



INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL SUPPORTING FAIR TRIAL & HUMAN RIGHTS

Registration No. 2795/2012

OFFICIAL LETTER HEAD OF THE ORGANIZATION

Highlights of What's to Come During the 37th HRC session- ICSFT



The Human Rights Council opened its thirty-seventh regular session on 26 February and will continue till 23 March 2018. The first day of the council commenced by hearing addresses by António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations; Miroslav Lajčák, President of the seventy-second session of the United Nations General Assembly; Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights; and Ignazio Cassis, Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland.

António Guterres, the United Nations Secretary-General, in his opening address said member states should be part of the cure by upholding the rights of all people and all states and reminded “all parties of their absolute obligation under international humanitarian and human rights law to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure at all times; efforts to combat terrorism did not supersede those obligations”. The Secretary-General also emphasized on the outstanding work of the outgoing High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad al Hussein and commended his tremendous courage and persistence to highlight human rights concerns across the globe.

Vojislav Šuc, President of the Human Rights Council, while opening the session said that 98 dignitaries would participate in the high-level segment of the Human Rights Council, and welcomed 12 delegations from least developed countries and small island States.

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Followed by Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights' plea to uphold the rights of all and put an end to oppression which has become the dominant trend. He further emphasized that "it was the accumulating unresolved human rights violations that would spark the conflicts that could break this world, not the lack of gross domestic product."

The HRC sessions provide a space for civil society and human right organizations like International Council Supporting Fair Trial and Human Rights (ICSFT) to bring their advocacy and address the root causes for human rights violations with the aim of elevating the protection and promotion of human rights according to international standards. It is also a chance to bridge the gap between the international and local levels, by providing information about human rights and human rights violations on the ground.

This session welcomes 98 dignitaries in the high-level segment ever and 11 delegates from least developed countries and Small Island States including those without permanent representation in Geneva. At this session, 6 expert panel discussions that will provide member States and NGOs with opportunities to hear from subject-matter experts and raise questions, and relevant thematic reports will be held, and 24 resolutions will be presented, discussed, and adopted.

Among others, the following resolutions will be discussed that are of our organizations priority concerns as well.

- Resolution to promote freedom of religion, conscience, thoughts, beliefs and address discrimination (European Union)
- Resolution on the rights of the child focusing on children in humanitarian situations (European Union)
- Resolution on the prevention of genocide (Armenia)
- Resolution on rights of minorities with focus on youth (Austria)
- Resolution on cultural rights and preservation of cultural heritage (Cyprus, Switzerland, Iraq, Serbia, Greece, Argentina)
- Resolution on the integrity of the judiciary (Russia)
- Several resolutions will deal with aspects of the sustainable development goals (SDGs), including a resolution on operationalization of human rights in the implementation of the SDGs (Denmark, Chile); a resolution on an integrated approach of the Human Rights Council for the implementation of the SDGs (South Africa) ; a resolution on operational synergies with human rights and SDGs (Ecuador); and a resolution on the promotion of human rights and implementation of the SDGs through the efficient delivery of public services (Azerbaijan and cross-regional group).

We expect the human rights situation in Yemen, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and Palestine to take the center stage at this council session owing to the continuously deteriorating human rights situation in these countries. Reports of

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torture and ill-treatment by security forces and severe restrictions on the rights to free expression, assembly and association, unlawful executions and lack of investigation and independent judiciary need to be highlighted and addressed during this session. More often than not activists have been subjected to travel bans and prevented from engaging with the council. Although this council has not taken action on Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and its allies, ICSFT and other human rights NGOs have repeatedly called on the human rights council and member states to take a firm stand against authoritarian regimes and openly denounce their violations at the council session.

It is critical that the international community take immediate steps to address the human rights concerns and strongly condemn these acts which require urgent attention.

Of substance ICSFT strongly denounces the politicized and unilateral resolution on the human rights situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, Res. L. 37. This resolution in addition to being grossly biased, it ignores the atrocities caused by terrorist groups that are funded by the same western countries and their allies preaching human rights to the Syrian government - UK, USA, Turkey, Israeli and Saudi Arabia. The resolutions also presents an unfounded criticism of the legitimate Syrian government.

As was the case with previous resolutions on Syria, this resolution puts all the blame on the Syrian government for violence and falls short of recognizing the grave threat by Jihadists in Syria whose acts are aimed at destabilizing the gulf region.

Instead the resolution disregards the documented crimes of terrorist groups like ISIS and Daesh, including executions of civilians, torture, rape, recruiting children and persecuting minorities.

This continuous one sided "human rights agenda" propaganda at the human rights council raises doubts about the real intentions of those who keep tabling this resolution at the council under the disguise of human rights. It seems their politicized agenda that will further destabilize the situation in Syria will continue to be entertained by the Human Rights Council with utter disregard for the consequences on-the-ground.

The only solution is to have a comprehensive political dialogue led by the legitimate government whose approval rate is at a staggering 80% as of now, and continue to build on the peace talks in Sochi. Any efforts towards resolving the situation in Syria should showcase full commitment to the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and unity of the Syrian Arab Republic and full commitment to Syria's national sovereign equality.

We reiterate our advocacy stance and will actively campaign for its fruition during this session.

ICSFT along with its partner organizations will actively engage with relevant stakeholders, delegations and UN organs to make sure that the current human rights situation in the Middle East is not forgotten and on the agenda. As per the usual ICSFT will actively engage with the council through different advocacy outlets including, side events, oral interventions, bilateral and multi-lateral meetings with relevant stakeholders.



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During the 37th session, ICSFT will organize four side events titled, Crimes of Saudi –Emirati aggression in Yemen, Human rights in the Gulf countries, Human Rights in the Arab Region under International Relations, and Jerusalem is the Capital of Palestine. As well we will take the council's floor to deliver oral statements on reprisals, human rights defenders, and country focused human rights situations that needs the council's attention. Our focus during the Human Rights Council session is to bring more visibility to the human rights situation in the Middle East in particular Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and raise the level of accountability of respective governments within the frame work of the Human Rights Council. Most importantly, in doing so, we will remind countries of their human rights obligations, whether they are directly implicated in an armed conflict, or indirectly contributing to it

For more information, have a look at the HRC calendar on the website

We will publish our statements as they are published in our advocacy document archive. More updates coming soon

For live updates, follow us on Twitter [.@icsft](#) [#HRC37](#) [#ICSFT](#)