

HRC 48

PANEL DISCUSSION ON THE PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE CONTEXT OF PEACEFUL PROTESTS, September 29

JOINT STATEMENT LEAD BY COSTA RICA AND SWITZERLAND

Madam President,

Let me thank the OHCHR for organizing this important and timely panel. I have the honor of delivering this statement on behalf of more than 30 States.

The topic of peaceful protests has now been on the agenda of the HRC for over ten years. During this period of time, significant progress has been achieved. OHCHR, UNODC, special procedures, treaty bodies and civil society have carried out an extensive work to further develop the international framework of human rights in the context of peaceful protests. [Guidelines on less lethal weapons were published, General Comments on the right to life and the right to peaceful assembly were adopted by the Human Rights Committee; and a compilation of practical recommendations for the proper management of assemblies was issued, just to mention a few.] There is therefore ample guidance available for a better protection of human right before, during and after protests, in particular the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly, of expression and of association as well as the rights to life and to physical integrity.

Despite these significant advances, force continues to be used in an excessive manner by States to repress peaceful protests, resulting in losses of life, injuries, cases of torture, ill-treatment and enforced disappearances. In addition, as we have heard, challenges such as internet shutdowns, surveillance and criminalization of protests have emerged. In some cases, the COVID-19 pandemic has been used as a pretext to restrict the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly, of expression and of association in an unnecessary or disproportionate manner. Against this background, we call on States to renew their commitment to promote and protect human rights in the context of peaceful protests and to hold perpetrators of violations and abuses accountable.

By taking their claims to the street, protestors exercise their rights; they contribute to spur a sound democratic debate, to inclusive public participation and to holding their governments accountable for their action or their lack thereof. Therefore we strongly encourage authorities to listen to the grievances being expressed by protestors.

Thank you Madam President.

1. Costa Rica
2. Switzerland
3. Albania
4. Australia
5. Austria
6. Belgium
7. Bosnia and Herzegovina
8. Bulgaria
9. Croatia
10. Cyprus
11. Czech Republic
12. Denmark
13. Ecuador
14. Estonia
15. Finland
16. Greece
17. Hungary
18. Iceland
19. Ireland
20. Italy
21. Latvia
22. Liechtenstein
23. Lithuania
24. Luxembourg
25. Malta
26. Montenegro
27. Netherlands
28. New Zealand
29. Norway
30. Panama
31. Paraguay
32. Poland
33. Portugal
34. Romania
35. Slovakia
36. Slovenia
37. Spain