

Amnesty International and ISHR welcome steps taken by the Special Procedures to improve their work but express concern about continuing lack of cooperation by members of the Human Rights Council

Amnesty International and ISHR welcome the report of the 26th Annual Meeting of the Special Procedures and would like to express our appreciation for the process set in motion by the Coordination Committee to discuss ways in which the Special Procedures can continue improving their work. This process is not only important for self-reflection on the part of the Special Procedures, but also for keeping the Council informed about how it can address non-cooperation by states, including lack of responses to visit requests and communications, acts of reprisals and intimidation against human rights defenders, and attacks *ad hominem* against mandate holders by UN member states.

The reworked webpage of pending visits greatly increases transparency about the status of pending visit requests. We note with concern that 16 states have never received a Special Procedures visit despite requests. We also particularly regret that Belarus, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Eritrea, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Myanmar and Israel have refused to facilitate visits by the respective country mandates. According to the report, as many as 54 states have more than five visits pending since 2015.

As per the terms of General Assembly (GA) resolution 60/251, Council members have a duty to cooperate fully with the Council and its mechanisms, including the Special Procedures. We regret that thirteen sitting Council members have received two or fewer visits since 2015, despite having over five pending visit requests, namely Angola, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of the Congo, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines and Venezuela.¹ We [and] encourage these members [them] to facilitate more regular visits by Special Procedures.

In cases where states fail consistently to cooperate with Special Procedures, this Council should take action. We also urge the Council to increase the political cost of reprisals and intimidation, and call on all members and observers to actively address the chronic under-funding of the Special Procedures.

In the implementation of the Secretary-General's Call to Action, we encourage the Coordination Committee to continue its efforts to encourage system-wide recognition and use of the Special Procedures' critical work, including as a means to follow-up on their recommendations and assessments.

Background

This statement was published in connection with the item 5 general debate at the resumed 43rd session of the Human Rights Council.

¹ The states listed are those that, according to the *Facts and figures with regard to the special procedures in 2019*, UN.Doc A/HRC/43/64/Add.1, five or more pending visit requests between 1 January 2015 and 31 December 2019, and who have in the same period facilitated two or fewer visits by the Special Procedures. Japan drew the attention to a visit by the Special Rapporteur on the elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their family members in February 2020, thereby reaching the number of three visits facilitated since 1 January 2015.