
Advance Unedited Version

Distr.: General
6 May 2011

Original: English

Human Rights Council
Sixteenth special session
29 April 2011

**Report of the Human Rights Council on its
sixteenth special session**

Vice-President and Rapporteur: Ms. Bente Angell-Hansen (Norway)

Contents

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
I. Resolution adopted by the Council at its sixteenth special session		
S-16/1.		
The current human rights situation in the Syrian Arab Republic in the context of recent events.....		
II. Organization of work of the sixteenth special session	1- 25	
A. Opening and duration of the session	6-7	
B. Attendance	8	
C. Officers	9	
D. Organization of work.....	10-12	
E. Resolution and documentation	13-14	
F. Statements	15-19	
G. Action on the draft proposal.....	20-25	
III. Report of the Human Rights Council on its sixteenth special session.....		26
Annex		
List of documents issued for the sixteenth special session of the Human Rights Council		

I. Resolution adopted by the Council at its sixteenth special session

S-16/1.

The current human rights situation in the Syrian Arab Republic in the context of recent events

The Human Rights Council,

Guided by the Charter of the United Nations and General Assembly resolution 60/251 of 15 March 2006,

Reaffirming the purposes and principles of the Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and relevant international human rights treaties, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and that all States are bound to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Recalling article 4 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights with regard to rights that may not be derogated from under any circumstances, even in a public emergency,

Expressing deep regret at the death of hundreds of people in connection with the recent and ongoing political protests in the Syrian Arab Republic, and grave concern at alleged deliberate killings, arrests and instances of torture of peaceful protesters by the Syrian authorities,

Noting the recent statement made by the Secretary-General, in which he called for an independent, transparent and effective investigation into the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic,

Noting also the recent statements made by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and certain United Nations special procedures mandate holders with regard to the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, in which they called for an end to the killings, as well as for accountability, protection of human rights defenders and respect for freedom of expression,

Noting further the stated intention of the Syrian Arab Republic to take steps for reform, and urging that country to take urgent and concrete measures to meet the legitimate demands of its people, including by enlarging the scope of political participation and dialogue, following through on the abolition of the High State Security Court and lifting measures restricting the exercise of fundamental freedoms,

Reaffirming that all States Members of the United Nations should refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State or in any other manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations,

1. *Unequivocally condemns* the use of lethal violence against peaceful protesters by the Syrian authorities and the hindrance of access to medical treatment, urges the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to immediately put an end to all human rights violations, protect its population and respect fully all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression and freedom of assembly, and also urges the authorities to allow access to the Internet and telecommunications networks and to lift censorship on reporting, including by allowing appropriate access by foreign journalists;

2. *Calls upon* the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to release immediately all prisoners of conscience and arbitrarily detained persons, including those who were detained before the recent events, as well as to cease immediately any intimidation, persecution and arbitrary arrests of individuals, including lawyers, human rights defenders and journalists;

3. *Urges* the Syrian authorities to refrain from any reprisals against people who have taken part in peaceful demonstrations and to allow the provision of urgent assistance to those in need, including by guaranteeing appropriate access to human rights and humanitarian organizations;
4. *Stresses* the need for the Syrian authorities to launch a credible and impartial investigation, in accordance with international standards, and to prosecute those responsible for attacks on peaceful protesters in the Syrian Arab Republic, including by forces under Government control;
5. *Urges* the Syrian authorities to enlarge the scope of political participation aimed at ensuring civil liberties and enhancing social justice;
6. *Encourages* relevant thematic special procedures mandate holders, within their respective mandates, to pay particular attention to the human rights situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, and urges the Syrian authorities to cooperate with these thematic mandate holders, including by allowing country visits;
7. *Requests* the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to dispatch urgently a mission to the Syrian Arab Republic to investigate all alleged violations of international human rights law and to establish the facts and circumstances of such violations and of the crimes perpetrated, with a view to avoiding impunity and ensuring full accountability, and to provide a preliminary report and oral update on the situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic to the Human Rights Council at its seventeenth session, and to submit a follow-up report to the Council at its eighteenth session, and also requests the High Commissioner to organize an interactive dialogue on the situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic during the eighteenth session of the Council;
8. *Calls upon* the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to cooperate fully with and grant access to personnel from the mission dispatched by the Office of the High Commissioner;
9. *Requests* the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner to provide all the administrative, technical and logistical assistance required to enable the mission to fulfil its mandate;
10. *Decides* to remain seized of the matter.

II. Organization of work of the sixteenth special session

1. Pursuant to paragraph 10 of General Assembly resolution 60/251, and in accordance with rule 6 of the rules of procedure of the Human Rights Council as contained in the annex to Council resolution 5/1, the Council “shall hold special sessions, when needed, at the request of a member of the Council with the support of one third of the membership of the Council”.

2. On 27 April 2011, the Permanent Mission of the United States of America requested the convening of a special session of the Council on 29 April 2011 to address the situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic.

3. The above-mentioned request was supported by 16 States Members of the Council: Belgium, France, Hungary, Japan, Mexico, Norway, Poland, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Senegal, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America and Zambia.

4. Additional signatures by the following member and observer States were also received: Austria, Australia, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Sweden and Uruguay.

5. As more than one third of the membership of the Council supported the above-mentioned request, further to consultations with the main sponsors, the President of the Council decided to convene open-ended informative consultations on 28 April 2011 and a special session of the Council on 29 April 2011.

A. Opening and duration of the session

6. The Council held its sixteenth special session at the United Nations Office at Geneva on 29 April 2011. It held two meetings during the session.

7. In the absence of the President, the sixteenth special session was opened by Bente Angell-Hansen, Vice- President and Rapporteur of the Council.

B. Attendance

8. The special session was attended by representatives of States Members of the Human Rights Council, observer States of the Council, observers for non-Member States of the United Nations and other observers, as well as observers for United Nations entities, specialized agencies and related organizations, intergovernmental organizations and other entities, national human rights institutions and non-governmental organizations.

C. Officers

9. At its first organizational meeting of the fifth cycle, on 21 June 2010, the Council elected the following officers who, with the exception of the President, also served as officers for the sixteenth special session:

President: Sihasak Phuanketkeow (Thailand)

Vice-Presidents: Arcanjo Maria Do Nascimento (Angola)

Rodolfo Reyes Rodríguez (Cuba)

Fedor Rosocha (Slovakia)

Vice-President and Rapporteur: Bente Angell-Hansen (Norway)

D. Organization of work

10. Pursuant to paragraph 124 of the annex to Council resolution 5/1, an open-ended informative consultation was held on 28 April 2011 in preparation for the sixteenth special session.

11. At its 1st meeting, on 29 April 2011, the Council considered the organization of its work, including speaking time limits, which would be three minutes for statements by States Members of the Council and two minutes for statements by observer States of the Council, observers for non-Member States of the Council and other observers. The list of speakers would be drawn up in chronological order of registration. States Members of the Council would be given the floor first, followed by observer States and observers for United Nations entities, specialized agencies and related organizations, intergovernmental organizations and other entities, and observers of national human rights institutions and non-governmental organizations.

12. The special session was conducted in accordance with the relevant provisions contained in Council resolution 5/1.

E. Resolution and documentation

13. The resolution adopted by the Council at its sixteenth special session is reproduced in chapter I of the present report.

14. The list of documents issued for the sixteenth special session is contained in the annex to the present report.

F. Statements

15. At the 1st meeting, on 29 April 2011, the United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights made a statement on behalf of the High Commissioner.

16. At the same meeting, the Council listened to a pre-recorded statement read by Mr. Olivier De Schutter, Special Rapporteur on the right to food, on behalf of all Special Procedures mandate holders at the request of the Coordination Committee of Special Procedures.

17. At the same meeting, the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic made a statement as the concerned country.

18. Also at the same meeting, on the same day, statements were made by the following States Members of the Council: Bangladesh, Belgium, Brazil, Chile, China, Cuba, Ecuador, France, Guatemala, Hungary (on behalf of the European Union), Japan, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Nigeria (on behalf of the Group of African States), Norway, Pakistan (on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference), Palestine¹ (on behalf of the Group of Arab States), Poland, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland, Thailand, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay.

19. At the second meeting, on the same day, statements were made by the following:

(a) Observer States of the Council: Algeria, Australia, Austria, Belarus, Bolivia, Botswana, Canada, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Egypt, Germany, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Portugal, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Sweden, Turkey, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam;

(b) Observer for United Nations entities, specialized agencies and related organizations: United Nations Children's Fund;

(c) Observers for the following non-governmental organizations: Amman Center for Human Rights Studies, Amnesty International, Arab Organization for Human Rights, Centre Independent de Recherches et d'Initiatives pour le Dialogue, CIVICUS - World Alliance for Citizen Participation, Espace Afrique International, Human Rights Information and Training Center, Human Rights Watch, International Commission of Jurists, International Federation for Human Rights Leagues (also on behalf of Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies), Maarij Foundation for Peace and Development, Rencontre

Africaine pour la defense des droits de l'homme, Reporters Sans Frontiers International, United Nations Watch, United Towns Agency for North-South Cooperation.

G. Action on the draft proposal

20. At the 2nd meeting, on 29 April 2011, the representative of the United States of America introduced draft resolution A/HRC/S-16/L.1/Rev.1 as orally revised, sponsored by the United States of America. Subsequently, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland joined in sponsoring the draft resolution.

21. At the same meeting, the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic made a statement as the concerned country.

22. At the same meeting, in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, the attention of the Council was drawn to the estimated administrative and programme budget implications of the draft resolution.

23. At the same meeting, the representatives of Argentina, China, Cuba, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan and the Russian Federation made statements in explanation of vote before the vote.

24. Also at the same meeting, at the request of the representative of Pakistan, a recorded vote was taken on the draft resolution as orally revised. The draft resolution as orally revised was adopted by 26 votes in favour, 9 against, with 7 abstentions. The voting was as follows:

¹ Observer of the Council speaking on behalf of Member and observer States.

In favour:

Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Chile, France, Ghana, Guatemala, Hungary, Japan, Kyrgyzstan, Maldives, Mauritius, Mexico, Norway, Poland, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Senegal, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay, Zambia.

Against:

Bangladesh, China, Cuba, Ecuador, Gabon, Malaysia, Mauritania, Pakistan, Russian Federation.

Abstaining:

Cameroon, Djibouti, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, Uganda, Ukraine.

For the text of the resolution as adopted, see chapter I.

25. Also at the same meeting, the representatives of Brazil and Hungary (on behalf of States Members of the European Union that are members of the Council) made statements in explanation of vote after the vote.

III. Report of the Human Rights Council on its sixteenth special session

26. At the 2nd meeting, on 29 April 2011, the report was adopted ad referendum and the Rapporteur was entrusted with its finalization.

Annex

List of documents issued for the sixteenth special session of the Human Rights Council

In the general series

A/HRC/S-16/2 Report of the Human Rights Council on its sixteenth special session

In the limited series

A/HRC/S-16/L.1/Rev.1 The current human rights situation in the Syrian Arab Republic in the context of recent events

In the non-governmental organizations series

A/HRC/S-16/NGO/1 Written statement submitted by Amnesty International

A/HRC/S-16/NGO/2 Written statement submitted by United Nations Watch