

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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United Nations: Call to nominate independent and highly qualified candidates for the election of members to the Human Rights Committee

Amnesty International calls on all states parties to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) to nominate independent and highly qualified candidates for election to the Human Rights Committee (the Committee). The terms of half of the 18 experts serving on this body, which oversees implementation by states parties of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, will expire on 31 December 2010. Elections to fill the vacancies will take place in September at the UN in New York.

The effectiveness of the Committee and the quality of its work depends in large measure on the election of independent and highly qualified members who have a proven expertise in the area of civil and political rights, and a strong commitment to human rights. It is therefore vitally important that states parties put forward candidates who meet this standard. In addition, Amnesty International opposes the nomination and election of individuals who serve in the executive of government; this undermines the appearance, at least, of the independence and impartiality of the Committee.

In order to ensure competitive elections and that the Committee's membership includes a broad range of expertise and experience, it is important that states parties put forward a large pool of highly qualified, independent men and women from which to choose.

There is nothing under the established rules to limit the number of terms members can serve on the Committee, and members whose terms are about to expire may be re-elected. Amnesty International nevertheless encourages a regular change in membership to ensure that new experts who have different backgrounds, knowledge, skills and expertise, are elected to the Committee.

In selecting candidates to put forward for nomination, Amnesty International urges all states parties to build on the good practice established by some governments and put in place a national process for attracting and selecting candidates which is open, transparent and fair. The selection process should be widely publicised and advertised at the national level and should involve civil society organizations competent in the areas covered by the ICCPR. Further, states parties should announce their candidate(s) at the earliest possible time and provide information about the nominee's qualifications, skills and expertise.

Amnesty International believes that it is in the interest of all states parties to establish a Committee which comprises individuals who are experts in the field of civil and political rights and who are independent from government. The organization calls on all states parties to ensure that

considerations of quality prevail over those of politics in the forthcoming nomination and election process.

Background information

The Human Rights Committee monitors states parties' implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

According to Article 28 of the ICCPR, the Committee shall consist of 18 experts:

- who are nationals of the states parties to the ICCPR;
- who are persons of high moral character and recognized competence in the field of human rights (consideration being given to the usefulness of the participation of some persons having legal experience);
- and who shall serve in their personal capacity

The term of service of half of the current members of the Committee expires on 31 December 2010. States parties have been invited to submit by 1 June 2010 nominations of candidates for the elections to fill the vacancies, which will take place in New York on 2 September 2010.

States parties elect the members of the Committee by secret ballot from a list of persons who possess the above qualifications and who are nominated by states parties as candidates. Each state party may nominate not more than two candidates from among its nationals. (Article 29 ICCPR).

In the election of the Committee, states shall further give consideration to equitable geographical distribution of membership and to the representation of the different forms of civilization and of the principal legal systems. The Committee may not include more than one national of the same state (Article 31 ICCPR).

Elections take place every two years for 9 seats out of 18 in order to ensure the complete composition is not changed at one occasion. Among the current members whose term of office continues until 31 December 2012 are nationals of Algeria, Argentina, Colombia, Egypt, Ireland, Mauritius, Morocco, Sweden and the United Kingdom. Nationals of France, Madagascar, the Netherlands, Romania, South Africa, Switzerland and Tunisia have already been nominated for the election in September 2010.

The full text of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) is available at:

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/ccpr.htm>.

For more information on the Human Rights Committee see:

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrc/index.htm>

The list of candidates that have so far been nominated for the election in September 2010 is available at: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrc/elections29th.htm>.

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