



Geneva International Centre *for* Justice

# **2019 Annual Report**



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ) is pleased to present its annual report for 2019. In these pages, you will find GICJ's wide range of activities and the various issues that we have reported on.

The year 2019 was very eventful for us. As is the case every year, GICJ participated in each of the three regular sessions of the Human Rights Council (HRC) and the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). We organized side events, human rights training courses, and monitored important events in many regions including Iraq, Iran, and Palestine. GICJ attended and participated in a number of other meetings to follow recent events, maintained relationships with the UN human rights mechanisms, and coordinated activities with other NGOs operating in the area of Human Rights.

We hope you find this report informative and helpful. If you have any questions or comments about this report or any of GICJ's activities, we would be happy to hear 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.

# 2019 by the Numbers

Human  
Rights  
Council



4 Side Events



61  
Oral Statements



30  
Written Statements



6 Training  
Sessions

Other  
Activities



5  
Appeals



23  
International Day  
Articles



3  
Special Reports

## 2. UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

### 40th Session of the UN Human Rights Council



#### Oral statements



Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ) delivered 19 joint oral statements with International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD), International-Lawyers.org, and Union of Arab Jurists during the 40<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Human Rights Council. Several thematic issues and country-specific situations were addressed, including recommendations in most cases, under the various Agenda Items of the Council.

Agenda Items:

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

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

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

Item 5: Human rights bodies and mechanisms

Item 6: Universal periodic review

Item 7: Human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories

Item 8: Follow-up to and implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action

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

Item 10: Technical assistance and capacity-building

#### THEMATIC ISSUES

##### *Environment*

GICJ and International-Lawyers.org delivered two joint statements concerning the environment under Agenda Item 3 (Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development). During the Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the

Environment, the issue of the most marginalised and affected victims of air pollution were raised. During the General Debate, attention was brought to the issue of climate change.

**Item 3:** *Clustered Interactive Dialogue with Special Rapporteur on the issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment*

GICJ stated that political will and necessary resources for effective implementation are lacking. Furthermore, states in Europe and America have failed to provide adequate support to less wealthy states to combat climate change. We must focus on developing countries and find relevant solutions that will not hinder upon their economic growth. Poor air quality is the largest global health risk, and 92% of pollution-related deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries.

[Link to video](#)

**Item 3: General Debate**

International-Lawyers and Geneva International Centre for Justice regret that states have still failed to take adequate action on climate change in this Council and in the international forums. It is already too late to prevent much of the damage to life and property according to climate change experts, which is why we need action to ensure compensation to injured people. We need an International Court of Climate Justice, to hold states that have failed to take action responsible for all their internationally wrongful acts. This situation needs urgent address. All stakeholders must be included in the solution to tackle the challenges of climate change.

[Link to video](#)

***Peace and security***

GICJ strongly condemns the use of force of any kind, including as a means to end conflict and achieve peace. This stance was expressed jointly with International-Lawyers.org during the General Debate under Agenda Item 2.

**Item 2 — HC/SG Country Reports & General Debate**

It is imperative that the United Nations address humanitarian crises through peaceful means and without military intervention. The use of force is not a way to resolve international disputes. The UN will not survive if it cannot contribute to peacefully

resolving conflicts, without the use of force. Moreover, the use of force inevitably leads to violations of human rights.

The tragedy in Iraq is a prime example. Iraq was among the most developed states in the region, until it was destroyed by the illegal use of force, allegedly under UN cover, by states seeking to impose their will. Yemen has seen the same fate, and now some Member States are contemplating the use of force against Venezuela. The UN may contribute to humanitarian assistance and peaceful means of resolution, but never the use of force.

[Link to video](#)

### ***Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related forms of intolerance***

Hate speech can and has led to some of the worst atrocities and crimes in human history. Regrettably, there has been a rise in hate speech in several forms. GICJ jointly addressed this worrying trend under Agenda Item 9 and also condemned the cowardly terrorist attacks that took place only days before the discussion.

#### **Item 9: General Debate**

GICJ highlighted the report's recommendation that states focus on education and awareness of prejudices that may develop into racism, breed hateful speech, and provoke extreme violence. We emphasize that these prejudices may be conscious or unconscious, and recognition of both prerequisites of intolerant behaviour is essential.

International-Lawyers.org and the Geneva International Centre for Justice strongly believe racism, xenophobia, and the hate speech that drives these phenomena, are systemic problems that need systemic solutions. GICJ urged the Council to redouble all necessary efforts to eliminate racism, quash violence-inciting hate speech on every level, as well as promote justice for all survivors of hate-based violence.

[Link to video](#)

#### **Item 9: General Debate**

Hate speech by political representatives have an important impact on society, since they give legitimacy to discriminatory behaviours. It also contributes to widespread xenophobia and forms of intolerance that play a crucial role in the increasing commission of hate crimes around the world. EAFORD and Geneva International Centre for Justice believe that it is important that states commit themselves to the enactment of domestic



legislation aimed at defining and criminalizing racist and xenophobic hate speech in accordance with international standards.

#### **Item 9: General Debate**

GICJ drew the attention of the Council to the growing wave of hate speech all around the globe. Hate speech as an indirect form of racial discrimination must be condemned in every circumstance. Therefore, EAFORD and GICJ appealed to all nations and individuals to combat the rising tide of anti-Islamic, anti-migrant, anti-other sentiment.

[Link to video](#)

### **COUNTRY-SPECIFIC ISSUES**

#### ***Central African Republic***

While commending the Central African Republic (CAR) for its developments amidst an armed crisis, GICJ and EAFORD jointly raised concerns about accountability and justice for victims of serious human rights abuses in CAR. This issue concern was raised during CAR's Outcome Review of the UPR.

#### **Item 6: Consideration of the UPR on Central African Republic**

GICJ expressed its concern about perpetrators who continue to enjoy impunity for crimes of sexual and gender-based violence, as well as justice for the victims of such crimes. GICJ strongly urged the government of CAR to strengthen its justice system and to speed progress in opening further investigations into such crimes, with the cooperation of the commission of inquiry and the International Criminal Court. Peace, stability, and security can only be achieved by realising the full rights and fundamental freedoms of women and girls.

[Link to video](#)

#### ***China and Myanmar***

GICJ and EAFORD jointly addressed the various barriers in China and Myanmar that prevent victims of human rights abuses from achieving justice and enjoying fundamental freedoms. We called for urgent action to be taken to address serious human rights situations in China and Myanmar. The situation of the Uighur people of Xinjiang province is a case in point; with millions of Muslims subjected to intense monitoring of personal activities, intimidation, and involuntary detention and torture in so-called

“vocational education centres.” The Chinese government has gone to great lengths to convince the world that human rights are protected in Xinjiang. GICJ called on the Council to continue to investigate and address these situations. GICJ also urged China and Myanmar to allow UN special procedures to visit their countries.

[Link to video](#)

### *Jordan*

GICJ jointly addressed a number of pertinent issues that need immediate attention in order to improve the human rights situation in Jordan. Namely, these were basic fundamental freedoms, the rights of women, and the right to participate in public and political life.

#### **Item 6: UPR**

EAFORD and Geneva International Centre for Justice encouraged the Jordanian Government to continue working on the effective implementation of the Comprehensive National Human Rights Plan until 2025, strengthen programmes aimed at building capacity for legal professionals in application of the standards of international organizations relating to women’s rights, and to provide shelter services and protection to vulnerable women threatened with honour crimes.

### *Iran*

Execution of minors and restrictions of freedom of association and peaceful assembly in Iran are serious human rights violations that GICJ jointly raised during the General Debate under Item 2.

#### **Item 2: General Debate**

GICJ expressed its concern about the execution of minors, discrimination, protests, and destabilizing actions taken by Iran throughout the region. EAFORD and Geneva International Centre for Justice called on Iran to end the practice of executing minors and to address the legitimate needs of its people, including the Arab population of Al Ahwaz. In addition, GICJ appealed to Iran to work toward peace in the region by ending its support of militias in Iraq and Yemen.

### *Iraq*

GICJ and Union of Arab Jurists jointly called attention to the disregard of the basic human rights of thousands of Iraqis. Additionally, GICJ addressed the root causes to the illegal 2003 Invasion of Iraq that has yet to be accounted for. Iraq is at the forefront of countries using the death penalty, but it is at the bottom of the list in development indicators, especially education and health. It is back to the top again in the level of corruption, allowing for the abuse of Iraqis' basic human rights. Moreover, elections are neither fair nor independent. GICJ urged the Council to encourage all special mandate holders to urgently visit Iraq, as well as create the mandate for a Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Iraq, who would monitor and report on the situation to the Council. GICJ also urged the Council to listen to the Iraqi people, who demand an end to the human rights tragedy that has lasted for 16 years.

[Link to video](#)

#### **Item 4 — General Debate**

The joint statement drew the Council's attention on the human rights situation in Iraq where massive, grave, and systematic violations keep occurring daily since the US invasion of 2003. Such violations include, among others, torture, enforced disappearances, arbitrary detention, media intimidation, suppression of peaceful demonstrations, and extrajudicial killings. We encouraged the idea of creating a mandate for a Special Rapporteur for Iraq.

[Link to video](#)

#### ***Mali***

GICJ jointly expressed concern over on-going impunity in Mali with regards to various human rights issues, and recommended the creation of an independent and effective criminal justice system.

The precondition for effectively holding perpetrators accountable is legislation prohibiting all serious human rights violations. GICJ therefore supported the Independent Expert in urging Mali to enact a law which would incriminate all gender-based violence including female genital mutilation. Where there is no national legislation incriminating the harmful practice, all efforts towards banning FGM will remain rather futile.

EAFFORD and GICJ called upon all states to support Mali in the protection of the civilian population and contribute to the fight against impunity by not only providing

financial resources, but also helping to build capacity for the creation of an independent and effective criminal justice system.

[Link to video](#)

### *Occupied Palestinian Territories*

On the human rights situation in occupied Palestine, GICJ jointly raised the issue of Palestinians being denied enjoyment of their own natural resources as well as the issue of environmental pollution. Another statement brought to attention the violation of the right of freedom of movement and the creation of the “Apartheid Road”. GICJ also jointly raised concern about the targeting of protected groups, particularly during the “Great March” protests.

#### **Item 7 – Interactive Dialogue with Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967**

[Link to video](#)

The occupying power is responsible for preserving local civic life and respecting the legal rights of all civilians in the territory. This responsibility has been clearly violated in the occupied Palestinian territories with regard to natural resources. The occupation arrangement put in place by Israel effectively prevents Palestinians from obtaining legal redress for these wrongful acts against them and their resources, or for the resulting health and financial harm they cause.

EAFORD and Geneva International Centre for Justice called on Israel and the international community to enforce international humanitarian law by ensuring that Palestinian civilians have effective access to justice to protect their lives, their communities, and their country.

[Link to video](#)

#### **Item 7: General Debate**

GICJ drew the attention of the Council to the discriminatory and inhumane segregation system the Palestinian people are facing. We maintain that it constitutes the crime of Apartheid according to the Rome Statute.

GICJ argued that Israel’s decision not to renew the mandate of Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH) aims at conferring a powerful discretion both on settlers and the IDF to act against Palestinians’ human rights. It therefore seeks to increase

the limitations imposed on the daily life of Palestinians, pushing them to abandon the city of Hebron, and thereby helping Israel's annexation goals.

GICJ called on the Council to take all the necessary actions to end the discrimination and segregation of Palestinians, and to support the right of self-determination of the Palestinian people.

[Link to video](#)

### *Sudan*

#### Interactive Dialogue with the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan (A/HRC/40/69)

Grave human rights violations and abuses that amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity continue to ravage the country, tear apart communities, and worse still, perpetrators at all levels continue to enjoy impunity.

EAFORD and Geneva International Centre for Justice remain deeply concerned about atrocities of targeted sexual and gender-based violence and justice for the victims. As in the Commission's Report, we welcomed the creation of a specialised sexual and gender-based violence court, notwithstanding its functionality and effectiveness, which remain of deep concern.

GICJ urged the government of South Sudan to advance its enhanced and steadfast communication with UN Special Procedures and the international community toward reparations and justice for victims. Additionally, GICJ also recommended that all parties involved in advancing peace efforts take all necessary measures to promote close cooperation and positive engagement with civil society organisations, and the full and effective participation of women and victims of human rights abuses.

[Link to video](#)

### *Syrian Arab Republic*

In addressing peaceful solutions and paths toward peace in Syria, GICJ and EAFORD strongly recommended combating impunity and making good use of universal jurisdiction in collaboration with other states and NGOs.

#### **Item 3: General Debate**

Since the beginning of the war many civilians in the Syrian Arab Republic have had to face the most atrocious crimes: they have been killed, injured, displaced and their

property destroyed. Whole families have disappeared. Numerous civilians have been arbitrarily detained and systematically tortured. GICJ highlighted the responsibility of each state to hold accountable the perpetrators of these borderless crimes. The joint statement underlined that accountability is a precondition for sustainable peace in Syria and other ongoing conflicts in the Middle East, and must be the foundation of any peaceful solution.

[Link to video](#)

### *Venezuela*

The joined statement expressed concern about the growing calls for military intervention in Venezuela. Any military intervention can only worsen the current situation. Likewise, sanctions will lead to the starvation of the population and to collapse of the health system. GICJ agreed with the Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of the unilateral coercive measures, and that dialogue should be the foundation of peaceful settlement of disputes. The international community should engage in constructive dialogue with the Government of Venezuela to find solutions to the very real challenges being faced.

[Link to video](#)

## **Written Statements**

Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ) submitted 12 joint written statements with other NGOs prior to the 40th Regular Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC), eleven of which were published on the its website. The statements covered several specific country situations and included recommendations to the Council, Member States, and other relevant bodies and stakeholders.



### *Central African Republic*

#### *Attacks on Aid Workers and Situation of Children in Central African Republic*

Central African Republic (CAR) is a resource-rich country but poor in economic and development standards. Since December 2013, armed groups in CAR have been fighting over the resource-rich lands. Mostly innocent civilians have been targeted however, as well as basic facilities including sites where displaced people take shelter. For the year 2018, 396 incidents involving humanitarian workers were recorded, which was a 17.5% increase from the previous year. In early January 2019, violence broke out in Bambari,

and violence and insecurity in Bakouma (Mboumou prefecture) caused 6,183 displacements. The security situation has also worsened in Alindao and other parts of the country.

Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ) recommended the Human Rights Council:

- Create a fund to support technical assistance and capacity building for the judiciary system and schools.
- Provide human rights training and education to government authorities and security forces

## *Iraq*

### Discrimination in Iraq

It is well-established that discrimination of any kind is prohibited under international human rights law. However, Iraq's government creates discriminatory policies and engages in acts of discrimination. A key law used to engage in discriminatory behaviour is Iraq's Anti-Terrorism Law (Law No. 13 of 2005),



which is used to justify wide-spread and ethnically- and religiously-motivated occurrences of arbitrary arrests, executions, enforced disappearances and torture.

After years of discriminatory policies, including a system of sectarian representation in the government, the anti-government demonstrations occurring around the country since 2011 have made it clear that most Iraqis are fed up. Therefore, Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ) recommended that the government of Iraq:

- Create a law against hate speech by public officials
- Ban militias
- Seek justice and remedies for victims of discrimination

### Mosul – No Plan for Reconstruction or Reparations

It has been a year and a half since ISIS was driven from Mosul, yet much of the city's infrastructure and buildings remain in shambles and civilians are still in desperate need

of humanitarian assistance. Everyone who fled during the occupation of ISIS is now facing harassment and humiliation from the Iraqi Security Forces and its affiliated militias when trying to return to their homes. Tens of thousands of displaced people are residing in camps just outside the city while others are struggling to rebuild their homes and businesses despite ongoing security concerns.

GICJ recommended that:

- The UN should establish an independent international commission of inquiry.
- Iraq should join the International Criminal Court to assist with prosecution of human rights violations.
- Iraqi government should ensure protection and support to victims of human rights violations in Mosul and should dedicate resources to begin rebuilding the city.



### Threats to Human Rights Defenders in Iraq

Thanks to the efforts of human rights defenders, governments are held accountable and victims of human rights violations can receive justice. However, in Iraq these defenders put themselves in harm's way every day through the simple act of advocating for human rights. Protest leaders, such as Mehdi Salah and Ghassan Abdul Hussein were detained, interrogated, and beaten for their role in organizing and participating in demonstrations against the deplorable conditions that now exist across Iraq. Human rights organizer Souad Al-Ali and lawyer Jabbar Abdul Kareem, both active in defending the rights of protesters, were killed in broad daylight.

Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ) recommended the government of Iraq:

- Cease punitive actions against human rights defenders.
- Hold perpetrators accountable for violating the rights of human rights defenders.
- Disband all militias

## *Myanmar*

*Continuing Violence, Impunity and Discrimination of Minorities (unpublished)*



The dramatic nightmare lived by Rohingyas and other persecuted ethnic minorities in Myanmar seems very far from a conclusion. Not a single shred of effort seems to have been deployed by the government of Myanmar to grant citizenship, fundamental rights, and liberties to the Rohingya minority, which has been living in its territory for centuries. And so, the decade-long discrimination continues unabated.



Given the political instability in Myanmar and the risks of impunity for persisting discrimination and atrocities perpetrated against its minorities, Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ), among its recommendations, urged the government of Myanmar to:

- Allow immediate and unimpeded humanitarian access, fully cooperate with international community.
- Create adequate conditions for the safe return of Rohingyas and grant them full citizenship, and full enjoyment of fundamental rights and liberties.
- Investigate and punish the perpetrators of sexual violence committed against Muslim women and girls living in Rakhine, Kachin and Shan states, and put psychological and medical support at the disposal of women and girls who have suffered sexual violence.

Furthermore, GICJ called upon the members of the Security Council to immediately refer the case to the International Criminal Court.

## *Palestine*

### *Human Rights Situation in Palestine and Other Occupied Arab Territories*

The Question of Palestine is inextricably linked to the history of the United Nations and is one of the longest unresolved issues on the UN agenda. Countless human rights violations have occurred since the onset of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. As Israel marks its 70 years of independence, there are some 5.4 million Palestinians living as refugees, the vast majority of whom are descendants of the people who fled or were expelled from their homes during the 1948 war that followed Israel's creation.



GICJ issued the following recommendations:

- That the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights ensures protection and support for health workers in war zones and to improve access to health services; and
- All governments ensure the effective integration of housing policy and social protection with core human rights obligations

### The Deteriorating Situation in Gaza

The current situation in the Gaza Strip requires an immediate response from the international community, in order to put an end to the escalation of violence perpetrated by Israeli soldiers against Palestinian demonstrators. During the demonstrations by Palestinians in Gaza, which are part of the Great March of Return, the Israel Defence Force employed unjustified violence and excessive force against unarmed demonstrators near the border. The protests are legitimately calling for the implementation of Palestinians' right of return and for the end of the siege of Gaza, which began in 2007.

In some of its recommendations Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ), called on:

- The international community to strongly condemn the indiscriminate use of lethal force on unarmed demonstrators by Israeli forces
- UN bodies to promote the respect of the fundamental rights to freedom of assembly and freedom of expression of Palestinian people
- The international community to take appropriate measures against the impunity of Israeli soldiers regarding actions that clearly violate international law.
- All the UN bodies, especially those competent on health issues, to make an unequivocal commitment for the protection of medical infrastructure in Gaza in order to ensure the fulfilment of the Palestinians' right to health and medical care.

### Israel's Segregation System against Palestinians

The policies and practices of racial oppression and segregation faced by the Palestinian people are due to a complex Israeli occupation system that includes separation walls, checkpoints, as well as separate roads and settlements. The current situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories perpetrated by Israel constitutes the crime of apartheid as defined in the Rome Statute.

In this context Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ) recommended, among others, that:

- The international community endeavour to end the Palestinian people's segregation carried out through different measures by Israel's regime.
- The international community take a clear position against the decision of Israel to end TIPH and endorse the introduction of a permanent international presence, ensuring the protection of Palestinian civilians in the West Bank against the abuses by Israeli authorities.
- All the Member States satisfy their legal duty under international law to take proper action in order to prevent segregation policies which might constitute the crime of apartheid

#### East Jerusalem: The Eviction of Palestinians from Their Land

In East Jerusalem, Israel's attempts to completely evict Palestinians from the Holy City have worsened, especially since the decision by US President Trump to relocate his country's embassy to Jerusalem in December 2017. Last



December witnessed several cases of arbitrary arrests, house demolitions and attacks on civilians, especially in the Al-Aqsa Mosque area.

In this context, Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ) recommended, among others, that:

- All concerned UN bodies implement UN General Assembly Resolution 181 concerning the status of Jerusalem and pressure the government of Israel to take responsibility for the protection of Jerusalem and its Palestinian population as residents of an occupied territory

- The international community put pressure on Israeli occupation forces to stop the media campaign against Palestinian activists and young men, and stop the policy of house raids and searches, including the intimidation of women and children
- The Human Rights Council put pressure on Israel to stop the policy of racial discrimination against Palestinians in interrogation, prosecution, and trial procedures
- The international community press for the abolition of the policy of administrative detention
- The international community dissuade the American administration from its arbitrary decision to relocate its embassy to Jerusalem

### *Sudan*

#### [Attacks against Freedom of Association and Assembly in the Republic of Sudan](#)

On 19 December 2018, the Sudanese population began protesting the actions taken by the government of Sudan concerning the country's economic crisis. Government policies had led to a significant increase in prices and a shortage of basic services. After several days of protests, the demands of the protestors escalated beyond economic issues and toward seeking a change in government by demanding that President Omar Al-Bashir –who had been the president of the Republic of Sudan for 29 years– step down. As soon as the protests escalated to country/wide demonstrations, police and security forces used rubber bullets, tear gas, and live ammunition to disperse the crowds.

Among its recommendations, Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ) urged the government of the Republic of Sudan to:

- Remove all national laws that restrict the freedom to associate and peacefully assemble
- Put in place measures, policies, and laws that promote and protect Sudanese citizen's right to freedom of association and assembly



## *Tunisia*

### Democratic Transition in Tunisia: Progress and Challenges

In recent years, the government of Tunisia has been pushing for progress toward democratic transition in the country. However, some obstacles continue to stand in the way of democracy and the full enjoyment of human rights. Concerns remain about the prolonged state of emergency, restrictions on peaceful demonstrations, the deradicalization of foreign fighters, the population's frustration over unemployment and economic stagnation, as well as the sense of abandonment among young people, and in disadvantaged areas.

Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ) encouraged Tunisia to pursue the implementation of institutional reforms and new legislation in full compliance with international human rights standards and, among others, recommended that Tunisia:

- Extend the mandate of the Truth and Dignity Commission and provide it with enough resources to thoroughly investigate all the complaints receives
- Elaborate a strategic plan to deal with the deradicalization of foreign fighters and take measure to fight against radicalization in overcrowded prisons
- Initiate and maintain a social dialogue with civil society on social grievances and economic concerns, and develop social and economic policies in favour of the most disadvantaged areas of the country

## *Yemen*

### Situation in Yemen

Yemen is a country in crisis. Most Yemenis – tens of millions of people – face destitution, famine, and cholera, because of a civil war that has been precipitated and prolonged by the political ambitions of the Houthi militia. The best way to bring an end to the violence and instability in Yemen, and give Yemenis a chance to create a long-term political resolution, is to work within the legal framework established by the Security Council.



The international community has a responsibility to do more in Yemen than just document human rights violations and send humanitarian aid. We need to end the war. The key to ending the war is to understand and address its primary causes using the framework of the Security Council.

Therefore, Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ) recommended the following:

- All states comply with the Security Council's travel, finance and military supply embargo against the Houthi militia and its allies
- All states support the legitimate government of Yemen in working toward a peaceful political solution to the crisis
- All states and UN entities avoid actions that may prolong the conflict

## GICJ's Co-Sponsored Side Events

### *Environmental Justice: Exploitation of Palestinian Natural Resources*

On 19 March 2019, Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ) and partner organizations hosted an event on the exploitation of Palestinian natural resources by Israel. This event featured two prominent experts on the nature of the issue and the prospects of



addressing the problem at the international level: Mr. Michael Lynk, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, and Mr. Alfred de Zayas, Former United Nations Independent Expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order.



[Link to article](#)



## **41st Regular Session of the UN Human Rights Council**

With a team of ten members and two guests, Geneva International Centre for Justice actively participated in the 41st session of the Human Rights Council. Prior to the session, GICJ submitted eight written statements highlighting different aspects of the human rights situation in four countries. During the Council session, GICJ delivered 21 oral statements, organized one side event, conducted a one-week human rights training workshop, monitored the discussion on several Council resolutions, and attended numerous side events to stay informed on a variety of issues. The sections that follow contain GICJ's key contributions during the session.

### Human Rights Council Agenda Items:

- 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.
- Item 3: Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development.
- Item 4: Human rights situations that require the Council's attention.
- Item 5: Human rights bodies and mechanisms.
- Item 6: Universal periodic review.
- Item 7: Human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories.
- Item 8: Follow-up to and implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action.
- Item 9: Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance, follow-up to and implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.
- Item 10: Technical assistance and capacity-building.

## Oral Statements

### THEMATIC ISSUES



ICJ delivered two joint statements, one each with International-Lawyers.org and EAFORD, concerning business and human rights issues during two General Debates. Under Agenda Item 5, the statement addressed ongoing discrimination against women in the workplace and the overall responsibility of businesses to respect human rights. The second statement, for Agenda Item 9, specifically considered how extractive industries perpetuate racism and colonialism.

#### Item 5: General Debate

GICJ advocated for mandatory Human Resources trainings, for codified best practice in mannerisms and speech, and for the abolition of disrespectful treatment toward women in the workforce. It further advocated for making it a compulsory prerequisite for start-ups, in order to receive capital, to have a comprehensive human rights plan, adhering to the UN Guiding Principles (UNGPs) or a future legally binding instrument. In addition, we called on the Working Group to codify the fact that businesses don't just have a crucial role in upholding human rights in their own activities and supply chains, as provided in the UNGPs, but also in society at large.

[Link to video](#)

#### Item 9: General Debate

The joint statement expressed its concern about the minimal efforts that are being put into the implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, and also regretted the alarming human rights violations in the extractivism economy. GICJ called upon states and transnational corporations to anchor governance, oversight and evaluation of the extractivism economy to the principles of sovereign equality, the right to self-determination, and the right to development. Finally, we highly recommend states to support, adopt and fully implement the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

[Link to video](#)

### *Environment*

GICJ and EAFORD delivered a joint statement concerning climate change under Agenda Item 3. In response to an earlier discussion on the issue of women's rights and climate change, the statement highlighted the need for gender-sensitive responses to this



global issue, due to the intersectional forms of discrimination that can lead to gender-differentiated impacts of climate change.

### **Item 3: General Debate**

GICJ drew the Council's attention to the human rights impacts of climate change, specifically the need for gender-sensitive responses. Women are more dependent for their livelihood on natural resources that are threatened by climate change and face unequal access to decision-making processes that address climate issues. GICJ called upon states to strengthen gender mainstreaming in climate change response activities, focusing on sustainable and equitable development, adaptation and mitigation, with a strong commitment to empowering women to build their own resilience.

[Link to video](#)

### ***Human Rights Defenders***

GICJ partnered with Kayan Feminist Organization and EAFORD to deliver joint statements concerning human rights defenders in two different contexts. One statement, under Agenda Item 3, discussed the treatment of HRDs by Israel; the other, under Agenda Item 4, highlighted how NGO activities that protect the lives and human rights of migrants crossing the Mediterranean Sea are being criminalized.

### **Item 3: General Debate**

GICJ drew the attention of the Council to the treatment of Human Rights Defenders by Israel, which has deteriorated steadily over the years and has now reached an alarmingly serious point. Kayan and Geneva International Centre for Justice urge the Council to take urgent action against Israel with the aim of ensuring the implementation of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

[Link to video](#)

### **Item 4: General Debate**

GICJ expressed its concern about the ongoing human rights situation in the Central Mediterranean Sea. In particular, GICJ wished to draw the Council's attention to the growing criminalisation of NGOs activities in this area by several states, some of which are currently serving as members of the Council. NGOs presence in the Mediterranean are conducting activities with the sole aim of providing migrants with humanitarian aid, thus compensating for the lack of action by states. Their presence at sea has prevented the

number of deaths and casualties from being higher. GICJ highlighted that humanitarian assistance is not and cannot be considered a crime.

### *Migrants*

GICJ and EAFORD delivered a joint statement concerning female migrants during an interactive dialogue under Agenda Item 3. The statement focused on addressing the needs of migrants with a gender sensitive perspective to ensure female migrants have the same access to economic opportunities as their male counterparts.

#### **Item 3: Interactive Dialogue with Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants**

Violence against women migrant workers and trafficking continues to play a major role in migration. They are part of the broader scope of violence, as well as the gendered norms that drive it. Such norms impact the migration opportunities available to women, restricting their ability to access skilled, safe and well-paid employment.

EAFORD and Geneva International Centre for Justice recommended to Member States that they ensure that opportunities to promote safe and regular migration consider gender factors, do not reinforce disadvantages due to a bias towards traditionally male employment sectors, and implement an adequate special prosecution unit for all perpetrators human rights abuses against migrant women and girls.

[Link to video](#)

### *Racism, Xenophobia, and Related Forms of Intolerance*

The alarming rise in hate speech around the world is especially apparent in politics and on social media. GICJ jointly addressed this issue with Kayan and EAFORD under Agenda Item 9 pointing out examples of this worrying trend in the Middle East, Europe, and America.

#### **Item 9: General Debate**

GICJ expressed grave concerns about the increasing phenomenon of hate speech and misinformation about specific groups used by politicians in order to foment hate, division and intolerance in society. Kayan and Geneva International Centre for Justice call on the Council to encourage world leaders to commit to international treaties and avoid hate speech, preventing incitement to violence and atrocity crimes.

[Link to video](#)

#### **Item 9: General Debate**

GICJ expressed deep concern over the pervasiveness of racist hate speech in today's society, especially on social media. International-Lawyers.org and the Geneva International Centre for Justice believe the exercise of one's freedom of expression should never come at the cost of the respect and equality of another. GICJ advocated for the Council to take strong action to prevent impunity for perpetrators of hate speech, racism, xenophobia, and intolerance, and called for the effective implementation of the DDPA.

[Link to video](#)

## COUNTRY-SPECIFIC ISSUES

### *Afghanistan*

GICJ delivered two joint statements concerning the UPR review of Afghanistan. With International-Lawyers.org, the statement addressed violence against women and gender-based crimes. The other statement, with EAFORD, discussed the need to combat impunity for human rights violations.

#### **Item 6: Consideration of the UPR on Afghanistan**

Lack of easy access to justice and accountability for gender-based crimes is leading to the ineffective implementation of existing legislations. The institutional, social and cultural obstacles need to be addressed in this instance. International-Lawyers.org and Geneva Centre for International Justice recommend that Afghanistan reinforce its measures protecting women and girls from violence, and ensure the implementation of the legal frameworks permitting access to justice for gender-based crimes.

#### **Item 6: Consideration of the UPR on Afghanistan**

Geneva International Centre for Justice remains of the idea that combating impunity and ensuring justice to victims shall remain a top priority for Afghanistan. During the armed conflict, several violations of human rights law and humanitarian law were committed against the civilian population by all parties to the conflict.

Given the decision of the International Criminal Court Pre-Trial Chamber to reject the request of the Prosecutor to proceed with an investigation into alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in the contest of the armed conflict in Afghanistan, GICJ urged Afghanistan:

- To investigate all incidents of civilian casualties and alleged crimes that occurred during the armed conflict

- To prosecute those responsible, either belonging to armed groups or security forces
- To provide remedies and reparations to the victims.
- To ensure the protection of civilians, and to ensure that all officers and soldiers of the Afghan national security and defence forces, as well as the officials in the judiciary and law enforcement, are fully trained on international humanitarian and human rights law.

[Link to video](#)

### *Burundi*

GICJ and EAFORD delivered a joint statement to the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi concerning violations of human rights by the Imbonerakure and other state-related actors. The statement called for accountability for past offenses and better protection of freedoms of expression and assembly to allow for peaceful protests by the people. The Commission responded to GICJ's statement during the interactive dialogue.

#### **Item 4: Interactive Dialogue with the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi**

Intimidation and threats by the Imbonerakure continue to threaten democracy, including freedoms of expression, association and assembly, and political participation among others. Moreover, there is deep concern that such tactics were used to limit or restrict these freedoms prior to the 2018 vote on the referendum to extend the presidential term.

EAFORD and Geneva International Centre for Justice called for:

- First, a steadfast investigation into human rights violations committed by the Imbonerakure, and bring the perpetrators to justice, and
- Second, immediate measures toward the protection of the right to freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly.

[Link to video](#)

### *Central African Republic*

While commending the Central African Republic (CAR) for the concrete steps taken toward peace, GICJ and International-Lawyers.org jointly recommended greater participation by the population in the peace process, especially the more vulnerable groups within the population. The statement also stressed the need for accountability for past human rights violations.

#### **Item 10: Enhanced interactive dialogue with the independent expert on the situation of human rights in the Central African Republic**

GICJ called for the full respect of human rights and for the application of sanctions in the event of breaches, as no peace process will take place as long as there is impunity.

GICJ recommended greater participation of the population through consultations, especially of the most vulnerable groups such as women, children, elderly, disabled people and ethnic minorities, which are often disproportionately affected by conflict but have rarely a role to play during the peace process.

[Link to video](#)

### *Iraq*

GICJ delivered two joint statements concerning the human rights situation in Iraq. These statements highlighted how the rule of law is not functioning in the country, the ongoing use of rape by army personnel, and the need to appoint a special rapporteur for Iraq.

#### **Item 2: General Debate on the High Commissioner's Oral Update**

The use of trials without due process to sentence alleged ISIS fighters to death is, as the High Commissioner mentioned, a grave problem in Iraq. The unfortunate reality also is that Iraq's judiciary is not independent, and legal proceedings of all types are commonly subject to meddling by political interests including militias. EAFORD and Geneva International Centre for Justice requested that the High Commissioner further investigate these gross human rights violations, and called on the Council to seek international cooperation to dissolve all militias in Iraq in order to re-establish the rule of law.

[Link to video](#)

#### **Item 4: General Debate**

In Iraq torture is practised on the widest scale; the death penalty is applied after swift and unfair trials, hundreds of thousands of innocent people are placed in prisons and detention centres for many years without trials. It is incumbent upon the Council to examine the situation and take the necessary measures. High-ranking officials profit from the national wealth yet leave the citizens without drinking water, without medical care, without education, and without social services, while Parliament adopts laws to discriminate between citizens in salaries, pensions and services. Indeed, the Council must

urgently examine this situation. GICJ recommended that a Special Rapporteur had to be appointed.

[Link to video](#)

### *Myanmar*

GICJ joined with EAFORD and International-Lawyers.org in delivering joint statements concerning the human rights situation in Myanmar. The statements focused particularly on protecting freedom of religion and addressing the issue of impunity.

#### **Item 2: Interactive Dialogue with the High Commissioner on Myanmar Minorities**

Since the outbreak of unprecedented violence against the Rohingya -and despite compelling evidence of genocide and crimes against humanity perpetrated at the hands of Myanmar military forces- hate speech, discrimination and blatant violations of the most fundamental rights continue unabated in Myanmar.

Geneva International Centre for Justice strongly recommended the following:

- Effective prosecution of hate speech against all religious and ethnic minorities, punish the perpetrators with commensurate sanctions;
- A call upon the local, regional and national authorities to immediately put an end to the violation of the freedom of worship for Muslims living in Myanmar.

[Link to video](#)

#### **Item 2: Interactive Dialogue with the High Commissioner on Myanmar Minorities**

Myanmar has the legal obligation to provide accountability for perpetrator of crimes committed against its civilians. Violations of human rights such as murder, executions without due process, attack against civilians as well as sexual violence constitute war crimes and demand swift and strong action by the State. However, the inadequate investigations and failure to prosecute perpetrators within Myanmar means the time for local action has passed. Prompt action by the Prosecutor of the ICC is now needed to bring the perpetrators of these horrific human rights violations to account. International-Lawyers.org and Geneva International Centre for Justice encouraged the Myanmar authorities to cooperate with the ICC process to ensure accountability for all human rights violations against the Rohingya Muslims and all minority groups.

[Link to video](#)

### *New Zealand*

GICJ delivered two joint statements, partnering with International-Lawyers.org and EAFORD, concerning the UPR review of New Zealand. GICJ commended New Zealand's efforts to address hate speech and discrimination while encouraging additional efforts to reduce incarceration rates of native people and address domestic violence.

#### **Item 6: Consideration of the UPR on New Zealand**

GICJ encouraged New Zealand to continue its efforts in improving its legislation regarding the rights of minorities, to ensure no part of society is discriminated against, duly investigate hate speeches and hate crimes, and bring perpetrators to justice, in order to reach for peace. We also expressed our appreciation for the development of a National Plan of Action for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights, which is an effective step towards the implementation of UPR recommendations.

[Link to video](#)

#### **Item 6: Consideration of the UPR on New Zealand**

GICJ reminded the Government of New Zealand of the need to address the high incarceration rate, in which Māori people are disproportionately represented in detention centres, and at every stage of the criminal justice system, both as offenders and as victims. We also note that New Zealand has a serious problem with gender-based violence and with intolerably high levels of family violence.

EAFORD and Geneva International Centre for Justice strongly recommended that the New Zealand Government:

- Eradicate discrimination against Maori, by tackling social inequalities experienced by Māori people in health, housing, employment, education, and access to justice; and
- Take concrete steps in addressing sexual and domestic violence against women, by guaranteeing that all victims benefit from protection and have access to medical and legal aid.

### ***Occupied Palestinian Territories***

Regarding the human rights situation in occupied Palestine, GICJ jointly raised the rapidly expanding issue of hate speech against Palestinians in Israeli society. Another statement raised the question of whether Israel's ongoing actions against the Palestinians

over many generations constituted the crime of genocide. A final statement called attention to the poor treatment of Palestinian women in detention.

#### **Item 7: General Debate**

Geneva International Centre for Justice drew the attention of the Council to the pervasive phenomenon within Israeli society of hate speech targeting Palestinians. Hate speech by political representatives has an alarming impact on society, giving legitimacy to discriminatory behaviours and contributing to widespread xenophobia. Disinformation and hate speech result in instilling fear among the larger population of vulnerable groups and minorities.

Kayan and Geneva International Centre for Justice called on this Council to:

- Take prompt action against the widespread phenomenon of hate speech in Israeli society and ensure accountability for the crimes that have been committed.
- Put pressure on Israel to implement the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and the Rabat Plan of Action.
- Restate the fundamental right of self-determination of the Palestinian people as well as their right of return to their lands and properties.

Link to video

<https://youtu.be/iv170sqQNkU>

#### **Item 7: General Debate**

International Lawyers.org and Geneva International Centre for Justice noted that the actions taken by Israel over the span of around 100 years demonstrate a systemic attempt to destroy the Palestinian people. GICJ also noted how there is no parallel in recent history where a population has been placed in such an inhumane situation for such an extended period of time. GICJ urged the Council once again to take immediate measures to pressure the State of Israel to terminate all illegal settlement activities, and to stop the institutionalized and blatant discrimination against the Palestinian people.

[Link to video](#)

#### **Item 7: General Debate**

GICJ highlighted the broad issue of the treatment of Palestinian women in detention. As compared to men, women have particular needs during pregnancy, childbirth and menstrual periods, none of which are typically addressed in Israeli



detention facilities. With its behaviour against women in detention, by not accounting for gender considerations, Israel is flagrantly disregarding international standards such as the “Bangkok Rules” on the treatment of women prisoners. EAFORD and Geneva International Centre for Justice called on the Council and all states to take prompt measures seeking justice for those women who have faced sexual harassment and other abuses while detained by Israeli authorities.

### Written Statements

Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ) submitted 12 joint written statements with other NGOs prior to the 40th Regular Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC). Eleven of the statements were published on the HRC website. The statements covered several specific country situations and included recommendations to the Council, member states, and other relevant bodies and stakeholders.



#### *Iraq*

GICJ is appalled at the scale of corruption in Iraq, and the government’s inability or unwillingness to curb it since 2003. Our report to the UNHRC calls on all stakeholders - the Iraqi government, international community, and the UN itself- to step up and put an end to corruption in Iraq.

Therefore, Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ) recommended that:

- The Iraqi government pursue its stated efforts to prosecute high-profile corrupt practices and begin reducing the overall culture of corruption
- The international community and trans-national corporations operating in Iraq reject corrupt practices and work toward greater transparency in their activities within Iraq
- The Human Rights Council appoint a Special Rapporteur for Iraq to, among other functions, investigate and monitor corruption and its impact on the human rights of Iraqis

## Rule of Law in Iraq



Rule of law is a principle of governance in which everyone, including the State itself, is accountable to laws consistent with international human rights standards. However, extensive reporting exposes blatant violations of the rule of law at every level of Iraqi governance.

Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ) condemns this disrespect for the rule of law, and recommends that:

- The government of Iraq follow its own Constitution in elections.
- The government end its alliance with private militias and prevent their exploitation of innocent civilians.
- The judiciary ensure accountability for arbitrary killings and ensures the right of fair trial to all prisoners.
- The international community urge the Iraqi government to abolish the death penalty.

## *Libya*

### Escalating Military Hostilities Undermine Peace Efforts

Since the outbreak of the armed conflict at the outskirts of Tripoli on 4 April 2019, thousands of persons have been killed or wounded, including innocent civilians. Despite a UN arms embargo and universal agreement that there should be



no military support for any of the parties in Libya, some countries have been blatantly ignoring these international understandings.

Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ) urgently recommended that the international community enforce the arms embargo and that foreign powers refrain from interfering in the Libyan civil conflict. GICJ appealed to all states concerned to immediately put an end to all returns to Libya, as it violates international human rights law to return Libyans to their unsafe country.

[Link to statement](#)

## *Myanmar*

### Broken Promises of Peace and Escalating Inter-religious Hostilities

Since the outbreak of unprecedented violence against the Rohingya and other ethnic minorities -and despite compelling evidence of genocide and crimes against humanity perpetrated at the hands of Myanmar military forces- hate speech, discrimination and blatant violations of the most fundamental rights continue unabated in Myanmar.



Geneva International Centre for Justice urgently recommends the following:

- Effective prosecution of hate speeches against all religious and ethnic minorities and punish the perpetrators with commensurate sanctions.
- The Head of the Government of Myanmar and other high-ranking public authorities should publicly condemn religious and hate speech, and thereby issue a warning that every single case will be criminally prosecuted and sanctioned without any exception.
- Chauk Township authorities, the regional and national governments immediately put an end to the violation of the freedom of worship for Muslims living in Chauk Township.

[Link to statement](#)

## *Occupied Palestinian Territories*

### *The Rise in Hate Speech by Political Representatives and on Social Media in Israel*

The issue of hate speech targeting Palestinians is becoming a pervasive phenomenon within Israeli society. Everyday hundreds, and sometimes thousands, of inciting, violent or insulting posts against Palestinians are published on social media,



particularly on Facebook. It was estimated that in 2018 474,250 inciting posts against Palestinians were written, the content of which included racist slurs, insults, and calls for violent actions.

During the 41st UN Human Rights Council, Geneva International Centre for Justice called upon the Council to take prompt action against the widespread phenomenon of hate speech in Israeli society and to put pressure on Israel to enact and implement specific domestic legislation aimed at criminalizing racist and xenophobic hate speech.

[Link to statement](#)

### *Israel's Treatment of Human Rights Defenders*

The treatment of human rights defenders (HRDs) by Israel has deteriorated steadily over the years and has now reached an alarmingly serious point. Individuals, groups, and organisations that promote and protect human rights in Israel and in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) are constantly under attack by the Israeli Government.

Geneva International Centre for Justice in its joint statement urged the Council to take urgent action against the criminalization policy adopted by Israel against human rights defenders, which violates the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

[Link to statement](#)

## Sexual Abuse of Palestinian Women in Detention



Palestinian women are subjected to psychological and physical violence during arrest, interrogation, investigation and detention by Israeli authorities, such as sexual harassment and rape. Those cases involve both police officers and officers of the Israeli Security Agency

(SHABACK).

Geneva International Centre for Justice maintains that these acts are a flagrant violation of international laws and treaties to which Israel is a party. It is necessary to adopt prompt measures aimed at encouraging women victims of such abuses to report those acts as well as at promoting general awareness on the issue. Accountability for those violations that occurred in the past must be guaranteed and prevention measures to avoid future violations must be developed.

[Link to statement](#)

## GICJ's Co-Sponsored Side Event

### *Imprisonment & Torture: Punishing Political Dissent*



Geneva

International Centre for Justice (GICJ) and two partner organizations, International-Lawyers.org and International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD), hosted an event on the use of imprisonment and torture to silence political dissent across the Middle East.



This panel discussion featured three experts who provided examples of how imprisonment and torture are currently being used to punish and intimidate political dissent by Iraq, Yemen, Israel and Palestine. Their examples also highlighted the disparate

impact on women and the targeting of people, like journalists and human rights defenders, who are not themselves dissenters, but who document dissent or attempt to protect the human rights of dissenters.



## **42nd Regular Session of the UN Human Rights Council**

With a team of nine members and six guests, Geneva International Centre for Justice actively participated in the 42nd session of the Human Rights Council. Prior to the session, GICJ submitted six written statements highlighting different aspects of the human rights situation in three countries and the rights of indigenous peoples. Two written statements GICJ submitted for the previous (41st) sessions were also published in this session. Over the course of the Council's session, GICJ delivered 21 oral statements, organized one side event, conducted a three-week human rights training workshop, monitored the discussion on several Council resolutions, and attended numerous side events to stay informed on a variety of issues. The sections that follow contain GICJ's key contributions during the session.

### **Oral Statements**

#### **THEMATIC ISSUES**



Geneva International Centre for Justice delivered 21 oral statements jointly with International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD) and International-Lawyers.org during the 42nd Session of the UN Human Rights Council. Several thematic issues and country-specific situations were addressed under the various Agenda Items of the Council.

#### **Item 3: Interactive Dialogue with Special Rapporteur on hazardous waste**

GICJ highlighted the situation of child and adult workers in conflict situations who are often exposed to toxic and hazardous substances. In addition, GICJ also pointed out that in Iraq, contamination, pollution, tonnes of war debris and toxic waste as a result of the 2003 invasion and the following armed conflict has resulted in environmental disaster leaving high levels of radiation, extensive PCB and sulphur contamination and several toxic stockpiles amongst others.

[Link to video](#)

#### **Item 9: Interactive Dialogue with the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent**

The oral statement emphasised that much more needed to be done to eliminate the scourges of racism, including acknowledging the various existing forms of Afrophobia and disaggregated data collection. GICJ agreed with a comment by the Council of Europe on Human Rights that historical roots, namely colonialism and the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, are identified as persisting factors steering modern prejudices and inequalities in Europe. The comment also noted that racism and racial discrimination against people of African descent were experienced at all levels of society, including the governmental level, and in numerous countries, adversely affecting social cohesion and inclusion.

[Link to video](#)

### **Item 9: General Debate**

The joint oral statement expressed worry and disappointment about the lack of commitment of UN members towards eliminating all forms of racial discrimination and other related forms of intolerance. It highlighted the case of Switzerland and the worrying institutional and structural racism against unaccompanied minor migrants in its territory. International Lawyers and Geneva International Centre for Justice urged Switzerland to improve its hosting conditions for unaccompanied minor migrants and to guarantee a safe place where they can fully thrive.

[Link to video](#)

The joint statement also discussed the lack of political will in addressing and eliminating racial discrimination, as well as the current systematic budget reduction of DDPA.

GICJ recommended that Member States:

- adopt and fully implement the DDPA
- exercise due diligence with regard to all forms of media such that they do not promote hatred, but instead use such platforms to promote inclusion, integration, and solidarity

[Link to video](#)

## **COUNTRY-SPECIFIC ISSUES**

### ***Item 6: Consideration of the UPR on Albania***

GICJ delivered a joint statement with International-Lawyers.org concerning the UPR review of Albania. The statement described the challenges faced by women and children of Roma and Egyptian ethnicity, including access to health care, education, jobs and other social services.

International-Lawyers and Geneva International Centre for Justice suggested that improving access to education would increase school enrolment and completion, delaying marriage, and providing job opportunities for women. For children, nutrition and health services would result in improved weight, less infections, and decreased mortality.

[Link to video](#)

**Item 6:** *Consideration of the UPR on Brunei Darussalam*

GICJ delivered a joint statement with International-Lawyers.org concerning the UPR review of Brunei. The statement addressed the inhumane and degrading punishments permitted under the country's penal law and the very low age of legal criminal responsibility. Several provisions in this penal code allow for disproportionate, inhumane and degrading punishments. GICJ urged Brunei to commit to creating a national independent human rights institution in accordance with the Paris Principles that would support the country's ongoing efforts to improve human rights.

[Link to video](#)

**Item 6:** *Consideration of the UPR on Costa Rica*

GICJ expressed concern about discrimination against indigenous people, persons of African descent, migrants, asylum seekers, refugees, women, older people, and persons with disabilities. We called for the implementation the UPR recommendations it accepted in this and in previous sessions, the elimination of all violence against women by tackling root causes through raising awareness , and increasing the participation and consultation of indigenous people, and the restoration of their lands.

[Link to video](#)

**Item 6:** *Consideration of the UPR on Côte d'Ivoire*

GICJ addressed major issues concerning the rights of children. In Côte d'Ivoire the worst forms of child labour still persists in the harvesting of cocoa and coffee, sometimes



as a result of human trafficking. International Lawyers and Geneva International Centre for Justice encouraged Côte d'Ivoire to continue in its efforts to combat child trafficking and child labour by clarifying roles and providing increased training for law enforcement and judicial officials.

#### **Item 6: Consideration of the UPR on Ethiopia**

GICJ delivered a joint statement with International-Lawyers.org concerning the UPR review of Ethiopia. The statement spoke to difficulties faced by displaced persons throughout the country and the need for the government to provide proper support systems, especially for displaced children. GICJ called on the Ethiopian government to accelerate the reconstruction of the affected areas and turn its attention to the infrastructure for the purpose of resettling the displaced persons.

[Link to video](#)

#### **Item 3: General Debate**

##### ***Iraq***

GICJ and its partners delivered four joint statements concerning the human rights situation in Iraq. These statements highlighted the problems of enforced disappearance, corruption, violence against women, lack of clean water, the need for transitional justice, and reiterated the need to appoint a Special Rapporteur for Iraq.

In the first statement GICJ repeated previous appeals in regards to human rights situation in Iraq. The Iraqi government had failed to comply with its obligation under international law to take measures to protect civilians and provide them with basic needs.

[Link to video](#)

In the second statement, GICJ pointed out the failure of states to respond to the recommendations of the Working Groups on Arbitrary Detention and Enforced Disappearances that they align their actions with their international legal obligations.

[Link to video](#)

In the third statement GICJ drew the Council's attention to the alarming situation of the traffic in persons in Iraq. Regrettably, there is evidence indicating that key government officials are involved in this trafficking activity, using their powers and security positions to aid the traffickers evade Justice.

[Link to video](#)

In the final statement GICJ addressed the acute water crisis in Iraq. GICJ recommended that Iraq ratify the Rome Statute of the ICC, that a Special Rapporteur for Iraq be mandated to investigate all human rights violations since 2003, and that a Compensation Commission for Iraq be set up.

[Link to video](#)

### *Myanmar*

#### **Item 4: Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on Myanmar**

GICJ joined with International-Lawyers.org in delivering two joint statements concerning the human rights situation in Myanmar. The statements focused particularly on the situation of displaced persons, children, and minority ethnic groups.

The report focused on the use of forced and incommunicado detentions, the use of torture on young men and boys, and lack of access to shelter, healthcare and education for refugees.

[Link to video](#)

#### **Item 4: Interactive Dialogue with the Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar**

The joined statement drew the Council's attention to the condition of the Rohingyas in Buthidaung prison where their basic rights are constantly being violated by acts of torture and other forms of violence. We urged the Council to take measures encouraging the Myanmar government to send the commanders responsible for this genocide to the ICC to answer for the many human rights violations, including war crimes and crimes against humanity.

[Link to video](#)

#### **Item 6: Consideration of the UPR on Norway**

GICJ noted that Norway had failed to address climate change in its national report, particularly the human rights consequences on poor countries by Norway's fossil fuel production. We recommended that Norway cease and desist greenhouse gas producing activities, that it work with other countries to limit warming to 1.5 degrees by 2100, provide technology on a cost-free basis to poor and developing countries who will be most hit by climate change, and plan a just transition strategy to compensate and support poor countries for the unfair burden of climate change that others like Norway have placed on them.

[Link to video](#)

### *Occupied Palestinian Territories*

With regards to the human rights situation in occupied Palestine, GICJ jointly raised concern about the excessive use of force by Israeli military and security forces, described the violation of children's rights, and decried the recent support of certain countries for the illegal annexation of territory by Israel.

#### **Item 2:** General Debate on High Commissioner's oral update on Commission of Inquiry on the 2018 protests in the Occupied Palestinian Territory

In the first statement, GICJ discussed how last year's Palestinian protests were met with "slow methodical shooting" from the Israeli side. It is estimated that in 2018 alone over twenty-three thousand Palestinians were injured by Israeli forces and many have been killed. We called on this Council to put pressure on Israel to respect its international obligations and to allow investigations within its territory. We further called for better access to health care for the numerous victims of the conflict.

[Link to video](#)

#### **Item 7:** General Debate

In the second statement, International-Lawyers.Org and the Geneva International Centre for Justice strongly condemned the illegal annexation pledges made by the Israeli government -and unilaterally supported by the US administration- including the annexation of the Golan Heights which remain occupied Syrian territories under Security Resolutions 242 and 338. We called on the Council to pressure Israel into ceasing all annexation plans as they are in violation of international law and undermine peace talks, and end all acts of violence.

#### **Item 7:** General Debate

GICJ expressed concern about the rights of children, whose treatment must be in accordance with their status as vulnerable people. GICJ calls for the respect of their rights, including the rights to health and education. Moreover, we further expressed our concern with regard to the support provided to Israel by the International Community and denounce the recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital by the US and Guatemala. GICJ called on the Council and the International Community to pressure Israel to respect its obligations under international law, humanitarian law and human rights law. Finally, GICJ

called on the OHCHR to publish and update a database of businesses operating in illegal Israeli settlements.

[Link to video](#)

### *Qatar*

GICJ delivered a joint statement with International-Lawyers.org concerning the UPR review of Qatar. The statement addressed the rights of women, especially the need to take more actions to combat domestic violence and provide assistance to victims of domestic violence.

[Link to video](#)

### **South Sudan**

GICJ delivered a joint statement with EAFORD concerning the human rights situation in South Sudan. The statement voiced concern about the targeting of health care facilities by warring parties and violence against minority women and girls.

[Link to video](#)

## **Written Statements**

GICJ submitted 6 joint written statements with other NGOs prior to the 42nd Regular Session of the Human Rights Council. Two additional statements submitted for the previous session were also published on the HRC website. The statements covered several specific country situations and included recommendations to the Council, Member States, and other relevant bodies and stakeholders.

### *Indigenous Peoples*



#### **Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**

Regrettably, indigenous people are facing a drastic increase of acts of violence, including undue criminal prosecution, killings, threats and intimidations, and harassment. This especially happens when indigenous leaders and community members voice opposition to large projects relating to extractive industries, agribusiness, infrastructure, hydroelectric dams and logging.

In this regard, we recommend the following:

- All violent attacks against indigenous peoples and their defenders must be promptly and impartially investigated and measures taken to provide effective redress and reparation.

- Addressing criminalization through a comprehensive review of national laws, the adoption of laws to ensure due process, and the revocation of laws and criminal procedures that violate the principle of legality and contradict international obligations.
- Formal recognition of indigenous peoples, through constitutional provisions. Where this is not possible, recognition by other means, including national laws, should be pursued.

[Link to statement](#)

### **Iraq: Enforced Disappearance**

Enforced disappearance is a shockingly common practice in Iraq, but one that the government avoids admitting or even discussing. The number of missing persons in Iraq ranges from hundreds of thousands up to one million according to different public



sources. Disappearances in Iraq are often targeted toward certain groups or families, which is apparent from the shared family names of many of the victims. Unfortunately, there is often little, if any, effort on the part of the government to investigate these situations, contrary to its international obligations.

Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ) and its partners recommended that:

- The Iraqi government properly investigate disappearances and the many cases of arbitrary detention that often lead to forced disappearance
- Iraq stop the illegal mass burials of unidentified bodies
- The Human Rights Council appoint a special rapporteur for Iraq and the Working Group on Enforced Disappearance include Iraq on its list of future country visits

An independent international commission be sent to Iraq to investigate all violations

[Link to statement](#)

### ***Iraq***

Truth, reparation and justice in the Republic of Iraq

*Since the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, and despite the official withdrawal of US troops in 2011, justice has not been achieved for the Iraqi people. The invasion and subsequent war constitute a war of aggression, which is the “supreme international crime”. This war was conducted without the approval of the UN Security Council and without a legitimate self-defence argument, therefore violating the UN Charter.*

GICJ believes it is necessary to create an International Special Tribunal to prosecute all those involved in the invasion, including the planning, administration and actual execution of the invasion, and who have committed human rights and humanitarian law violations.

Pending the creation of such a tribunal, we call on the relevant United Nations bodies to ensure that:

- Iraq ratifies the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court; incorporates into its domestic legislation definitions of war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide and establishes specialised courts with technical capacities and jurisdiction over these crimes.
- The United States and other members of the Coalition investigate and prosecute those responsible of the invasion and for crimes during the Iraqi occupation.
- The international community promotes and respects human rights, works together towards ending impunity and ensures they such actions do not recur.
- The United Nations Human Rights Council creates a Special Rapporteur for Iraq to investigate all human rights violations since 2003.
- The United Nations Security Council creates a Sanction Committee to investigate all human rights violations since 2003.

## ***Myanmar***

**The human rights violations and abuses are worsening in Myanmar**

Legal conditions for repatriation seem to be far from acceptable. Following the agreement signed between Bangladesh and Myanmar, many Rohingyas have refused the repatriation conditions offered by the government of Myanmar. It is imperative to grant



citizenship to Rohingyas and not simple residence cards or identification cards. Rohingyas should receive passports under the same conditions as the citizens of Myanmar, and they must fully enjoy freedom of religion, freedom of movement, access to education and healthcare, and protection from all forms of discrimination.

GICJ therefore recommended that the international community should interrupt all financial and economic relations and any other form of support to Myanmar's military to isolate its commanders and bring them before the ICC to answer charges of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide.

### **Occupied Palestinian Territories**

#### **The Human Rights of Children in the Occupied Palestinian Territories**

Under Israeli military law, which is applied to Palestinians in the West Bank, no child under the age of 12 can be held criminally responsible. Nevertheless, several cases show the summoning and interrogation of children as young as four years old. A 2016 law allows the State "to imprison a minor convicted of serious crimes such as murder, attempted murder or manslaughter even if he or she is under the age of 14". Israel Military Order #1591 of 2007 gives the right for Israeli forces to detain Palestinian children that are 12 years old or more for up to six months if they have "reasonable grounds to presume that the security of the area or public security require the detention."

Geneva International Centre for Justice called on:

- The Human Rights Council and the Committee on the Right of the Child to ensure that Israel respects the minimal age of criminal responsibility, uses detention of children

as a measure of last resort, and stops transferring child prisoners from the OPT to Israel

- The international community to continue pressuring Israel into respecting UN resolutions and its international obligations, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child
- The Special Representative of the Secretary General to add Israel to the “list of shame” from the Annual Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict.



## GICJ's Co-Sponsored Side Event

### *Enforced Disappearance and Extrajudicial Killings in Iraq*

On 25 September 2019, Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ) and two partner organizations, International-Lawyers.org and the International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD), hosted an event on enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings in Iraq. Enforced disappearances and related crimes of torture and extrajudicial killing in Iraq are ongoing issues that have been given insufficient attention by the international community and no genuine efforts have been made to address the problem.

The event featured Ali Arkady, a noted photojournalist and war reporter from Iraq. His work spans ten years and ranges from documenting the day-to-day life of an orphanage in Baghdad to reporting from the frontline in the war against ISIL. Since 2014, he has worked with the VII Photo agency and several international media outlets. While embedded with an Iraqi Special Forces Unity fighting to recapture Mosul, Mr. Arkady witnessed systematic torture and execution of civilians. In this event, the journalist presented six war crimes he witnessed and documented between 18 October and 22 December 2016.



### *GICJ's Human Rights Training*

During the three-week Council session, GICJ conducted a human rights training workshop that covered a wide range of issues and incorporated a variety of experiences.



Trainees were provided with background information on international law, human rights law, the UN system and its human rights mechanisms. They met with UN officials and human rights experts and attended numerous sessions and side events on topics related to the trainees' interests.

### 3. UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW

#### **UPR 32: Third Cycle of North Macedonia's Periodic Human Rights Review**

On 24 January 2019, the Working Group of the UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review mechanism (UPR) conducted its third review of the human rights situation in North Macedonia.

The third cycle of North Macedonia's review began with a presentation of the National Report by the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, Andrej Zhernovski. Mr. Zhernovski noted the political difficulties faced by North Macedonia since its last review, but highlighted successful reforms of the justice system and of the criminal code. In response to questions posed in advance, he also noted efforts undertaken to reduce corruption and mistreatment in prisons, as well as efforts to curb violence against journalists and members of the LGBTI community.

Following presentation of the national report, the session proceeded with an interactive dialogue, during which 57 state delegations participated. States commended North Macedonia for improvements to its judiciary and also its efforts to fight discrimination. However, states were concerned about prison conditions and deportation of migrants and refugees. Concerns were also expressed regarding ongoing discrimination against members of the Roma and LGBTI communities, as well as barriers faced by people with disabilities. The North Macedonian delegation responded to various points raised by UN Member States and concluded with a few remarks.

On Tuesday, 29 January 2019, the Working Group adopted the report on North Macedonia, which contained a total of 169 recommendations.

#### **UPR 33: Third Cycle of Qatar's Periodic Human Rights Review**

The third cycle of Qatar's review began with a presentation of the National Report by H.E. Mr. Soltan Bin Saad Al-Muraikhi, State Minister for Foreign Affairs of Qatar, who emphasized that, in the context of Qatar National Vision 2030, the State is eager to pursue international cooperation and fulfil its international obligations. Between the strategies and policies adopted to promote and protect human rights, interesting achievements had been made for the protection of the rights of migrant workers and domestic workers, in accordance with the provision of the International Labour Organization Domestic

Workers Convention. Among the topics under discussion were the improvements in women and children education, the rights of persons with disabilities, and national security and counter-terrorism laws.

After the National Report, the session proceeded with an interactive dialogue, during which 104 delegations made statements and offered recommendations for human rights improvements. Several states commended the efforts made by Qatar, particularly in the improvement of the rights of migrant workers, in fighting human trafficking, and for including the environment in the National Vision 2030. However, concerns were raised about women rights, freedom of expression, death penalty, and the funding of terrorist groups. The Qatari delegation replied to the various points raised by Member States and ended the discussions with some observations.

At its meeting on 17 May 2019, the Working Group adopted the report on Qatar. The recommendations will be examined by Qatar, which will provide responses in due time.

### **UPR 34: Third Cycle of Iraq's Periodic Human Rights Review**

On 11 November 2019, the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) – a key constituent of the UN Human Rights Council – conducted its third review of the human rights situation in Iraq. The Iraqi delegation was headed by Mr. Farooq Ameen Othman, Iraq's Minister of Justice.

Mr. Ameen Othman began by presenting Iraq's National Report for its 3rd cycle UPR, explaining the human rights developments since the last review in November 2014 and the general human rights situation in the country. In the aftermath of this previous review, 175 of the total 229 recommendations had been accepted by Iraq and claimed to have been implemented through the country's national plan. While it was implied that progress has been difficult as a result of Iraq's security challenges over the last four years, Mr. Ameen Othman suggested that Iraq's human rights record was strong. He claimed that Iraq had remained committed to adhering to its international human rights obligations under its numerous signed and/or ratified human rights conventions. Indeed, it was claimed that much heartening progress had been made in the last few years.

Most states offered some commendations on Iraq's progress since the last UPR, while also suggesting a large number of recommendations on a variety of issues. Key areas of concern were the reports of excessive use of force against protestors, the use and

application of the death penalty, the widespread use of torture and enforced disappearances, the rights and treatment of women and minorities and social policy. Despite the security challenges and sacrifices Iraq is said to have made over the last five years, Mr. Ameen Othman reiterated that the government of Iraq is highly committed to ensuring the full exercise of all of the rights of Iraqi citizens, even when dealing with terrorism. He thanked all international institutions that provided assistance to the Iraqi state in order to improve the human rights situation in Iraq, and reemphasised that Iraq was determined to place human rights as a top priority in legislation and politics.

At the adoption of the draft report, it was noted that the Iraqi delegation received a total of 298 recommendations during this review cycle. Accordingly, the delegation said that all 298 would be examined by Iraq and their response will be provided no later than the 43rd session of the HRCIt remains to be seen what action will be taken towards the fulfilment of these promises.

GICJ has contributed significantly to Iraq's 3rd cycle UPR review, in order to ensure that interested parties are made aware of matters of particular concern for the organisation – particularly in light of the recent protests.

### **UPR 34: Third Cycle of Iran's Periodic Human Rights Review**

The review of the Islamic Republic of Iran was held at the 9th meeting, on 8 November 2019. H.E. Mr. Mohammad Javad Ardeshir Larijan, the Secretary of the High Council for Human Rights of the Islamic Republic of Iran, opened the session by stating Iran's commitment and cooperation with the Universal Periodic Review process. He emphasized that human rights is a value deeply rooted in Islam and that Iran had taken numerous steps in achieving the accepted recommendations from the second cycle.

The Iranian delegation stated that since the previous cycle its government had adopted a number of major policies, laws and regulations, but faced serious challenges, such as the economic sanctions, in the implementation of the recommendations and on the general improvement of human rights. The Working Group adopted the report containing a total of 329 recommendations.

While many states commended Iran's efforts, others remained concerned over the treatment of ethnic and religious minorities within Iran. The discriminatory treatment of the Baha'i community was particularly emphasized by several countries. Iran's international obligations were also called into question by several countries.

On 12 November, the Working Group adopted the report on Iran, which consisted of 329 recommendations. Iran will examine and consider these recommendations and respond no later than the forty-third session of the Human Rights Council in February and March of 2020.

### **GICJ's report on Iraq**

In anticipation of Iraq's 3rd UPR cycle review, GICJ submitted a report to the 34th session Human Rights Council UPR Working Group to highlight particular issues of concern for the organisation, and offered its own recommendations. This report centred around three key issues: the death penalty, torture and ill-treatment, and the destruction of cities in recent conflict.

With regard to the death penalty, GICJ expressed its concern about Iraq's increasing use of capital punishment, including as a penalty for crimes which the international community does not consider as serious. Particular areas of concern were the use of the amendment (12 July 2016) to the Criminal Procedure Code No. 23, the use of the Anti-Terrorism law as a legal ground for death sentences, and the lack of free trials in many death penalty cases. In terms of torture and ill-treatment, key areas of concern noted were the continuous and widespread use of torture in Iraq, only exacerbated by the advancement of ISIS and the subsequent war on terror. Finally, regarding destroyed cities, the report expressed concerns about the numbers of civilian casualties, population displacement and infrastructural damage, as well as the lack of effective humanitarian assistance and compensation.

### **GICJ's Report on Iran**

GICJ submitted a report ahead of Iran's UPR. The Geneva International Center for Justice submitted a report to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights that was included in the Summary of Stakeholders' Submission on the Islamic Republic of Iran. The report included a brief description of a variety of human rights violations, such as discrimination and harassment against religious and ethnic minorities, the use of the death penalty the lack of independence of the judiciary and the restrictions to the right to due process and fair trial, conditions of detention and accounts of torture and ill-treatment, discriminatory laws against women and girls, and the lack of cooperation with the Special Procedures and core international human rights institutions. The GICJ report additionally provided recommendations to the Iranian government to address and resolve these human rights issues.

**Side event on the UPR process in Iran and Iraq**



On the 7 November 2019, GICJ, in collaboration with International-Lawyers.Org EAFORD, organised an information meeting on the process in Iraq and Iran at headquarters in Geneva,



and UPR the UN open for

the attendance of any interested parties or individuals. Former Senior Human Rights officer at GICJ Mr. Christopher Gawronski acted as the speaker for Iraq, along with Mr. Tahar Boumedra, former UN Human Rights Chief of the UN Mission to Baghdad, for Iran. The meeting was moderated by Ms. Isabela Zaleski Mori, Human Rights Researcher at GICJ.

In his presentation on Iraq, Mr. Gawronski chose a number of key topics to present orally. He emphasised the difficulty of putting a positive spin on Iraq, even at the UPR, before highlighting the key problems the country continues to face. He focused on enforced disappearances and arbitrary detention, ill-treatment and torture, the death penalty, corruption, the failure of the state to maintain critical infrastructures, and the recent protests. This meeting allowed GICJ to express once more its particular concern and answer questions from a live audience.

## **4. UN COMMITTEES AND OTHER MEETINGS**

### **UN Conference on the Question of Jerusalem**

Focused on the theme of “Preserving the cultural and religious character of Jerusalem,” the conference, running from on 27-28 June 2019, was an important opportunity to address the issue of Israel’s policies and measures aimed at the forcible change of status of Jerusalem. Several experts, including internationals, Palestinians and Israelis, had the opportunity to discuss the political, legal and socio-economic consequences of Israel’s actions.

GICJ believes that the Conference was an important opportunity to highlight new developments in the complex issue of Jerusalem and maintains that prompt actions are needed by the international community in order to prevent Israel’s plans to change the character of the city. GICJ urges the international community to stop the US actions that actively and indiscriminately support Israel in its violation of international law.

[Link to article](#)

### **Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD)**

#### *Reviews State of Palestine during its 99th Session*

The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination held its 99<sup>th</sup> Session on 8 September 2019. During this meeting, it conducted its first review of the State of Palestine.

After hearing the presentation from the Palestinian delegation and the country Rapporteur, the Committee, while recognizing the difficult conditions within the State of Palestine due to the occupation and settlements, reminded the delegation that the State should nonetheless take all possible measure to implement the Convention.

[Link to article](#)

### **Business and Human Rights**

#### **The 8th United Nations Forum on Business and Human Rights**

The 8th United Nations Forum on Business and Human Rights took place in Geneva from 25 to 27 November 2019. In three day, 70 meetings took place under this year’s theme, “Time to act: Governments as catalysts for business respect for human rights”.

GICJ attended 30 meetings of the Forum, and one side event. During these, and under the guidance of the three UNGPs' pillars, panellists looked at the role of governments and businesses in the access to remedies, the fight against corruption and for accountability, as well as the impact on businesses on peace, climate change and so on.

[Link to report](#)







## 5. HUMAN RIGHTS TRAININGS

In 2019, GICJ conducted six Human Rights Training Courses in order to promote human rights values around the world. Two took place in Istanbul in April, the others took place in Geneva in April, June, September, and November.

One two-day training course in Istanbul dealt with Business and Human Right. The five others consisted in workshops on International Human Rights Law and Human Rights mechanisms.

GICJ workshops are designed to train groups of NGO professionals, human rights activists, civil servants, diplomats and university professors. They focus especially on the functioning of the United Nations human rights system and thus strengthen the participants' ability to effectively engage with the relevant UN bodies and to gain an effective 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 comprehensive 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.

## 6. GICJ STATEMENTS AND APPEALS



### **GICJ Urges States and UN Bodies to End Human Trafficking**

On 22 February 2019 GICJ participated at today's CEDAW discussion on trafficking of women and girls in the context of global migration by delivering an oral statement and submitting a joint report with Advocating Opportunities.

The joint report focused on the following three aspects of trafficking using the cases of three countries, which offer insights that are broadly applicable and could help other states in satisfying the obligation to suppress all forms of trafficking of women and girls.

[Link to article](#)

### **GICJ Seeks Action on Continuing Human Rights Abuses in Iraq**

On 19 June 2019, GICJ sent a letter to Mme. Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, informing her of several pressing human rights situations in need of attention in the Republic of Iraq. GICJ continued to point out the grave human rights consequences resulting from the domestic chaos left behind after the US-led invasion and occupation of Iraq 16 years ago. The country continues to suffer from weak governance and high levels of corruption, which permit severe and ongoing human rights violations against millions of Iraqis. GICJ urged the High Commissioner to take immediate action to address these urgent issues and to work with UN agencies and the international community to ban the militias otherwise the many human rights violations in Iraq will continue.

[Link to article](#)

### **Israel Destroys Palestinian Homes and Causes Massive Damage**

In another violation of the rights of Palestinian people by Israel, in the early hours of July 22nd, Israel demolished several buildings in the Palestinian community of Sur Bahir, affecting the livelihoods of 6,300 Palestinians. This move, according to the UN, was not compatible with Israel's obligations under international humanitarian law. GICJ called on the international community to hold to account Israel's daily violations of human rights, and exert pressure on Israel to stop these policies. We advocated for the international community to hold Israel accountable for its crimes, and urged the international community to put an end to this illegal occupation.

[Link to article](#)

## **Geneva International Centre for Justice Appeals to Stop Grave Violations against Demonstrators in Iraq**

GICJ has been receiving on-the-ground reports of ongoing and systematic human rights violations in Iraq since the protests began in July 2018. While the protestors' demands are genuine (ever since 2003, Iraq has been a hotbed of governmental corruption and has suffered continuous economic and social decline) the Iraqi leadership repeatedly refuses to respond to their demands. Instead, they are using brute force and violence to crush the protests. GICJ has received reports that the security forces and militia are using tear gas, rubber bullets, live rounds, machine guns, and bubble grenades, to disperse the demonstrators.

GICJ repeated its previous appeals to the international community to take immediate action on these urgent issues. We urged the international community to put pressure on the government of Iraq to stop using violence against protesters. We also asked to respond directly to the request of the Organising Committee of the Demonstrations in Iraq, and called on the UN concerned bodies to dispatch an international, independent investigation commission to investigate all the human rights violations in Iraq including the recent one, and to hold the perpetrators accountable.

[Link to article](#)

## **GICJ Appeals for Iraq to Respect the People's Demands**

25 October 2019, thousands of protesters were again demonstrating in Iraq against the failure of their government to provide basic public services, address corruption, and protect their fundamental human rights. As occurred during protests earlier in the month, the police and security forces met the protesters with tear gas followed by live ammunition. In Baghdad alone, 12 protesters were killed and over 1000 people have been wounded. Six of those wounded by bullets were journalists. GICJ once again condemned the actions taken against protesters and calls on the international community to take a firm stand. The continuation of human rights violations by the Iraqi government without clear international condemnation marked a serious imbalance in the international justice system. Failing to act deepens the United Nations' double standard toward Iraq and sends a negative message that undermines the credibility of the United Nations everywhere in the world.

### **Mr. Pompeo, Israeli settlements in the OPT are still unlawful**

“The establishment of Israeli civilian settlements in the West Bank is not per se inconsistent with international law.” This sentence had been pronounced by US Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo on 18 November 2019. One of the arguments he raised in his speech to support this assertion was that “calling the establishment of civilian settlements inconsistent with international law {}[hadn’t] worked. It [hadn’t] advanced the cause of peace.”

GICJ called on all states to abide by international law and work toward its strengthening. The UN Member States should avoid making declarations that go against the rule of law, the respect of international law, and the UN Charter.

[Link to article](#)



## 7. GICJ SPECIAL REPORTS

### CESCR Review of Estonia – 2019

On 19 and 20 February 2019, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) conducted its third periodic review of Estonia's human rights situation pertaining to the issues falling under the Committee's mandate. The review took place within the framework of the Committee's 65th session in Geneva.

GICJ pointed out the issues faced by the educational system and that there were serious differences in the situations of different ethnic groups in the country. GICJ supported Estonia's efforts to address these inequalities and all its other efforts to ensure the full enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights by all residents of Estonia.

[Link to article](#)

### GICJ reports to the UN Committee against Torture (CAT)

On the occasion of the 66th session of the Committee against Torture (CAT) during May 2019, GICJ contributed to a review on torture and ill-treatment of detainees held overseas by the military forces of the United Kingdom and met with members of the Committee to discuss several areas of concern. GICJ urged the UK to carry out a full inquiry into alleged acts of torture and other ill-treatment committed by, at the instigation of, or with the consent or acquiescence of, British officials.

[Link to article](#)

### The Path toward Accountability for Human Rights Abuses by Transnational Corporations

By recent estimates, transnational corporations (TNCs) control more than half of all international trade, and the annual turnover of several TNCs exceeds the GDP of most countries. As a result, TNCs have a significant and increasing influence on the well-being of people around the world.

This report explores the background of the human rights context of TNCs and the current global debate around the creation of binding rules to govern TNCs in their international activities for the purpose of protecting and promoting human rights.

[Link to report](#)

## INTERNATIONAL DAY ARTICLES



In 2018, GICJ published 23 articles explaining its position on several international issues recognized by UN International Days. To read the reports click on the International Day:

<b>24 January</b>	International Day of Education	<a href="#">Link</a>
<b>6 February</b>	International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation	<a href="#">Link</a>
<b>20 February</b>	World Day of Social Justice	<a href="#">Link</a>
<b>8 March</b>	International Women's Day	<a href="#">Link</a>
<b>22 March</b>	World Water Day	<a href="#">Link</a>
<b>3 May</b>	World Press Freedom Day	<a href="#">Link</a>
<b>5 June</b>	World Environment Day	<a href="#">Link</a>
<b>20 June</b>	World Refugee Day	<a href="#">Link</a>
<b>26 June</b>	International Day in Support of Victims of Torture	<a href="#">Link</a>
<b>18 July</b>	Nelson Mandela International Day	<a href="#">Link</a>
<b>30 July</b>	World Day Against Trafficking of Persons	<a href="#">Link</a>
<b>30 August</b>	International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances	<a href="#">Link</a>
<b>26 September</b>	International Day for the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons	<a href="#">Link</a>
<b>10 October</b>	World Day Against the Death Penalty	<a href="#">Link</a>
<b>17 October</b>	International Day for the Eradication of Poverty	<a href="#">Link</a>
<b>24 October</b>	United Nations Day	<a href="#">Link</a>
<b>2 November</b>	International Day to End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists	<a href="#">Link</a>
<b>16 November</b>	International Day for Tolerance	<a href="#">Link</a>
<b>20 November</b>	World Children's Day	<a href="#">Link</a>
<b>25 November</b>	International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women	<a href="#">Link</a>
<b>29 November</b>	International day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People	<a href="#">Link</a>
<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	<a href="#">Link</a>
<b>10 December</b>	Human Rights Day	<a href="#">Link</a>

## **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.



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