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ORAL STATEMENT
Item 4 General Debate

COUNCIL MUST TAKE ACTION ON INDIA, IRAN AND GUATEMALA

UN Human Rights Council
54th session
11 September – 13 October

Mr. President,

Shrinking space for dissent in India has involved an ever-tightening arsenal of financial and counter-terrorism laws and weaponizing these laws to crack down on human rights activities by civil society, particularly those working on the rights of marginalized communities. Conditions in the country for religious minorities worsened significantly over the last two years. Unabated violence is currently taking place between ethnic groups in the North-Eastern state of Manipur. The High Commissioner has called for the redoubling of efforts to uphold the rights of minorities facing violence and discrimination in India, and the Council must now take steps to address this deterioration in human rights under its prevention mandate.

This month marks the one-year anniversary of the “Woman Life Freedom” uprising in Iran. Over this past year Iranian authorities have committed a litany of crimes under international law in effort to crush the uprising: hundreds of unlawful killings; the arbitrary application of the death penalty; tens of thousands of arbitrary detentions; widespread torture, including rape of detainees; widespread harassment of victims’ families who call for truth and justice; and reprisals against women and girls who defy discriminatory compulsory veiling laws. To date, not one official has been criminally investigated for crimes committed during or in the aftermath of the uprising. Last week, parliament passed a new bill that would introduce even more severe penalties for defying compulsory veiling. As we look forward to the first report of the Fact-Finding Mission established by this Council, we urge states to expand their ambition in helping to combat the crisis of impunity including by exercising universal or other extra-territorial jurisdiction in relation to crimes under international law in Iran, and to deter further cycles of bloodshed.

We are deeply concerned by the ongoing criminalisation of human rights defenders, journalists and independent justice operators in Guatemala. Former prosecutor Virginia Laparra, considered by Amnesty International to be a prisoner of conscience, remains arbitrarily detained on unfounded charges since 23 February this year; her lawyer Claudia Gonzalez was also arbitrarily detained in August. We call on the Council to increase its scrutiny on the situation in Guatemala and call on the government to end its attack on human rights defenders, journalists and independent justice operators.

Thank you.