

Strengthening the Response to Gross and Systematic Violations

Background

In creating the Human Rights Council, the General Assembly decided “that the Council should address situations of human rights, including gross and systematic violations, and make recommendations thereon.” (A/RES/60/251 OP 3) The Council shall also “contribute, through dialogue and cooperation, towards the prevention of human rights violations and respond promptly to human rights emergencies.” (A/RES/60/251 OP 5(f)).

Issues to Address

The Council has not effectively used its full range of tools from the IB package to address country situations, including discussions, panels, presidential statements, resolutions, and others as appropriate.

Concrete Proposals

1. Allow the Secretary General to request a special session of the Human Rights Council to address a human rights emergency or to discuss gross and systematic human rights violations, based on recommendations from any of his under secretaries, including the High Commissioner, or his special representatives.
2. Develop specific tripwires for action, such as requests from the concerned country, a coup or significant civil unrest, or a formal request from a National Human Rights Institution.
3. Call a special session if five different special procedures cite the same country as a country of serious concern in their regular reports.
4. The President should hold monthly mini-sessions to allow for more in-depth discussions of important issues. Some of the mini-sessions should be dedicated to discussions on human rights emergencies or gross and systematic human rights violations, and to providing recommendations to address the situation, or follow-up on previous recommendations. The format of these mini-sessions can utilize numerous tools in the IB package, as appropriate to the particular situation.