

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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United Nations: Urgent call to nominate candidates as human rights experts

In March 2008 the President of the United Nations Human Rights Council is expected to appoint up to 16 human rights experts to serve as Special Procedure mandate-holders. The Special Procedures in question deal with issues such as the right to adequate housing, the right to food, human rights defenders, indigenous people, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances, contemporary forms of slavery, extreme poverty and the human rights situations in Myanmar and Somalia.

The appointment of independent, impartial, competent and expert men and women from all regions of the world to the Special Procedures mandates is crucial to a well-functioning system of Special Procedures and to the ability of the Human Rights Council to protect and promote human rights.

The basis of the new appointment process is a public roster of eligible candidates, maintained by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR.) A Consultative Group has begun to review the candidates on the roster. By 2 February 2008, it is expected to make recommendations on suitable candidates for 16 mandates. Based on these recommendations and broad consultations, the President of the Council will then proceed with the appointments, with final approval by the Human Rights Council expected during the 7th regular session in March 2008. Additional appointments – to other Special Procedures mandates - will be made at the 8th and 9th regular sessions of the Human Rights Council in June and September 2008.

Although the establishment of the Special Procedures roster has the potential to expand the pool of persons qualified to hold Special Procedures' mandates, as of 10 January only 51 candidates were included in the public roster. Of these, only 15 are women.

For the most competent candidates to be appointed it is crucial that the Special Procedures roster, which will constitute the primary pool of eligible candidates, is extensive and broadly representative with many potential candidates from all regions and both sexes.

Amnesty International, therefore, renews its call on Governments, NGOs and relevant professional associations to send names of eligible candidates to the OHCHR for inclusion in the roster. Particular urgent attention should be dedicated to nominating candidates for the 16 vacancies that require appointment in March.

Suggestions for the Special Procedures roster should be based on the technical and objective requirements for eligible candidates for mandate holders, adopted by the Human Rights Council on 27 September 2007 (Decision 6/102). Amnesty International has developed a checklist (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/united-nations/special-procedures/checklist>) for each requirement. Account should also be taken of the exclusion from appointment to a given mandate of individuals holding decision-making positions in Government or in any other organization or entity which may give rise to a conflict of interest inherent to the mandate.

Amnesty International reminds Governments, NGOs and relevant professional associations of the importance of nominating “more women candidates for election and appointment to the human rights treaty bodies and mechanisms” as affirmed by Human Rights Council in its resolution 6/30 on integrating the human rights of women throughout the United Nations system, adopted without a vote on 14 December 2007.

Background information

The new appointment process, established in Human Rights Council Resolution 5/1 (A/HRC/5/21), has several stages. The basis of the appointment process is a roster of eligible candidates, based on technical and objective requirements, to be prepared, administered and regularly updated by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

The Consultative Group, which will make recommendations to the President of the Council, consists of Ambassadors Idriss Jazaïry, Juan Martabit, Masood Khan, Valery Loshchinin and Blaise Godet. Although they are respectively the Geneva UN Ambassadors of Algeria (African Group), Chile (GRULAC), Pakistan (Asian Group), Russian Federation (Eastern European Group) and Switzerland (Western European Group.), they serve on the Consultative Group in their personal capacities. Human Rights Council resolution 5/1 requires the Consultative Group to take into account, as appropriate, the views of stakeholders, including the current or outgoing mandate-holders, in determining the necessary expertise, experience, skills, and other relevant requirements for each mandate.

The Special Procedures mandate holders list of vacancy is available at the OHCHR website (<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/chr/special/nominations.htm>). Nominations should be send directly to the OHCHR, using the standardised form by email: hrcspecialprocedures@ohchr.org, by fax: +41 (0) 22 917 9011; or by post, addressed to: HRC Secretariat, c/o Orest Nowosad, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Room PW 4-093, Palais des Nations, 8-14 Avenue de la Paix, CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland.

Amnesty International is promoting the public roster. However, in keeping with long-established policy, Amnesty International does not take a position in favour of or against any candidate. Consequently, the organization will not put forward names for inclusion on the roster.

Further information on Amnesty International's action to promote the Special Procedures can be found at <http://www.amnesty.org/en/united-nations/special-procedures/find-the-experts>.

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