Council hears reports on Côte d'Ivoire and Syria, holds General Debate on human rights situations that require its attention

Human Rights Council
MIDDAY AND AFTERNOON 15 June 2011

Holds Interactive Dialogue with Commission of Inquiry on Côte d’Ivoire,
Hears High Commissioner Present her Reports on Côte d’Ivoire and Syria

The Human Rights Council today held an interactive dialogue with the independent, international Commission of Inquiry on Côte d’Ivoire. It also heard the High Commissioner for Human Rights present her report on the situation of human rights in Côte d’Ivoire and her preliminary report on the situation of human rights in Syria. It then held a general debate on human rights situations that require the Council’s attention.

Rodolfo Reyes Rodriguez, Vice-President of the Human Rights Council, said in its resolution 16/25, the Human Rights Council had decided to dispatch an independent, international Commission of Inquiry to investigate the facts and circumstances surrounding the allegations of serious human rights abuses and violations committed in Côte d’Ivoire following the presidential election of November 2010.

Vitit Muntabhorn, Chairperson of the Commission of Inquiry, noted that in establishing the Commission, the Human Rights Council had sent a strong signal about how important it was to combat impunity in Côte d’Ivoire. Many of the victims of violence still lived in fear of violence. Many violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law had been committed; they included summary executions, killings and arbitrary arrests. Although the situation had improved there remained occurrences of violations. Various sides were responsible for the violations. Some of the crimes committed after the post election crisis were serious and might constitute crimes against humanity. These included systemic attacks which might have been committed for reasons of political affiliation and of ethnic identity. The continued presence of armed young people in Abidjan helped to feed the feeling of insecurity in the population. The new Government must show zero tolerance for the behaviour of forces who continued to carry out acts of harsh treatment.

Côte d’Ivoire, speaking as a concerned country, said the Government took note of the report prepared by the Commission of Inquiry led by M Vitit Muntabhorn and welcomed the Commission’s recommendations. The Government had anticipated the recommendations contained in the report by already beginning implementation, demonstrating its commitment to establishing a new order, putting an end to impunity and promoting and protecting human rights. In addition to the recommendations noted in the report, including judicial and military procedures against some suspects, the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission and referral to the International Court of Justice, the Government would also add measures to create a Minister in charge of human rights and freedoms.

In the interactive dialogue with the Commission of Inquiry on Côte d’Ivoire, speakers said they were encouraged to hear that the President was willing to put in place a Commission on Truth and Reconciliation that would shed light on the crimes and violations committed. Technical assistance to all the initiatives needed to be provided. Speakers said that following the presidential elections in 2010, grave human rights violations had occurred in Côte d’Ivoire and they welcomed the efforts taken by President Ouattara to create a Government of unity. Speakers said it was essential to reconcile the various ethnic and religious groups to promote peace throughout the country, adding that the appointment by President Ouattara of Charles Konan Banny to head the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was an important step. Speakers said they looked forward to the establishment of the appropriate follow-up mechanisms to support implementation on the ground and encouraged all Member States to provide technical assistance. It was critical to work with regional organizations and speakers were encouraged by the continued engagement of the Economic Community of West African States and the African Union for a sustainable solution of the crisis in Côte d’Ivoire. Speakers expressed support for the proposal to establish an Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Côte d’Ivoire.

Speaking in the interactive dialogue were Nigeria on behalf of the African Group, Morocco, Turkey, Thailand, China, France, Brazil, European Union, Japan, Germany, Norway, Canada, Australia, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States, Russian Federation, Mexico, Senegal.


Bente Angell-Hansen, Vice President of the Human Rights Council, said that as requested by Council resolution S-14/1 on the situation of human rights in Côte d’Ivoire and by resolution S-16/1 on the situation of human rights in Syria, the Council would now listen to the presentation of the report of the High Commissioner on the situation of human rights in Côte d’Ivoire, as well as her preliminary report on the situation of human rights in Syria.

Navi Pillay, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, presenting her report on the situation of human rights in Côte d’Ivoire, said that in the face of the recent crisis in that country, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights with its field presence in the
United Nations Operation Côte d’Ivoire remained key actors in the efforts carried out with other United Nations partners to prevent violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, the protection of civilians at risk, and the securing of accountability and remedy for violations. The Human Rights Division of the United Nations Operation Côte d’Ivoire established a 24 hour hotline through which violations of human rights could be reported. Since its inception in December 2010, the call centre has received more than 12,000 calls. In a very precarious security environment, it had proven to be an essential tool for the collection of information and a vital link to civilian populations. The hotline enabled human rights officers to identify hot spots and sensitive zones and in certain cases, to prevent violations through the immediate dispatch of military and police patrols.

Presenting her preliminary report on the situation of human rights in Syria, Ms. Pillay said in accordance with Human Rights Council resolution S-16/1, the High Commissioner established a team to carry out a Fact-Finding Mission to gather and analyze information from a range of sources. Despite several official communications requesting the Government of Syria to grant access to the Fact-Finding Mission, no response had been received, which severely hampered the work of that team. Due to the impossibility of deploying a team to Syria, information was gathered from outside the country. As the human rights situation on the ground had continued to deteriorate, the High Commissioner strongly urged the Syrian Government to cooperate with the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights. Like other people in the Middle East, the people of Syria were eager to attain dignity, equity and justice for all. The Government had responded with excessive violence against unarmed protestors.

Speaking as a concerned country, Côte d’Ivoire said that at a time when the country was facing a new stage, it wanted to express thanks for all of the efforts that had been made to help Côte d’Ivoire out of the crisis. Côte d’Ivoire noted particularly the efforts to make sure that democracy and the rule of law prevailed during this crisis. The outcome of this crisis was a victory for democracy and a triumph for the cardinal values of freedom and democracy and the sacrifices of victims, refugees and others were not made in vain. Côte d’Ivoire had to consolidate the rule of law and respect for human rights in the country. Côte d’Ivoire restated its firm commitment to put an end to impunity. It remained aware that it would not be able to return to normalcy immediately but it had begun the process. Côte d’Ivoire expressed heartfelt thanks of the Government for all of the support that it had received and noted that it had been important in achieving peace and security.

The Council then held a general debate on human rights situations that require the Council’s attention.

Speaking in the general debate were Hungary on behalf of the European Union, Canada on behalf of a Group of 54 States, Netherlands on behalf of a Group of 73 States, France, Switzerland, United States, Spain, United Kingdom, China, Japan, Norway, Brazil, Belgium, Slovakia, Cuba, Pakistan, Uruguay, Algeria, Germany, Australia, Austria, New Zealand, Ireland, Canada, Iran, Sweden, Denmark, Czech Republic, Israel, Belarus, and Venezuela.

The following non-governmental organizations also took the floor: Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l’amitié entre les peuples in a joint statement, Nonviolent Radical Party Transnational and Transparty, Centrist Democratic International, Agence Internationale pour le Développement, and Centre for Human Rights and Peace Advocacy.

The following countries spoke in right of reply: Sri Lanka, Venezuela, Cuba, Zimbabwe, Britain, China, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Azerbaijan, Morocco, Ethiopia, Japan and Algeria.

The Council will meet at 9 a.m. on Thursday, 16 June to conclude its general debate on human rights situations that require the Council’s attention. It will then hold an interactive dialogue with the Independent Expert on Burundi and the Independent Expert on Haiti.

Documentation


Presentation of Report of Commission of Inquiry

VIVIT MUNTABHORN, Chairperson of the Commission of Inquiry, noted that in establishing the Commission, the Human Rights Council had sent a strong signal about how important it was to combat impunity in Côte d’Ivoire. The Commission had worked hard to carry out the mandate since it was appointed. The Commission had visited Abidjan and went to the west, north and south of Côte d’Ivoire. The Commission had spoken with political leaders as well as the authorities; the prime minister; officers from security forces; and with victims. They had met with Mr. Gbagbo and Madame Gbagbo and many former government officials who were now under arrest. Many of the victims of violence still lived in fear of violence. Many violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law had been committed; they included summar executions, killings and arbitrary arrests. Although the situation had improved there remained occurrences of violations. Various sides were responsible for the violations. Schematically, people who were seem as supporters of Ouattara suffered repression at the hands of defense and security forces and mercenaries, directly after the elections. However, persons who were seen as supporters of Mr. Gbagbo were also victims of violence. Some of the crimes committed after the post election crisis were serious and might constitute crimes against humanity. These included systemic attacks which might have been committed for reasons of political affiliation and of ethnic identity.

The continued presence of armed young people in Abidjan helped to feed the feeling of insecurity in the population. The new Government must show zero tolerance for the behaviour of forces who continued to carry out acts of harsh treatment. The Ivorian authorities with the help of humanitarian agencies must prepare a global response to this crisis to relieve the suffering. The issue of transboundary crime was another issue that the Government would have to deal with. Another major challenge lay in the need to reconcile communities. The Commission noted that most of the people they had met expressed the desire to live together peacefully. The designation of truth and reconciliation commissions was of symbolic importance. Impunity was at the core of the continuing violence in the country. Additionally, the Government of Côte d’Ivoire must make sure that those responsible for human rights violations were brought to justice. The Commission called on the High Commissioner
to bring all its authority to best assist this process. The Commission recommended that the international community lend its support to the Ivorian Government in its efforts to end impunity and establish the rule of law in the country.

Statement by Concerned Country

KOUDIO ADJOUMANI (Côte d’Ivoire), speaking as a concerned country, said the Government took note of the report prepared by the Commission of Inquiry led by Mr. Vitit Muntabhorn and welcomed the Commission’s recommendations. The Government had anticipated the recommendations contained in the report by already beginning implementation, demonstrating its commitment to establishing a new order, putting an end to impunity and promoting and protecting human rights. In addition to the recommendations noted in the report, including judicial and military procedures against some suspects, the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission and referral to the International Court of Justice, the Government would also add measures to create a Minister in charge of the human rights and freedoms. The recommendations made by the Commission of Inquiry relating to the need for technical assistance for the Government of Côte d’Ivoire to ensure proper implementation and follow-up were welcome. The Government also thanked national and international civil society organizations, notably, humanitarian agencies and human rights organizations for their contribution in managing the crisis in Côte d’Ivoire and for assisting in normalizing the social and political life in the country.

Interactive Dialogue with Commission of Inquiry

OSITADINMA ANAEDU (Nigeria), speaking on behalf of the African Group, said that the African Group commended the Commission of Inquiry for submitting their report. The African Group noted that testimonies had been heard from victims firsthand. Côte d'Ivoire had been a success story in Africa and it was unfortunate that the country had been thrown into a political crisis following the presidential elections of November 2010. The African Group was convinced that the elections were only catalysts for the violence and it was encouraging to hear from the Commission of Inquiry that communities were willing to live together. The African Group was encouraged to hear that the President was willing to put in place a Commission on Truth and Reconciliation that would shed light on the crimes and violations committed. Technical assistance to all the initiatives needed to be provided, concluded the African Group.

OMAR RABI (Morocco) said that Morocco wished to express sincere congratulations with regard to the achievement of peace and stability in Côte d’Ivoire. Morocco welcomed the fact that the Commission of Inquiry had fully complied with the mandate and had provided a detailed report. Morocco noted that this was done with the full cooperation of the Government. It further noted that the Government of Côte d’Ivoire, accepting the recommendations of the Council, had shown its commitment to protecting human rights. Côte d’Ivoire was commended for other measures taken to protect human rights. Morocco encouraged the Government to set up a mechanism for national reconciliation, to allow sustainable peace and security.

ELA GORKEM-GOKCE (Turkey) welcomed the report of the Commission of Inquiry. Following the Presidential elections in 2010, grave human rights violations had occurred in Côte d’Ivoire and Turkey welcomed the efforts taken by President Ouattara to create a Government of unity. Turkey said that it was essential to reconcile the various ethnic and religious groups to promote peace throughout the country, adding that the appointment by President Ouattara of Charles Konan Banny to head the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was an important step.

SEK WANNAMETHEE (Thailand) commended the Commission of Inquiry’s comprehensive approach in gathering information and their efforts to meet with various stakeholders from all sides. Based on the report, Thailand was deeply alarmed by the violations of international human rights law and the violence against women and children. Thailand supported all of the recommendations put forward by the Commission and agreed for the continuation of a human rights mechanism to establish an independent expert for Côte d’Ivoire and wished to ask the Commission to elaborate how the recommendations from the 2004 report could complement the existing report.

HOU PEI (China) welcomed the report of the Commission of Inquiry and its recommendations. China appreciated the efforts made by the Ivorian Government to put an end to violence and restore security in society and it was their hope that the Government and people of Côte d’Ivoire would make progress toward reconciliation and development. China, for its part, was prepared to play a positive role along with the international community to help restore peace and security in Côte d’Ivoire.

JEAN-BAPTISTE MATTEI (France) noted that the international community must provide assistance to Côte d’Ivoire. France was determined to support the efforts of the Ivorian Government with regard to re-establishing the rule of law as well as respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It was indispensable that justice be done. Certain crimes committed could be considered as war crimes and crimes against humanity. There could not be sustainable peace without reconciliation. France stressed that beyond emergency action which France had provided, it would spare no effort to lend assistance to the hundreds of thousands of refugees. France further expressed its full support to the draft resolution deposited by the African Group. It further called on the members of the Council to support the draft resolution with a view to its adoption by consensus.

The Representative of Brazil said valuable information was gathered on the ground by the Commission of Inquiry and it was now up to the new Government to ensure that the people of Côte d’Ivoire would enjoy lasting peace. Accountability for grave violations would be a central element for reconciliation. Brazil looked forward to the establishment of the appropriate follow-up mechanisms for support implementation on the ground and encouraged all Member States to provide technical assistance. Brazil said it was critical to work with regional organizations and was encouraged by the continued engagement of the Economic Community of West African States and the African Union for a sustainable solution of the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire.

NICOLE RECKINGER (European Union) welcomed this interactive dialogue. The European Union had firmly condemned the human rights violations perpetuated following the presidential elections in Côte d’Ivoire, and the end of hostilities was a turning point they supported. They also supported the Government’s commitment to national reconciliation, and combating impunity for the perpetrators of human rights violations must be a priority. The European Union welcomed the draft resolution concerning the establishment of a Commission of Inquiry and an Independent Expert to ensure monitoring and they stressed the need to reform the security sector and to support economic reconstruction. The European Union continued to work with United Nations agencies to help those Ivorians who had been displaced and continued to suffer
KENICHI SUGANUMA (Japan) noted that by visiting each region of the country in more than three weeks the Commission of Inquiry had created a report that succeeded in thoroughly outlining the situation in Côte d’Ivoire. Japan looked forward to a return to peace and progress under the new Ouattara regime. Japan was concerned about the extent of violations of international human rights and humanitarian law which continued in the country. It further took note of the current administration’s willingness to investigate the events of the conflict and to bring justice to those responsible through its judicial process as well making national reconciliation a high priority. It hoped that the steps to be take in the new administration would yield results and that the national security situation would stabilize. Japan noted that it would continue to watch both the security and human rights situations of Côte d’Ivoire.

TIMO BAUER-SAVAGE (Germany) said Germany highly encouraged the Economic Community of West African States, the African Union and the new Government to continue their efforts to restore peace, human rights and stability in Côte d’Ivoire. Germany reaffirmed its readiness to assist the Government and the people of the Côte d’Ivoire in their efforts to overcome the long political and economic crisis the country had gone through. Germany called upon the Government of Côte d’Ivoire to take all steps to protect human rights in all parts of the country. Germany was concerned by the situation in the justice and penitentiary system and said that sustainable reforms of the police and the military was another important point. Germany invited the Government of Côte d’Ivoire to cooperate with the international community and the Human Rights Council to enhance the human rights situation.

BAARD HJELOE (Norway) commended the Commission of Inquiry for the report on the human rights situation in Côte d’Ivoire, which was of great concern to the Norwegian Government. The report addressed a series of issues that were cause for great concern, including systematic killing and rape as part of general attacks based on supposed political or ethnic belonging; the excessive use of force against demonstrators; arbitrary detentions; enforced disappearances; and torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. Especially worrying were accounts of acts of sexual violence against women and the effect of the conflict on children; such acts were intolerable. Unlawful acts of violence must not go unpunished, regardless of which side of the conflict was responsible for the acts. Norway strongly encouraged the Government of Côte d’Ivoire to adhere immediately to the recommendations of the Commission, particularly with regards to the fight against impunity for the perpetrators of human rights abuses through prosecution of suspects by the national judiciary and military tribunals. It was crucial that transparent and impartial investigations were made to this end.

ANNE-TAMARA LORRE (Canada) said Canada was grateful to the members of the Commission of Inquiry for their report. Canada was relieved that the political situation in Côte d’Ivoire was stabilizing. The investiture of President Ouattara was critical. However the culture of impunity and the breakdown of the judiciary since the 1990s remained the biggest obstacles to peace. Canada was concerned about the violence against pro Gbagbo forces and called upon President Ouattara to put an immediate end to such acts of violence.

PETER WOOLCOTT (Australia) commended the active involvement of the United Nations in supporting the humanitarian response and investigations of human rights violations in Côte d’Ivoire. Australia noted that some violations of human rights and international law committed during the conflict could constitute crimes against humanity and war crimes. Australia was deeply concerned by the 3,000 deaths the Commission estimated to have resulted from human rights abuses and strongly affirmed that those responsible for should be brought to justice. The Australian Government supported the engagement of the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States with Côte d’Ivoire as vital to regional stability.

ANNIKA ABERG (Sweden) said that the violence that followed in the wake of the presidential election in November 2010 caused a serious human rights and humanitarian crisis in Côte d’Ivoire. The report of the Commission reached important conclusions with regard to a number of serious violations of international human rights law and humanitarian law. This was a key instrument in order to establish accountability and the report must be followed up by exhaustive, impartial and transparent investigations into the allegations. Sweden remained concerned about ongoing violence and fighting, especially in the country’s western parts, resulting in deaths and injuries as well as exacerbating the serious humanitarian situation. Sweden would therefore like to join the Commission in encouraging the Ivoirian Government to undertake the necessary efforts to combat past and present impunity for those responsible for or involved in serious human rights violations, in particular acts of sexual violence against women and children. Ensuring respect for human rights prevented conflict, and accountability for violations of human rights was necessary in order to end impunity and make peace sustainable.

PETER GOODERHAM (United Kingdom) said that it was important that Côte d’Ivoire now tackle impunity through an independent and transparent mechanism, investigating all allegations of human rights violations and abuses and ensuring those deemed responsible were held to account. Tackling impunity was particularly important as post-conflict efforts moved forward and vital to ensuring long-term stability for the Ivoirian people. It was also important that new democratic structures and human rights mechanisms were enshrined in law, so that they had a practical effect and were universal in their application. In this regard an Independent Expert would be an invaluable and welcome resource in supporting the Government of Côte d’Ivoire. The United Kingdom asked the Independent Expert what complimentary role he thought the United Nations Operation in Côte d’Ivoire could take to support the implementation of his recommendations and the work of the Independent Expert.

URSKA CAS SVETEK (Slovenia) said Slovenia remained concerned about the continuous and serious human rights violations in Côte d’Ivoire. In its report the Commission of Inquiry highlighted the violations committed against children by both sides to the conflict, including the use of children and youth in conflict-related activities. Slovenia would like to ask the members of the Commission of Inquiry about their views on measures to be taken to foster harmonious coexistence among the young generations of Côte d’Ivoire. Slovenia fully supported the Commission’s recommendation that the Human Rights Council should establish an independent mechanism on the human rights situation in Côte d’Ivoire.

EILEEN CHAMBERLAIN DONAHOE (United States) said that by convening the Special Session of the Council in December and creating the Commission of Inquiry in March, the international community sent a strong, unified message expressing profound concern regarding human rights abuses and violations and insisting upon respect for the democratic process. Now they must follow through on the commitment of the Ivoirian people by ensuring that human rights remained a priority in Côte d’Ivoire. The United States welcomed the report’s
recommendation to create a mechanism to ensure follow-up to the Commission’s work and to assist the Government in combating impunity. The United States was thus pleased by the Ivorian initiative in the Council to create an Independent Expert for this purpose. Continued oversight was a clear indication of that Government’s commitment to respect human rights and take steps toward reconciliation. This initiative deserved their strong support as a Special Procedures mandate was a unique mechanism for independent oversight and focused, regular reporting of the human rights situation. The international community must consider these recommendations with a view towards ensuring accountability for those responsible for serious human rights violations and abuses.

SERGEY KONDRATIEV (Russian Federation) took note of the report of the Commission of Inquiry and agreed with the experts that at the basis of the conflict was a post-election period breeding with social and political unrest. The Russian Federation was concerned about the large number of dead and injured and the use of force by militias, UN Peacekeepers and other military units. The Russian Federation was concerned about crimes committed based on ethnic, religious or other differences. This violence needed to be halted in order to prevent an all out civil war. The Russian Federation urged all parties to respect human rights and humanitarian standards and urged parties to treat detainees in a humane way. The Russian Federation supported the recommendations of the Commission to bring all culprits to justice. The UN Mission in Côte d’Ivoire needed to do all it could to establish a sustainable political settlement, national reconciliations, and democratic reforms. The Russian Federation was willing to support international steps to aid Côte d’Ivoire in these efforts.

LILIANA PADILLA RODRIGUEZ (Mexico) said the commitment shown by the Government of Côte d’Ivoire to achieve effective national reconciliation was critical. Mexico supported the conclusions of the Commission of Inquiry and supported the Government of Côte d’Ivoire’s acceptance of the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court. The Government of Mexico also backed the appointment of a Human Rights Council mechanism to follow up on the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry.

JURG LAUBER (Switzerland) said that Switzerland was concerned about the humanitarian crisis that continued to be rife in the country, including the situation of internally displaced persons and refugees. They were further concerned by reports that violations were still taking place in the country. Switzerland was pleased by the new Government’s expressed commitment to end impunity. Those responsible for human rights violations should be brought justice and investigations should be exhaustive, impartial and transparent. Switzerland was also pleased that the Government had agreed to work with the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court to bring perpetrators to justice and it supported the establishment of an Independent Expert to monitor the human rights situation in Côte d’Ivoire.

BABAKAR BA (Senegal) welcomed the report of the Commission of Inquiry on Côte d’Ivoire. It was a thorough report providing up-to-date information on events surrounding the presidential elections. The report provided specific information and detailed evidence on the widespread human rights violations committed. This allowed for the assessment of the scale and scope of the acts committed during the post-conflict situation. This was also important for national reconciliation, stability, security, the establishment of democracy, the fight against trafficking of arms and humans, and the situation of women and children. Senegal believed that such actions were praiseworthy initiatives that gave rise to a firm hope on the part of the authorities to address the causes and consequences of the conflict. Senegal believed that Côte d’Ivoire would need technical and financial support to address these issues and supported a draft resolution on Côte d’Ivoire.

JULIE GROMELLON, of International Federation of Human Rights Leagues, called upon the Government to establish a process for truth, justice and reconciliation and urged that this body would meet international standards in providing equity and justice. The International Federation called on the Government of the Côte d’Ivoire to immediately cease human rights violations, especially those committed by the security forces. A mechanism should be established to support the implementation of the Commission of Inquiry’s recommendations and to counter impunity and implement the reforms necessary in the military and justice sectors.

JOSE LUIS DIAZ, of Amnesty International, said there was an urgent need to protect Ivorians at risk. Insecurity continued to be pervasive, notably in Abidjan and eastern parts of the country where real or perceived supporters of the former President Laurent Gbagbo were still being targeted. The insecurity was preventing an estimated 500,000 internally displaced persons and refugees from returning home, recovering their land and resuming their livelihoods. This risk caused a long-standing problem of displacement in Côte d’Ivoire and the region. Amnesty International called on the Human Rights Council to urge the Ivorian authorities to allow these detainees visits by the International Committee of the Red Cross and their relatives.

JULIE DE RIVERO, of Human Rights Watch, said the Commission of Inquiry had highlighted the serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law committed by all parties. Accountability for serious crimes was essential for the victims and for rebuilding respect for the rule of law. Impunity risked fueling further abuses. Human Rights Watch called on the Human Rights Council to act on the Commission’s recommendation to make public the 2004 Commission of Inquiry report. The Commission’s mandate should be extended to publish a longer report that included the breadth of its fieldwork. Human Rights Watch welcomed the Council’s attention to the grave crimes committed in Côte d’Ivoire and urged members to work for the long-term promotion of human rights there.

MAURICE KATALA, of Action internationale pour la paix et le développement dans la région des Grands Lacs (AIPD), said that since the controversial presidential elections of 2010, the situation had been exacerbated by widespread attacks on human rights which continued to take place after the intervention of French forces of the Licorne operation. This intervention was tied to the protection of natural resources, economic interests and the geopolitical position of Côte d’Ivoire in Africa. The protection and promotion of human rights was not the concern of President Sarkozy. The Ivorian crisis, which was far from being over, required a review of the cynical world order. The intrusion of France in the contentious Ivorian election and the selective involvement of the United Nations complicated the efforts for national truth and reconciliation supported by the African Union. Establishing a Truth and Reconciliation Commission before establishing the responsibility of France and the rebels would have serious consequences for the future of Côte d’Ivoire. Either those who committed crimes were pardoned or reconciled, or they were punished. Action International pour la Paix et le développement dan la région des grands lacs called on the Human Rights Council to evaluate practices in Africa that were financed and led from abroad by those with economic power.

MALUZA WASILUADIO MAVULA, of International Committee for the Respect and Application of the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights, said the military intervention by France seriously aggravated the crisis in Côte d’Ivoire and opened the way to one of the greatest human tragedies in recent years. France and its allies in the mission to maintain peace in Côte D’Ivoire bore before history a heavy responsibility for this crime of war. The deep disdain shown by France towards human rights with regard to the military intervention in March...
KHADDJA KHADA, of Femmes Africa Solidarité, noted that speaking at the sixteenth session of the Council, Femmes Africa Solidarité had called for the establishment of a Commission of Inquiry on the situation in Côte d’Ivoire and that this had been done. A Truth and Reconciliation Commission had been created for that purpose. Femmes Africa Solidarité noted that the women of Côte d’Ivoire had called for their place in the reconciliation. They called to be allowed to make their contribution. Ivorian women needed to spearhead the reconciliation because of the role that they had always played, because women were first and foremost mediators. Femmes Africa Solidarité stressed that with the support of UN Women, it had called in New York for the strengthening of peace keeping forces.

Concluding Remarks

VITIT MUNTABHORN, Chairperson of the Commission of Inquiry, in reply to questions raised during the interactive dialogue, said that the Commission of Inquiry in 2004 had highlighted the need for judicial reform, to take action against impunity and the possibility of linking up with the International Criminal Court and provided essential background information for the current report. The Commission of Truth and Reconciliation was welcomed and there should be access to justice for victims. The army required professionalization, human rights training and the elimination of uncontrolled elements which caused damage elsewhere. There should be a promotion of youth activities on human right to ensure empathy for cross cultural understanding. The United Nations Operation in Côte d’Ivoire was a physical presence whose role should be reinforced for the prevention of violations and the protection of citizens.

REINE ALAPINA-GANSOU, Member of the Commission of Inquiry, said she wanted to return to the issue of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Ms. Alapina-Gansou stated that the Commission was to be an inclusive body involving all stakeholders which would allow Côte d’Ivoire to restore peace. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission would base its work on the past experiences and best practices of former truth and reconciliation bodies. The International Criminal Court was a judicial body undertaking important work. The work to be done by the Commission of Inquiry would contribute to the International Criminal Court’s work.

SULIMAN BALDO, Member of the Commission of Inquiry, in response to questions raised, noted that there was no identifiable chain of command of the army. The army of the Fourth Republic had been treating elements of the former army with heavy handedness. It remained important to begin the task of unifying the army. There was confusion between the army and the gendarmeries because people had arbitrarily taken up uniforms of various different forces. He noted that youth was a pressing issue. The youth issue was not only about child soldiers but also the violence of young people that had been fostered by authorities during the conflict. The dimension of youth remained a key priority as it remained for the Government to address violence, the culture of impunity and the effects of the economic crisis. Mr. Baldo said that some of the members of militias were in reception areas for refugees and they were a security threat, not only for Côte d’Ivoire but for countries that had received them as refugees.

VITIT MUNTABHORN, Chairperson of the Commission of Inquiry, in reply to questions raised during the interactive dialogue, said that there was a complementary relationship between the Human Rights Council Commission of Inquiry and the International Criminal Court; the Commission of Inquiry was focused on hearing the stories of victims and witnessing their experiences while the International Criminal Court was a judicial body.

Documentation


The Preliminary Report of the High Commissioner on the situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic, (A/HRC/17/CRP.1), addresses the period 15 March to 15 June 2011. During this period, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) was unable to deploy staff on the ground in Syria and, until recently, to other countries where Syrian refugees had fled. This hampered the process of gathering information directly from victims of human rights violations, eyewitnesses and others. Therefore, much of the information contained in this report is based on information received from United Nations partners, human rights defenders, national and international human rights organizations, civil society organizations, media sources and other individuals, including a small number of victims of human rights violations and eyewitnesses from Syria.

Presentation of Reports by High Commissioner on Situation of Human Rights in Côte d’Ivoire and in Syria

NAVI PILLAY, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, introducing her report on the situation of human rights in Côte d’Ivoire, said that in the face of the recent crisis in that country, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights with its field presence in the United Nations Operation Côte d’Ivoire remained key actors in the efforts carried out with other United Nations partners to prevent violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, the protection of civilians at risk, and the securing of accountability and remedies for violations. The Human Rights Division of the United Nations Operation Côte d’Ivoire established a 24 hour hotline through which violations of human rights could be reported. Since its inception in December 2010, the call centre has received more than 12,000 calls. In a very precarious security environment, it had proven to be an essential tool for the collection of information and a vital link to civilian populations. The hotline enabled human rights officers to identify hot spots and sensitive zones and in certain cases, to prevent violations through the immediate dispatch of military and police patrols. As part of the United Nations coordinated response, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights conducted a mission to Côte d’Ivoire from 2 to 9 April led by Assistant Secretary-General Ivan Simonovic. The mission assessed the human rights situation in the country and reminded all parties of their obligation to respect international human right and humanitarian law and of the importance of bringing perpetrators to justice as a pre-requisite to sustainable peace. The Assistant Secretary-General had the opportunity to meet with President Alassane Ouattara and a variety of high level officials, including former and present
cabinet members. On 13 April, the High Commissioner for Human Rights participated in Security Council consultations on the situation in Côte d’Ivoire where she stressed that the country had a history of human rights violations without any accountability or redress and noted that in 2004 a Commission of Inquiry established by the Secretary-General identified alleged perpetrators and recommended accountability mechanisms, which were never created.

The High Commissioner said that the lead up to the arrest of Laurent Gbagbo was marked by a serious escalation of violence and the deterioration of the human rights situation, exacerbated by the propagation of inflammatory messages, including through state television. Since then, security in Abidjan and many places in the west of Côte d’Ivoire had improved. However, the human rights situation remained of serious concern. Throughout the reporting period, there were reports of excessive and indiscriminate use of force against civilians, retaliatory killings and summary executions, enforced disappearances, torture, arbitrary arrest and detention, extortion, pillaging and sexual and gender-based violence. In April 2011, a United Nations Operation in Côte d’Ivoire investigative mission was deployed to the west of the country for more than a month where it conducted an exhaustive investigation. The mission found that at least 1,012 persons, including 103 women and 42 children were killed and 46 rape cases including pregnant women and two minors were documented in connection with the crisis. Repeated intercommunity clashes and violent confrontations between Mr. Gbagbo’s loyalists, aided by militiamen and mercenaries and pro-Ouattara forces supported by militia composed of traditional hunters had occurred.

Lack of discipline and violence on the part of the newly established army which was composed of several different groups with no clear command structure were also of serious concern. There were reports alleging that soldiers were involved in human rights violations in both Abidjan and the rest of the country, including summary executions, arbitrary arrest, torture, rape, looting and extortion. Rebuilding social cohesion and fostering reconciliation between communities appeared to be a difficult undertaking but this task was both urgent and necessary and should be a priority of the Government of Côte d’Ivoire and would require the support of the international community. The creation of a Dialogue, Truth and Reconciliation Commission could play a significant role in this regard, but could not replace measures to ensure criminal accountability. Some concerns were expressed about the lack of consultation and the attempt to jump-start the process through a swift appointment of the commissioners without clear terms of reference or legal framework for the operation of the Commission. Transitional justice processes should be comprehensive and inter-connected, including prosecutions, reparations, vetting, reform of the security sector and the judiciary. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights stood ready to assess President Ouattara and his Government in the development of a transitional justice strategy for the country.

Like other people in the Middle East, the people of Syria were eager to attain dignity, equity and justice for all. They were calling for change and sought a democratic system of government that respected their human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Government had responded with excessive violence against unarmed protestors. The High Commissioner expressed her grave concern for the human rights and humanitarian crisis the country was facing. Claims and counterclaims required independent investigation and verification and to this end, the High Commissioner considered wholly inadequate the Syrian Government’s invitation to hand-picked journalists to visit selected areas in order to document the existence of alleged mass graves and the confessions of members of armed groups. This initiative came at a time when both foreign journalists and independent human rights groups were barred from Syria. Further the Government had severely curtailed communications to prevent news of the crackdown from filtering through.

The increasing use of heavy weaponry against protestors and bystanders had had grave consequences as was seen from the disturbing reports from Dara’a a few weeks ago. The mounting casualty rate among civilians was alarming. It underscored the Syrian Government’s lack of restraint in its efforts to crush dissent. The number of those killed in incidents involving protestors was believed to have exceeded 1,100 persons, including women and children. On June 9, the High Commissioner publicly condemned the dire human rights situation in Syria and reiterated the request that the Fact-Finding Mission be granted access and cooperation. Once again, the High Commissioner called upon the Syrian Government to halt its assault on its own people, to desist from using excessive force and to respect obligations of human rights law. The High Commissioner welcomed measures taken by neighboring countries to allow Syrians fleeing their homes to cross their borders into safety and urged all neighboring countries to keep their border open for as long as necessary and to extend their collaboration to the High Commissioner’s team.

Statements by Concerned Country

KOUADIO ADJOUANI (Côte d’Ivoire), speaking as a concerned country, thanked the High Commissioner for the presentation of the report on the outbreak of the conflict after the 2010 November elections. At a time when the country was facing a new stage, it wanted to express thanks for all of the efforts that had been made to help Côte d’Ivoire out of the crisis. Côte d’Ivoire noted particularly the efforts to make sure that democracy and the rule law prevailed during this crisis. The outcome of this crisis was a victory for democracy and a triumph for the cardinal values of freedom and democracy and the sacrifices of victims, refugees and others were not made in vain. Côte d’Ivoire had to consolidate the rule of law and respect for human rights in the country. Côte d’Ivoire restated its firm commitment to put an end to impunity. It remained aware that it would not be able to return to normalcy immediately but it had begun the process. Côte d’Ivoire expressed the heartfelt thanks of the Government for all of the support that it had received and noted that it had been important in achieving peace and security.

General Debate on Human Rights Situations that Require the Council’s Attention

ANDRAS DEKANY (Hungary), speaking on behalf of the European Union, condemned in the strongest terms the ongoing repression in Syria and the unacceptable violence used by military and security forces against protestors. Those responsible should be held accountable. The European Union called for the immediate release of all those held for their participation in peaceful protests and condemned the arrest of...
European Union called for the immediate release of all those held for their participation in peaceful protest and condemned the arrest of Syrian journalists. The European Union was deeply concerned by the human rights situation in Belarus and reiterated its demand for the immediate release of all political prisoners and the end to the persecution of democratic forces. The European Union had tabled a resolution concerning the human rights situation in Belarus providing for a strong follow-up mechanism. The European Union deplored the human right situation in Bahrain and was concerned about the alleged cases of torture and ill-treatment as well as by the reported deaths of individuals in custody. With regard to Yemen, the European Union condemned in the strongest terms the continued use of violence against peaceful protestors which should stop immediately. The European Union noted that the report of the Secretary-General on the situation of human right in Iran clearly indicated that the crackdown on human rights defenders, women’s rights activists, journalists and members of the opposition had been intensified. The European Union called on Iran to cooperate with the recently established Special Rapporteur. The European Union expressed concern for the human rights situations in Libya, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Camp Ashraf in Iraq. The European Union expressed concern at the deterioration of the human rights situation in China and called on the Chinese authorities to immediately end arbitrary arrests and disappearances, clarify the whereabouts of all disappeared persons and to release all of those who had been detained for exercising their right to freedom of expression.

ALISON LECLAIRE CHRISTIE (Canada), speaking on behalf of a Group of 54 States, said that they fully shared the concerns of the Human Rights Council, the High Commissioner and the more than 11 Special Procedures who had expressed concern about the human rights situation in Syria. More than 1,000 peaceful protestors had reportedly been killed to date and thousands had been arbitrarily detained. There were reports of arbitrary detentions of men, women and children, which needed to be independently verified. Credible and impartial investigations needed to be conducted to bring those responsible for attacks on innocent civilians to justice. Injured and wounded people needed to be able to seek medical help without fear of reprisals and the Group of 54 States called on the Government of Syria to respect freedom of expression, association and the media. Arbitrary arrest, detention and torture, including of political dissidents and members of the media, must cease immediately. They urged the Government of Syria to fully cooperate with the Council and allow the High Commissioner unfettered access to the country.

BOUDEWIJN J. VAN EENENNAAM (Netherlands), speaking on behalf of a Group of 73 States, called on the Government of Yemen to do everything in its power to resolve the crisis in that country. The States were troubled by reports of killings, disappearances and deaths suffered by children and women and called on all parties to respect human rights and to hold those who had violated human rights accountable. The international community should support Yemen and other stakeholders to achieve these objectives. The States welcomed the invitation by the Government of Yemen to invite the High Commissioner for Human Rights to visit Yemen.

JEAN-BAPTISTE MATTEI (France) said the situation in Syria was marked by increased brutality toward the citizens. The regime should yield to the calls by United Nations agencies, human rights bodies and others in the international community and halt these acts. The situation in Libya was also preoccupying and France called for the immediate cessation of violence by the Gaddafi regime. France condemned human rights violations in Yemen and urged the adoption of the political transition suggested by the Gulf Cooperation Commission and acceptance of a mission by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. France urged the authorities in Bahrain to allow for dialogue and reconciliation, guarantee human rights and not execute those condemned to death. In Iran, many had been arrested and were subject to heavy sentences. France appealed to Iran to cooperate with the Special Rapporteur and allow the Special Rapporteur to visit. Regarding Sri Lanka, France supported the work of the Secretary-General’ s Panel of Experts and urged the Government to investigate human rights violations and pursue national reconciliation. France was concerned about the increasing pressure put on human rights advocates in China. Regarding Belarus, France was concerned about the sentencing of opposition politicians, journalists, human rights defenders and others, and thus would support the adoption of a resolution on Belarus.

JURG LAUBER (Switzerland) welcomed the fact that the Council had reacted so quickly to matters that had arisen over the last few months, but they were convinced that the international community could do more. Switzerland called on the Government of Yemen to cease the violence. It required independent bodies to establish the facts and people responsible for acts of violence and torture should be brought to justice. Switzerland welcomed the fact that the High Commissioner would soon visit Bahrain and invited her to submit a report to the Council Concerning Syria, Switzerland condemned the brutal repression exercised by the Government and the disproportionate use of force against a population making legitimate claims for fundamental rights and freedoms. In Uganda, Switzerland called for the prosecution and judgment for perpetrators of acts of torture and extrajudicial killings and Switzerland decried the attitude toward homosexuals. Human rights applied to all with no discrimination, including on the basis of sexual identity or orientation. Regarding Myanmar, Switzerland remained concerned about grave human rights violations against ethnic minorities, despite measures put into place by the new Government. The liberation of several political prisoners was insufficient and the Swiss Government called on the Government of Myanmar to receive the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar without delay.

EILEEN CHAMBERLAIN DONAHOE (United States) said the United States condemned in the strongest possible terms the killing of Iran activist Haleh Sahabi at her father’s funeral. Eyewitness accounts made it clear that she died as a result of reprehensible actions by Iranian security forces. Burma continued to hold over 2,000 political prisoners and routinely violated the rights of its citizens, including ethnic minority populations. China’s growing number of arrests and detentions of lawyers, activists, bloggers, artists, religious believers, and their families and its use of extra-legal measures undermined the rule of law. The Government restricted freedom of religion and expression, including criminalizing dissent on the Internet and had reportedly removed over 300 Tibetan Buddhist monks from the Kirti Monastery. Belarus sentenced three opposition presidential candidates to prison and gave two more suspended sentences. In Zimbabwe abuses in the Marange diamond fields continued, along with arrests of political party and civil society members. Cuba continued to restrict fundamental freedoms and human rights using short term detention and government orchestrated mob violence to suppress dissent. In Venezuela, restrictions on civil society were severe and the erosion of democratic institutions continued with decree powers given to the executive. The Government of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea continued to violate the human rights of its citizens and that regime’s treatment of its own people was deplorable. In Sudan, violations of international humanitarian law and human rights abuses continued. Actions by the Sudanese Government, in Darfur, Abyei and Southern Kordofan had resulted in civilian displacement and casualties. The Syrian Government continued to repress the legitimate demands of the people through killings, torture, and arbitrary arrest. In Yemen, hundreds of people had died and over 8,000 had been wounded in clashes with security forces. In Libya, Gaddafi had launched airstrikes on civilians, violently repressed demonstrations, tortured prisoners and targeted perceived opponents. In Sri Lanka the United States was concerned by the allegations in the Panel of Experts report and was considering its recommendations and urged the Government of Sri Lanka to work with the Tamil National Alliance to achieve reconciliation.
AGUSTIN SANTOS MARAVER (Spain) said Spain was concerned about the violations committed during peaceful protests and demonstrations in recent weeks as occurred in Bahrain, Syria, Yemen and Libya which was prohibited by international law. Spain called on these Governments to assure the appropriate use of force to avoid the loss of human life. Human rights violations needed to be investigated and perpetrators brought to justice. Political protest needed to be channeled into political dialogue. Spain was worried about the human rights situation in Côte d’Ivoire, particularly given evidence that both sides had committed human rights violations. Spain hoped that President Ouattara and other responsible authorities would lead the way to credibility. Spain read with great interest the report on the human rights situation in Sri Lanka and called on the Council to take the recommendations seriously. A credible national mechanism for investigating human rights violations should be established. Spain expressed concern about the situation in Belarus that took place after the elections in 2010, particularly violations of human rights committed against journalists, human rights defenders and opposition members. Spain also called on the UN to take positive steps in the area of human rights through dialogue and cooperation with the international community, including with the Special Rapporteur.

PETER GOODERHAM (United Kingdom) said that the United Kingdom was deeply disturbed by the deteriorating situation in Syria, particularly by reports that opposition figures and human rights activists had been detained and tortured. The United Kingdom called on the Syrian Government to treat detainees in accordance with international standards, particularly the prohibition of torture. The United Kingdom then called on all parties involved in the escalating crisis in Yemen to prevent bloodshed. They were particularly concerned by the violent tactics used by the security forces against peaceful protesters. The United Kingdom called on the Government of Yemen to act with restraint and to take account of the legitimate aspirations of citizens. The United Kingdom also spoke about concerns in Bahrain and Sri Lanka and said that the state of human rights in many parts of the world remained fragile, including in Zimbabwe, Eritrea and Burma. The United Kingdom called on the Governments of these countries to live up to their international human rights obligations, end arbitrary detention, release political prisoners and engage in a meaningful dialogue with all the main political forces in society.

JIAN YINGFENG (China) said that the Human Rights Council in reviewing item 4 should follow the following principles: appropriately settle differences through dialogue and cooperation, respect different practices emanating from specific cultural traditions and do away with the practice of using human rights as a means to pursue other political based agendas. China hoped that stability and order could be restored in Northern Africa. China followed the principle of non-involvement in other countries’ internal affairs and urged the international community to play a constructive role by creating favorable conditions for the return of peace and stable development in North Africa. China noted that the United States had not taken any effective measures to ratify the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and had not carried out investigations into the killing of civilians in Afghanistan and Iraq. The American Government controlled the right of expression on the Internet through the guise of combating terrorism. China was also concerned about Islamophobia and the negative attitude against Jewish people and Roma that existed in Europe, in addition to the rise of anti-immigrant statements.

KENICHI SUGANUMA (Japan) said the recent Special Sessions on Côte d’Ivoire, Libya and Syria had demonstrated that the Human Rights Council could respond swiftly and flexibly to various situations. Japan supported such initiatives and reaffirmed its conviction that each Government should respond sincerely to the aspirations of its people, governed based on their will and fully protect and promote human rights. The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, grave human rights violations, such as lack of access to food, the miserable state of detention facilities and severe restrictions on the freedom of opinion and expression persisted. The issue of abductions remained unsolved. Japan called with the utmost urgency for a rapid resolution of the issue. Japan strongly urged the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea authorities to take measures toward improvement of the human rights situation in cooperation with the international community including accepting a visit by the Special Rapporteur. Japan fully supported the efforts in the Middle East and North Africa toward a stable transition to democracy and the realization of domestic reforms. Japan strongly condemned the use of excessive force against citizens in Libya and Syria. Japan viewed the Myanmar Government’s release of and granting of amnesty to some of its prisoners of conscience in May as a positive step towards the process of national reconciliation. Japan, however, strongly hoped the Government would take further positive actions for democratization and national reconciliation. Japan took note of and supported Sri Lanka’s national reconciliation efforts toward the realization of lasting peace. It was crucial that the Sri Lankan Government take the lead in addressing the human rights violations that took place and make efforts toward national reconciliation. Japan had been holding a series of bilateral human rights dialogues with the Government of Iran and hoped Iran would continue to take positive steps in the area of human rights through dialogue and cooperation with the international community, including with the new Special Rapporteur.

GEIR SJOBERG (Norway) said that Norway was deeply concerned about the human rights situation and the use of force against protesters in Bahrain. They had received disturbing reports that individuals had been arrested, punished, or let go from their jobs because of their actual or alleged participation in protests during the last few months. Norway urged the Government of Bahrain to create the conditions for a real and open dialogue with all segments of Bahraini society. Norway was also concerned about the human rights situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, particularly in the eastern parts of the country where abuses carried out by the Government army and armed groups, including sexual violence, were widespread. Norway urged national and local authorities to use the upcoming elections to strengthen fundamental human rights and freedoms and to ensure a political culture which allowed people to freely express their rights. Norway continued to be concerned by the situation in Swaziland and they appealed to the Government there to engage with its citizens on all dimensions to achieve an improved economic and social development and to seek an open and constructive dialogue with relevant stakeholders. The situation in Belarus continue to give cause for grave concern. The series of sentences against leading opposition politicians and others who took part in the demonstrations after the presidential election last December were another step in the wrong direction. Norway once again called on the Belarusian authorities to release all political prisoners.

MARIA NAZARETH FARANI AZEVEDO (Brazil) stated that Brazil was seriously concerned about the intensification of violence in Syria. Brazil commended the openness of the Yemen Government but the Council should remain engaged to address human rights there. Demands for freedom of expression, good governance and inclusive economic growth confirmed the universality of human rights. There was no dignity with repression. The universality of human rights should guide the work of the Human Rights Council. The Council had responded appropriately to human rights situations in Côte d’Ivoire, Libya and Syria, but had not given support to other populations in similar situations. There was no one-size-fits all response to human rights violations which was why Brazil advocated the diversification of tools available to the Council. Even when unfolding and rights-holders faced violence and death, the Human Rights Council was hampered. Doubt standards undermined the legitimacy of the Human Rights Council. Brazil remained committed to a Human Rights Council that was
responsible to all serious violations in a way that served the victims in the first place. This would require a genuine interest in collectively assessing the situation on the ground. Outcomes should be the result of debates; debates should not be the result of ready-made outcomes.

FRANCOIS ROUX (Belgium) said the uprisings in North Africa and the Middle East showed that people could not be indefinitely deprived of their rights. Belgium urged the Council to accompany and support those countries that wanted to make progress on the road to human rights. Belgium condemned the use of violence and terror in Syria and Yemen. Belgium was pleased to see the recent decisions in Egypt and hoped that the lifting of the state of emergency would soon occur in Egypt. Belgium urged a moratorium on the use of the death penalty in Bahrain. Belgium urged Pakistan to reform its law on blasphemy. The situation of human rights in China had not improved over the last few months and Belgium appealed to the Chinese Government to clarify the situation of the people who had disappeared and to lift restrictions on the Internet.

FEDOR ROSOCHA (Slovakia) said that the failure of Belarus to engage with the international community in addressing its human rights situation within various human rights mechanisms after the 2010 presidential elections was worrisome. Slovakia called for the release of all political prisoners if there were no credible criminal charges and all related judicial proceedings should be conducted in compliance with international fair trial standards. At the same time, Slovakia was concerned about the continued repression of dissent in Iran, including the frequent application of capital punishment, torture and other inhuman treatment. Slovakia appealed in the strongest possible terms to the Government of Syria to cease any violence against individuals exercising their legitimate right to the freedom of expression, assembly and association. In a similar vein, Slovakia called upon the Government of Bahrain to address all allegations of death threats, torture, ill-treatment, arbitrary detention, employment and school expulsions and other forms of intimidation or harassment against those participating in recent peaceful protests in accordance with international human rights obligations. Slovakia reiterated its call to the authorities of Myanmar to take concrete action delivering tangible progress toward national reconciliation, democracy and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Lastly, Slovakia appealed to the Government of Sri Lanka to ensure proper, independent, and impartial investigations of allegations of human rights abuses. Accountability was a crucial component of a sustainable peace and reconciliation.

JUAN ANTONIO QUINTANILLA (Cuba) said the Council was witnessing the growing offensive practice of blaming and shaming which had previously plunged the Human Rights Council into a dire situation. Western countries had proposed a list of supposed violations of human rights by countries of the South which was not legitimate. Cuba urged the countries of the South to close ranks and reject the complaints aimed at them. The Government of Syria had promised to implement a process of reform and Cuba respected its will and determination to this and demanded full respect and sovereignty for Syria without any interference in its internal affairs.

MUHAMMAD SAEED SARWAR (Pakistan) said Pakistan was fully committed to promoting and protecting human rights for all citizens regardless of religion, caste and creed. In accordance with this commitment, Pakistan had recently ratified key international human rights conventions. Pakistan strongly condemned the recent killing of a journalist in Pakistan and demanded an immediate inquiry into this incident. The Government had constituted a judicial commission to study all respects of the incident, collect witness information and file a final report. Pakistan reaffirmed its commitment to assure the freedom of the press and protect the media in its duties. The Government of Pakistan strongly believed that freedom of expression was a vital ingredient in a tolerant and democratic society.

RICARDO GONZALEZ (Uruguay) referred to the serious events in Syria that had led to grave violations of human rights. The fact that the Syrian authorities were not cooperating to provide redress had led to a serious in act that violated human rights law and international humanitarian law and it had led people to flee Syria and seek refuge in neighbouring countries. The international community was surprised by the violence of the repression in Syria and firmly condemned it. There had been requests for the Government to initiate investigations into the violent repression and Uruguay regretted that these calls for investigations had fallen on deaf ears. Uruguay endorsed the appeal made by the United Nations Secretary-General and the High Commissioner and they urged an immediate end to the violence. In conclusion, Uruguay urged the Government to initiate a national dialogue which would allow for peaceful solutions which complied with the country’s human rights obligations.

IDRISS JAZAIRY (Algeria) noted that at a time when the world was at a decisive turning point toward freedom and emancipation, Algeria wanted to draw the attention of the Council to the situation in the Western Sahara. Algeria noted the principle that administered territory had separate status from state territory. Further it was noted with regard to the situation last April in the Western Sahara that the Security Council had unanimously adopted resolution 1979 which was attached to this principle of separation of state territory and administered territory. Algeria noted that it was important to improve the human rights situation in the Western Sahara. It further hoped that all parties were willing to work with the international community for full respect of human rights, baring in mind their international obligations. Algeria was ready to cooperate with any missions which the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights put forward.

REINHARD SCHWEPPE (Germany) said Germany remained concerned about the situation of human rights in many countries. Germany had witnessed the crackdown on opposition forces and human rights defenders after last year’s elections in Belarus and the ensuing harassment, arbitrary detention and prosecution of many activists for the simple fact of having participated in peaceful protests. On the other hand, some positive developments had been seen. The so-called Arab spring had united the force of thousands of ordinary citizens, human rights defenders and democracy activists and had led to a wave of change not many would have believed a year ago. Germany was especially concerned about the situation of human rights defenders in Syria where a current wave of brutal repression was shocking. Germany called for the Government in Damascus to immediately stop violence and to cooperate fully with the mission of the High Commissioner. Grave concern prevailed also with regard to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Colombia. Germany highlighted that human rights defenders were targeted in Sri Lanka and welcomed the report of the Secretary-General’s Panel of Experts on Sri Lanka. Many instances of harassment, intimidation, arbitrary detention and prosecution of members of non-governmental organizations were reported during the constitutional reform process in Zimbabwe. In Ethiopia, new legislation increased the overall capacity to monitor human rights violations. Germany applauded the “Million Signatures Campaign” for gender equality in Iran.

PETER WOOLCOTT (Australia) said that Australia condemned the grave human rights violations and abuses in Syria, including widespread use of violence. Reported torture of children was particularly disturbing and Australia urged the United Nations Security Council to refer the issue to the International Criminal Court. Australia called on Syria to grant access to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to investigate all alleged violations of international human rights law. In Libya, Australia strongly condemned the use of violence and called on the regime to immediately cease human rights violations and abuses against its people. Australia supported the work of the International
Criminal Court in prosecuting those responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity. Australia remained deeply concerned about the human rights situation in Iran, including the use of the death penalty, the intimidation and arbitrary arrests of human rights defenders and urge Iran to stay all executions, respect human rights of all detainees and ensure trials were conducted fairly. The deteriorating human rights situation in Fiji was of concern, with public emergency regulations, abrogated judiciary and the mismanagement and corruption. Australia called on Fiji to take steps toward fair and free elections that would bring Fiji back into the international community and democracy. Australia urged authorities in Myanmar to make genuine progress towards democracy and called for the immediate release of remaining political prisoners.

CHRISTIAN STROHAL (Austria) noted that over the last six months the Council had been living up to its mandate of responding to past violations of human rights and preventing future human rights abuses and this was a clear testimony of what the Council was capable of doing. The establishment of mechanisms to investigate allegations of serious crimes in Côte d’Ivoire, Libya, and Syria were an important tool to address past but also prevent future human rights violations. Austria noted that in aligning itself fully with the cross-regional statement made by Canada, it urged the Syrian Government to grant access to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to the country as requested by the Council at its Special Session. Austria remained concerned about serious violations of human rights in Iran. Attacks against journalists in conflict situations in many countries remained a cause for concern. Of particular interest was the situation in Belarus which had significantly deteriorated since the violations of electoral standards in the presidential elections of 19 December 2010. Austria stressed that the fight against impunity for attacks on journalists needed to be strengthened.

WENDY HINTON (New Zealand) said one of the roles of the Council was to promote and protect the human rights of civilians in conflict. The indiscriminate attacks on civilians in Libya and the brutal repression of peaceful protestors in Syria demonstrated categorically that these regimes had no respect for the human rights of their own people. New Zealand reiterated its strong support for UN Security Council resolution 1973 and called on the Gaddafi regime to cease all hostilities against civilians, ensure full access for humanitarian workers and to protect the rights of journalists. The use of Syrian security forces of brutal force, mass arrest and the discharge of live fire on peaceful protestors was not acceptable. New Zealand called on Syria to allow both the Council’s fact-finding mission and the UN humanitarian mission to assess the situation independently. Recent statements by Lieutenant Colonel Mara, a former member of the current regime in Fiji, highlighted the use of intimidation and beatings of pro-democracy activists in Fiji. This underlined New Zealand’s long-standing concerns about human rights abuses in Fiji which had been raised in this Council. Fiji should take steps to respect and protect the rights of its citizens.

GERALD CORR (Ireland) said that Ireland was very concerned about the situation in Sudan, particularly in Abyei, and it urged the Governments of Sudan and South Sudan to ensure that the human rights of the population of Abyei were protected in the run up to July 9. Ireland reiterated its call to all concerned in Somalia to pursue national reconciliation, build up accountability and functional security sector and provide basic services to the people of Somalia. The continued deterioration of the human rights situation in Belarus was of serious concern and needed to be addressed in a comprehensive manner by the international community. Turning to the Arab world, Ireland said that strongly supported the widespread calls for greater respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and underlined that the Palestinian people continued to live under military occupation and rule and said it was a priority to bring this situation to an end. Ireland strongly encouraged efforts to end the conflict in Libya, welcomed the lifting of state of emergency in Bahrain and called on the authorities of Sri Lanka to cooperate fully with the United Nations and to address the recommendations of the United Nations Panel of Experts.

ALISON LECLAIRE CHRISTIE (Canada) deplored the crackdown by the Government of Syria on peaceful protesters. Canada called on the Government of Syria to immediately stop using force against the people. It further called on the Government to cooperate with the Council. Canada was extremely concerned about reports of serious violence against civilians. In relation to the situation of Côte d’Ivoire, Canada was further concerned to see that in some regions, notably the east of the country, that violence was ongoing. It was necessary for the Ivorian authorities to take measures to put a stop to the violence. Canada urged the Government of Myanmar to remove unlawful restrictions on freedoms and to stop widespread violations of human rights. Canada watched with concern in Belarus, while civil society and journalists had been sentenced for exercising their rights. It expected Belarus to abide by its obligations under international law.

SEYED MOHAMMAD REZA SAJJADI (Iran) said the deterioration of human rights situations in some western countries was alarming and needed the due attention of the international community. Unconditional support for serious crimes against humanity committed in occupied Palestine and other Arab territories, the killing of hundreds of civilians in Afghanistan and Pakistan, secret detention centers, and the use of torture in Guantanamo were blatant examples of systematic human rights violations by the United States at the international level. In the European Union Member States, minority groups were experiencing unprecedented racist attitudes and xenophobic actions. Daily acts of Islamophobia, violence against Muslims and insults against Islamic sanctuaries had become a general a growing trend. Ill-treatment and excessive use of force in police custody and violation of detainee’s rights, the growing number of racially motivated crimes was alarming in Sweden. The Sami minority faced barriers related to the enjoyment of their human rights in Sweden as well. In Canada, minority groups suffered from different serious violations of basic human rights on a daily basis. In particular, Muslim women had experienced discrimination in various forms.

ANNA UGGLA (Sweden) said Sweden was extremely concerned about the human rights situation in Syria and said that humanitarian access must be granted and those responsible for violations must be held accountable. The situation in Bahrain was of grave concern, while the continued repression in Yemen could not be accepted. Sweden welcomed the recommendations of the United Nations Panel of Experts and supported the recommendations for further investigations in Sri Lanka. In China, Sweden was concerned about setbacks in the area of rule of law, freedom of expression and increased harassment of human rights defenders. The human rights situation in Cuba was of concern, including the lack of respect for freedom of expression and opinion and freedom of assembly. In Zimbabwe, critical reforms were needed with regard to the respect for rule of law, human rights and democracy to ensure environment conducive to holding credible and free elections.

STEFFEN SMIDT (Denmark) condemned arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, torture, killings and targeted attacks by the Syrian Government. Syria must abide by its international obligations and ensure respect for fundamental freedoms, including rights of peaceful assembly and freedom of expression. Denmark urged the Syrian authorities to grant access to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Denmark was deeply troubled by the situation, having almost reached the level of civil war. Several reporters had been banned and news sites blocked. Denmark noted that since March the authorities had arbitrarily arrested persons, many of whom remained in custody. Denmark urged the Government to reinstate the moratorium on capital punishment. It further welcomed the expert panel report on Sri Lanka.
DENMARK noted that a credible and independent follow-up process was needed to address the grave allegations, thereby contributing to reconciliation and laying the groundwork for sustainable peace. Denmark welcomed the reinstatement of democracy in Ivory Coast but remained deeply concerned about the reports that human rights abuses had continued in the aftermath of the conflict.

PATRICK RUMLAR (Czech Republic) said the Czech Republic was deeply concerned by the ongoing persecution of individuals in connection with the December presidential elections in Belarus. The Czech Republic urged the authorities to stop the current series of political processes and to immediately and unconditionally release all political prisoners. The Czech Republic strongly condemned the continuing massive violations of fundamental human rights, including the right to life, in Syria. The Czech Republic called on the Government of Syria to fully cooperate with the investigative mission of the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights. The Czech Republic was concerned about the tense situation of the Kirti Monastery in Sichuan province in China. The Czech Republic called on the Government of Myanmar to release all political prisoners and take immediate steps to put an end to continuing grave violations of human rights. The Czech Republic appreciated the release of most political prisoners in Cuba and acknowledged some of the developments taking place in Cuba, but was convinced that there remained a space for improvement. Sadly, there had not been any improvement in the situation of human rights in Iran and the Czech Republic called on the Government of Iran to accept the mandate of the Special Rapporteur. It was regrettable that the Government of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea continued to ignore calls for the improvement in the human rights situation in the country.

WALID ABU-HAYA (Israel) said that Israel strongly condemned the Syrian crackdown on peaceful protesters across the country, with an escalation of the military campaign in the north-east of the country which resulted in a humanitarian catastrophe. The Syrian leadership had rejected the calls of the United Nations Secretary-General, the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the international community to put an end to those acts against Syrian people and to meet their demands for fundamental freedoms. Israel was gravely concerned about the human rights situation in Libya and said that the report of the Commission of Inquiry left no doubt that war crimes and crimes against humanity were committed by the forces loyal to Gaddafi. The Human Rights Council had yet to show deference to the suffering of civilian Yemenites seeking freedom and realisation of basic human rights and Israel called upon the United Nations and this Council to use all available tools to bring an end to human rights violations in Yemen. Also, the Council must stand with the Iranian people in their legitimate demand for freedom and liberty, in face of persecution of religious and ethnic minorities and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons.

MIKHAIL KHVOSTOV (Belarus) said Belarus rejected the European Union initiative concerning Belarus, adding that it undermined the principles and methods of work of the Council which had been established on the basis of a fragile consensus. This type of practice aimed at putting the Council on a politicization route. Belarus noted that nevertheless no reaction from the Council had come following demonstrations in Stuttgart which were brutally repressed. Belarus noted that there had been no assessment or evaluation regarding the United States’ refusal to receive the Special Rapporteur on torture regarding the Brad Manning case. Belarus reiterated that the European Union should not question the authentic dialogue in the Council for politically motivated reasons. It asked the Council to reject the resolution of the European Union.

The Representative of Venezuela thanked the High Commissioner for her presentation regarding the situation of human rights in Syria and took note of its content. Venezuela would always be on the side of peace and reconciliation in cases of conflict. Venezuela condemned the rising number of victims in Syria. Syria was located in an area of geopolitical tension and Venezuela was concerned that this was being exploited by exterior forces to deepen the conflict and scale up instability in the region. The Syrian Government had taken positive actions, such as the freeing of detainees. Venezuela hoped the people would find a way forward to establish a peaceful reconciliation of the conflict an believed in the people’s capacity to resolve the conflict without foreign intervention in accordance with the full sovereignty and self-determination of the Syrian people.

GIANFRANCO FATTORINI, of Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l’amitié entre les peuples, in a joint statement with International Educational Development, International Peace Bureau and France Libertés – Fondation Danielle Mitterrand, said that the Arab Spring had brought hope, but the response of Governments and several world powers was of grave concern. Those forces tried to impose political models just like they had tried in the past to impose their cultural or religious models. Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l’amitié entre les peuples invited the High Commissioner for Human Rights to participate in the high-level debate that would take place during the General Assembly on the theme of the responsibility to protect. Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l’amitié entre les peuples also invited the Human Rights Council to organise a round table during its nineteenth session, dedicated to arms trade and human rights.

ORETTA BANDETINI DI POGGIO, of Women’s Human Rights International Association, in a joint statement with France Libertés – Fondation Danielle Mitterrand, International Educational Development, and Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l’amitié entre les peuples (MRAP), said that in a recent statement, the High Commissioner had condemned the Iraqi military operation in the camp Ashraf in Iraq that had left at least 34 people dead and called for an independent inquiry in this respect. There was no international surveillance in this camp because monitoring teams were banned from visiting. Women’s Human Rights International Association urged the High Commissioner and the Council to support setting up a permanent monitoring team in Camp Ashraf until a definitive solution was reached on the basis of the plan proposed by the European Parliament.

TENZIN KAYTA, of Society for Threatened Peoples, in a joint statement with International Educational Development, and Nonviolent Radical Party, Transnational and Transparty, of Society for Threatened Peoples, was concerned at the continuing reports of violations of fundamental human rights and freedoms which threatened the distinct cultural, religious and national identity of the Tibetan people. While exercising the rights of freedom of assembly and freedom of speech many Tibetans lost their lives during the 2008 uprisings on the Tibetan Plateau. With regard to this, the Committee against Torture and the Special Rapporteur on extra judicial killings had urged the Chinese authorities to conduct investigations to bring those responsible to justice. The Society for Threatened Peoples noted that given this background it was the responsibility of the international community to address the chronic human rights situation faced by Chinese, Mongolians, Tibetans and Uyghurs under Communist China.

DIANE ALA‘I, of Baha’I International Community, noted that the Iranian Government repeatedly claimed its commitment to human rights. However, the facts proved just the opposite. For 25 years Baha’Is could not enter university because the registration forms required a declaration of religion. Hopes were raised when, in response to international pressure, the Government announced that this would be removed. However, Baha’Is who had passed the exams found that they were falsely declared Muslims in their student cards. A policy was revealed in a
This document contains a mix of international human rights issues and concerns. Here is a structured representation:

**Security Forces and Shoot-to-Kill Orders**

Security forces participating in operations against protestors stated they had received shoot-to-kill orders from their commanders. Syrian security forces had killed more than 1,200 protestors. Human Rights Watch documented a number of cases in which security forces arbitrarily arrested thousands. Ex-detainees interviewed said they had been subjected to torture. The Syrian authorities totally denied access to media, human rights defenders and humanitarian groups. Human Rights Watch research indicated that the nature and scale of abuses were not only systematic but also implemented as a part of State policy, suggesting these abuses qualified as crimes against humanity. Human Rights Watch was concerned about the failure of the Sri Lankan government to investigate well-founded allegations of serious abuses that took place during the last months of its decades-long internal armed conflict. A report released by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in April concluded that tens of thousands of civilians were killed in the war’s final months, but government efforts since then had fallen dramatically short of international standards and failed to satisfy Sri Lanka’s obligations under international law.

**Human Rights Violations in Iran**

Mislabeled allegations had not amounted to credible evidence as there were many examples of forced disappearances and extrajudicial killings. Journalists and human rights defender FMA Razzak had faced threats, attacks and fabricated legal cases while working to expose human rights violations and on 29 April 2011 he was severely beaten.

**Morocco’s Treatment of the Polisario**

Democratic International called on the international community to put pressure on the Polisario to respect their obligations under the international humanitarian law. There must be protection of international humanitarian aid destined for camp Tinduf.

**Regional Issues**

HASSAN NAYEB HASHEM, of Verein Sudwind Entwicklungspolitik, believed that the tragic events in the Middle East and North Africa should not overshadow tragic events in Iran. Perpetrators of human rights violations against prisoners enjoyed impunity. Prisoners lacked access to legal protection and health care in Iran. Many were on hunger strike as an expression of solidarity and dismay at the tragic and brutal deaths that occurred all too often in prisons there. The number of public executions was extremely high and there were not reports available of the number killed in prison. Most of those sentenced to death or executed had been denied due process, including the denial of access to lawyers while in detention.

**Access to Legal Protection**

CATHERINE MORRIS, of Asian Legal Resource Centre, in a joint statement with Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada, said that it called on the Human Rights Council to take action on the dozens of journalists that had been killed in Pakistan since 2000. On 29 May 2011 journalist Saleem Shahzad was abducted in Islamabad and his tortured, mutilated body was discovered a few day later. The Government initially failed to investigate his abduction while it had now announced a judicial inquiry. The Asian Legal Resource Centre was concerned about a suspected campaign of reprisals in Bangladesh to silence those raising concerns about torture and extrajudicial killings. Journalist and human rights defender RMA Razzak had faced threats, attacks and fabricated legal cases while working to expose human rights violations and on 29 April 2011 he was severely beaten.

**Human Rights in Sri Lanka**

The Government of Sri Lanka stressed that the report was borne outside of an inter-governmental process and therefore had no official status in the United Nations. The Government of Sri Lanka would continue its consistent constructive engagement, including on issues related to the reconciliation progress, with the United Nations Secretary-General and the United Nations system to achieve its objectives. Concerning the videos aired on a British media station, these unsubstantiated allegations had not amounted to credible evidence as there were many examples of enforced displacement of hundreds of children that had been condemned to exile, embezzlement of international aid and arbitrary detention.

**Religious Minorities in India**

MILOUD CHAOUCH, of Agence Internationale pour le Developpement (Aide-Federation), said that attention of the Council needed to be turned to the situation of Moroccan families who had been expelled from Algeria, regardless of the fact that they had been living there for decades. The recommendations of the Committee for Protection of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families were still pending application by Algeria. The Agence Internationale pour le Developpement urged the Human Rights Council to intervene and to ensure that its conclusions were not empty words.

**Human Rights in Afghanistan**

SEKHON AWATAR SINGH, of Centre for Human Rights and Peace Advocacy, said that India claimed to be a secular nation without any preferential treatment to any particular religion. In fact, the reality on the ground did not support this claim. Secular India continued to safeguard only the interests of Hindus, while the non-Hindu religious communities were entirely dependent on them in economic, social, cultural, and political spheres. The Centre for Human Rights and Peace Advocacy said that the ruling elite pursued discriminatory policies towards minorities, with a view to making them economically and politically dependent on the majority Hindu community. Today, participation of the minorities in governance and the economy was almost negligible. The Centre called upon the Council to condemn the discriminatory policies and practices of the government that incapacitated religious minorities.

**Right of Reply**

KSHENUKAN SENEWIRATNE (Sri Lanka), speaking in a right of reply, said that delivering on its responsibilities to ensure the welfare of all its citizens, the Government of Sri Lanka ten months ago embarked on an independent domestic process founded on the principles of restorative justice, which would enable the Government to identify the lessons of the past as well as to address issues of reconciliation. The process of reconciliation involved truth, justice and reparation and was proceeding through the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission. Regrettably, Sri Lanka was faced with biased, prejudiced and unsubstantiated reports that sought to vitiate the atmosphere which had done little to help improve the situation. Concerning references to a critical report deeming to be part of the United Nations, the Government of Sri Lanka stressed that the report was borne outside of an inter-governmental process and therefore had no official status in the United Nations system. The Government of Sri Lanka would continue its consistent constructive engagement, including on issues related to reconciliation progress, with the United Nations Secretary-General and the United Nations system to achieve its objectives. Concerning the videos aired on a British media station, these unsubstantiated allegations had not amounted to credible evidence as there were many examples
of such doctored videos and photos. The Government of Sri Lanka was distressed about the images aired in the Channel 4 film without any guarantee of their authenticity. This was an exercise which was carried out by a small section of international media at the behest of certain parties with vested interests and it catered only to the interests of separatist forces living outside of Sri Lanka with the objective of pushing the country back to war.

FELIX PENA RAMOS (Venezuela), speaking in a right of reply, said that the United States was displaying yet again its usual behaviour of the empire and shamelessly lied about the power of the national executive in Venezuela. Who could believe the statements of the North American Government which was a leader in violations and humiliation, Venezuela asked. Venezuela reiterated its commitment to the existence of full human rights in its territory and reiterated that the freedom and participation of its citizens was absolute. Nobody was suffering from censure in Venezuela or was persecuted for their political opinion. Venezuela called on the United States to put a stop to this policy towards Venezuela and other progressive governments of the world and to honour its promises of a new relationship with Latin America based on mutual respect and equality between the people.

JUAN ANTONIO QUINTANILLA (Cuba), speaking in a right of reply, said that Cuba once again had listened to groundless accusations by the United States. It criticized others instead of immediately putting an end to the blockade against Cuba that had been imposed for over 50 years now and bringing to justice perpetrators of torture and other human rights violations committed in Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib. Why didn’t the United States say one word in this room about human rights violations of its minorities and indigenous peoples, Cuba asked. Cuba said Sweden, the Czech Republic and other countries had no authority to judge others on human rights, as their own past did not allow them. Sweden was showing hypocrisy and subservience to the United States, while the Czech Republic should look into their own treatment of minorities, particularly the Roma.

JAMES MANZOU. (Zimbabwe), speaking in a right of reply, said that there were once again countries who engaged in name and shame practices when they themselves were gross violators of human rights not only in their own countries but all over the world. The United States could not hide its real intention in Zimbabwe, which was not about human rights but about the natural resources that it desired. The Government of Zimbabwe had said no to the imperial plunder of its own resources. The United States, the United Kingdom and Germany should be held accountable for drone attacks, arbitrary detention and the murder of innocent civilians around the world, including women and children. Zimbabwe looked forward to full cooperation in the area of human rights and hoped that Sweden and Germany took note of its comments.

BUDOOR AHMED (Bahrain), speaking in a right of reply, said that the Kingdom of Bahrain had witnessed regrettable and painful events aimed at striking at the security and stability of the country. The Government had dealt with these events in a responsible manner by defending its citizens’ rights and had established a special ad hoc Committee to investigate and establish the reasons for these recent events. The Kingdom of Bahrain provided protection for the freedom of expression and equality among citizens before the law and cooperated with civil society organisations at the local and national levels. Acts of sabotage and threatening private and public institutions had led to a declaration of an emergency situation in the country on 15 March 2011. However, the emergency situation was put to an end in June 2011 and a process of national dialogue was embarked upon on the basis of principles that called for the respect of human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

YANG ZHILUN (China), speaking in a right of reply, said that a number of Western countries and non-governmental organizations had accused China of human rights violations this morning. The right of freedom of expression was an important right protected by the Constitution of China. Citizens had the right to express their opinion, with the understanding that in the exercise of this right national security should not be jeopardised. Turning to the case of a particular monastery, China said that the clergy of this monastery had been involved in a number of incidents and that was why the local government decided to improve the management of the monastery and organise legal education. China said that there was no mention of enforced disappearances.

KIM YONG HO (Democratic People’s Republic of Korea), speaking in a right of reply, denounced the distorted allegations made by the United States and Japan today. First, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea had strong reservations concerning the foundation of comments by the United States. The United States failed to address the human rights violations it committed at home and abroad and the negative impact of its hostile policies towards the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. That was why the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea considered the behaviour of the United States hypocritical. If Japan was truly a friend of human rights, it needed to address its own human rights record first. The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea reiterated its position that Japan should address its past crimes and human rights violations rather than returning to abduction cases that had been resolved once and for all.

The Representative of Azerbaijan, speaking in a right of reply, took the floor to respond to allegations raised by Norway. It noted that Norway seemed to be unaware of the visit of its Prince Haakan to Azerbaijan when he named it a reliable partner to Europe. Azerbaijan called on the delegation of Norway not to use archaic political expressions. It further noted that there were currently no political prisoners in Azerbaijan. Further that the representative of the non-governmental organization quoted by Norway admitted in meetings that it had indeed violated the law of Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan asked Norway not to make double standards and take care of their own human rights record.

OMAR HILALE (Morocco), speaking in a right of reply, statement only in French.

GRIMA KASSAYE AYEHU (Ethiopia), speaking in a right of reply, said that the assertion relating to the existence of legislation which limited the operation of certain civil organizations in Ethiopia was incorrect. This legislation was enacted with the intention to empower civil society organizations and not to restrict their operations.

OSAMU SAKASHITA (Japan), speaking in a right of reply, said that concerning alleged discrimination against citizens of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea in Japan, the Japanese constitution had protections prohibiting discrimination, which applied to all foreign nationals in the country. Concerning the issue of abductions, Japan and the Special Rapporteur had repeatedly stated that the abduction issue was not resolved. In August 2008 the Government of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea changed its position and agreed with Japan to establish an investigative committee into abductions of Japanese nationals by their Government. Japan urged the Government of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea to evade this issue by asserting political allegations and to commence the investigation without
BOUALEM CHEBIHI (Algeria), speaking in the right of reply, statement only in French.

KIM YONG HO (Democratic People’s Republic of Korea), speaking in a second right of reply, said that the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea underlined that the abduction cases had been resolved once and for all and no more discussions on the subject were needed. Persistent allegations by Japan on this issue were motivated by its political agenda in line with its consistent hostility towards the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. Secondly, Japan’s own human rights record and crimes against humanity and war crimes committed in the past needed to be first of all acknowledged by Japan, and because those crimes had no statute of limitation, accountability for those crimes needed to be established.

OSAMU SAKASHITA (Japan), speaking in a second right of reply, said that concerning the abduction issue it wanted to comment on the Democratic Peoples’ Republic of Korea second response in its second right of reply. Japan noted that out of the 17 Japanese victims of abduction recognized by Japan only 5 had returned home and the Democratic Peoples’ Republic of Korea had yet to prove to any satisfactory degree their whereabouts. It noted that the numbers mentioned on the unfortunate past were totally groundless. Regarding past human rights abuses, Japan noted that it had expressed its feeling of remorse for the destruction and suffering caused as a result of its aggression. It further noted that the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea should not evade the human rights issue that the international community had raised by using the word politicization.

For use of the information media; not an official record