

# GICJ Report

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2019



Geneva International Centre *for* Justice

## 2018 Annual Report

[www.gicj.org](http://www.gicj.org)



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>UN Human Rights Council .....</b>	<b>1</b>
37 <sup>th</sup> Regular Session – 26 February to 23 March 2018 .....	1
<i>Oral Statements</i> .....	1
<i>Written Statements</i> .....	6
<i>Side events co-organized by GICJ</i> .....	12
38 <sup>th</sup> Regular Session – 18 June to 6 July 2018 .....	13
<i>Oral Statements</i> .....	13
<i>Written Statements</i> .....	18
<i>Side events co-organized by GICJ</i> .....	20
39 <sup>th</sup> Regular Session – 10 September to 28 September 2018 .....	21
<i>Oral Statements</i> .....	21
<i>Written Statements</i> .....	25
<i>Side events co-organized by GICJ</i> .....	29
28 <sup>th</sup> Special Session on Human Rights in Palestine – 18 May 2018 .....	30
<i>Oral statements</i> .....	30
<b>Universal Periodic Review .....</b>	<b>32</b>
Israel .....	32
Saudi Arabia .....	32
China .....	33
<b>UN Committees and Other Meetings .....</b>	<b>34</b>
Business and Human Rights .....	34
<i>Intergovernmental Working Group on TNCs</i> .....	34
<i>Forum on Business and Human Rights</i> .....	34
Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination .....	34
<b>Human Rights Training .....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>GICJ Statements and Appeals .....</b>	<b>37</b>
<i>Protests in Iran and the Violent Response of the Authorities</i> .....	37
<i>27 Years, Waiting on Accountability for the Victims</i> .....	37
<i>The 2003 War Against Iraq – 15 Years of Denial</i> .....	37
<i>French manifesto blames anti-Semitism on “Islamist radicalization”</i> .....	37
<i>Legacy and celebrating the centenary of Nelson Mandela</i> .....	38
<i>Blockade to the Great March of Return</i> .....	38
<i>GICJ denounces Israeli Massacres of Palestinian Protesters</i> .....	38
<i>Never Forget: The Right of Return of Palestinian Refugees</i> .....	38
<i>GICJ welcomes the Adoption of Security Council Resolution 2417 (2018)</i> .....	39
<i>GICJ’s Opinion on MoU between the UN Agencies and the Government of Myanmar</i> .....	39
<i>Statement on the US withdrawal from the Human Rights Council</i> .....	39
<i>Tribute to Kofi Annan 1938-2018</i> .....	40
<i>Urgent Appeal: The Iraqi Government violates the right of the Iraqi people to life</i> .....	40
<i>Letter: GICJ Calls Attention to Systematic Human Rights Abuses in Iraq</i> .....	41
<i>Iran’s continuous practice of mass executions without any guarantees of fair trial</i> .....	41
<i>Appeals on behalf of refugees in Thailand</i> .....	42
<i>The Situation in Iraq – GICJ update for Decision Makers on the Cases of Iraqi refugees</i> ....	42

<i>Letter: GICJ condemns human rights violations against Sudanese protesters .....</i>	<i>42</i>
<b>GICJ Special Reports.....</b>	<b>44</b>
<i>Arriving in EU: Renewed Hope or New Threats? .....</i>	<i>44</i>
<i>Working Toward Peace in Yemen: Building on the Security Council Framework .....</i>	<i>45</i>
<i>International Day Articles 2018.....</i>	<i>46</i>

## INTRODUCTION

Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ) is pleased to present its annual report for 2018. In these pages, you will discover GICJ's wide range of activities and the various issues we follow.

The year 2018 was a busy one. As with every year, GICJ participated in the typical three sessions each of the Human Rights Council (HRC) and Universal Periodic Review, we organized side events, conducted human rights training sessions and continued to monitor critical events like the situations in Myanmar and Palestine. In addition, last year GICJ participated in the HRC special session in May on the situation in Palestine and the review of Iraq by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, we monitored evolving situations in Sudan and Democratic Republic of the Congo (among others), and we reported on the ongoing work of two parallel UN efforts regarding business and human rights. GICJ attended and participated in numerous other meetings to follow recent events, maintain relationships with UN human rights mechanisms, and coordinate our activities with other like-minded NGOs.

We hope you find this report informative and helpful. If you have questions or comments about this report or any of GICJ's activities, we would welcome hearing from you at [info@gicj.org](mailto:info@gicj.org).

### Support our mission

If you appreciate our work, please consider supporting our human rights activities with a donation via our website [www.gicj.org](http://www.gicj.org). Any amount is helpful in ensuring our ability to continue advocating for human rights and seeking justice for victims of human rights violations.

# 2018 by the Numbers



4 Sessions

Human  
Rights  
Council

3 UPRs



6 Side Events



67

Oral Statements



35

Written Statements



3 Training  
Sessions

Other  
Activities



18

Appeals



32

International Day  
Articles



3

Special Reports

## UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

### **37<sup>th</sup> Regular Session – 26 February to 23 March 2018**



GICJ participated in the 37<sup>th</sup> session of the Human Rights Council delivering 24 joint oral statements, submitting 18 written statements and co-hosting two side events.

As civil society representative and on behalf of GICJ and other NGOs, Ms. Gofran Sawalha delivered a statement during the High-Level Segment of the 37th session. GICJ further delivered 22 joint oral statements under items 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 of the agenda of the Human Rights Council. The oral statements are summarized in the next section and can be watched online.

Further, GICJ submitted 18 joint written statements addressing alarming violations of human rights in Iraq, Libya, Burundi, Palestine, Myanmar, South Sudan and Yemen. They called for the accountability of human rights offenders in present and past conflicts, emphasized the dire humanitarian crises in Yemen, Iraq and other countries and underlined the need to help the civilian population particularly women and children in territories affected by armed conflict or military occupation. Each statement concluded with a series of recommendations by GICJ and the co-signatory NGOs to the parties concerned, UN member states as well as UN bodies, particularly the Human Rights Council.

Finally, GICJ co-hosted two side events. The first side event “The Role of Foreign Actors” focused on foreign actors increasingly transforming the Middle East while the second side event “15th Commemoration of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq” dealt with the consequences of the US-led invasion in 2003.

[Read online](#) or [download](#) the full report of the 37th session.



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### **Oral Statements**

#### **High-Level Segment – 8<sup>th</sup> meeting**

- The Oral Statement alarmed the Council that institutional racism and racial discrimination is continuously widespread in all regions of the globe. Hate crimes are on the rise and political leaders and people of influence use hate-speech which leads to stereotypes that de-humanize victims and can potentially lead to the most serious crimes such as ethnic cleansing or genocide. In addition to that, there are still numerous discriminatory laws currently in force under which particularly indigenous communities and civilians in the occupied Palestinian territories suffer. The Council should develop and adopt a multi-year program in support of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA).  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XwdlP72CWCU>

#### **High-Level Panel Discussion on: Human Rights Violations of Children in Syria**

- The oral statement addressed the most basic rights of children that are in peril focusing on health aspects. As the situation has further escalated, particularly the situation of children

has deteriorated. The destruction of the medical infrastructure and the lack of access for humanitarian assistance has led to malnutrition, forced recruitment by different parties and excessive violence all of which having an impact on the children's mental and physical well-being. The compliance with international human rights law and international humanitarian law has to be ensured and the international community must take all possible measures to ensure the protection of basic human rights of Syrian children.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QH3\\_A2LsE1Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QH3_A2LsE1Y)

#### 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 – General Debate

- The first oral statement stressed the importance of early warning efforts involving systemic exclusion of discrimination and violence against minorities through the OHCHR's cooperation with affected groups, civil society and national as well as international stakeholders. The lack of respect of minority rights can create a dual system that subverts democracy and social cohesion. Minorities might even fall victim to atrocity crimes such as ethnic cleansing or even genocide as a consequence of hate speech.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xqdhhlkgt4>

- The second statement emphasized that in the current political narrative culture is often a tool for *Othering* and gives room for xenophobia to grow. In this regard, particularly the freedom of artistic expression has to be protected and the artists encouraged instead of prosecuted.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=00IOawlQeCM>

#### Item 3: Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development – Interactive Dialogue with the 'Special Rapporteur on the Sale of Children, child prostitution and child pornography'

- The oral statement expressed concern about commercial international surrogacy arrangements because they encourage the exploitation of children as well as surrogate mothers living in poverty. Clearly, the practice of surrogacy goes against the SDGs and other international norms as it impeded human rights of women and children and their development.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E4wiCA1FYaA>

#### Item 3: Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development – General Debate

- One oral statement alerted the Council on the humanitarian situation in Iraq. 8.7 million people find themselves in need of humanitarian assistance 15 years after the invasion of Iraq by a US-led coalition. The bombing of IS strongholds by the US-led coalition has further destroyed Iraqi infrastructure while the justice system is ruled by corruption and brutality. The United States and its allies must bear legal responsibility and must be held accountable for all crimes committed so that justice and sustainable peace can be ensured.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E4wiCA1FYaA>



- Another oral statement stressed the role of water scarcity in armed conflict in the Middle East. Article 11 (1) ICESCR and implicitly the International Bill of Human Rights protect the right to water as it is indispensable for an adequate standard of living. Particularly in Syria water scarcity has aggravated the humanitarian situation. Furthermore, the 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.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R3QszzYzds0>
- A third oral statement expressed concern about the protection of civilians in armed conflict. In inter alia Syria, Yemen, Iraq, Sudan and Myanmar, the most atrocious of crimes against humanity occur before the eyes of the international community that is failing to protect uncountable civilians from persecution, untold suffering and death. After seven years of conflict the suffering of civilians in Syria still persists. The international community has the responsibility to act as united front to prevent atrocity crimes wherever they occur.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yBXeVM0xPIY>

Item 4: Human rights situations that require the Council's attention – 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'

- The oral statement accentuated that the Rohingya refugees will only return to Myanmar if their safety is assured by the international community and if they are no longer subjected to discrimination and persecution. These conditions are not met. Refoulement is an absolute prohibition under International Human Rights and Refugee Law. The repatriation deal will lead to further human rights violations against the Rohingya minority. 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.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TXIXGh0nQaM>

Item 4: Human rights situations that require the Council's attention – Interactive Dialogue with the Commission for Human Rights in South Sudan

- The oral statement highlighted the dire situation in South Sudan and called upon the international community to pay close attention to the numerous violent attacks and various human rights abuses. Regarding the report by the Commission for Human Rights in South Sudan further investigation into root causes and external forces that contribute to the armed conflict are necessary. Further, humanitarian support for South Sudanese victims and refugees should be enhanced.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kdY-rKx5-CM>

Item 4: Human rights situations that require the Council's attention – General Debate

- The first oral statement reminded the Council that the people of Iraq will commemorate 15 years since the illegal invasion by the U.S. which resulted in a total destruction of the

country as well as the loss of civilian lives. Many of the current problems faced by Iraqi citizens can be traced back to the 2003 invasion. Numerous human rights violations occur under the pretext of combating terrorism. After 15 years, it is time that the perpetrators of the crime of aggression are held accountable. The UN must improve their reporting practices on the human rights abuses and provide Iraqi citizens with necessary protections. A Special Rapporteur for Iraq must be appointed.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dmSCAW\\_jP4k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dmSCAW_jP4k)

- A second oral statement addressed the failure of the international community to investigate and prosecute international crimes committed in Iraq since the illegal invasion and occupation 15 years ago. The large-scale systematic violations of international human rights and humanitarian law by various actors would be qualified as international crimes under the Rome Statute. Thus, the situation of Iraq must, in the absence of a credible national judiciary, be referred to the International Criminal Court or an ad-hoc international tribunal. The fulfillment of victims' demands for justice and accountability are vital to any viable solution to achieve peace for the Iraqi people.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6YmOStSWavg>

#### Item 5: Human rights bodies and mechanisms – General Debate

- The first oral statement drew attention to the convoluted and complicated system of the OHCHR which prohibits actors of civil society to participate equally. The continuous reduction of civil society space at the Human Rights Council and the difficulties in the process of registration and accreditation for the Human Rights Council sessions lead to unequal opportunities for civil society organization, especially from developing countries, to attend the Council sessions. It is important to enhance the cooperation between the different bodies.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LB5p0dinhkM>

- Another oral statement pointed to the shrinking space at the UN Human Rights Council for civil society organizations. NGOs face several barriers which keep them from attending the HRC Sessions such as the registration via Internet. Further, more transparency is needed in the NGO oral statement online registration process. Communication between the Council and civil society in all UN languages should be enhanced in order to work towards collective and practical solutions together.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UpMkrJiPCmw>

#### Item 6: Universal Periodic Review – General Debate

- The oral statement called the Council's attention to the lack of adherence to UPR recommendations by Iraq and Israel. Iraq has not shown any action in abolishing the death penalty, ceasing spread torture and ratifying the Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR and the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture. Israel has failed to ratify the aforementioned Protocols and enacted laws further discriminating against the rights of Palestinian citizens.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=1&v=uTNvgnIV-No](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1&v=uTNvgnIV-No)

### Item 7: Human Rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories – General Debate

- The oral statement underlined the grave human rights violations the Palestinian people are confronted with since 1967. It further highlights the recent development that Palestinians in East Jerusalem are arbitrarily deprived of their nationality. This does not only change the demographic composition of the occupied Palestinian territory but affects the Palestinians' basic human rights. The statement urged the Council to investigate whether Israel is committing genocide against the people of Palestine.  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yVeYgf1Io\\_s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yVeYgf1Io_s)

### Item 8: Follow-up to and implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action – General Debate

- The statements reminded the Council firstly, of the importance of the protection of the free press, it being an integral part of the right to freedom of expression. The UN itself should also encourage journalists to publish critical report about the institution.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JD7EswB6O-0>
- The second statement pointed to the importance to support persons with disabilities because they continue to be disproportionately affected by conflict and humanitarian emergencies, especially in Iraq and Palestine.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7-w6orR5FKs>

### Item 9: Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance, follow-up to and implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action – General Debate

- The statements called for the full and effective implementation of the Durban Declaration by all Member States and urge the OHCHR to clarify why funds that are intended for promoting the DDPA have been employed elsewhere contrary to the General Assembly's decision. In the face of an increase in intolerance, hate speech and armed conflicts fueled by racial and ethnical reasons it is more urgent than ever to promote the DDPA.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rBS5RundctU>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SmlEalGoA4I>

### Item 10: Technical assistance and capacity-building – General Debate

- The first oral statement called for enhancing 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.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HGKq9VqmshM>
- The second statement focused on grave situation of health and children, the main victims of the armed conflict in Yemen. Malnutrition and diseases such as diphtheria put hundreds of

children on the verge of death. Humanitarian aid should be provided directly in order to ensure its effectiveness.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cRi1\\_5XO9Nw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cRi1_5XO9Nw)



## 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 condemned 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 emphasizes 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 gave alternatives to detention and looked 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

The US-led invasion in 2003 increased armed violence and worsened the overall 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 concluded 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. GICJ 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. GICJ recommended 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, GICJ 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 alleged 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 looked at steps towards moving forward and the barriers it entails as well as accountability of perpetrators and ensuring justice for victims. It also touched 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 focused on Coalition war crimes which warrant the establishment of an independent international tribunal that can investigate and prosecute such crimes. In an international armed conflict like the initial Iraq War, war crimes include all grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions, including: willful 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 focused 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 highlighted 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. Those rights, namely the right to life and safety, are continuously infringed as a result of 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 recommended 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

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. It discussed the detrimental impact on their right to home, family life, and residency; deprivation of liberty; and the right to health and stressed that the full enjoyment of Palestinian children's human rights will only be possible if Israel's occupation and institutionalized discrimination against Palestinians are brought to an end.



[Link to full Written Statement](#)

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

The statement underlined that the US decision to officially recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel can be viewed as an 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. This move by the US further deprived Palestinians of their inalienable rights. The UN must take all necessary measures to pressure the US to rescind its decision and to finally bring an end to the illegal occupation.

[Link to full Written Statement](#)

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

The statement recalled that numerous UN resolutions reaffirm permanent sovereignty by the Palestinian people over their natural resources, which is an essential element of 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, as well as destruction, forced diversion or seizure of vital infrastructure. Such activities exacerbate the already critical socioeconomic and human rights situation of Palestinians. Natural resources are another tool to dominate and dehumanize Palestinians and to further undermine their prospects for self-determination. Therefore, the statement recommended 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 Refoulement

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 a



repatriation agreement, according to which nearly one million Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh will be repatriated back within two years. This written statement insisted that the repatriation deal between Bangladesh and Myanmar is extremely immature and that it will lead to more human rights violations against the Rohingya minority. The main conditions that must be met before any repatriation plan is implemented are an unconditional end to the violence and guarantees of non-recurrence. Moreover, refugees and international agencies,

including the UN, are excluded from all stages of this repatriation. Rohingya should play a key role in the planning 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 seize humanitarian aid and abduct residents from the camp. It appears that the government is taking positive steps to alleviate the human rights violations committed, such as the recent introduction of registering SPLA soldiers into a biometric system. However, much more needs to be done to bring justice, healing and reconciliation to the victims. This statement investigated the humanitarian situation of children and the youth, testimonies of victims who experienced or fled the conflict, and the environment of impunity with regard to the armed conflict in South



Sudan. Lastly, it called upon all states to provide for technical assistance and capacity building in order to improve the current situation in South Sudan and to take 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 spiraled into a devastating civil war. It is estimated that 400,000 Syrians are reportedly dead or missing since the beginning of the war. According to the United Nations and the Arab League Envoy to Syria, over 5 million Syrians have fled the country and 12 million people are internally displaced. 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

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 need humanitarian assistance, including 4.9 million people, trapped in besieged and hard-to-reach areas. Over half of the population has been forced to leave 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 violations could be qualified as international crimes under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. This statement aimed to call for a response to the Syrian crisis by the international community through the United Nations. It further assessed the situation on the ground and advocates for more effective UN actions to alleviate the suffering of civilians.

[Link to full Written Statement](#)

### Yemen: The Failure to Protect

This statement called for a response to the Yemeni crisis through the United Nations and advocated for more effective UN actions to alleviate the suffering and to increase the protection of civilians. The transition process after the coup d'état in Yemen led to the civil war that continues to these days. Grave violations of the provisions of the 1949 Geneva Conventions by armed groups, Houthis and the Saudi-led armed forces amount to crimes against humanity and war crimes as defined by the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. The perpetrators of



international human rights law and international humanitarian law violations should be brought to justice. Those crimes should be investigated in a prompt, thorough and independent manner.

[Link to full Written Statement](#)

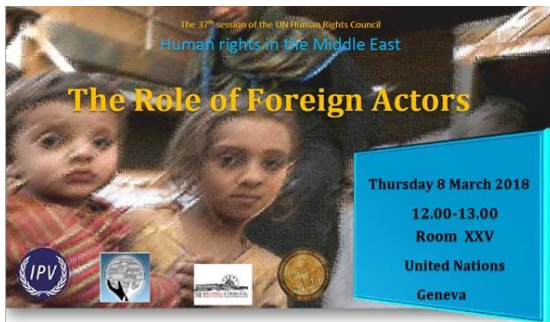
### Yemen: Women and Girls in Conflict

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. The conflict has quickly escalated into a dire humanitarian crisis. During these years of war, the Yemeni population has been witnessing multiple violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, such as enforced displacements, enforced disappearances, abductions, indiscriminate killings and attacks directed against civilians. In this context, the statement considered discrimination against women and the rights to education and healthcare as well as child marriage.

[Link to full Written Statement](#)



### Side events co-organized by GICJ



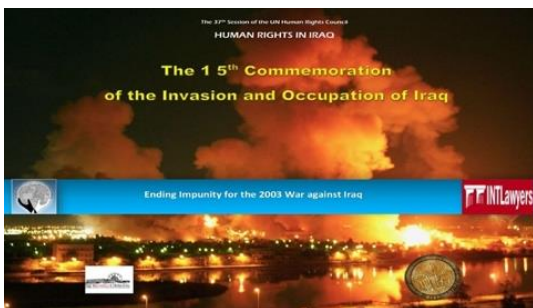
#### "The Role of Foreign Actors"

On 8 March 2018 GICJ co-hosted the side event "The Role of Foreign Actors" with Ius Primi Viri (IPV). It focused on foreign actors who are increasingly transforming the Middle East and the historical fault lines. Simmering conflicts between local communities are exacerbated by outside actors. These State actors pitch segments of the same society against each other, often dividing societies into proxy militias prolonging

the conflict. Three panelists offered their insight into this specific emergency.

Read the full report [here](#) or watch the full side event in [Arabic](#) or [English](#).

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



GICJ co-hosted the second side event "Invasion and Occupation of Iraq" with the International Organisation for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD), International Lawyers.Org and other organizations on 15 March 2018. It commemorated the consequences of the war of aggression which lacked the support of the Security Council. Although millions of lives were lost, even 15 years after the invasion, no one was

held accountable.

Read the full report [here](#) or watch the full side event in [English](#) or [Arabic](#).

### **38<sup>th</sup> Regular Session – 18 June to 6 July 2018**



GICJ participated in the 38<sup>th</sup> session of the Human Rights Council delivering 20 joint oral statements, submitting eight joint written statements and co-organizing two side-events.

The joint oral statements were delivered under items 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 of the agenda of the Human Rights Council as well as during the annual full-day discussion on the human rights of women. They are summarized in the next section and can be watched online.

The joint written statements addressed alarming human rights violations inter alia in Iraq, Myanmar, Yemen and Europe.

Finally, GICJ co-hosted two side events. The first side event “Health of Syrian refugees in Lebanon” focused on the difficulty for Syrian refugees to access health care services and goods. The second side event “Human Rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory: Systemic Violation with Impunity” stressed Israel’s prolonged occupation of the Palestinian territory and aimed to bring to light the numerous human rights violations.

[Read online](#) or [download](#) the full report.



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## **Oral Statements**

### **Annual Full-Day Discussion on the Human Rights of Women – Panel 2: Advancing Women’s Rights in the Economic Sphere through Access and Participation in Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)**

- The oral statement in Panel 2 underlined the significance of fighting for equality in digital spaces. Since ICTs become increasingly important, it is central to advocate for the role of women in this field. The statement raises the concern that the access to the Internet as well as ICTs in many countries is limited and draws the Council’s attention to those women and girls who are in need of basic education to access ICTs.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FhlVAKhlDuY>

### **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**

- The oral statement expressed deep concern about human rights violations in Europe. Increasing numbers of asylum-seekers in south-eastern Europe find themselves trapped, constantly facing the threat of being deported back to their country of origin. While waiting for the outcome of their asylum applications, they have to face very poor living conditions. The statement stressed the increase in racism and xenophobia and called upon the international community to work towards a hospital ambient for asylum-seekers in Europe.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WnUDGQru-OA>

### Item 3: Promotion and Protection of all Human Rights, Civil, Political, Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, including the Right to Development

- In response to the report of the Special Rapporteur the oral statement drew the Council's attention to the acute public health challenges faced by refugees. It addressed specifically Lebanon's policy adopted in 2015, whereby an annual fee of 200 USD must be paid by refugees to maintain their legal status. This stripped more than 60 % of the refugees from their legal status and constitutes, thus, a de facto deprivation of liberty. The statement called upon the Lebanese government to abolish the annual fee and upon the Special Rapporteur to further investigate into health concerns faced by refugees.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9t6qB\\_o5Qlg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9t6qB_o5Qlg)

### Item 3: Promotion and Protection of all Human Rights, Civil, Political, Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, including the Right to Development – General Debate

- The oral statement addressed the vulnerability of children in Yemen. They are affected by violations of international humanitarian law and face several violations of their most basic human rights, such as the rights to water and education. It further stressed the urgency to establish a ceasefire agreement and called upon the parties to respect their human rights and international humanitarian law obligations.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VEwPBR7DkVo>

- The second oral statement addressed the rights of migrants and stated that the failure of states to provide protection for people fleeing from harm constitutes a serious violation of international law. It further called upon the countries to treat migrants humanely and upon the Council to condemn those countries that refuse to offer protection.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TWq4dZMwOfg>

### Item 4: Human Rights situations that require the Council's attention – Interactive Dialogue with the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi ([A/HRC/38/10](#))

- The oral statement expressed regret that Burundi refused to fully cooperate with the CoI. It further stressed the remaining concern regarding the overall humanitarian situation, especially the deadly massacre in May and grave human rights violations including torture, extrajudicial killings and forced detention. Further, the statement asked the CoI for an update on the status of Burundi with the International Criminal Court as well as what measure are being taken to address root causes.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XqynNn4\\_uvw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XqynNn4_uvw)

### Item 4: Human Rights situations that require the Council's attention – Interactive Dialogue with: Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar (oral update)

- The oral statement stressed the repercussions of climate change on the fulfillment of human rights in Myanmar which is one of the three most vulnerable countries in the world in this regard. Those threats include the spread of infectious diseases as well as food and water insecurity. This is an additional impediment to the return of the Rohingya. GICJ urged the

Council to ensure that Myanmar will adopt protection measures regarding climate change and to ensure basic human right for population including all ethnicities.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WFLSLTiEkn8>

#### Item 4: Human Rights situations that require the Council's attention – General Debate

- The oral statement highlighted the consequences of the illegal invasion of Iraq and occupation of 2003. Regarding the recent national and parliamentary elections in Iraq, we noted that they brought along reports of fraud, societal confusion about the electoral results, and acts of intimidation for voters. The statement urged the Council to ensure a fair and transparent electoral process in Iraq.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S6kbDHuWqPw>

- The oral statement criticized the infringement of human rights under the pretext of combating terrorism around the globe. In Iraq specifically, systematic and grave human rights violations are committed against civilians including arbitrary arrest and the retrieval of confessions under torture. The fight against terrorism is tremendously important but it will be impossible to succeed if the governments themselves disregard international human rights standards.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FlYXcEt65nw>

#### Item 5: Human Rights Bodies and Mechanisms – Report of the Working Group on Business and Human Rights ([A/HRC/38/48](#))

- The oral statement welcomed the discussion on an international legally binding agreement and on civil liability in home countries of transnational companies. It stressed that international human rights law must remain above economic and business law. To this end, an international legally binding agreement to end corporate impunity is needed.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O2eb6mCr\\_nI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O2eb6mCr_nI)

#### Item 5: Human Rights Bodies and Mechanisms – General Debate

- The oral statement expressed grave concern about the protection of the right to health as well as the impact of climate change on the realization of human rights around the globe. It further expressed regret regarding the insufficient action by the international community and urged the Council to appoint a Special Rapporteur on human rights and climate change.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MdlvuGoyLds>

#### Item 6: Universal Periodic Review – Consideration of the Universal Periodic Review Outcome of Mali ([A/HRC/38/7](#))

- The oral statement encouraged the continuous action to combat impunity, child labor and women's participation in conflict management. However, there are concerns about allegations of human rights abuses related to the Joint Force of Five. Investigation is needed in this regard as well as the compliance with international law by the military courts.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uFs8zkrDzlc>



#### Item 6: Universal Periodic Review – Consideration of the Universal Periodic Review Outcome of the United Arab Emirates ([A/HRC/38/14](#))

- The oral statement called upon the UAE to ratify the ICCPR and ICESCR and to establish a moratorium on the death penalty, as a step towards the complete abolition of this practice. It particularly emphasized the importance of ensuring the freedom of expression.  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0aXR0QGb\\_54](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0aXR0QGb_54)

#### Item 6: Universal Periodic Review – General Debate

- The oral statement pointed the Council's attention to the absence of Israel and to the human rights violations in Palestine. Moreover, the cooperation of the UAE and its acceptance of most of the recommendations was pointed out.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pkw5h6ofbWU>

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

- The oral statement reminded the international community that Israel has failed to implement all relevant UN resolutions that seek to protect the basic rights of Palestinian people. There has been no other example in recent history where a people had been placed in such an inhumane situation for such an extended period of time. The statement called upon the Council to initiate an investigation into the continuing violations of human rights and whether the State of Israel is committing the international crime of genocide and to pressure the State Israel to comply with international law.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KJXlNbyWB28>
- The second oral statement concerned the relocation of the US embassy from Tel-Aviv to Jerusalem. The practice of the US is a direct violation of several UN resolutions with regard to the City of Jerusalem. Israel further maintains discriminatory systems and systematic abuses of human rights against the Palestinian population. Therefore, the statement urged the UN to ensure protection and to take all necessary measures to finally end the occupation of Palestine.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GrEf2SeTjcg>

#### Item 8: Follow-up and implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action – General Debate

- The oral statement expressed concern about the shrinking NGO space with the UN system and emphasized the importance of civil society in the process of implementing human rights.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CL4TCIE6Syk>

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

- The oral statement urged the Council to reiterate its commitment to the Durban Declaration in its words and deeds. An effective implementation into national legislation of each state is crucial for continuing to combat all forms of discrimination in order to realize human rights for all, without any form of distinction.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=5&v=G57CAXWVCew](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=5&v=G57CAXWVCew)

### Item 10: Technical Assistance and Capacity-Building - Interactive Dialogue with the Independent Expert on the Situation of Human Rights in Central African Republic

- The oral statement particularly denounced incitement to violence which has provoked numerous instances of violence against groups on the basis of their ethnicity and religion. In light of the deteriorating situation in Central African Republic GICJ asked the Independent Expert what specific measures towards combating hate speech would be effective and what assistance the international community could provide towards achieving this result.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QGSEItPXzGE>

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

- The first statement highlighted on the one hand the need for financial and technical assistance in Mali and the Central African Republic. On the other hand, it pointed to the threat of rising sea-levels affecting many Pacific Island states. These states depend on larger countries to implement reforms that might prevent more drastic warming of the Earth's atmosphere.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0KcTX6oTBQY>

- The second oral statement under item 10 addressed the humanitarian crisis in Yemen. Until the peace negotiations reach a definite solution, the efforts for humanitarian assistance need to be increased in order to restore the human rights protection.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=38aFbalQEmo>





## Written Statements

### Children in Yemen: the future of a whole generation is under threat

The written statement focused on the situation of children as one of the most vulnerable categories of the population which is most affected by the ongoing conflict in Yemen. They face both violations of their most basic human rights such as the right to education and health. They are equally directly or indirectly affected by numerous violations of international humanitarian law committed by all parties of the conflict. The statement particularly pointed to the worrisome practices of child marriages and child recruitment.



[Link to full Written Statement](#)

### Cancer: The Public Health Challenge for Syrian Refugees in Lebanon

The statement treated the large influx of refugees in Lebanon which has exacerbated the political, economic and security challenges of the country especially in relation to the health system. It aimed to illustrate some of the main challenges Syrian refugees are facing in terms of accessing to health care, such as no access to legal status and financial hardship.

[Link to full Written Statement](#)

### Death Penalty and Summary Executions in Iraq



The written statement emphasized that the number of executions in Iraq has continued to rise. The death penalty and extrajudicial executions are used as tools of political repression, to eliminate political opponents, and to maintain a reign of terror over the Iraqi population at large under the pretext of combating terrorism.

[Link to full Written Statement](#)

### Freedom of Expression and Association in Iraq

The written statement expressed concern about the violations of freedom of expression and association in Iraq. There are numerous cases of violence used against peaceful protestors and kidnapping of activists and journalists. The climate of impunity surrounding these illegal practices, including attacks against civilian properties and abduction of journalists and human rights defenders, perpetrated by governmental forces must end.

[Link to full Written Statement](#)



### South-Eastern Mediterranean: The incorporation of the EU Asylum Directives in the South-Eastern EU Countries

The joined written statement focused on the incorporation of the EU Asylum Directives in Greece, Italy, Malta and Cyprus, namely the countries which constitute the main points of entry of asylum seekers in Europe. The full and correct incorporation of the Directives in the national legal orders of the South-Eastern EU Member States constitutes an imperative need.

[Link to full Written Statement](#)



### Myanmar: Freedom of the Press should be Urgently Restored

The written statement focused on the issue of freedom of the press in Myanmar. The Myanmar government maintains tight control over the media sector through the use of harsh defamation laws. GICJ submitted that the prosecution and threats against journalists hampers the unveiling of the truth regarding the Rohingya crisis and the transition of Myanmar to democracy. There is an imperative need that freedom of the press is restored immediately and journalists be provided the opportunity to investigate the crimes taking place.

[Link to full Written Statement](#)

### Occupied Palestinian Territory Occupation – No End in Sight

This written statement put emphasis on the ongoing occupation of the Palestinian Territories by the state of Israel as a whole and on the resulting serious human rights situation. It deserves the full attention of the Human Rights Council and the international community at large.

[Link to full Written Statement](#)



### Growing Racism and Xenophobia in Europe

The written statement focused on the rise of racism and xenophobia during the last decade in Europe. Extremists have unjustly put the blame for the economic and political crises on the increasing influx of migrants, especially on refugees. Apart from verbal discrimination and hate speech, race-based violent attacks occur increasingly. Politicians and the media have a crucial part to play in combating racism and xenophobia as emphasized by several existing conventions and resolutions.

[Link to full Written Statement](#)





## Side events co-organized by GICJ

### “Health of Syrian refugees in Lebanon”

On 28 June 2018 GICJ co-organized a side event focused on the current situation and health challenges of Syrian refugees in Lebanon together with the International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD) and International-Lawyers.Org. Three panelists – Kelsi Kriitmaa a Migrant Health Assistance Programme Coordinator at the International Organization for Migration; Dr. Melanie Samson, a Senior Manager in the Capacity Building team at the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC); and Nour Hamada a Pharmacist and Researcher in international public health – offered an insight into the topic.

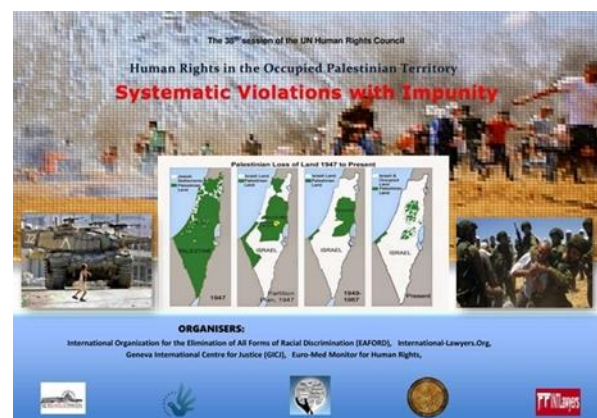
To read the full report: [click here](#).



### “Human Rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory: Systemic Violations with Impunity”

This side event focused on Israel’s prolonged occupation of the Palestinian territory including systematic human rights abuses and illegal settlements. It was co-sponsored by GICJ with International Organisation for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD), International-Lawyers.Org, and Euro-Med Monitor and had the exceptional honor to have the contributions of special guest, Mr. Michael Lynk who was the current Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights Situation in the Palestinian Territory Occupied since 1967 and joined via Skype. The other distinguished were Ms. Aroub Soubh, the official media spokesperson for the Jordanian coalition; Ms. Daniela Donges, a civil peace worker for Palestine and Ms. Eman Zwitter, a human rights researcher.

To read the full report: [click here](#).



## 39<sup>th</sup> Regular Session – 10 September to 28 September 2018



GICJ participated in the 39<sup>th</sup> session of the Human Rights Council delivering 20 joint oral statements, submitting nine joint written statements and co-sponsoring two side events.

The joint oral statements were delivered under items 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 of the agenda of the Human Rights Council. They are summarized in the next section and can be watched online. The joint written statements addressed alarming violations of human rights in, inter alia, South Sudan, Israel, Iraq and Myanmar.

Finally, GICJ co-hosted two side events. The first side event “Toward Peace in Yemen – Human Rights Violations: Root Causes” focused on the humanitarian crisis in Yemen and the action of the UN within the conflict. During the second side event “The Case of Iraq: The Human Rights Council and Mass Human Rights Violations” two former UN officials criticized the overall role of the UN in Iraq and elaborated on what the UN should have done in relation to the human rights violations in Iraq.



### Oral Statements

#### 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

- The joint oral statement welcomed the new High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet and welcomed her focus on the rights of women and children to health care and development. GICJ emphasized that equal protection and resources should be provided for the protection of both civil and political as well as economic and social rights. The statement also called for a greater expert capacity in human rights and climate change in the OHCHR. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O2sn1V15Jn0>
- Another joint oral statement focused particularly on the High Commissioner’s Report on the right to privacy in the digital age emphasizing that a digital personality, which is not necessarily identical to our real personality, enjoys the same freedoms and rights. Therefore, effective national legal frameworks are necessary to protect individuals against unlawful or arbitrary interference from surveillance measures. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oYKFXIJg\\_tY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oYKFXIJg_tY)

#### Item 3: Promotion and Protection of all Human Rights, Civil, Political, Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, including the Right to Development – Interactive Dialogue with Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Slavery

- The oral statement underlined that migrant domestic workers and especially women domestic workers face slavery-like conditions and serious human rights abuses such as sexual violence. It asked the Special Rapporteur to elaborate on whether bi-lateral migrant workers agreements are effective and whether similar bilateral agreements concerning

foreign domestic workers would be possible. The Member State should ensure access to justice and effective remedies for domestic migrant workers.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x2n4fMlqxcI>

### Item 3: Promotion and Protection of all Human Rights, Civil, Political, Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, including the Right to Development – Interactive Dialogue with Special Rapporteur on Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation

- The oral statement underlined the deteriorating availability and quality of water in Basra, Iraq. The invasion and occupation of Iraq destroyed water purifying systems and other infrastructure. Further, corruption within Iraq results in a lack of leadership which was identified as an obstacle to safe drinking water and sanitation by the Special Rapporteur's report.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZWLvtr3SExk>

### Item 3: Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development – General Debate

- The first joint oral statement focused on the dire human rights situation in Iraq fifteen years after the illegal war. The statement stressed in particular the abhorrent situation of detention and prisons in Iraq; hundreds of thousands are arbitrarily detained and the prisons are consequently overcrowded. It is on the international community to address the situation that was initially created by foreign intervention.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S363BkEVqCM>

- The second oral statement during the General Debate addressed the crisis in Yemen and the need for long-term solutions. The danger of not addressing root causes is the inevitable possibility of repeated, similar, and/or related crimes and of perpetrators escaping justice. All states should push the dialogue that identifies, acknowledges, and addresses root causes of the Yemeni conflict.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RHcuUjw9b2o>

### Item 4: Human Rights Situations that Require the Council's Attention – Interactive Dialogue with the Commission of Human Rights in South Sudan

- The joint oral statement drew the Council's attention to the recent development that in 2018, South Sudan tops the list of violence against humanitarian operations for the third year straight. Further, civilians and particularly children face horrible violent attacks and statelessness persists due to administrative challenges and continuous poverty. The statement therefore asked the Commission to explain their way of addressing statelessness and what steps they take to ensure safety of aid workers and reintegration of child soldiers into society.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EVrGW\\_zccnA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EVrGW_zccnA)

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

- The first joint oral statement denounced the human rights situation in Iraq including the wide use of the death penalty by the government and the desperate situation of prisoners in

detention centers. In Basra, as the High Commissioner mentioned in her opening statement, the police completely disregarded the freedom of expression and association by using violence against civilians protesting against water shortages and water pollution.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KThPeCJAW78>

- The second joint oral statement during the General Debate highlighted that the silence of the Council regarding human rights violations in Iraq has exacerbated the situation. Arbitrary arrests, mass executions, and torture take place under the pretext of terrorism. There is neither an effective education system nor a health system nor an independent judiciary. The statement underlined that the UN and many states are responsible for the slow deaths of thousands of Iraqis and that all perpetrators should be brought to justice.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AOSJOgiQPGw>

#### Item 5: Human Rights Bodies and Mechanisms – General Debate, including on report of Intergovernmental Working Group on Rights of Peasants

- The oral statement supported the experts' suggestion of including food sovereignty and the term "Mother Earth" in the Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and emphasized the importance of having a voice in shaping the food supply and agricultural system.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3nK9dpzXJbs>

- The oral statement expressed deep concern about the shrinking civil society space as well as the heavy budget cut decided on earlier in 2018. Meanwhile the total workload of this Council more than doubled. This will lead to less efficiency, less data and a reduction of expertise. Further, GICJ informed about acts of intimidation, personal attacks and other behavior of that nature against NGO representatives by members of the Human Rights Council.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VHGrp3qpYg8>

#### Item 7: Human Rights Situation in Palestine and Other Occupied Arab Territories – Interactive Dialogue with the Commission of Inquiry on Occupied Palestinian Territories

- The joint oral statement points to the clear responsibilities of an occupying power set out in international law which Israel clearly fails to comply with. Confronted with consistent and recurring violations of human rights, it is no surprise that Palestinians subjected to such conditions protest. The Commission should examine the links between the March protest and the ongoing occupation and isolation of Palestinian territory.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PqRi8PwfVu4>

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

- The first oral statement particularly underlined the recent intent of demolition of the village Khan al Ahmar that will result in the forced relocation of its 188 citizens. This action of forced displacement is considered to be a war crime under international law and will further



the illegal expansion of Israel. The Council and the concerned bodies must act to put an end to the Israeli occupation of Palestine.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0DzykHE--sA>

- The second oral statement during the General Debate on Item 7 called upon the international community to dedicate resources to improve the daily situation of Palestinians. As the ICJ has reasoned in its advisory opinion on the wall constructed by Israel, all states are under an obligation not to recognize or assist in the illegal situation resulting from the construction of the wall. Therefore, the international community should work together to end the belligerent occupation of the Palestinian territories.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KhvFaKAPgYg>

#### Item 8: Follow-up to and implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action – General Debate

- The oral statement highlighted the shrinking civil society space giving the example of the limitations of invitations for interested people outside the UN to attend side events. From this session, it has been limited to only five persons. Further, GICJ criticized the accreditation process as being inconvenient particularly for people with limited internet access.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-GIMjUv5XH0>

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

- The first oral statement called for all members of the Council to adopt and implement the DDPA. Urgent action is needed regarding the trend across the globe toward closing borders and blaming migrants and racial minorities for crimes and other social ills.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j\\_UNCEG9JHI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j_UNCEG9JHI)

- The second oral statement emphasized that nowadays political parties and persons in positions of power continue to spread disinformation as well as inaccurate portrayals of migrants and people with different ethnic backgrounds. The intended result is to instill fear of vulnerable groups among the population. GICJ expressed concern that this form of manipulation can lead to the enactment of discriminatory and racist laws.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=npOsQnyLiWc>

#### Item 10: Technical Assistance and Capacity-building – Enhanced Interactive Dialogue on the OHCHR Report on the Democratic Republic of Congo

- The joint oral statement highlighted the serious human rights violations taking place in the context of elections that severely hinder any chance of fair, democratic and transparent process. It underlined that eight countries are indeed involved in DRC's politics and the formation of several armed forces has further hindered the possibility of a democratic, unified and independent state. Human rights training should be provided to security officials

and all necessary assistance for those charged with overseeing the December 2018 elections must be ensured.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sFwoz6JxnmM>

#### Item 10: Technical Assistance and Capacity-building – General Debate

- The first oral statement emphasized the need to address the conflict in Yemen effectively by investigating and recognizing the main root causes of the actual situation and by encouraging and supporting the National Dialogue. The international community must also take actions against all parties that are supporting the Houthis with the supply of arms and weapons.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ckNJXfaZvu8>

- The second oral statement during the General Debate focused on the humanitarian crisis in Yemen as well. It reminded the Council of the resolutions of the Security Council, which have demanded an end to the fighting and outlawed the arming of the Houthis and other destabilizing militia groups. The UN must have a consistent approach towards ending the conflict because that is the only lasting solution for Yemeni civilians.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K4F\\_KaQUOaM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K4F_KaQUOaM)



## Written Statements

### A Look into Modern Day Slavery

Countries have implemented numerous laws to prohibit any forms of slavery practices, however, new forms of contemporary slavery have appeared, and countries have failed to prevent them. Besides traditional slavery, the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery includes “forced labor, debt bondage, serfdom, children working in slavery or slavery-like conditions, domestic servitude, sexual slavery, and servile forms of marriage.”



*Involuntary domestic servitude is a form of bonded labour. [Source: spark.adobe /IMGWU]*

GICJ called on the international community to boycott campaigns against products made by enslaved persons, in particular those produced by children and to strengthen the security with regard to human trafficking. States should implement economic reforms prohibiting any forms of exploitation in the workplace (working hours, minimum age, matching international standards as for the safety and health in the workplace and recruitment) with the focus on child labor and slavery, ensuring transparency in the business environment (including the whole supply chains).

[Link to full written statement](#)

### Aid Workers, Children in Armed Conflict, and Statelessness in South Sudan

For the third year straight, South Sudan tops the global list of violence against humanitarian operations. Since the beginning of the civil war in 2015 over 19,000 children were recruited and used by both warring parties and other government security forces and armed groups. Numerous incidents have been documented and reported of horrible violent attacks that killed and maimed hundreds of children and cases of sexual violence against girls are also on record.

The Human Rights Council should urge the international community to reinforce and enhance security measures towards humanitarian aid operations in South Sudan, especially the most vulnerable and remote areas. Further, GICJ called on the government of South Sudan to release all remaining child soldiers from army ranks and prioritize health and education concerns of those released.

[Link to full Written Statement](#)

### Basic Law: Israel as a Nation-State of the Jewish People

On 19 July 2018, the government of Israel further deepened the concerns of the international community regarding its institutionalized discrimination against national minorities, notably Palestinian and Arab populations within its territory, by adopting a divisive new nation-state law. By nature, this law automatically excludes and discriminates against Palestinians and other minorities. Inter alia, GICJ urged the Security Council as the main promoter and protector of peace to take initiatives along with the General Assembly and other relevant bodies to remedy this decades-long tragedy by condemning the discriminatory measures taken by Israel. Those responsible for enacting discriminatory laws such as the New Nation must be held accountable. Further, GICJ called on the UN to exert all efforts for the revocation of the New Nation-State Law that explicitly mentions Jewish national rights but fails to do the same for minorities.

[Link to full Written Statement](#)

### Burundi – Acts of Violence, Intimidation, and Threats by Imbonerakure

In 2017, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein acknowledged the dangerous threat of the Imbonerakure, the youth wing of the current ruling party CNDD-FD. He strongly condemned their “grotesque rape chants” during rallies in Burundi where they made repeated calls to impregnate or kill party opponents. In 2018, reports have revealed numerous instances where certain groups of people were forced by the Imbonerakure to attend rallies and events of the current ruling party. In order to bring a halt to the abuses committed by the Imbonerakure, GICJ called on the government of Burundi to hold the Imbonerakure accountable and provide them with human rights training. Further, GICJ encouraged the Human Rights Council to support and allocate appropriate bodies and stakeholders towards providing all necessary technical and financial assistance for the EAC in efforts to build solidarity and immediately re-institute talks for dialogue and implementing peaceful measures in Burundi.

[Link to full Written Statement](#)

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

The written statement underlined that the extent of Coalition crimes in Iraq warrants the establishment of an independent international tribunal that can investigate and prosecute such crimes. This tribunal should also investigate whether the crimes committed during the Iraq War amount to genocide under international law. An independent international tribunal for Iraq would provide an opportunity for victims to voice the horrors they witnessed and experienced



and would contribute to restoring and maintaining peace. GICJ thus called on the United Nations to urgently endorse an international tribunal for the prosecution of persons responsible for serious violations of international humanitarian law committed in the territory of Iraq during the initial invasion and the subsequent occupation of Iraq by the United States and other Coalition members. A Special Rapporteur should be appointed to monitor and report on the human rights situation in Iraq.

[Link to full Written Statement.](#)

### Myanmar – The Continued Struggle of Rohingya for Citizenship

One of the most challenging problem for the Rohingya is that of citizenship status. Today, the Rohingya are indeed the biggest community of stateless people in the world. In January 2018, the governments of Bangladesh and Myanmar signed an agreement to allow the physical repatriation of Rohingya refugees that fled to Bangladesh after the violence broke out against the Rohingya in the Rakhine State of Myanmar. In June 2018, the Tripartite agreement between the government of Myanmar, UNHCR, and UNDP is entered into force. Despite this Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and the agreement between Myanmar and Bangladesh, the Rohingya have not returned to Myanmar. The government of Myanmar has failed to dismantle any discriminatory laws, policies and practices against the Rohingya which makes it hard or rather impossible for the refugees to return to their homes in the near future. GICJ urged the government of Myanmar to dismantle the discriminatory laws and to work with the UN Fact-Finding Mission (FFM). Access to Rakhine State should be provided to the High Commissioner, the Special Rapporteur, and the Commission of Inquiry. Furthermore, the Human Rights Council should ensure the implementation of the MoU.



Minors make a majority of Rohingya refugees who have crossed the border to Bangladesh. [Source: undispatch.com UNICEF/Brown]

[Link to full Written Statement](#)

### The Context of the Conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

The humanitarian crisis in the DRC has gravely affected civilians. Violence and human rights abuses continue to intensify and spread. According to the 2017 Annual Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, the fragmentation of armed groups and switching parties and ideologies have contributed to the degradation of the situation of children in the country. Recent reports have also revealed that aid workers and asylum seekers have been the victims of shootings by Congolese soldiers in South Kivu. The DRC government should comply with its obligations under IHL and IHRL and ensure that the training of the National Security Forces is efficient and effective and that it is extended to any authority officer. Inter alia, GICJ urged the Human Rights Council to closely monitor the human rights situation prior to and after the December 2018 elections.

[Link to full Written Statement.](#)

### Truth and Justice with Respect to the Iraq War

This statement focused 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 lack of accountability sets a dangerous precedent.

Since the domestic judicial mechanisms of the United States, other Coalition countries or the victim country (Iraq) may be ineffective in prosecuting or otherwise examining the issue of aggression, there is a need for an alternative and international judicial platform. GICJ recommended that the Human Rights Council should urgently endorse an international independent investigation and an international tribunal to look into these allegations.

[Link to full Written Statement.](#)

### Systematic Grave Violations Against Peaceful Demonstrators in Iraq

On 8 July 2018, the Iraqi population began a series of new demonstrations in the cities of Basra, Wasit, Maysan, Diwaniyah, Samawah, Dhi Qar, Najaf, Karbala and the capital Baghdad.



*Demonstrators gather in Basrah to protest against the government of Iraq. [Source: GICJ]*

Demonstrators expressed their frustration about the lack of jobs and basic services, including water and electricity. Concurrently, there was a very high security alert by government authorities who used threats and intimidation tactics with the help of associated militias, security forces, and party leaders against many of the activists. The freedom of assembly and association as well as the freedom of expression are guaranteed by the ICCPR to which Iraq is a party. Among other recommendations, GICJ urged the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of

the right to freedom of opinion and expression to make a country visit to Iraq.

[Link to full Written Statement.](#)



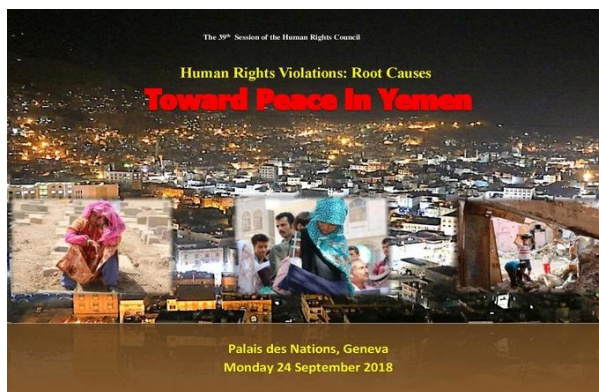


## Side events co-organized by GICJ

### Toward Peace in Yemen – Human Rights Violations: Root Causes

On 24 September 2018, GICJ co-hosted a side event on the root causes of the civil war in Yemen. Despite of the framework established by the UN Security Council the conflict continues. The side event examined the impact of the report of the Independent Experts and how the Security Council resolutions had been implemented by the concerned parties, member states and the UN itself.

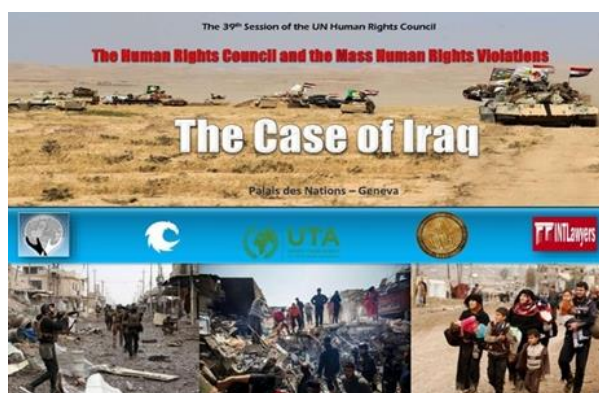
[Click here](#) for the full summary and watch the full side event in [English](#) or [Arabic](#).



### The Case of Iraq: The Human Rights Council and Mass Human Rights Violations

On 25 September 2018, GICJ co-hosted its second side event on the failure of the UN to act in relation with the human rights violations in Iraq. Two former UN officials who served in Iraq Mr. Tahar Boumedra and Mr. John Pace suggested that the whole UN presence in Iraq can be better replaced by appointing a Special Rapporteur. The third panelist Mr. Inder Comar, an expert lawyer focused on accountability in Iraq including how to proceed with the crime of aggression against Iraq.

[Click here](#) for the full summary and watch the full side event in [English](#) or [Arabic](#).





## **28<sup>th</sup> Special Session on Human Rights in Palestine – 18 May 2018**



GICJ participated in the twenty-eighth Special Session of the Human Rights Council on the deteriorating human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories including East Jerusalem, which was held on 18 May 2018.

This special session was convened due to the rapid escalation in violent attacks against Palestinian protesters during the Great March of Return demonstrations and specifically the excessive use of lethal force by Israeli's army against the demonstrators. These demonstrations began on 30 March 2018 and were scheduled to continue until 15 May, the *Nakba*. *Nakba*, Arabic for catastrophe, marks the day that Palestinians were expelled from their land due to the creation of Israel in 1948. In particular, the attacks by Israeli forces on Palestinian protesters were deemed excessive.



The spark that lit the flames of the protest was caused by the United States who chose 14 May to move their embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, cementing their recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital. Although this move has been condemned internationally, and is contrary to several UN resolutions, the United States chose to go ahead with the move.

Demonstrations took place at tent camps around 600-700 meters from the perimeter fence. A few hundred protesters, out of tens of thousands, have approached the boundary, burning tires, throwing rocks, and using kites to fly flaming materials into Israeli territory. According to Israeli sources, protesters have also thrown fire bombs and other explosive devices. Israeli security forces responded with lethal force, using rubber bullets, tear gas (thrown and dropped by drones), and live ammunition.

GICJ joins other non-governmental organizations and the leaders of the international community, including the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the UN Secretary



General, in condemning the use of lethal force by Israeli security forces against mostly unarmed Palestinian protesters. The majority of the international community has condemned Israel's actions, and the High Commissioner for Human Rights has stated that these killings may constitute "willful killings" a grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention. An international, independent and impartial investigation is needed in order to hold those responsible accountable.



### **Oral statements**

In the first joint oral statement, GICJ strongly condemned the attacks on Palestinian protesters by the Israeli occupying forces and urged the Council to launch an independent and transparent enquiry into these attacks. The plight of the Palestinian people is long-standing for several decades and due to Israel's non-compliance with UN resolutions. The statement recalled the

relevant UN resolutions and that moving the US embassy to Jerusalem is contrary to those. GICJ urged:

- The international community to put pressure on Israel to comply with UN resolutions and to ensure the protection of human rights of the Palestinian people including their right to return and the right to association and peaceful assembly.
- The Council to take all necessary measures and action towards ending the illegal occupation and guaranteeing the Palestinian people their right to self-determination.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bUeYKJFt7oM>

In the second oral statement, GICJ condemned the massacre of 14 May 2018 as another example of a war crime committed by Israel against the Palestinian people. Participation in a demonstration does not, in and of itself, constitute an act of hostility or direct endangerment of life, and therefore does not justify the use of life bullets. The shocking lack of accountability for the crimes committed in Palestine is what has allowed and will allow these crimes to continue throughout the decades, unless urgent and definitive action is taken. GICJ therefore called upon:

- The Council to investigate whether Israel is committing genocide against the people of Palestine.
- The international community to spare no efforts to establish a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the region by granting the Palestinian people their right to self-determination and to independence in their State of Palestine.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vXIKw1pS7IQ>

[Read online](#) or [download](#) the full report on the Special Session.

## UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW

### Israel



On 23 January 2018, the third national report of the UPR of Israel was presented by Ambassador Aviva Raz Shechter, Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations, and Ms. Emi Palmor, Director General of the Ministry of Justice.

In her opening remarks, Ambassador Schechter accused the UN Human Rights Council of issuing “biased resolutions” against Israel. Nevertheless, the delegation expressed its strong commitment to UN human rights mechanisms – in spite of its “unique security situation, regional instability and incitement against its right to exist”. She particularly emphasized new initiatives and measures taken with respect to women, the LGBT community and people with disabilities. The situations of Palestinians in the occupied territories was not examined.



During the Interactive Dialogue, the denial of Palestinians’ inalienable rights, prohibition of non-discrimination, arbitrary detention and ill-treatment, freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, and the situation of human rights defenders. Several UN Member States criticized Israel for failing to abide by its international human rights obligations and UN resolutions, particularly by rejecting the applicability of the Geneva Conventions to the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Most Member States further called on

Israel to end the occupation and annexation of Palestinian land, the construction and expansion of Israeli settlements, the demolition of Palestinian homes and structures, and the forcible transfer of Palestinians. Some referred to the need to end the blockade of the Gaza Strip.

In the final remarks, Israel responded to concerns about the shrinking space for civil society and the targeting of human rights defenders by claiming that those working on human rights do not face any restrictions.

On Thursday, 25 January 2018, the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review adopted the Report on Israel that will provide its responses no later than the thirty-eighth session of the Human Rights Council in June 2018.

[Read the full report.](#)

### Saudi Arabia



On 5 November 2018, the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Working Group of the UN Human Rights Council conducted its third periodic review of the human rights situation in Saudi Arabia.

The review began with a presentation of the National Report by Mr. Bandar Al Aiban, President of the Saudi Arabia Human Rights Commission. Mr. Al Aiban highlighted the country’s efforts to combat human trafficking, improve women’s rights and provide support to many developing countries and people in need in other parts of the world. Following the presentation, other States made comments, commendations and criticisms, asked questions, and offered recommendations to Saudi Arabia for human rights improvements. Of particular note were the many concerns expressed about freedom of the press and of expression in the light of the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, the continuing use of male guardianship over women, and labor

conditions of migrants. The Saudi delegation responded to numerous points raised by member countries and offered some closing remarks at the end of the review.

On Friday, 9 November 2018, the UPR Working Group adopted the Report on Saudi Arabia, which contained a total of 258 recommendations. Saudi Arabia was given until the 40<sup>th</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council (March 2019) to consider whether to accept or reject the recommendations.

[Read the full report.](#)

## **China**



On 6 November 2018, the third national report of the UPR of China was presented by Mr. Le Yucheng, China's Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs.

During the presentation of the report, the Vice Minister talked about individual rights and ethnic groups. Freedom of expression and religious belief is protected according to the law. He noted that China has the largest number of internet users in the world at over 800 million, thus demonstrating how freely people can express themselves. China has advanced women's rights, enhanced the protection of children, developed an elderly care system, and created a living allowance system for persons with disabilities. All fifty-five ethnic minority groups are represented at the National People's Congress.

During the Interactive Dialogue, States praised China's effort in reducing poverty levels and enhancing South-South cooperation. However, concern was expressed regarding China's failure to ratify the ICCPR, its continued use of the death penalty and about the treatment of certain minorities especially Muslims, Tibetans and Uyghurs including forced labor and re-education camps.

The Chinese delegation answered to a number of questions, emphasizing its commitment to human rights protection. They restated inter alia that the death penalty is cautiously applied and that some human rights defenders are mislabeled and in fact, common criminals. On 9 November 2018, the UPR Working Group adopted the report on China, which contained a total of 346 recommendations from 150 states. China will consider the recommendations and respond no later than the fortieth session of the Human Rights Council (March 2019).

[Read the full report.](#)

## UN COMMITTEES AND OTHER MEETINGS

### Business and Human Rights

#### Intergovernmental Working Group on TNCs

From 15 to 19 October 2018, the Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group (IGWG) on Transnational Corporations and Other Business Enterprises with Respect to Human Rights held its fourth session in Geneva, Switzerland. The IGWG was created by the Human Rights Council in June 2014 ([A/HRC/RES/26/9](#)). The IGWG's mandate is "to elaborate an international legally binding instrument to regulate, in international human rights law, the activities of transnational corporations and other business enterprises."

The main purpose of this session was to review the text of the first complete draft (zero draft) of a proposed international treaty to regulate the activities of transnational corporations and other business enterprises from a human rights perspective. Based on the discussions during this session, the Chair-Rapporteur will revise the draft and present the revision for additional review at the next session, which is anticipated to take place in October 2019.

#### Forum on Business and Human Rights

Between 26 and 28 November 2018 the United Nations Office in Geneva hosted the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Forum on Business and Human Rights (Forum) with this year's central theme being '*Business respect for human rights – building on what works.*'



The Forum is the world's largest annual gathering on business and human rights with more than 2,000 participants from government, business, community groups and civil society, law firms, investor organizations, UN bodies, national human rights institutions, trade unions, academia and the media. Over three days, participants took part in more than 60 panel discussions on topics that relate to the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, as well as current business-related human rights issues. The Forum is the foremost event to network, share experiences and learn about the latest initiatives to promote corporate respect for human rights.

[Download](#) the full report here.

### Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination



On the occasion of the 97<sup>th</sup> session of the **Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD)** during November 2018, **GICJ** contributed to the review on racial discrimination in Iraq, met with members of the Committee to discuss several areas of concern and provide recommendations on actions Iraq should take to end racial discrimination in accordance with its international obligations. In

a written report to CERD, GICJ provided a background on Iraq and its historical lack of racial discrimination, compared to the current situation. The report explains how Iraq violates its legal obligations in several ways, and in particular:



- Iraq engages directly in racial discrimination.
- Iraq supports racial discrimination by third parties.
- Iraq fails to use “all appropriate means” to end racial discrimination.

Following the review, the Committee issued its concluding observations about Iraq. The observations raised numerous concerns, including several related to issues brought up by GICJ, such as:

- Allegations of human rights violations by Iraqi forces and affiliated militias including summary executions, enforced disappearances, torture, destruction of homes and other properties, and targeting of ethnic groups
- Limited representation of ethnic minorities in public office including the quota system established by the Electoral Act
- Some internally displaced persons, including Arabs, being prevented entry to the Kurdistan Region on the basis of ethnicity
- Lack of data regarding complaints of discrimination, which “may reveal a lack of suitable legislation, poor awareness of the legal remedies available, a lack of trust in the judicial system, a fear of reprisals or a lack of will on the part of the authorities to prosecute the perpetrators of such acts.”

GICJ believes that the Committee’s observations, if seriously addressed by Iraq, would truly reduce the frequency and scope of racial discrimination in Iraq, de-institutionalize the discrimination that now exists, and hold perpetrators accountable, thus resulting in less racial discrimination, reduced impunity, and real justice for victims of discrimination.

[Read online](#) or [download](#) the full GICJ Report to CERD.

## HUMAN RIGHTS TRAINING



In 2018, GICJ organized and carried out three Human Rights Training Courses in order to contribute to the promotion of human rights all around the world. They took place in January, March and November. GICJ workshops are designed to train groups of NGO representatives, human rights activists and university professors. They focus particularly on the functioning of the United Nations human rights system and thereby strengthen the participants' ability to effectively engage with the relevant UN bodies and to gain a deeper understanding of the international human rights mechanisms.

During the workshop, participants get an overview of the history and the mandate of the UN human rights bodies. They receive detailed information on the mandate of the Council, the permanent agenda, the membership, the regular and special sessions and the decision-making process. A particular emphasis is placed on the participation of NGOs in the Council (both before and during the sessions), especially the ways in which they can submit written statements and deliver oral statements.



Participants also gain a practical insight into the human rights mechanisms of the UN, such as by attending official sessions of the Universal Periodic Review or the Human Rights Council. In the closing ceremony each participant receives a certificate in recognition of their successful completion of the workshop on International Human Rights Law and Human Rights Mechanisms.

## GICJ STATEMENTS AND APPEALS



### Protests in Iran and the Violent Response of the Authorities

On 6 January 2018, GICJ published its position on the Iranian authorities' violent response to anti-government demonstrations. What started as protests of the high unemployment rate and the rise in prices of the basic goods in Mashaad, had soon spread across the country. The government response to the protests had turned violent as at least 21 people had died and over 450 people had been arrested in Tehran. Considering the protests had been heavier outside the capital, the number of deaths and arrested people will likely be higher across the country. GICJ expressed its concerns regarding the deaths and the high number of arrests since the beginning of the demonstrations. The government should ensure the protection of the protesters' right to freedom of expression as well as their right to freedom of assembly.

Read the full press release [here](#).

### 27 Years, Waiting on Accountability for the Victims

On 13 February 2018, GICJ published a position on accountability in Iraq emphasizing the numerous crimes the United States committed since 1991. The serious violations of International Humanitarian Law amount to war crimes. GICJ recommends to the OHCHR to use all necessary measures to establish an International Independent Commission. This independent commission should investigate all violations in Iraq since 1991. The UN should establish an international court tasked with the prosecution of international crimes against the Iraqi people during the last three decades.

Read the full position [here](#).

### The 2003 War Against Iraq – 15 Years of Denial

On 9 April 2018, GICJ commemorated the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the start of Iraq's occupation emphasizing that repercussions of all kinds persist until today. The infrastructure has been destroyed, grave human rights violations committed, and the perpetrators of these crimes have still not been held accountable. Accountability is however crucial to achieve justice and peace which is one of the main goals of GICJ.

Read the full position [here](#).

### French manifesto blames anti-Semitism on "Islamist radicalization"

GICJ considered the manifesto published on 22 April 2018 in "Le Parisien – Aujourd'hui en France Dimanche" as incendiary and unnecessarily lays the blame for anti-Semitism at the feet of the Muslim population. GICJ expressed its special concern about the incendiary language which could equate to hate speech. Therefore, GICJ called on France to take every available measure to tackle all manifestations of racist hate speech directed at the Muslim population.

The United Nations should denounce this manifesto and remind France of their obligation to combat hate speech, as enshrined in the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

Read the full press release [here](#).

### **Legacy and celebrating the centenary of Nelson Mandela**

GICJ published on 30 April 2018 a tribute to Nelson Mandela joining the Human Rights Council that, at its 37<sup>th</sup> session, adopted a resolution (37/15) to hold a high-level intersessional discussion celebrating the centenary of Nelson Mandela (27 April 2018).

Read the full article [here](#).

### **Blockade to the Great March of Return**



On 8 May 2018, GICJ reported on the current explosive situation of the protests in Gaza. These demonstrations, called the Great March of Return, had begun on 30 March and would continue until 15 May. On this day, the Palestinians commemorate the Nakba, the day that they had been expelled from their land due to the creation of Israel in 1948. GICJ condemned the use of lethal force by the Israeli security forces against the protesters and called for the

perpetrators to be brought to justice. The international community should use all means to ensure Israel complies with the obligations enshrined in international law including an arms embargo.

Read the full statement [here](#).

### **GICJ denounces Israeli Massacres of Palestinian Protesters**

GICJ strongly condemned the heinous attacks by Israeli forces on Palestinians in Gaza who were gathering on Monday 14 May 2018 as part of a series of demonstrations called “Great March of Return”, which began on 30 March 2018 in Gaza. The aim of the march is to demand the right of return for Palestinian refugees. Reports state that over 50 Palestinian protesters have been killed and nearly 2000 have been injured where Israeli forces allegedly opened fire on the protesters and launched teargas and firebombs. The statement strongly condemned the war crimes committed by Israel and once again called on the international community to do so as well.

Read the full position [here](#).

### **Never Forget: The Right of Return of Palestinian Refugees**

On 15 May 2018, GICJ published a statement on the Palestinian refugee’s right of return emphasizing the recent protests and the historical background. The right of return does not diminish with the passage of time and remains a cornerstone of a future solution. GICJ reiterated its pleas for the rights of Palestinians and the need to take all necessary measures to finally bring an end to the prolonged occupation.

Read the full position [here](#).

## **GICJ welcomes the Adoption of Security Council Resolution 2417 (2018)**

On 24 May 2018, the Security Council unanimously adopted a resolution underlining the link between armed conflict and food security. GICJ welcomed the adoption of this important resolution, especially in the light of the several grave humanitarian crisis and food insecurity situations that have recently been present in multiple countries, such as Iraq, Yemen, Syria and the Central African Republic. The press release called on all Member States to ensure the full implementation of this text and of the previously adopted resolutions. This is of crucial importance to reduce the suffering affecting a large number of civilians, including children and women.

Read the full press release [here](#).

## **GICJ's Opinion on MoU between the UN Agencies and the Government of Myanmar**

On 7 June 2018, GICJ published an opinion on the Memorandum of Understanding signed on 6 June 2018 between UNHCR, UNDP and the Union Republic of Myanmar to “establish a framework for cooperation aimed at creating the conditions conducive to the voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable repatriation of Rohingya refugees to their places of origin or of their choosing.” In the statement, GICJ appreciated the Memorandum of



Understanding between the government of Myanmar and the United Nations agencies as a pivotal step to ensure safe, voluntary, and sustainable return of refugees to their place of origin. The implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding should be ensured so that the Rohingya refugees are protected from further human rights violations and are granted national identification for which they had to wait for decades.

Read the full position [here](#).

## **Statement on the US withdrawal from the Human Rights Council**

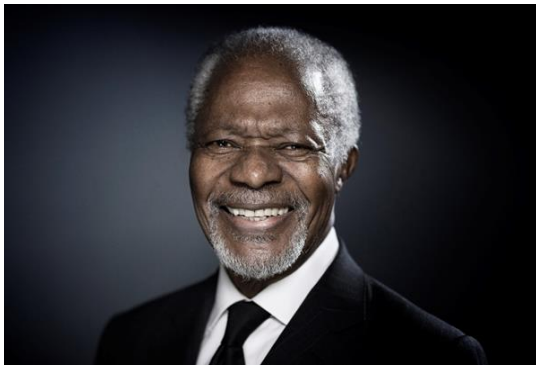
The US Ambassador to the UN, Nikki Haley, announced on 19 June 2018 that the United States will withdraw from the Human Rights Council, calling the UN's top human rights body “a hypocritical and self-serving organization that makes a mockery of human rights” and accusing it of “chronic bias” against Israel. The United States, she said, will no longer participate in the ongoing HRC session or in future sessions, meaning that it will not serve out the remainder of its term in the Council.

GICJ expressed its regret regarding the withdrawal from the UN's human rights body, which was set up to protect and monitor human rights situations around the world.

Read the full position [here](#).



## Tribute to Kofi Annan 1938-2018



On 20 August 2018, a press release was published emphasizing that GICJ is especially saddened by the sudden passing of former United Nations General-Secretary (from 1997 to 2006), Mr. Kofi Annan on 18 August 2018. He was known as one of the most courageous leaders, a champion for human rights, and a leader of peace. Kofi Annan, while soft spoken, was stern in his delivery and words and was known for his compassion, warm spirit, intelligence and dignity and respect for humanity. GICJ commemorates the life and legacy of Kofi Annan by

promoting and protecting human rights, solidarity, and justice and by being a strong voice for civil society at the United Nations.

Read the full press release [here](#).

## Urgent Appeal: The Iraqi Government violates the right of the Iraqi people to life

On 31 August 2018, GICJ called upon the United Nations to urge the Iraqi authorities to take action to save Basra from a serious environmental disaster, particularly, to pressure the government of Iraq to prioritize the ongoing water crisis. The water shortage is due to the high water salinity. This pollution has led to the shutting down of purification systems and is not only killing the people but also the fish. Furthermore, the impact on the agriculture being the second largest economic sector in Iraq is fundamental. This danger for humans as well as for several animal species has led to on-going protests in Basra and all over the country in which the government failed to respect fundamental rights, inter alia the freedom of expression. Indeed, there have been many casualties and arrests of several people as a result of the violent protests. The water pollution is believed to be a consequence of smoke and gas emissions emitted by foreign oil companies. Having to face overcrowded hospitals and a lack of medicine, Iraqis rely on international humanitarian help which at this point fails to meet the needs of the population. Inter alia, GICJ urges:

- The international community to act in any possible way to oblige the government of Iraq to cease any activity that is harming the life of its citizens, namely those conducted by oil companies that need to either stop their operations or take serious measures to eliminate the pollution they are causing.
- The international community to remind the government of Iraq of its duty to fight corruption in all its forms including transparency in the use of funds meant to elevate the quality of life of its citizens. GICJ recalls the government of Iraq that it is a state party of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption.
- The international community to pressure Iran to immediately stop blocking the flows of water shared by both countries via Shatt-al-Arab River, to stop dumping waste in the Iraqi territory and that to take the responsibility and compensate for the damage it has caused in Iraq.

GICJ believes further, that the international community's ignorance and lack of action over the past 15 years towards the imposed sectarian system by the occupying authority is the root cause



of the problems in Iraq. In this regard and as widely asserted by the Iraqi, a permanent solution is only possible if the sectarian system is terminated.

### **Letter: GICJ Calls Attention to Systematic Human Rights Abuses in Iraq**

On 7 September 2018, GICJ sent a letter to Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, congratulating her on her recent appointment to the position of High Commissioner and identifying Iraq as a pressing human rights situation in need of attention.

In spite of being host to massive, grave and systematic human rights violations, Iraq has been forgotten in the fifteen years since its invasion. Innumerable human rights abuses occur daily and spread across the entire country. The abuses include torture, enforced disappearances, arbitrary detention, media intimidation, suppression of peaceful demonstrations, wholesale destruction of critical infrastructure, lack of food and safe water supplies, and an absence of basic services across most of the country.

Iraq produces millions of barrels of oil every day, and yet the government does not have the resources to prevent civilian deaths from starvation, disease and uncontrolled violence. Moreover, many of the grave human rights abuses are systematically perpetrated by the government itself and its so-called security forces and affiliated militias. The government is rife with corruption, and the justice system lacks transparency. Since Iraq is one of the top countries in applying the death penalty, conviction all too often brings with it execution by the government.

GICJ monitors developments in Iraq and frequently raises the issue of human rights in Iraq at the Human Rights Council where it receives scant attention. In addition, GICJ regularly provides alerts regarding human rights violations in Iraq and has sponsored events to educate interested parties about recent developments. Once again, GICJ calls on

- The international community to play its part, in cooperation with High Commissioner Bachelet, in pressuring the Iraqi authorities to respect human rights and Iraq's international commitments.

Since Iraq is usually absent from the list of countries reviewed by the UN human rights bodies, GICJ wants to focus the new High Commissioner's attention on this grave human rights situation.

### **Iran's continuous practice of mass executions without any guarantees of fair trial**

On 12 November 2018, GICJ published a press release informing about the execution of 22 ethnic Arabs from the city of Ahwaz by the Iranian government. GICJ called on the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran to look into the issue at hand. In light of transparency an investigation into the executions should be carried out, including the details of the charges brought against the individuals, the reasons for their detention and the procedures that had led to their executions. Finally, the press release called upon the international community, in particular the UN and its relevant bodies, to put pressure on Iran to stop the practice of capital punishment, to protect all human rights without a distinction of any kind and to comply with its international obligations.

Read the full press release [here](#).

## Appeals on behalf of refugees in Thailand

On 16 November 2018, GICJ published a press release to inform about two letters dated 14 November 2018 in which GICJ appeals to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to help more than 600 refugees who find themselves in a dire situation in Thailand. GICJ had been receiving cries for help from



many Arab refugees who had fled war or massive human rights violations in their countries of origin, namely Iraq, Palestine, Sudan, Syria and Yemen. Among the individuals seeking assistance are men, women and children, many of whom with education and experience in medicine, engineering, journalism, art and sales. Some of them have been staying in Thailand for more than six years in poor living conditions awaiting resettlement.

GICJ called on both United Nations High Commissioners to use any available means to alleviate the situation of refugees in Thailand and to ensure their early release from prisons so that they could live in safety, dignity and peace. Further, GICJ called upon the international community to provide assistance by recourse to all available means.

Read the full press release [here](#).

## The Situation in Iraq – GICJ update for Decision Makers on the Cases of Iraqi refugees

On 19 November 2018, GICJ published an update about the situation in Iraq. Numerous grave human rights violations persist, and the government fails to allocate even the minimal amount of resources necessary to protect civilians from starvation, disease and uncontrolled violence.

Therefore, GICJ appeals to all states that host Iraqi refugees to comply with their international obligations, in particular with the principle of non-refoulement. Upon their return, these people would face persecution, be often subjected to ill-treatment and at times executed, following proceedings that do not encompass guarantees of a fair trial.

Read the full position [here](#).



## Letter: GICJ condemns human rights violations against Sudanese protesters

On 27 December 2018, GICJ informed about a letter sent to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet which condemned serious human rights violations in Sudan.

On 19 December 2018, Sudanese people began protesting against the government because of an economic crisis that has caused a serious rise in prices and shortage of basic goods. At

numerous demonstrations, police and security forces have not only used tear gas and rubber bullets to control crowds but have also fired live ammunition into crowds to disperse them. Although some protests have resulted in property destruction, this does not allow the government to use lethal force. To date, thirty-seven people have died as a result of the government's attacks on protestors. GICJ urgently requested:

- The High Commissioner's intervention with the Sudanese authorities by demanding that they avoid, prevent, and put an end to these human rights violations.
- The High Commissioner for Human Rights should call attention to this serious lack of respect for the basic rights of Sudanese citizens and pressure the government of Sudan to correct these violations immediately.

Read the full position [here](#).

## GICJ SPECIAL REPORTS



### Arriving in EU: Renewed Hope or New Threats?

On 14 June 2018, GICJ published a report about the EU's policy regarding asylum procedures and reception of asylum seekers. It focused particularly on the EU directives 2013/32/EU and 2013/33/EU. The purpose of the directives was to establish common procedures for the reception of applicants for international protection and for granting and withdrawing international protection.

During the report, the legislation implementing the directives of the four Member States Greece, Malta, Cyprus and Italy was examined. Those south-eastern European countries play a key role as first entry points into the EU. Although all four Member States have implemented the directive in their national legislation, legislation differs to a worrying extent.

Particularly concerning the directive 2013/32/EU, the recent Italian legislation raises legitimate concerns. GICJ recommended to the Italian authorities amend their policy and adopt a more open approach to asylum seekers.

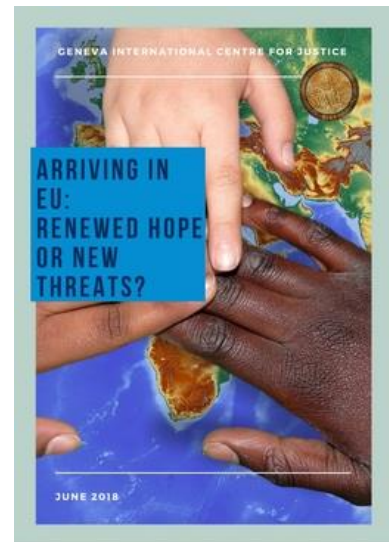
With regard to the directive 2013/33/EU, GICJ noticed that especially the legislation in Greece raises concerns as to firstly, the failure to fully implement the directive into national legislation and secondly, the detention of asylum seekers. For the time being, the transposition of the directives can be claimed to mirror the unequal legislative and policy situation in EU Member States.



It must be understood by all Member States that the present humanitarian crisis, which is taking place so close to Europe's borders, constitutes one of the most serious humanitarian crises in history. The EU was formed not only as a Union for commerce and goods. One of its founding values is the protection of human rights. In order to manage such a huge crisis, the EU Member States must be united and push for cooperation. The full and correct

implementation of the directives in the national legal orders is imperative. Therefore, GICJ urged states to take action in order to ensure full protection of human rights of asylum seekers immediately.

[Read online](#) or [download](#) the full report.



## Working Toward Peace in Yemen: Building on the Security Council Framework

In September 2018, GICJ published a report on the devastating situation in Yemen in order to highlight the need for the UN and the international community to work toward peace and to end the ongoing conflict.

The current conflict in Yemen started as civil unrest in 2011 resulting from disaffection with the Yemeni government. However, the unrest developed into a protracted armed conflict between the Houthi militia and the government after the Houthis stormed the capital in 2014. Since then, Yemeni citizens have been terrorized by the Houthi militia and have become the victims of a humanitarian crisis in their own country.

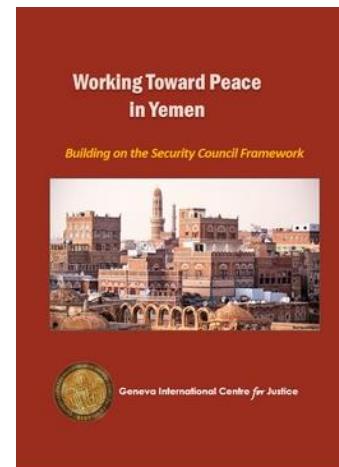
The crisis is so severe that, by the end of 2017, more than 60% of Yemenis were food insecure and 16 million lacked safe drinking water. A 2018 report sponsored by UN Development Programme indicated that almost 75% of the population are surviving on the equivalent of less than \$100 per month, including 21% who have no income and rely entirely on aid.

Recently, Save the Children determined that an additional one million children are at risk of famine, bringing the total now at risk to over five million.

To move forward, the international community needs to follow the clear framework established by the UN Security Council under its Chapter VII powers. This framework has clearly identified the Houthi militia and its allies as the primary aggressors in the conflict. It further requires all members states, and the UN, to isolate the Houthis and assist the legitimate government in pursuing a negotiated, Yemeni-led political solution.

Therefore, the UN needs to work out a plan to end the bloody conflict based on the Security Council framework; a plan that addresses root causes rather than focusing on surface issues and impacts. Without an honest examination of the main causes, whether they be sectarian in nature, economic, or otherwise, there will be no peace and likely no end to the human rights violations resulting from the ongoing conflict.

[Read online](#) or [download](#) the full report.





## International Day Articles 2018



In 2018, GICJ published 32 articles explaining its position on several international issues recognized by UN International Days. To read the reports click on the International Day:

<b>27 January</b>	International Holocaust Remembrance Day	
<b>6 February</b>	International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation	
<b>20 February</b>	World Day of Social Justice	
<b>1 March</b>	Zero Discrimination Day	
<b>8 March</b>	International Women's Day	
<b>21 March</b>	International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination	
<b>22 March</b>	World Water Day	
<b>24 March</b>	International Day for the Right to the Truth Concerning Gross Human Rights Violations and for the Dignity of Victims	
<b>25 March</b>	International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and Transatlantic Slave Trade	
<b>7 April</b>	International Day of Reflection on the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda	

<b>29 April</b>	Day of Remembrance for all victims of chemical warfare	
<b>3 May</b>	World Press Freedom Day	
<b>21 May</b>	World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development	
<b>29 May</b>	International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers	
<b>4 June</b>	International Day for Innocent Children Victims of Aggression	
<b>12 June</b>	World Day Against Child Labor	
<b>20 June</b>	World Refugee Day	
<b>26 June</b>	International Day in Support of Victims of Torture	
<b>18 July</b>	Nelson Mandela International Day	
<b>30 August</b>	International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances	
<b>2 November</b>	International Day to End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists	

<b>20 November</b>	Universal Children's Day	
<b>25 November</b>	International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women	
<b>29 November</b>	International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People	
<b>2 December</b>	International Day for the Abolition of Slavery	
<b>3 December</b>	International Day of Persons with Disabilities	
<b>9 December</b>	International Anti-Corruption Day	
<b>9 December</b>	International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and of the Prevention of this Crime	
<b>10 December</b>	Human Rights Day	
<b>18 December</b>	World Arabic Language Day	
<b>18 December</b>	International Migrants Day	
<b>20 December</b>	International Human Solidarity Day	

## **Geneva International Centre for Justice**

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

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 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 that 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 evidence 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.

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/GIC4J>  
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**Website:** [www.gicj.org](http://www.gicj.org)