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Amnesty International calls on Botswana to step up action to promote and protect human rights

Human Rights Council adopts Universal Periodic Review outcome on Botswana

Amnesty International welcomes Botswana's acceptance of a range of recommendations, including to ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,¹ to establish a national human rights institution in line with the Paris Principles,² and to combat all forms of discrimination, especially against women.³ This shows some commitment to human rights, however, it is disappointing that Botswana rejected the majority of the recommendations made to it by other states, including related to serious human rights violations.

Amnesty International deeply regrets Botswana's rejection of recommendations to guarantee the right of journalists to freedom of expression, including the right to receive and impart information.⁴ Journalists continue to be intimidated and harassed by the authorities. On 8 March 2017, three journalists from the INK Centre for Investigative Journalism were detained and threatened by plain-clothes security agents in the area where the new home of then President Khama was being constructed, amid allegations of corruption. The security agents told the journalists that they would be shot on sight if they tried to return.

The organization also regrets Botswana's rejection of recommendations to ratify the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,⁵ the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness,⁶ and to adopt legislative measures aligned with the Convention on the Rights of the Child to ensure every child's right to nationality.⁷

Botswana also rejected 19 recommendations to establish an official moratorium on the death penalty⁸ and a further eight recommendations to ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the

¹ A/HRC/38/8, recommendation 128.13 (Mauritius), A/HRC/38/8/Add.1, page 3.

² A/HRC/38/8, recommendations 127.6-127.20 (Portugal, Sierra Leone, Ukraine, South Africa, Togo, Afghanistan, Lichtenstein, Morocco, Tunisia, Greece, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Canada, Namibia, Germany).

³ A/HRC/38/8, recommendation 127.26 (Italy).

⁴ A/HRC/38/8, recommendations 128.51-128.53 (United States of America, Australia, Netherlands).

⁵ A/HRC/38/8, recommendations 128.21 (Slovakia), 128.22 (Cote d'Ivoire).

⁷ A/HRC/38/8, recommendation 128.73-128.76 (Russian Federation, Sierra Leone, Belgium, Mexico).

⁸ A/HRC/38/8, recommendations 129.19-129.37 (Montenegro, Germany, Mexico, Portugal, Ireland, Iceland, Ghana, Holy See, Australia, Belgium, Chile, Estonia, Ecuador, Canada, Uruguay, Angola, Namibia, Italy, Spain).

International Covenant on Civil and Political rights aiming at the abolition of the death penalty.⁹ This leaves a significant gap in its efforts to ensure compliance with its human rights obligations and commitments – the very objective of the UPR process. Amnesty International is encouraged, however, that Botswana accepted recommendations to hold public consultations on the death penalty,¹⁰ and as part of these consultations, urges Botswana to facilitate an open and transparent debate on the death penalty.

Background

The UN Human Rights Council adopted the outcome of the Universal Periodic Review of Botswana on 28 June 2018 during its 38th session. Prior to the adoption of the report of the review Amnesty International delivered this oral statement.

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International Secretariat, Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW, UK

www.amnesty.org

⁹ A/HRC/38/8, recommendations 129.1 – 129.6 (Slovakia, Spain, South Africa, Liechtenstein, Argentina, Sweden) and 129.16-129.18 (France, Honduras, Mozambique, Liechtenstein).

¹⁰ A/HRC/38/8, recommendations 127.28 (Rwanda), 127.29 (Ukraine).