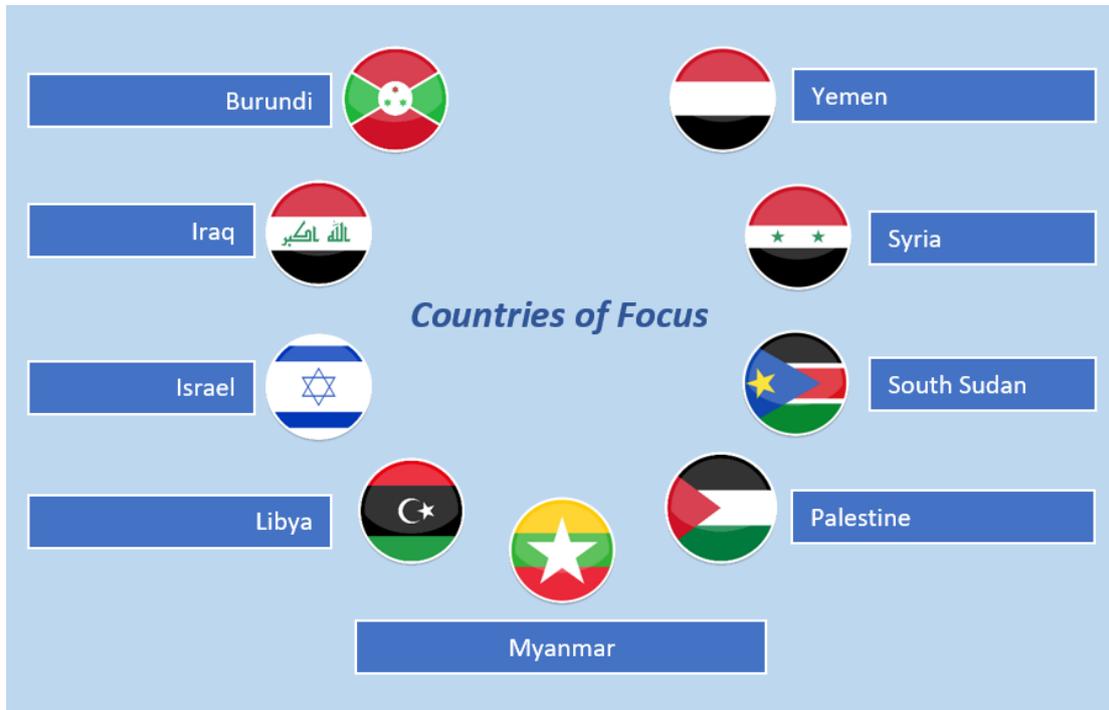
During its participation in the 37th session of the Human Rights Council, GICJ, jointly with other organizations, delivered 24 joint oral statements, submitted 18 joint written statements, and co-organized 2 side events. The official copies of the written reports submitted to the Human Rights Council are available to download at the bottom of the page, alongside the summaries and videos of the side events.



During the Session, GICJ participated in discussions under numerous HRC Agenda items. We addressed and brought to the Council's attention several thematic issues concerning serious human rights violations, issues, and challenges faced by citizens and groups of persons.



GICJ also brought to the Council's attention the grave human rights situations in some certain countries and regions that have been a focus for GICJ outside the Council Sessions.



## GICJ's Joint Oral Statements

### *High-Level Segment*

*Oral statement on: Racism and Racial Discrimination - 28 February -*

Delivered by: Gofran Sawalha

Ms. Gofran Sawalha was selected to speak at the High-Level Segment of the 37<sup>th</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council after being nominated by GICJ, International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD), International-Lawyers.Org, and other NGOs to represent Civil Society. In her statement, she focused on the serious issue of institutional racism and racial discrimination was brought to the Council's attention. Historical roots of structured racism and the fight against racism and racial discrimination at the UN was reflected on while the Council was called to act in a practical way.



### ***Mr. President, distinguished members of the Council***

*It is alarming that institutional racism and racial discrimination continue to be widespread and pervasive in all regions of the globe. Human history is evidence enough that racism and racial discrimination translates into some of the worst atrocities imaginable.*

*Current racial divisions rooted in transatlantic slavery and colonialism require serious action to redress. We are deeply concerned over today's situation for African and Arab migrants who face increased vilification based purely on their ethnic origins. With racially based hate crimes on the rise, there is growing concern that hate speech, misinformation, and disinformation in the media, is the probable catalyst.*

*Moreover, political leaders and persons of influence are using hate speech, and incitement to hatred, to target, vilify, and isolate groups based on race. Negative perceptions and stereotypes de-humanize victims and can potentially lead to the most serious of crimes such as ethnic-cleansing or genocide.*

*Despite the existence of several international norms, treaties, and instruments that explicitly condemn all forms of racial discrimination there are numerous examples of discriminatory acts and laws currently in place and enforced. For instance, the 1982 Myanmar Citizenship Law restricts the Rohingya from exercising basic human rights such as freedom of movement or full political participation.*

*In other regions, innocent individuals and families lose their homes and their lands through forced evictions and demolitions that have devastated the lives of men, women and children. Indigenous*

communities such as the Maasai in Eastern Africa and First Nations people in North America are forcefully evicted and targeted as a result of these discriminatory laws.

In the Occupied Palestinian Territories, families and children have been devastated by unlawful demolitions of civilian properties for generations.

As a Palestinian, I have witnessed countless stories of the disenfranchisement, dispossession, and displacement suffered by my people under discriminatory Israeli laws and practices. Racially based actions everywhere continue to threaten the peace of local villages and communities as perpetrators, enjoy impunity.

**Mr. President, distinguished members of the Council**

The fight against racism and racial discrimination has been on the UN agenda since its beginning and is firmly based on the principles of the UN Charter. We already have the instruments and programmes needed for its elimination, but they are not implemented by states, and not even by the UN itself.

We now call on the Human Rights Council to act at this session on the specific request from the General Assembly to develop and adopt a multiyear programme of activities to provide for the renewed and strengthened outreach needed to inform and mobilize the global public in support of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA).

**Finally,**

The full and effective implementation of the DDPA is critical, specifically the adoption of national legislation that combats incitement to hatred to prevent and punish crimes inspired by racial hatred and to put into action best practices to ensure the promotion and protection of human rights for all.

**Thank you**

[Link to video statement](#)

Item 3

*Interactive Dialogue with the 'Special Rapporteur on the Sale of Children, child prostitution and child pornography' ([A/HRC/37/60](#)) - 6 March -*

Delivered by: Mutua K. Kobia

In relation to the Special Rapporteur's report on surrogacy and the sale of children the disparities between the practice of surrogacy in high-income countries and low-income countries was addressed.

**Mr. President,**

We welcome the timely and important report by the Special Rapporteur on surrogacy and the sale of children.

Commercial international surrogacy arrangements is a concern for EAFORD and Geneva International Centre for Justice as such activities and practices strips vulnerable children of their rights and puts them

*at risks by way of taking advantage of unequal capitalistic economic and social systems and further perpetuates them. Moreover, it encourages the exploitation of children as well as surrogate mothers living in poverty.*

*We are also deeply concerned that commercial international surrogacy arrangements mainly involves deals from persons of high-income countries who buy surrogate mothers from low-income countries. Furthermore, most high-income countries have banned several forms of surrogacy while most low-income countries allow such arrangements. It is clear that this practice of surrogacy goes against the SDGs and other international norms as it impedes human rights of women and children and their development, and worse still attempts to commodify children. Moreover, as noted in several reports, commercial surrogacy systems, and specifically unregulated surrogacy, involves various forms of abusive acts and illegal activities.*

**Mr. President,**

*Commercial international surrogacy must be viewed as an interrelated issue as root causes stem from the lack of proper and equal economic opportunities. Thus, economic development, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women must be addressed in order to find adequate solutions to prevent exploitation and the illegal adoption and sale of children via international commercial surrogacy.*

*In conclusion, we urge the Council to seriously address root causes and inequalities and approach the sale of children from the perspective of the child.*

Thank you,

[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.” - 9 March -*

Delivered by: Lisette Alberti

As 2018 marks the Fifteenth Anniversary of the invasion of Iraq, many of the oral statements call for accountability and justice for this event.

**Thank you Mr. President,**

*This is a joint statement by International-Lawyers.Org and Geneva International Centre for Justice. 2018 marks the fifteenth anniversary of the invasion of Iraq by a US-led coalition. Unfortunately, the current situation in Iraq does in no way reflect the hopes of freedom the invasion was fuelled by. Currently, Iraq is war-torn and 8.7 million people find themselves in need of humanitarian assistance. These fifth teen years have left a trail of death, destruction and lawlessness: 3 million people lost their lives in this period.*

*In this chaotic situation of lawlessness, sectarian violence is able to thrive and the Islamic State could commit horrendous atrocities. The bombing by the US-led coalition of IS strongholds, has further destroyed Iraqi infrastructure, in defiance of the Geneva Conventions. The justice system is ruled by corruption and brutality with arbitrary arrests, systemic torture and skyrocketing execution rates.*

*15 years later, the United States and its allies must bear legal responsibility for all committed crimes and violations. An official apology, reparations of the losses, accountability for the perpetrators of crimes and justice for victims remain absent. The human rights of the Iraqi people should take center stage and the formation of an international criminal court should provide all victims with justice. There will be neither justice nor sustainable peace as long as the past injustices are not addressed, as long as impunity continues to thrive and accountability and compensation are denied.*

Thank you.

[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”- 9 March -*



Delivered by: Konstantinos Kakavoulis

During the General Debate on Item 3 we addressed the issue of water scarcity in armed conflict particularly in the Middle East.

**Mr. President,**

*IUS PRIMI VIRI and Geneva International Centre for Justice would like to stress the role of water scarcity in armed conflict in the Middle East. History has revealed that a freshwater deficit has the potential to spark or increase hostility in semi-arid countries. In this regard, water scarcity has aggravated the humanitarian situation in Syria.*

*According to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights General Comment 15, there is an implicit right to water in the International Bill of Human Rights. The right to water is indispensable in order to secure an adequate standard of living, as protected under Article 11, paragraph 1, of the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.*

*Furthermore, we would like to point out that deprivation of freshwater may be used as a “means of oppression”, as in the case of Israel, which impedes Palestinians from having access to their water sources.*

*While climate models robustly project that the current aridification of the wider Mediterranean and Middle East will continue and intensify in the coming decades, there is an urgent need for all*

stakeholders to work towards ensuring that all people in the Middle East enjoy their right to water. Especially regarding Syria the provision of fresh water to the people must be prioritized, in order for peace to be fully achieved.

Thank you

[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” - 9 March -*

Delivered by: Lisa-Marlen Gronemeier

We are especially concerned about the lives of civilians during war and armed-conflict situations. In this light the civilians and victims of the Syrian civil war was addressed as well as the role of the international community.

**Thank you Mr. President,**

*The need to counteract systematic human rights violations is as dire as ever. Yet, EAFORD and Geneva International Centre for Justice are gravely concerned that even when the most atrocious of crimes against humanity occur before the eyes of the international community, their prevention takes a backseat behind some Member States’ geopolitical and other interests. The international community is failing to protect uncountable civilians from persecution, untold suffering and death – in Syria, Yemen, Iraq, Sudan and Myanmar to name a few.*

*7 years have passed since the beginning of the bloody Syrian civil war. Today, the suffering of civilians remaining inside the country is immeasurable – marked by deliberate starvation, airstrikes and ground-based attacks by Government forces and their allies.*

*Syria’s Eastern Ghouta is witnessing unprecedented massacres since mid-November, with hundreds of civilians being killed as air raids target civilian structures and as entire buildings sheltering families collapse with women, children and men trapped inside. The voracious aerial bombardment following the prolonged military siege on Eastern Ghouta is aimed at draining the life out of one of the last remaining opposition strongholds.*

*The international community has the responsibility to act as united front to prevent atrocity crimes wherever they occur. The pledge of “never again” must motivate us to strengthen international cooperation on early warning and prevention of atrocity crimes, and on transitional justice mechanisms including accountability for perpetrators, in an effort to break cycles of impunity and marginalization and ensure non-recurrence.*

Thank you.

[Link to video statement](#)

## Item 4

*Clustered Interactive Dialogue with the:*

*'Independent international fact-finding mission on the situation of human rights in Myanmar' and the 'Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar' ([A/HRC/37/70](#)) - 12 March -*

Delivered by: Lisa-Marlen Gronemeier

During this Interactive Dialogue we accentuated the plight of Rohingya refugees with regards to international norms and laws as well as the role of key actors.

**Thank you, Mr. President.**

*We appreciate the update reports by the FFM and the Special Rapporteur. We share the Special Rapporteur's grave concern at the Bangladesh-Myanmar Repatriation Agreement, which would force Rohingya refugees to return from camps in Bangladesh to so-called "temporary accommodation", expected to be prison-like camps in Myanmar that Rohingya have been returned to previously.*

*Rohingya refugees are very clear that they will return to Myanmar only if their safety is assured by the international community, their lands returned, and houses rebuilt; if they are granted full citizenship and no longer subjected to discrimination and persecution. These conditions are not met. Moreover, Rohingya refugees were not consulted throughout the planning of their return. Bangladesh agreed to repatriate refugees to the state-sponsored system of apartheid that is still in place in Myanmar.*

*Refoulement is an absolute prohibition under international human rights and refugee law. EAFORD and Geneva International Centre for Justice consider the repatriation deal extremely immature and are convinced that it will result in further human rights violations against the Rohingya minority. To implement any repatriation plan, an unconditional end to violence and guarantees of non-recurrence must be ensured.*

*Secondly, we are seriously concerned that refugees and international agencies, including UNHCR are excluded from all stages of this repatriation. Rohingya should play a key role in the planning and management of their return. Thirdly, the required verification process is contentious. The Myanmar authorities denied the Rohingya citizenship and deprived them of any possibility to prove their identity for decades. Under these circumstances, it is unreasonable to expect Rohingya refugees to present the necessary documents for voluntary repatriation.*

*Lastly, we are mindful of previous repatriations of tens of thousands Rohingya to Myanmar in the 1990s and early 2000s.*

*We call upon all relevant actors to ensure that Rohingya refugees are not forced back to Myanmar as long as they remain at risk of serious human rights violations. Eventual voluntary repatriation should*

take place under the supervision of international human rights monitors and the relevant UN agencies, in conditions that are – as stated by the Rapporteur - safe, dignified, and sustainable.

Thank you.

[Link to video statement](#)

*High-Level Panel Discussion on:*

*Human Rights Violations of Children in Syria ([A/HRC/RES/36/20](#)) - 13 March -*

Delivered by: Mutua K. Kobia

A special high-level panel discussion was held to underscore the grave human rights violations and abuses of children in Syria. We addressed the most basic rights of children that are in peril focusing on health aspects.

***Thank you, Mr. President,***

*In the Syrian conflict, attacks against civilian facilities and indiscriminate killings of civilians persist. Over the last couple of weeks, the situation has further escalated, especially in the regions of Eastern Ghouta and Idlib. In these conditions, children are the most vulnerable, and they need special protection for all parties to the conflict.*

*The destruction of a high number of hospitals following the indiscriminate attacks has caused the deterioration of the healthcare systems, which has an extremely detrimental impact on the general health of Syrian children. However, the devastation of the medical infrastructure is not the only element that is putting the lives of children at risk. Their condition in besieged cities is particularly challenging. In fact, in these areas, access for humanitarian aid and assistance is especially difficult and a growing number of children are suffering from malnutrition.*

*Syrian children are facing multiple daily violations of their most basic human rights, such as the right to food, health, and to education. Furthermore, they are victims of excessive violence and forced recruitment by different parties to the conflict. As a result, children are suffering from devastating psychological consequences, including ‘toxic stress’, which can have a life-long impact on children’s mental and physical wellbeing.*

*EAFFOD and Geneva International Centre for Justice urge all parties to the conflict to respect and to comply with international human rights law and international humanitarian law to ensure access to humanitarian aid, especially in besieged areas, and stop the indiscriminate attacks against the civilian population that are causing the death of innocent people, including many children. The international community must take all possible measures to ensure that the basic human rights of Syrian children*

are protected and must ensure the provision of mental health and psychosocial programming inside Syria.

Thank you.

[Link to video statement](#)

*Interactive Dialogue with the:*

*Commission for Human Rights in South Sudan ([A/HRC/37/71](#)) - 13 March -*

Delivered by: Mutua K. Kobia



The dire situation in South Sudan is of much concern and requires more attention by the international community. With regards to the report by the Commission for Human Rights in South Sudan we call for further investigation into root causes and external forces that contribute to the armed conflict.

**Mr. President,**

*The situation in South Sudan is deeply alarming to EAFORD and Geneva International Centre for Justice as we are especially concerned about the grave humanitarian situation, numerous violent attacks including sexual and gender-based violence, and various human rights abuses and the hundreds of thousands of residents forced to flee their homes and communities in search of refuge within the country and across its borders. Worse still, reports indicate that in many instances their villages are looted and torched leaving IDPs and refugees without a home to return to.*

*Emergence of new armed groups is caused by the spread of on-going violence further endangering the lives of many more civilians. The scale and severity of atrocities committed against civilians amount to crimes against humanity and without adequate assistance, advice, and support by the international community perpetrators will continue to enjoy impunity.*

*We welcome the report by the Commission but ask whether serious consideration was taken in investigating and addressing root cause of the power struggle and conflict at large?*

*External influences such as the role of transnational and international oil companies, alleged arms trade, and other internal influences such as corruption within the government must seriously be taken into consideration and investigated with means of accountability as their actions and operations are directly linked and contribute to the on-going abuses, violence, and violation of human rights in South Sudan.*

*Moreover, addressing these root cause are in line with the Commission's mandate and is absolutely crucial in ensuring adequate recommendations to prevent further deterioration of the situation with a view to its improvement and for sound transitional justice, truth and reconciliation.*

**We recommend the Commission to:**

- **Fully Investigate** and **identify** relevant root causes to prevent further violations, build accountability, and ensure protection of human rights and well-being of the people of South Sudan.
- **Investigate** elements and effects of corruption at all levels.

**The East African community and the African Union to:**

- **Enhance** and **provide** humanitarian support for South Sudanese victims and refugees.

Thank you,

[Link to video statement](#)

**As 2018 marks the fifteenth anniversary of the invasion of Iraq, many of the oral statements under the General Debate on Item 4 called for accountability and justice for this event. Alongside the oral statements delivered, a side-event was organized.**

*General Debate on Item 4*

*“Human rights situations that require the Council’s attention” - 14 March -*

Delivered by: Marjon Tytgat

**Mr. President**

*We wish to bring to this council’s attention the disastrous situation in Iraq. The 15 years that have passed since the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq have shown us that this illegal invasion resulted in a total destruction of the country.*

*The invasion of Iraq is classified as a war of aggression. As a consequence of the invasion and occupation millions of civilians lost their lives or were the target of torturing practices. Cities were destroyed, and vital infrastructure was damaged.*

*Many of the problems Iraqi citizens are still facing today can be traced to the 2003 invasion. Today, numerous human rights violations are being committed by the Iraqi authorities, and the pro-governmental militias, under the pretext of combating terrorism.*

**Distinguished delegates,**

*Now that 15 years have passed since the illegal invasion, it is time to hold the perpetrators of this crime of aggression accountable. Further, we urge the UN to improve their reporting practices on the human*

rights abuses in Iraq and to provide the Iraqi citizens with necessary protections. A special Rapporteur for Iraq must be appointed.

In relation to this, please join us at a side event on the 15th of March, starting at 12.00 O'clock in room 24.

Thank you

[Link to video statement](#)

#### General Debate on Item 4

##### *"Human rights situations that require the Council's attention" - 14 March*

Delivered by: Lisa-Marlen Gronemeier

**Thank you Mr. President,**

*Despite over 20 years of the existence and innovation in international criminal justice, the international community has hitherto failed to stop, investigate or prosecute international crimes committed in Iraq since the illegal invasion and occupation 15-years ago. Horrendous large-scale systematic violations of international human rights and humanitarian law by government and government-affiliated forces, ISIS and other non-state armed groups, and international forces, would be qualified as international crimes under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court or an ad-hoc international tribunal. We are gravely concerned over the failure of efforts to promote criminal accountability. To build trust and stability in Iraq, the grievances of all affected groups affected by human rights violations and atrocity crimes must be addressed. EAFORD and Geneva International Centre for Justice call for the situation of Iraq to be referred to the International Criminal Court or an ad-hoc international tribunal, given the extent of committed crimes, the absence of a credible national judiciary, and obvious unwillingness of the state to prosecute perpetrators.*

*We urge the United Nations to take into account the evidence that has been brought to their attention over the years and to ensure accountability for acts committed by all actors to the conflict in Iraq. The most pressing priority must be to adopt necessary measures to ensure the protection and fundamental human rights of all civilians. The fulfilment of victims' demands for justice and accountability are vital to any viable solution to achieve peace for the Iraqi people. Transitional justice is thus imperative for the years ahead.*

Thank you.

[Link to video statement](#)

## Item 5

*General Debate on Item 5**“Human rights bodies and mechanisms” - 15 March -*

Delivered by: Alessandra Zanzi

During the General Debate on item 5, we drew attention to the convoluted and complicated system of the OHCHR, which prohibits all actors of civil society to participate equally.

***Thank you, Mr. President,***

*This year is the 25th anniversary of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, which states that “special emphasis” must be put on to measures that aim to reinforce a “pluralistic civil society”. On this occasion, International-lawyers.org and Geneva International Centre for Justice want to express their concerns over the continuous reduction of civil society space at the Human Rights Council.*

*Civil societies from developing countries are facing difficulties in the process of registration and accreditation for the Human Rights Council sessions. In fact, they can be confronted with internet-related technical complications. Furthermore, the accreditation system is not available in all UN languages. It is of great importance that civil societies, especially from developing countries have equal opportunities to participate in this Council and do not face any discrimination due to technical barriers.*

*We would equally like to point out our concerns regarding the functioning of the oral statement registration system and we recommend that a more transparent process should be applied.*

*We also want to take this occasion to draw attention to the fact that the African Working Group meeting is scheduled during the last week of this session, despite some countries asked via “note verbale” for the re-scheduling of the meeting. This overlap will cause the impossibility for important contributors to participate in both events. It is important, in order to have more progress, to enhance the cooperation and the organization between the different bodies.*

*Thank you*

[Link to video statement](#)

*General Debate on Item 5**“Human rights bodies and mechanisms” - 15 March -*

Delivered by: Mutua K. Kobia

The shrinking of civil society space at the UN Human Rights Council is a worrying and pressing issue; we remarked on several crucial aspects and concerns.

**Mr. President**

*EAWORD and Geneva International Centre for Justice would like to bring this Council's attention to the shrinking NGO space at the United Nations and specifically at the UN Human Rights Council.*

*With respect to the UN Charter and the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) that calls for effective NGO contributions, UN Resolution [60/251](#) of the General Assembly acknowledges that, “non-governmental organisations play an important role at the national, regional, and international levels, in the promotion and protection of human rights”; this role must be reflected at the HRC.*

*However, NGO registration to attend and contribute to the HRC contains several barriers most notably accessible internet access. Civil society members and organisations, particularly in developing countries, have limited to no internet access, and therefore, people in the most vulnerable situations suffer drawbacks and discrimination with regards to effective participation at the HRC Sessions.*

*Furthermore, there is a shared concern regarding the NGO oral statement online registration process, which we believe could be much improved and unprejudiced with increased transparency. Additionally, the limited number of accredited individuals, currently standing at 15, who wish to attend or participate at a side-event is not mentioned in the Practical Guide for NGO Participants and warrants addressing. Lastly, seating space for NGOs has steadily declined.*

*We thus recommend enhanced and accessible communication in all UN languages between the Council and civil society towards collective and practical solutions.*

Thank you,

[Link to video statement](#)

## Item 6

*General Debate on Item 6**“Universal Periodic Review” - 16 March -*

Delivered by: Jennifer D. Tapia



In the General Debate on item 6, the UPR mechanism was addressed by drawing attention to the case of Iraq and Israel.

***Thank you, Mr. President,***

*We would like to stress on the importance of the UPR Mechanism as it provides a detailed examination to improve the human rights situation of states.*

*We note that during Iraq’s last cycle review, a number of recommendations called to immediately cease death penalty practices and to ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR. In addition, Iraq has received many recommendations to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture. However, in blatant disregard of UPR recommendations, Iraq has showed no action in neither abolishing death penalty, ceasing spread torture practices, nor ratifying these protocols.*

*Similarly, we call this council’s attention to the State of Israel’s lack of adherence to UPR recommendations by failing to ratify the aforementioned Protocols in views to abolish death penalty and to prohibit degrading treatment of people. Moreover, although the State of Israel has accepted some recommendations to protect the rights of Arab minorities and to ensure non-discrimination in terms of justice, housing and property rights; the state of Israel has then enacted more laws that further discriminate against the rights of Palestinian citizens.*

*International Lawyers.org and GICJ hold that discrimination, vague provisions of anti-terror laws, death penalty and torture are used as tools for oppressing and imposing an atmosphere of fear among opponents and minorities. Thus, we call upon the international community to pressure these States to immediately cease these practices and abide by their international obligations under International human rights law.*

*Thank you.*

[Link to video statement](#)

## Item 7

*General Debate on Item 7**“Human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories” - 20 March -*

Delivered by: Marjon Tytgat



During the General Debate on item 7, the situation of the Palestinian population was discussed. We called for the protection of their rights and for accountability for the crimes perpetrated against them.

**Mr. President,**

*International-Lawyers.Org welcomes the continued consideration of item 7 on the grave human rights abuses that the Palestinian people continue to face, and which strip Palestinians of their most fundamental human right of self-determination.*

*We wish to call attention to the consequences of the illegal Israeli settlement activities forced upon the Palestinian civilian population, which have been taking place since 1967. We note that in recent days Israel has taken its oppression to new legal heights by arbitrarily depriving Palestinians in East Jerusalem of their nationality. These actions Israel has taken to remove Palestinians from the State of Palestine do not only impact the demographic composition of the occupied Palestinian Territory, but they also severely affect Palestinians' quality of life and their enjoyment of the most basic human rights.*

**Mr. President,**

*We call on the international community and the Council to take all necessary measures to put a stop to the illegal settlement activities that violate Palestinians' inalienable rights, including their right to self-determination. As actions taken point towards the intention to destroy the Palestinian people, at least in part. We urge the Council to investigate whether Israel is committing genocide against the people of Palestine.*

*We believe this investigation is crucial because the Palestinian people are currently victim to atrocity crimes and to a variety of abuses including: extrajudicial killings and detentions, regular inhumane and violent treatment, denial of medical care, denial of free-movement and expression, the destruction of property, unfairness in judicial proceedings, and the list goes on.*

Thank you.

[Link to video statement](#)

Item 8

*General Debate on Item 8*

*Follow-up to and implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action*

*- 20 March -*

Delivered by: Alessandra Zanzi

The protection of the Freedom of Press was discussed during the General Debate on item 8.

**Thank you, Mr. President,**

*International-Lawyers.Org and Geneva International Centre for Justice want to raise the issue regarding the United Nations' challenges faced with regards to respecting the right of free press, without discrimination. The right of free press should be respected for anyone, regardless of their opinions. This is an integral part of the right to freedom of expression, which is a central point of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action.*

*Until now, no action has been taken to restore Inner City Press to its resident correspondent status at United Nations headquarters in New York. Questions have been raised as to whether this decision may be related to their continuous critical reporting on the UN and on matters that may raise concerns regarding the integrity of the organization. The UN should provide clarifications on this matter.*

*The UN should encourage journalists to report on such issues so that the organization can continually improve itself. We support the United Nations and this Council, because you strive to create the kind of United Nations we want. An organization that is guided by and respectful of human rights as the VDPA envisions. We hope that the UN will live up to these commonly expressed principles and that this Council will act to ensure the right to freedom of expression and the freedom of press for all.*

Thank you

[Link to video statement](#)

*General Debate on Item 8*

*Follow-up to and implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action.*

*- 20 March -*

Delivered by: Konstantinos Kakavoulis

We emphasized the need to support persons with disabilities and to lift barriers that impede their participation in public life.

**Mr President,**

*This is a joint statement by IUS PRIMI VIRI and Geneva International Centre for Justice. We would like to focus on Article 22 of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, which refers to non-discrimination, and the equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by disabled persons.*

*Stephen Hawking's life reveals what can happen when a disabled person receives all the supports they need to live their life to the fullest.*

*Initiatives and legislative measures in the right direction have been recently adopted, such as the declaration of 2018 as the year for persons with disabilities in Egypt and the passage of the New Act on persons with disabilities in India. However, persons with disabilities continue to be disproportionately affected by conflict and humanitarian emergencies in Iraq. Additionally, more than one-third of Palestinians with a disability have never been to school, while 87 percent of them are unemployed. What is more, many do not use public transport as it is not adapted sufficiently.*

*Coming back to Stephen Hawking's inspirational example, writing for the World Health Organization in 2011, the legendary theoretical physicist argued –and I quote- “We have a moral duty to remove the barriers to participation, and to invest sufficient funding and expertise to unlock the vast potential of people with disabilities.” It must be underlined that he did not speak about cures for disabilities, but removal of barriers to full participation in public life for people who have them.*

Thank you

[Link to video statement](#)

Item 9

### *General Debate on Item 9*

*Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance, follow-up to and implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.*

*- 20 March 2018 -*

Delivered by: Konstantinos Kakavoulis

Inclusiveness and diversity requires much more effort in order to combat racism and racial discrimination while promoting harmony amongst humans.

**Mr. President,**

*IUS PRIMI VIRI and Geneva International Centre for Justice hail the efforts of this Council and Member States to take measures in order to combat discrimination based on freedom of religion and belief.*

*Cultural diversity is the rule rather than the exception in most States nowadays. According to recent estimates, the UN's 206 member states contain over 600 living language groups, and 5,000 ethnic groups. In very few countries can the citizens be said to share the same language, or belong to the same ethnonational group. While xenophobic violence is ongoing and refugee flows are bigger than ever –with the refugee population amounting to more than 3 percent of the global population- the full and effective implementation of the Durban Declaration by all member States is an imperative need. As pointed out by the honourable delegate of South Africa during yesterday's Debate on Racial Discrimination, when it comes to xenophobia and racism, there must not be any separation between 'them' and 'us'. We should not see ourselves in opposition with the perpetrators. This stance increases hatred rather than diminishing it. Segregating between the racists and us constitutes nothing more than further discrimination. We have to make step forwards together if we actually want to fight discrimination, if we really want to be Nelson Mandela's legacy.*

Thank you.

[Link to video statement](#)

#### **General Debate on Item 9**

*Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance, follow-up to and implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. - 20 March 2018 -*

Delivered by: Alessandra Zanzi

The distribution of the OHCHR's fund was discussed during the General Debate on item 9, calling for more transparency.

**Thank you, Mr. President,**

*International-Lawyers.org and Geneva International Centre for Justice are concerned about the decreasing efforts that are being put into promoting and implementing the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. We are troubled by the lack of action, the misuse of resources, and the non-implementation of decisions taken by the UN General Assembly that we have witnessed in recent years from the OHCHR division that is responsible for promoting the DDPA.*

*We want to take this occasion to call upon the OHCHR to clarify why funds that are intended for promoting the DDPA have been appropriated and employed elsewhere, in contravention with the General Assembly decisions. Why has so little progress been made to promote and implement the DDPA by the division that has this responsibility within the OHCHR?*

*Today, the world is facing an increase in intolerance, xenophobic and discriminatory discourses, and hate speech in different parts of the world. Furthermore, we are equally confronted with a rise of*

*violence and armed conflicts that are fueled by racial and ethnical reasons. In this context, an implementation of the DDPa by States and by the OHCHR is more urgent than ever. We therefore urge the High Commissioner to respond to our concerns.*

Thank you

[Link to video statement](#)

Item 2

### *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” - 21 March -*

Delivered by: Lisa-Marlen Gronemeier

During the General Debate on Item 2 we recognized discrimination against minorities and the various elements, such as ‘hate speech’, that contributes to its escalation; root causes and prevention was emphasized.

***Thank you Mr. President,***

*We appreciate the vital work by the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner and his Office. Acknowledging the importance of the OHCHR’s focus on countering discrimination and strengthening accountability and the rule of law outlined in the Annual Report, we would like to highlight the interrelationship between conflicts; minority rights and the promotion of inclusiveness and stability.*

*Indeed, when minorities experience practices and institutional arrangements that systematically discriminate against, denigrate and exclude them, tensions between minorities and the respective State are intelligible consequences. Unequal access to education, political participation, employment, and public services, violates minorities’ individual and collective rights and creates a dual system that subverts democracy and social cohesion. If coupled with hate speech and incitement to hatred, minorities are deprived of their fundamental rights to life in safety and dignity and may fall victims to atrocity crimes such as ethnic cleansing or even genocide. The plight of the Rohingya in Myanmar is a gruesome example. With the social fabric torn by crimes committed against the marginalized, conflict is latent and ready to reoccur in ever more cruel forms. Seaming up the fabric of society and preventing or peacefully resolving conflicts necessitates first and foremost full respect for minority rights.*

*EAFORD and Geneva International Centre for Justice stress the importance of early warning efforts involving systemic exclusion of and discrimination and violence against minorities, through the OHCHR’s cooperation with affected groups, civil society, and national and international stakeholders.*

Thank you.

[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” - 21 March -*

Delivered by: Lisette Alberti



During the General Debate on item 2 in which the annual report of the High Commissioner was discussed, the importance of the protection of Cultural Rights was underlined.

***Thank you Mr. President,***

*In the current political narrative, culture is often a tool for Other-ing, a tool to distinguish a hostile ‘them’. As the political right is thriving across Western-Europe and North America, the notion of ‘identity’ and ‘culture’ gives room for xenophobia to grow and for hostilities to arise. International-Lawyers.Org and Geneva International Centre for Justice are thankful the High Commissioner’s annual report underlines the importance of cultural rights.*

*The interaction between different ideas is what forms us as communities. Artists and cultural institutions are often the first ones questioning the status quo, allowing communities to develop. The Freedom of Artistic Expression is key in challenging our own biases and creating space for discussion, creating an inclusive society where a diversity in ideas, cultures and identities will thrive. Artistic expression forces a critical view and thus acts as an antidote to xenophobia, racism and other forms of discrimination.*

*Giving voices to the marginalized and expressing opinions other than our own benefits all, and are essential in achieving development, peace and social cohesion. The right of Freedom of Artistic Expression is therefore one to be cherished and protected. Those who do just that, artists of all media, should be supported and encouraged instead of prosecuted and hushed. Diversity should be seen as a strength. Inclusion will only be all-encompassing when everyone’s voice is heard, even those who go against our own.*

*Thank you*

[Link to video statement](#)

Item 10

*General Debate on item 10,  
“Technical assistance and capacity-building” - 22 March -*

Delivered by: Alessandra Zanzi

During the General Debate on item 10, we called for the enhanced international cooperation and joint technical assistance to the people in Yemen in order to secure their safety, their access to humanitarian aid and their human rights.

**Thank you, Mr. President,**

*Yemen has been living in an ongoing civil war since 2014, which has now reached more than 1000 days of conflict and has quickly escalated into an extreme humanitarian crisis.*

*The Yemeni population has been strongly exposed to malnutrition and the country’s healthcare system has been devastated by this conflict. In addition, various epidemics, such as cholera, have spread, and a high number of individuals have been surviving only on humanitarian aid and assistance.*

*During these years of war, many people have been facing multiple human rights violations, such as enforced disappearances and abductions, and numerous civilians have been victims of indiscriminate attacks. In this context women and children are particularly vulnerable and need special protection.*

*International-lawyers.org and Geneva International Centre for Justice urge the international community to increase their efforts to achieve lasting peace in the country and call for a political solution, as the most effective and best way to reach the end of this crisis.*

*In the meantime, it is of vital importance to develop more effective strategies to alleviate the prolonged civilian suffering. To this end, we must enhance international cooperation and joint technical assistance by the relevant actors, notably to facilitate the full, safe and unhindered access of humanitarian aid to all parts of the country.*

Thank you.

[Link to video statement](#)

*General Debate on item 10,  
“Technical assistance and capacity-building” - 22 March -*

Delivered by: Konstantinos Kakavoulis

We strongly called on the Council and international community to seriously attend to the grave situation of health and children in armed conflict in Yemen.

**Mr. President,**

*IUS PRIMI VIRI and Geneva International Centre for Justice would like to stress children's rights violations in Yemen. Children are the main victims of the ongoing war in the country. The malfunctioning health care and famine put hundreds of children on the verge of death.*

*Malnutrition has spread like wildfire among children in seized areas. Other diseases have also begun to emerge among the population. For instance, the rapid spread of diphtheria in Yemen highlights major gaps in routine vaccination coverage in recent years and signifies a collapsing health system. Only 50% of all health facilities are fully or, at least, partially functioning.*

*We welcome the World Health Organization and UNICEF initiatives to vaccinate more than 2.7 million children under the age of 15 to protect them from the infectious disease. We urge the international community to take more steps on the same direction in order to combat famine and other grave diseases.*

*The providers must ensure that aid is provided directly to the Yemeni children, since allegations are constantly blaming Houthi militia for interfering with available humanitarian aid, selling it on the black market and distributing the products among themselves.*

*In the words of Mahatma Gandhi: "If we are to teach real peace in this world, and if we are to carry on a real war against war, we shall have to begin with the children".*

*Thank you.*

[Link to video statement](#)

## GICJ's Joint Written Statements

### Democratic Space, Civil Society and Political Crisis in Burundi

The democratic space in Burundi has continuously shrunk since 2013 and the political crisis has continued to worsen. Since Burundian President Pierre Nkurunziza in 2015 took a third term in office Burundi fell into political and civil turmoil that escalated to serious human rights abuses and violations. In addition, the current government of Burundi has left several critical international bodies such as the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and has weakened its cooperation with the



Human Rights Council in so far as denying the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in Burundi access into the country. The current government has also taken several legal and non-legal steps to silence any opposition especially by the media. This statement condemns such actions by the very authorities that are supposed to protect a democratic and

civil society to freely express their opinions in a non-violent manner. Moreover, similar legal and non-legal measures were taken to prevent civilians' right to freedom of assembly and association. These actions have led to escalated violence including detentions, and even reports of enforced disappearances and torture particularly towards journalists. This statement also gives recommendations to the Human Rights Council and the government of Burundi towards improving democratic and civic space in Burundi.

[Link to full Written Statement](#)

### Libya – Human Trafficking and Slavery

On 14th of November 2017, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Zeid Ra'ad Al-Hussein, expressed deep dismay regarding the appalling conditions of detention facilities in Libya.



Additionally, he expressed concern over the plight of African migrants detained in these facilities further noting that the detention system in Libya is "broken beyond repair". on 20 November 2017, United Nations Secretary General, António Guterres spoke to reporters expressing his horror regarding news reports that showed alleged

human slavery at an auction in Libya. The victims are African migrants who were captured, trafficked, and/or tricked into slavery. This statement emphasises the need to address the root causes of the

human slave auctions in Libya including a serious investigation by a specialized UN mission guided by the UN Human Rights Council. Respect, dignity, and security for the human rights of African migrants en route to and under captivity in Libya must be protected. This statement also gives alternatives to detention and looks into international norms and customs on slavery, notable responses that warrant tackling root causes, and recommendations for the Human Rights Council, the African Union, and the European Union. [Link to full Written Statement](#)

### United Nations Response to Iraq's Humanitarian Crisis

Iraq is being swept off the Earth by the hurricane of wars. The past decade is not an exception. The US-led invasion in 2003 led to increased armed violence and worsening of the situation in Iraq. The security environment in the country is deteriorating day by day. Continuous armed conflict had a negative impact on every person and every aspect of life within the Iraqi society.



Serious widespread and systematic human rights violations are reported in the conduct of armed groups, the U.S.-led coalition forces and the Iraqi government. Sectarianism and the danger of disintegration remain. Terrorism and criminal violence have become part of daily life in many parts of the country. Furthermore, the collateral damage of the fight against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, also known as ISIS) is simply ignored. The given statement states that the commissioned war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide are not investigated, the perpetrators enjoy impunity and fear nothing, victims are denied their right to remedy and reparation. These horrendous large-scale systematic human rights violations were and are being committed by the Iraqi governmental agents, security and military forces, government-allied militias, coalition military forces, ISIS and other non-state armed groups in Iraq. These widespread and systematic crimes could be qualified as international crimes set forth by the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Lastly, this written statement concludes that the international community's response to the Iraqi crisis through the United Nations and the impact on the ground are not efficient.

[Link to full Written Statement](#)

### Fighting terrorism in Iraq

Fifteen years after the invasion in Iraq, the so-called “war on terror” has led to severe numbers of Iraqi casualties, both civilian and combat troops, as a consequence of the indiscriminate and brutal ways in which this war has been and is being fought. The Iraqi security forces and militias are committing brutal abuses and are ultimately contributing to an already very poor human rights situation. These abuses, in combination with anti-terrorism measures built into Iraqi law, and extreme war tactics are responsible for a broad array of human rights violations. We recommended to the UN to investigate the legality and application of the Iraqi Anti-Terrorism Law and to establish an independent investigation committee to ensure accountability of all parties to the conflict that committed widespread and massive violations of international humanitarian and human rights law.



### Children and Armed Conflict in Iraq

The so-called ‘war on terror’ in Iraq is conducted in indiscriminate and brutal ways. The imperative of the Iraqi government, supported by the pro-governmental militias and international coalitions,



worsens the situation on the ground by allowing security forces and militias to commit brutal abuses. As always, civilians are disproportionately affected by the conflict. Moreover, in Iraq children have a lot to endure. We recommend to the UN to prosecute perpetrators of violations against children and to allocate the adequate resources to reintegrate

children, with specific attention to psychological support. Further we urged the UN Office in Iraq to investigate the recruitment of children for training camps organized by the various parties to the conflict. [Link to full written statement](#)

### Mosul: Rebuilding after Destruction and Bringing Accountability

Months after the end of the so-called “liberation” campaign conducted by Iraqi forces with the support of the international coalition that was led by the United States of America, many civilians in Mosul, Iraq are still under the threat of Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) as well as the Iraqi Federal Police. Reports allege that civilians are being indiscriminately abducted under the suspicion that they may have been with or had ties with ISIS. As well, innocent civilians who have, or had relatives associated with ISIS are

also under threat. The paramilitaries, primarily the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) who are mostly backed by Iran, also committed grave violations under the pretext of liberating Mosul. Mosul is in desperate need of humanitarian assistance to restore stability, security, and peace. This statement looks at steps towards moving forward and the barriers it entails as well as accountability of perpetrators and ensuring justice for victims. It also touches on the role of civil society and their relationship with the government.

[Link to full Written Statement](#)



### War Crimes Committed During the War and Occupation of Iraq

This statement focuses on violations of international law during the Iraq War and occupation, and in particular, war crimes committed by the United States of America and its allies (hereinafter, the “*Coalition*”).<sup>1</sup> The extent of Coalition war crimes warrants the establishment of an independent international tribunal that can investigate and prosecute such crimes. In an international armed conflict<sup>3</sup> like the initial Iraq War, war crimes include all grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions, including: wilful killing, torture or inhuman treatment, unlawful detention, deportation or transfer of a civilian, denying civilians or prisoners of war of fair trial rights, hostage-taking, and wanton



destruction of and appropriation of property. An independent international tribunal for Iraq would strengthen international humanitarian law, provide victims an opportunity to voice the horrors they witnessed and experienced, would bring justice to the persons responsible for them, and would contribute to restoring and maintaining peace.

[Link to full Written Statement](#)

### Holding the United States-Led Coalition that Invaded Iraq Responsible for the Crime of Aggression

This statement focuses on the troubling lack of accountability for the crime of aggression committed through the invasion of the Republic of Iraq in March 2003 by the United States of America. The failure to hold former government leaders accountable for this invasion is a grave threat to international law. Like previous international criminal tribunals, an independent international criminal tribunal for the crimes committed in the lead up to the Iraq War will further the cause of justice, enforce and uphold the rule of law, and further international accountability. Initially prosecuted on an international level before the Nuremberg Tribunal, the crime of aggression is the supreme international crime. Starting

on July 17, 2018, the International Criminal Court (ICC) can narrowly prosecute crimes of aggression,



making it the first time since the Nuremberg Tribunal that an international court will be able to prosecute this crime. To date, there has only been one attempt to investigate the issue of aggression in Iraq. No other serious attempts to investigate the Iraq War and the issue of aggression have been made in the

United States or elsewhere. [Link to full Written Statement](#)

### **No Safe Haven: Palestinian Children under Israeli Military Occupation**

This statement highlights that Palestinian children are among those whose most fundamental rights are violated on a consistent basis, as a result of Israel's prolonged belligerent occupation. This statement focuses on the most fundamental of rights, namely the right to life and safety, which



continues to be infringed upon due to Israel's daily military activities and settler violence, as well as due to destructive military campaigns. These have a cumulative effect on children, often leaving those that survive with lifelong injuries and psychological illnesses. The statement therefore recommends the

international community to demand Israeli authorities to abide scrupulously by the State's obligations under the CRC in all territories under its control and to comply with the Fourth Geneva Convention.

[Link to full Written Statement](#)

### **Born into Injustice: The Impact of Institutionalized Discrimination on Palestinian Children**

In this statement, it is outlined that Palestinian children fall victim to a system that discriminates against them on the basis of their national belonging from the very day they are born. Palestinian children fall victim to a discriminatory system, under which fundamental rights such as a healthy upbringing in a



stable home and family environment are gravely obstructed. Having discussed the detrimental impact on their right to home, family life, and residency; deprivation of liberty; and the right to health, the

statement stresses that the full enjoyment of Palestinian children of their human rights will only be possible if Israel's occupation and institutionalized discrimination against Palestinians is brought to an end. [Link to full Written Statement](#)

### **Obstruction of Human Rights: US Recognition of Jerusalem as Capital of Israel**

The statement affirms that, whereas the US decision to officially recognize Jerusalem as capital of Israel can be viewed as attempt to legitimize Israeli control over the remaining Palestinian territory



and to undermine Palestinians' legitimate historic, national, and legal rights in Jerusalem, it does not change the internationally recognized status of Jerusalem, according to which East Jerusalem is illegally occupied and is the future capital of Palestine. Having outlined in what ways the US move further deprives Palestinians of their

inalienable rights, the statement reaffirms in the strongest manner that the UN must take all necessary measures to pressure the US to rescind its decision and to finally bring an end to the illegal Israeli occupation. [Link to full Written Statement](#)

### **Exploitation and Control of Palestinian Natural Resources as Tools of Domination**

The statement recalls that numerous UN resolutions reaffirm permanent sovereignty by the Palestinian people over their natural resources, which is an essential element in the right of self-determination.

However, Palestinian sovereignty is undermined by Israel's exploitation, damage and depletion of their natural resources, destruction of agricultural lands and orchards, and destruction, forced diversion or seizure of vital infrastructure such as water, sewage and electricity systems, and dumping of waste materials. Such activities



exacerbate the already critical socioeconomic and human rights situation of Palestinians. Natural resources are described as another tool to dominate and dehumanize Palestinians and to further undermine their prospects for self-determination. Therefore, the statement recommends to the relevant UN bodies to, *inter alia*, pressure Israel to end its policies of illegal appropriation and exploitation of Palestinian natural resources.

[Link to full Written Statement](#)

## Forcible Repatriation of Rohingya: Disregard to the International Prohibition of Refoulment

The situation of Rohingya Muslim minority of Myanmar remains increasingly alarming. The mass atrocities against Rohingya continue to these days despite the international calls for immediate halt of violence. As a result of army crackdowns in Myanmar's northern Rakhine state in 2016 and 2017, approximately 750,000 Rohingya fled to Bangladesh. The atrocity crimes committed against Rohingya with an obvious intent to destroy this group may amount to the international crime of genocide. On



16 November 2017, the governments of Bangladesh and Myanmar signed repatriation agreement, according to which nearly 1 million Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh will be repatriated back within 2 years. This written statement insists that the repatriation deal between Bangladesh and Myanmar is extremely immature and we are convinced that it will bring

to more human rights violations against Rohingya minority. The main condition that must be met before any repatriation plan is implemented - an unconditional end to the violence and guarantees of non-recurrence. Moreover, refugees and international agencies, including UN, are excluded from all stages of this repatriation. Rohingya should play a key role in planning and management of their return. Lastly, the statement reminds of previous unfortunate repatriations of tens of thousands Rohingya to Myanmar in the 1990s and early 2000s.

[Link to full Written Statement](#)

## South Sudan: The Urgent Need to Resolve the Current Conflict

In South Sudan the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and the Sudan People's Liberation Army in-Opposition (SPLA-IO) remain in conflict and continue to commit grave human rights violations against innocent civilians. United Nations reports and press releases have indicated that the atrocities committed may amount to crimes against humanity as it has even been reported that humanitarian camps, including UN camps, have been under attack by soldiers who also seize humanitarian aid and at times abduct residents from the camp. While it appears that the government is taking positive steps to alleviate the human rights violations committed, mainly by soldiers, such as the recent introduction of registering SPLA soldiers into a biometric system<sup>1</sup>, much more needs to be done to bring justice,



healing and reconciliation to the victims. This statement looks into the humanitarian situation of children and the youth, witness testimony of victims who experienced or fled the conflict, and the environment of impunity with regards to the violent conflict situation in South Sudan. Lastly, this statement gives recommendations on technical assistance and capacity building towards improving the current situation in South Sudan and steps towards accountability and justice. [Link to full Written Statement](#)

### Attacks on Public Health Workers in the Syrian Arab Republic

What began as anti-government protests in Syria's capital, Damascus, in March 2011 has spiralled into a devastating civil war. Since the beginning of the war, an estimated 400,000 Syrians are reportedly dead or missing according to the United Nations and Arab League Envoy to Syria, over 5 million Syrians have fled the country and 12 million people are displaced internally. Over time, the conflict grew more



and more complex with the involvement of the international community, Kurdish forces, terrorist organizations like ISIS and other opposition forces. According to the WHO, Syria is among the most dangerous countries for a health worker. Since the beginning of the conflict, 770 health care workers have been killed in Syria. During the same period, 147 humanitarian aid workers have been killed. Not only is this a grave loss of innocent lives, it also prohibits those in need of medical attention from receiving proper care. [Link to full Written Statement](#)

### Syria: UN Response to the Crisis

The confrontation between the government and armed groups in Syria resulted in complex civil conflict with involvement of regional and world powers, the ISIS taking the advantage of the chaotic



situation. It is estimated that more than half a million killed out of total population of 24,5 million since the beginning of the Syrian humanitarian crisis in March of 2011. In 2017, the Humanitarian Response Team of Whole Syria assessed that 13.5 million people require humanitarian assistance, including 4.9 million people in need, trapped in

besieged and hard-to-reach areas, where they are exposed to grave protection threats. Over half of the population has been forced from their homes, and many people have been displaced multiple times. Children and youth, millions of whom have known nothing but conflict, comprise more than

half of the displaced, as well as half of those in need of humanitarian assistance. Horrendous large-scale systematic human rights violations were and are being committed by the governmental forces, coalition military forces, ISIS and other non-state armed groups. These widespread and systematic crimes could be qualified as international crimes set forth by the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. This statement aims to demonstrate the response of the international community to the Syrian crisis through the United Nations and assess the impact on the ground and advocates for more effective UN actions to alleviate the suffering and to protect civilians. [Link to full Written Statement](#)

### **Yemen: The Failure to Protect**

This statement aims to demonstrate the response of the international community to the Yemeni crisis through the United Nations and assess the impact on the ground and advocates for more effective UN actions to alleviate the suffering and protect civilians. The transition process after the coup d'état in Yemen prompted the fully-fledged civil war that



continues to these days. The armed conflict further fuels sectarian divide in the region and destabilises war-torn Middle East. The Houthi forces allied with the former president **Ali Abdullah Saleh** are fighting the forces loyal to the government of **Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi**. It is clear that Iran provides political, financial and military support to Houthis. The Iranian Quds Forces serve as military advisers, provide with arms and train the Houthi militia. The Saudi-led coalition in support to the President Hadi conducts a multinational military intervention against Houthis. All parties to the conflict in Yemen are well-aware of widespread and systematic attack. Grave violations of the provisions of 1948 Geneva Conventions by armed groups, Houthis and the Saud-led armed forces fulfil the elements of crimes against humanity and war crimes as defined by the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. The statement emphasises that perpetrators that violate the provisions of international human rights law and international humanitarian law should be brought to justice. The commissioned war crimes and crimes against humanity should be investigated in a prompt, thorough and independent manner. The statement concludes that the actions of the international community through the United Nations fail to protect civilians.

[Link to full Written Statement](#)

## Yemen: Women and Girls in Conflict

Yemenis have been experiencing an ongoing civil war since 2014 when the Houthis, an anti-government force, took control of the city of Sana'a. This fight became international with the 2015 intervention by the Saudi-led coalition. The conflict has quickly escalated into an extremely dire



humanitarian crisis and in December 2017, it reached 1000 days of civil war. During these years of war, the Yemeni population has been witnessing multiple grave human rights violations, such as enforced displacements, enforced disappearances, abductions, indiscriminate killings and attacks on civilians. In this context, the statement considers

discrimination against women and human rights violations, international human rights and humanitarian law, the right to education, the right to healthcare, and child marriage.

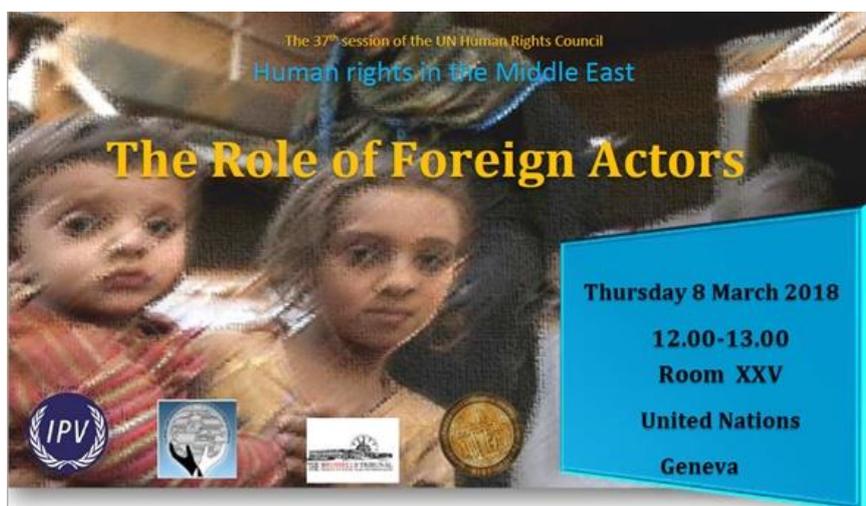
[Link to full Written Statement](#)

## GICJ Co-Sponsored Side-events

### "The Role of Foreign Actors"

On 8 March, 2018 GICJ co-hosted a side event entitled "The Role of Foreign Actors" with the International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD) and Ius Primi Viri (IPV) at the Thirty-Seventh Session of the UN Human Rights Council. The event took place in Room XXV from 12h00 to 13h00 at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, Switzerland.

The side-event focused on foreign actors who are increasingly transforming the Middle East and the historical fault lines and simmering conflicts between local communities that are exacerbated by outside actors. These State actors pitch segments of the same society against each other, often dividing societies into proxy militias that prolongs the conflict. Three panellists offered their insight into this specific emergency.



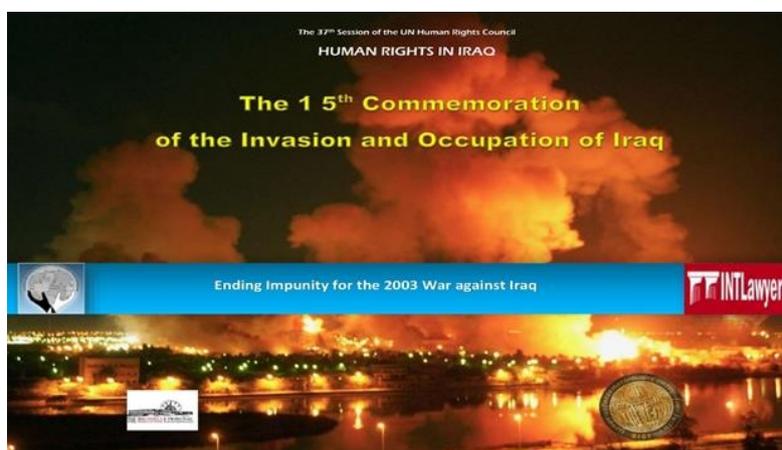
[Watch](#) the full event online or [read](#) the full Report.

Mr. Ahmed Al Quraishi spoke about the danger of state-backed militias and he explained that one moves into a sectarian debate when encountering these groups. The second speaker, Dr. Tarek Chindeb, said that terror has been exposed based on the cooperation with Arab States. Finally, Dr. Baraa Shiban, demonstrated that, when everything is put into context, in order to realise the real threat in the region, it is evident that the use of proxies in certain states and recruitment of foreign actors can be used to further a specific agenda.

### "15<sup>th</sup> Commemoration of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq"

GICJ co-hosted a second side event entitled "Invasion and Occupation of Iraq" with International Organisation for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD), International Lawyers.Org and other organisations at the Thirty-Seventh Session of the UN Human Rights Council. The event took place on 15 March 2018 from 12h00 to 14h00 in Room XXIV at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, Switzerland.

The side of event was on the 'War in Iraq' which in 2018 marks 15 years since the invasion of 20 March, 2003. This war was an illegal war and a war of aggression without the support of the UN Security Council. The consequences of war must be remembered as it implicates a direct violation of the UN Charter and numerous adverse ramifications persists until today. There was significant opposition to the war, furthermore the results of the invasion comprise millions of lives lost and the devastation of an entire country. Yet, there remains zero accountability. Four panellists spoke during this side event.



[Watch](#) the full event online or [read](#) the full report.

The first speaker, Mr. Jan Lönn, spoke about the actions he undertook with his organisation in order to stop the war that was planned by the former United States of America (US) President, George W. Bush, which he declared as a priority in his term in office. Further, Mr. Ahmed Al-Quraishi highlighted what happened during the lead up to the War in Iraq as he reflected on his experiences as an on the ground journalist. The third speaker, Mr. Sabah al-Mukhtar, acknowledged that – unfortunately- accountability for the Iraq-war is clearly not in sight. He compared the last 15 years in Iraq with the situation of the country before 2003 and noted that prior to the invasion and occupation of Iraq there was no al-Qaeda, no ISIS, and no internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the country. Finally, Mr. Inder Comar, stated that; “democracy is dying” and that democratic norms are at great risk when there is an illegal war taking place and our democracy is at risk when governments can achieve such a situation as that in Iraq.

## Geneva International Centre *for* Justice

*Independent, non-profit, non-governmental organization*



*GICJ team at the 37th session of the UN Human Rights' Council*

GICJ is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organization dedicated to the promotion and reinforcement of commitments to the principles and norms of human rights. GICJ is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland and is governed by the Swiss Civil Code and its statutes. Basing its work on the rules and principles of International Law, International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law, GICJ observes and documents human rights violations and seeks justice for their victims through all legal means available.

**Mission:** GICJ's mission is to improve lives by tackling violations and all forms of violence and degrading or inhumane treatment through the strengthening of respect for human rights; reinforcing the independence of lawyers and judiciaries; consolidating the principles of equity and non-discrimination; ensuring rule of law is upheld; promoting a culture of awareness on human rights; and combating impunity.

**Work:** GICJ has been tackling issues of justice and accountability since it was established. GICJ maintains a partnership with various NGOs, lawyers and a vast civil society network around the world. Through these channels, GICJ is able to receive documentation and evidences of human rights violations and abuses as they occur in several countries. GICJ continues to bring this information to the attention of relevant UN bodies in order to gain justice for all victims.



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