



## INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL SUPPORTING FAIR TRIAL & HUMAN RIGHTS

Registration No. 2795/2012

OFFICIAL LETTER HEAD OF THE ORGANIZATION

### THE 39<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL, 10 SEP -28 SEP 2018



*Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (left) Vojislav Šuc, President of the Human Rights Council(right), Geneva, 10 September*

The 39<sup>th</sup> session of the Human Rights Council (HRC) opened yesterday, 10 September 2018, at palais des nations, Geneva, Switzerland .

After opening the session, Mr. Vojislav Šuc – President of the HRC for the Twelfth Cycle (2018) – gave the floor to the current UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Michelle Bachelet, to deliver her first [speech](#) before the HRC since having taken the highest UN human rights position succeeding Mr. Ra'ad bin Zeid.



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### **Human rights – core purpose of the United Nations**

Ms. Bachelet, after having acknowledged the efforts of her predecessor and thanking his legacy, referring to the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), stressed that human rights are the core purpose of the United Nations.

Reaffirming that respect for human rights is in the common interest of States and that they have the primary obligation to uphold them, she highlighted the need for States to engage in multilateralism and inclusive dialogue in order to find common grounds and solve challenges facing the world. Through cooperation and coordination, including in the context of human rights mechanisms, and striving to reach consensus states can end conflicts, discrimination, and all other forms of human rights violations and bring about peace and development at the best possible standards.

### **Human rights violations**

#### **Yemen**

While addressing the most concerning human rights violations taking place currently, Ms. Bachelet mentioned the situation [Yemen](#), referring to international crimes being committed in this country by the aggressive military Saudi-led coalition, calling to a continued international and independent investigations into all allegations of violations of [international humanitarian law](#) and [war crimes](#), particularly pointing out the “horrific series of airstrikes that killed and injured thousands of civilians and children in [Al Hudeydah](#)” and the “airstrike on the school bus in [Sa’adah](#)”.

#### **Saudi Arabia**



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In referring to the situation in Saudi Arabia the High Commissioner appointed the crackdown on peaceful human rights defenders, especially defenders of gender equality and women's rights, as being "deeply disturbing". Highlighting the cases of [Samar Badawi](#) and [Nassima Al-Sadah](#), who are being held incommunicado since their arrest. The High Commissioner specifically expressed concern over the public prosecutor's recommendation of the death penalty for [Israa al-Ghomgham](#). HC Bachelet called on the Saudi authorities to release all individuals detained for exercising their fundamental freedoms, and deplored the arbitrary arrests of peaceful activists, which clearly contradicts with the spirit of the country's self-proclaimed new reforms.

### **Bahrain**

The UN Human Rights High Commissioner addressing the situation in Bahrain mentioned the large number of cases of revocation of citizenship that has been reported to the [Office](#). Ms. Bachelet said the legislation underpinning such actions should be reviewed in line with Bahrain's obligations under international law, and condemns the reports of possible [exclusion of Bahraini citizens from the forthcoming elections](#) of the National Assembly by classifying it as "disturbing". She also called for the release of all human rights defenders who are currently arbitrarily detained, including [Nabeel Rajab](#).

### **Palestine**

Ms. Bachelet remarked that the prospects of peace and respect for human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory are undermined by the continued illegal Israeli occupation.

### **Gaza**

She expressed her concerns about the ever-deepening [human rights crisis in Gaza](#) which stems from the 11 years of Israel's blockade, as well as successive



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escalations in hostilities. Also she condemned the high number of deaths and injuries of Palestinians caused by the excessive use of force by Israeli troops against peaceful civilians in the context of the recent [demonstrations along Gaza strip](#).

### **West Bank**

The HC further addressed the coercive environment created by illegal Israeli settlement enterprise in the West Bank and East Jerusalem which continues unabated, with demolitions and severe restrictions on freedom of movement of Palestinians and increasing acts of settler violence, exemplified with the imminent demolition of [Khan al Ahmar](#) – Abu al Helu, one of 46 Palestinian Bedouin communities at risk of forcible transfer in the West Bank.

### **Israel**

The High Commissioner also expressed concern over the recent adoption of the [Nation State Basic Law](#) in Israel, which institutionalizes discrimination against Israel's non-Jewish population.

ICSFT along with its partner organizations will actively engage with relevant stakeholders, delegations and UN organs to make sure that the current human rights situation in the Middle East is not forgotten and on the agenda. As per the usual ICSFT will actively engage with the council through different advocacy outlets including, side events, oral interventions, bilateral and multi-lateral meetings with relevant stakeholders.

During the 39th session, ICSFT will organize three side events titled, human rights situation in Yemen, the gulf region, and protection of minority rights . As well we will take the council's floor to deliver oral statements on reprisals, human rights



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defenders, and country focused human rights situations that needs the council's attention.

As per usual our focus during the Human Rights Council session is to bring more visibility to the human rights situation in the Middle East in particular, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and raise the level of accountability of respective governments within the frame work of the Human Rights Council. Most importantly, in doing so, we will remind countries of their human rights obligations, whether they are directly implicated in a conflict, or indirectly contributing to it

For more information, have a look at the calendar on our website [www.icsft.net](http://www.icsft.net)

We will publish our statements as they are published in our advocacy document archive.

For live updates, follow us on Twitter .@icsft #39hrc

More updates on our events coming soon!