



INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL SUPPORTING FAIR TRIAL & HUMAN RIGHTS

Registration No. 2795/2012

OFFICIAL LETTER HEAD OF THE ORGANIZATION

CONCLUDING REMARKS ON THE 37th HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL SESSION

26 March 2018 Geneva, Switzerland

The 37th session of the Human Rights Council concluded on 23 March, 2018 in Geneva, Switzerland. The International Council Supporting Fair Trial and Human Rights successfully advocated, intervened and worked for the promotion and protection of human rights in the Middle East, through oral interventions, participation in plenary debates as well as interactive dialogues and other fora, and four conclusive side events.

After four weeks of discussion, collaboration, advocacy and dialogue at the Human Rights Council, the ICSFT was able to successfully advocate and intervene bilaterally and multilaterally with other relevant stakeholders. The ICSFT worked, alongside other stakeholder and partners in advocating for the human rights situations in Yemen, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Palestine. Resolutions presented at the conclusion of weeks of dialogue and discussion that were relevant to the ICSFT included:

- 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)
- Implementation of the SDGs through the efficient delivery of public services (Azerbaijan and cross-regional group).

To address these situations and others, the International Council Supporting Fair Trial and Human Rights facilitated the following side events and oral interventions:

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Crimes of the Saudi-Emirati aggression in Yemen after 1100 days of war, with Dr. Fouad Ibrahim as moderator, and the following notable advocates as panellists: Prof. Fadi Baoom, Prof. Kim Shareef, Prof. Azal Al Jawi, Prof. Safaa AlShami. Video of this intervention is available through a video from Sana'a.

Human Rights in Gulf Countries: Justice, with Prof Jan Fermon moderating, and the following notable panellists: Dr. Violette Daguerre, Dr. Abdul Hameed Dashti, president of ICSFT, Prof. Rudolf El-kareh, and Dr. Fouad Ibrahim, deputy president of ICSFT.

Human Rights in the Arab Region under International Relations, moderated by Dr. Hassan Jouny, and with notable panellist Dr. Abdul Hameed Dashti, president of ICSFT, Prof Souraya Assi, and Dr. Elias Khoury.

And finally, ***Jerusalem is the capital of Palestine***, moderated by Prof. Rudolf El-Kareh, with notable panellists Dr. Abdul Hameed Dashti, president of ICSFT, Dr. Hassan Jouny, Prof. Catherine Maia, and Prof. Souraya Assi.

Additionally, ICSFT participated in advocacy work comprising more than 15 oral interventions, including the following interventions made by Dr. Abdul Hameed Dashti, president of ICSFT :

Item 2. Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General – General debate

Item 3: Clustered interactive dialogue with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on violence against children and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for children and armed conflict- General debate

Item 4: an Interactive dialogue with the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic

Item 7: Human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories- General debate

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Item 9. Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance, follow-up and implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action

Item 10 High Commissioner and the Secretary-General Report and oral briefing on Yemen– General debate

During the session, ICSFT continued to advocate for the promotion and protection of human rights and human rights defenders in the Gulf Region, focusing in particular on the following issues:

- **Palestine**

The human right situation in Palestine continues to deteriorate, in spite of decades of lobbying and work. The United States continues to block advocacy attempts, in order to support the occupying power, Israel. The ICSFT advocated throughout the council for the rights of Palestinians to self-determination, for settlements by Israeli occupying powers to immediately cease, and for the occupation itself to immediately cease. Resolutions and their outcomes presented in summary of the negotiations throughout the council are as follows:

- “In a resolution, adopted by a vote of 25 in favor, 14 against and 7 abstentions, the Council determined that all legislative and administrative measures and actions taken or to be taken by Israel that sought to alter the character and legal status of the occupied Syrian Golan were null and void and would have no legal effect.
- By a vote of a vote of 43 in favour, 2 against and 1 abstention, the Council reaffirmed the inalienable, permanent and unqualified right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, and urged all States to adopt measures to promote the realization of the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people.
- The Council demanded in a resolution, adopted by a vote of 41 in favor, 3 against and 2 abstentions, that Israel cease all practices and actions that violated the human rights of the Palestinian people, demanded that Israel cease its policy of transferring prisoners from the occupied Palestinian territory into the territory of Israel, and urged it to ensure

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that any arrest, detention or trial of Palestinian children was in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

- In a resolution adopted by a vote of 34 in favor, 4 against and 8 abstentions as orally revised, the Council demanded that Israel immediately cease all settlement activities in all the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan. It further called upon all States to implement the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights in relation to the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem.
- By a vote of 27 in favor, 4 against and 15 abstentions, the Council called for the implementation of the recommendations of the independent commission of inquiry on the 2014 Gaza conflict, of the independent international fact-finding mission to investigate the implications of Israeli settlements on the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of the Palestinian people, and of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict.”¹

- **Yemen**

In spite of extensive lobbying by the ICSFT and other key stakeholders to the human rights issues on the ground, the situation in Yemen continues to be dire for human rights defenders on the ground, as the United States continues to back Saudi funding of the atrocities there. As noted by the Americans for Human Rights and Democracy in Bahrain, “Despite repeated calls for US withdrawal of support to the Saudi-led war in Yemen, [the United States’] Senate voted 55-44 on March 20, 2018 to kill a resolution that sought to curb US involvement in the war. By this act, the US confirms its complicity in war that continues to kill 1000s of women and children amidst Saudi-led airstrikes and blockade.”²

¹ <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/NewsDetail.aspx?NewsID=22897&LangID=E>

² https://twitter.com/ADHRB?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor



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- **Syria**

ICSFT strongly denounced 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.

Throughout the council there was biased and unbalanced focus on the unravelling human rights situation in Syria. The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic was established on 22 August 2011 by the Human Rights Council through resolution S-17/1 adopted at its 17th special session with a mandate to investigate all alleged violations of international human rights law since March 2011 in the Syrian Arab Republic. The debate was framed with focus on the report by the COI Syria, without recognition of US and Saudi backed weapons, armed actors, and significant financial backing, along with an unbalanced, unilateral and escalating narrative being dismissed by the majority of the international community. Notable comments from present member states during the discussion of voting for or against the resolution included the following:

The United States repeatedly deflected responsibility by stating that the COI Syria report presumed actions by the Russian Federation which included “clear identification of actions in breach of international law”, and specifically that “unguided bombs by Russian fixed wing aircrafts may amounts to war crimes.” In response, Russia stated that certain Western allied member states were “excessively emotional and seek to mislead the international community,” and that the Western backed statements were “not driven by concern of humanitarian situation in war-torn country, but with desire to reach politically motivated goals: to shield illegal armed groups from responsibility for the crimes committed, groups with are supported by resolution cosponsors. Those who have protected and continued to commit military crimes hold civilians hostage, destroy entire groups, commit terrorist attacks, take hostages, torture women and children, conduct mass killings as an example to others.”

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The ICSFT firmly condemns the unilateral, biased, and violent actions by Western powers and their allies, and confirms that these actions are further escalating the conflict, and causing bloodshed of innocent civilians. We adamantly believe that more than just lip service must be done to protect the rights of the people concerned.

- **Bahrain**

As has happened in past years, the Council failed to create a system to consistently respond to situations which require its attention, and specifically reprisals against human rights defenders and civil society in Bahrain. Systemic reprisal against human rights defenders in Bahrain continue to be the norm. During 37rd HRC session ICSFT once again pushed for an immediate end to all violations and abuses of human rights, full accountability and an end to impunity, as well as a more robust and comprehensive action from the council to increase the visibility of crimes being committed in Bahrain, focused on the issue of citizenship revocation, travel ban, arbitrary detentions and enforced disappearances.

As long as there continues to be unjust and oppressive violence, we will continue to support, affirm, and advocate for balanced truth, and justice.

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

Our statements are published in our advocacy document archive.

For live updates, follow us on Twitter @icsft #ICSFT

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