

Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada

NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations

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Organization: Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada
Item: Item 3 – General Debate
Date: 12 June 2017
Speaker: Mr. Joseph Doyle

Oral Statement to the 35th Session of the UN Human Rights Council from Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada (LRWC), NGO in special consultative status

HRC must move to address non-compliance by members

Mr. President:

Serious violations of the rights of human rights defenders and others to liberty, fair trial and freedoms of expression, association and peaceful assembly are compounded when members of the Human Rights Council refuse to remedy violations in accordance with recommendations by treaty bodies and mandate holders, and ignore Universal Periodic Review recommendations.

Some members of Council persist in widespread or systematic deprivations of liberty in violation of international law. It has been suggested that in certain circumstances such patterns of violations could amount to crimes against humanity. Such conduct condemns innocent victims to increased injustice and renders impotent the praiseworthy work of Council bodies and other members.

Saudi Arabia and China, members of Council since 2014, are two members that have continued to engage in widespread and systematic rights violations by misusing domestic laws to criminalize the peaceful exercise of protected rights and to arbitrarily imprison innocent defenders and critics. Recommendations for release, reform and reparations by Council bodies are ignored, and victims remain unjustly imprisoned or even subject to execution.

It is time for Council, in cooperation with civil society, to develop a mandatory code of conduct that imposes specific human rights obligations on Council members and fair procedures to receive, determine and remedy complaints of non-compliance.

Thank you.