



UNITED NATIONS

Press Release

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL ELECTS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND APPROVES A NUMBER OF SPECIAL PROCEDURES MANDATE HOLDERS

Human Rights Council
AFTERNOON 26 March 2008

The Human Rights Council this afternoon elected 18 experts to make up its new Advisory Committee. The Council also approved candidates for its Special Procedures on the right to adequate housing, the right to food, human rights of indigenous people, sale of children, effects of economic reform policies, human rights in Myanmar, human rights in the Palestinian territories, human rights and extreme poverty, contemporary forms of slavery, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances, people of African descent, human rights in Somalia and human rights defenders.

/...

Also this afternoon, the Council approved the list of candidates for Special Procedures mandate holders proposed by the President of the Council, who chose them out of candidates proposed by the Consultative Group which the Council appointed. The list included Ms. Raquel Rolnik (Brazil), Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context; Mr. Olivier de Schutter (Belgium), Special Rapporteur on the right to food; Mr. James Anaya (United States), Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people; Ms. Najat M'jid Maala (Morocco), Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography; Mr. Cephas Lumina (Zambia), Independent Expert on the effects of economic reform policies and foreign debt on the full enjoyment of human rights, particularly economic, social and cultural rights; Mr. Thomas Ojea Quintana (Argentina), Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar; Mr. Richard Falk (United States), Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967; Ms. Maria Magdalena Sepúlveda (Chile), Independent Expert on the question of human rights and extreme poverty; and Ms. Gulnara Shahinian (Armenia), Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences.

/...

Comments Following the Approval of the List of Special Procedure Mandate Holders

/...

ITZHAK LEVANON (Israel) said that as the list of candidates for Special Procedures mandate holders was put forward today, he was overwhelmed at the profound sense of lost opportunity. The mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territories was hopelessly unbalanced. This mandate was redundant at best and malicious at worst. It was impossible to believe that out of a list of 184 potential candidates, the eminently wise members of the Consultative Group honestly had made the best possible choice for this post. In a recent article, the proposed candidate stated that he did not think it was "an irresponsible overstatement to associate the treatment of Palestinians with the criminalized Nazi record of collective atrocity". Someone who had publicly and repeatedly stated such views could not possibly be considered independent, impartial or objective, as was explicitly required in the institution building text. The Human Rights Council was rapidly moving away from its *raison d'être*. The members of the Council were missing an opportunity to show the world that this Human Rights Council genuinely sought improvement, the chance to make a difference, and the prospect of laying the groundwork for better cooperation with Israel.

WARREN TICHENOR (United States) said that the Special Procedures, including country mandates, allowed the Human Rights Council an opportunity to view, monitor and help certain countries develop and improve their human rights situations. The United States respected the integrity of the procedure to elect candidates but expressed its concern on the mandate holder selected for the task of assessing the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. This had long since been a particularly sensitive mandate and he hoped that it would not be conducted with bias and partiality. That being said, he wished the other new mandate holders the best of luck in their new appointments.

/...

MARIUS GRINIUS (Canada) said that the appointment of this slate of Special Procedures mandate holders marked an important milestone in the development of the Council. The Special Procedures had been referred to as the crown jewels of the United Nations human rights system. The efforts which had gone into the presentation of this list were fully appreciated. Canada hoped that Members could respect the integrity of the agreed process, in which no State should have a veto over candidates. However, based on the writings of one of the candidates, the nominee for the mandate on the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Canada expressed serious concern about whether the high standards established by the Council would be met by this individual. Therefore, Canada dissociated itself from any Council decision to approve the full slate.

/...

MOHAMMAD ABU-KOASH (Palestine) said it was ironic that Israel which claimed to be representing Jews everywhere was campaigning against a Jewish professor who had been nominated for the post of Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The candidate was the author of 54 books on international law. Palestine doubted that those who had campaigned against him had read that many books. The candidate's nomination was a victory for good sense and human rights, as he was a highly qualified rapporteur. If Israel was concerned about human rights it would have ended its prolonged occupation.

/...

For use of the information media; not an official record