

The 58th Human Rights Council Session: Concluding Report

Charlotte Zehrer, Elena Vallejo Secadas

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Riviermarkt 5, 2513 AM The Hague, Netherlands



+ 31 62 72 41006



info@ghrd.org



<https://www.ghrd.org>

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Introduction

GHRD at the 58th Human Rights Council Session

On Friday, 4th of April 2025, the 58th Human Rights Council session in Geneva came to its end. The session was marked by many discussions and concerns about the situation of human rights all over the world – and GHRD was right in the middle of it. This Human Rights Council session was adventurous and at times overwhelming in its sheer number of issues and atrocities that continue to be committed, but it was also the most impactful and fruitful in GHRD’s history so far. This report seeks to give an overview over discussions we have participated in, people we have met and events we have organized, all in the name of protecting human rights worldwide.

1. Death penalty and blasphemy: our advocacy as signpost?

For quite a while, the UN team has been working on the issue of the abuse of blasphemy laws, specifically in Pakistan, where these laws impose the sentence of capital punishment. According to Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the death penalty may only be imposed for the “most serious crimes”, of which blasphemy does not form a part.¹ Yet, some countries, in violation of Article 6, still impose capital punishment for insults to religion and religious figures.

The Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR foresees the abolition of the death penalty in general. However, not all countries who are signatories to the ICCPR are also signatories to its Second Optional Protocol. At GHRD we therefore always call for the ratification by all countries of the Second Optional Protocol. During the high-level panel on the use of the death penalty which took place during this Human Rights Council session, we thus delivered an oral statement. In this statement we explicitly voice concerns over the imposition of capital punishment for blasphemy which constitutes a violation of international human rights law and is often abused to the detriment of ethnic and religious minorities, as well as political dissidents.

The full **oral statement** can be seen here:

 **GHRD Statement High-Level Panel Death Penalty 58th Session Human Rights Council** as well as on all our social media accounts. Our oral statement was a huge success: shortly afterwards, we were approached by a member of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) who examined a great interest in our work on the abuse of blasphemy laws. Overall, and in part thanks to GHRD’s advocacy, this issue has found its

¹ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, art 6.

way into the discourse of this Human Rights Council session. The team could make good connections to journalists, members of other NGOs and even the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion and Belief, Nazila Ghanea, together with whom we will work on a comprehensive report about the targeting of minorities in Pakistan through the abuse of the mandatory death penalty for blasphemy.

2. Falun Gong campaign: about forced organ harvesting in China

One of GHRD's annual campaigns of 2025 is the Falun Gong campaign. The Falun Gong are members of a spiritual movement in China, that has been classified as a terrorist group and consequently banned by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in the 1990s.² This culminated in relentless persecution of Falun Gong practitioners, leading to their imprisonment in the thousands.³ During the course of this imprisonment and persecution a disturbing practice crystallized: Forced organ harvesting. This highly illegal practice has been uncovered by the organization *Doctors Against Forced Organ Harvesting* (DAFOH). According to their report the number of victims is estimated to be at least in the ten thousands.⁴ Importantly, this practice with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, the Falun Gong movement very likely amounts to genocide.⁵

During the panel on early warning mechanisms for genocide, GHRD therefore delivered a compelling **oral statement** which can be watched here:

 58th Session Human Rights Council - Falun Gong Practitioner speaking up and on all our social media platforms. After delivering this oral statement, KaYan, our partner and Falun Gong advocate, together with Dr. Harold King from DAFOH had a very fruitful meeting with an OHCHR representative, who showed great willingness to take up the case. The representative further recommended the instigation of individual complaint procedures at the UN treaty bodies, such as the Committee against Torture, or communications with the special procedures of the Human Rights Council such as the Working Group of Enforced, or involuntary procedures with the Special Rapporteur against Torture or the Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions. This will be one of GHRD's major campaign goals in 2025.

The human rights situation in China has also been discussed during a **side event** at the Human Rights Council session, where both the situation of Uyghurs and Falun Gong

² FalunInfo, 'Why is Falun Gong persecuted in China?' (Falun Dafa Infocenter, 2025).
<<https://faluninfo.net/why-is-falun-gong-is-persecuted-in-china/>>

³ Falun Dafa Information Center, 'FALUN GONG: 25 Years of Persecution, 25 Years Too Long' (June 2024), p 18.

⁴ DAFOH Special Report, 'Forced Organ Harvesting From Living People in China' (25 April 2024).

⁵ Ibid; Falun Dafa Information Center, 'FALUN GONG: 25 Years of Persecution, 25 Years Too Long' (June 2024).

practitioners have been highlighted. The Uyghur population continues to face severe persecution in China despite disinformation campaigns attempting to downplay the reality. An estimated 1 to 3 million Uyghurs remain detained in forced labor camps, with many in the diaspora still unable to contact their families. Over a million children have been forcibly separated from their parents and subjected to reeducation aimed at cultural assimilation. Religious freedoms are heavily restricted, during Ramadan, mosques are closed and basic practices like fasting and praying are forbidden. Transnational repression extends beyond China's borders, with Uyghur refugees being deported from countries like Thailand. Although minority languages are officially recognized, education has been conducted exclusively in Chinese since 2004, relegating native languages to private use at home.

Similarly, the Falun Gong have been persecuted by the CCP since the 1990s, mostly because the movement's broad popularity - it is estimated that it counted about 10 million practitioners during its most popular phase - was seen as a threat to the CCP's monopoly on power. In the year 2024 alone, 164 deaths of Falun Gong members in prisons and labor camps have been confirmed, with over 600 members prosecuted and imprisoned, placing them at severe risk of forced organ harvesting. The domestic oppression is matched with a targeted international disinformation campaign as well as transnational repression of Falun Gong practitioners abroad.

Next to the oral statement about the concerning situation of the Falun Gong, GHRD has also submitted a **written statement** for consideration by the Human Rights Council, which can be found under **point A. of the Annex**. The Falun Gong campaign has further sparked significant interest with the US mission in Geneva. The UN team is in close contact with a representative of the mission and seeks to involve her in any further steps of the campaign.

3. The war in Sudan: oral statements, rallies and more

The war in Sudan is hardly a new issue on the human rights agenda, given its tragic ten-year anniversary in 2025. Yet, the situation remains dire: the humanitarian crisis is one of the worst ever witnessed, the use of chemical weapons is prevalent, sexual violence is frequently used as weapon of war, and minorities targeted through brutal attacks by both State and Rebel forces.⁶

To express our ongoing concerns, GHRD therefore held an **oral statement** during the Interactive Dialogue on the human rights situation in Sudan, which can be seen here: [58th session HRC Statement on Human Rights Situation in Sudan](#) and on all GHRD

⁶ United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 'Report on the situation of human rights in the Sudan' (20 January 2025) A/HRC/58/29.

social media accounts. This oral statement turned out to be a great success too. Overnight, it has gone viral in Sudanese fora and established GHRD's reputation as an NGO excelling in the protection of vulnerable populations worldwide.

Due to the statement's great success, the team was invited to contribute to a rally taking place in front of the United Nations at the Broken Chair. The protest, organized by affiliates of the European Parliament and Sudanese peace organizations, mainly addressed the use of chemical weapons, its impact on civilians and the grave violation of the Geneva Convention that it constitutes. On behalf of GHRD, Charlotte delivered a speech about the appalling increase in the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war, mainly by the Rebel forces, the RSF. The full speech can be found under **point B. of the Annex**, while a short account can be found here:

<https://www.thenewsagency.net/news/charlotte-zehrer-advocates-for-human-rights-in-sudan-on-historic-day-in-geneva/>



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4. Human Rights in Bangladesh and Tibet: more oral statements

Two of GHRD's constant areas of concern are the human rights situations in Bangladesh and Tibet. Therefore, we held two more **oral statements** during the General Debate item 2 and 3 at this Human Rights Council session that underlined the urgency to take action in both cases.

In Bangladesh, GHRD has documented a concerning trend of attacks against religious and ethnic minorities in the country. This particularly affects Hindus, Buddhist, Christians and Indigenous communities, who fall victims to mob attacks, targeted violence and systematic oppression.⁷ The full **oral statement** can be seen here:

[📺 GHRD HRC Oral Statement March 4, 2025 \(Bangladesh situation\)](#) and on all GHRD social media platforms. In addition to the oral statement, GHRD also submitted a **written statement** for consideration by the Human Rights Council which can be found under **point C. of the Annex**.

The situation in Bangladesh, particularly in connection to the regime change and the protests of July and August 2024, was also tabled at a **side event** during this Human Rights Council session, which was attended by the High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk. He spoke on behalf of a team of forensic experts and investigators who spent two months on the ground, documenting grave human rights violations under the framework of international human rights law. Their findings include evidence of extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests and detentions, torture, including of children, and gender-based violence, all reportedly coordinated by government officials with the intent to suppress protests. The investigation found reasonable grounds to believe that crimes against humanity had been committed, including the deliberate obstruction of medical care and acts of revenge following the unrest. Volker Türk also expressed serious concerns about the use of the death penalty. He urgently called for accountability and emphasized potential legal avenues such as a referral to the International Criminal Court (ICC), the application of universal jurisdiction, and the establishment of national or international tribunals. Long-term efforts, according to the High Commissioner, must also focus on reconciliation, truth-telling, reform, and memorialization.

In Tibet, GHRD has been particularly concerned with the suppression of political dissidents, peaceful protests and Buddhist movements. The exploitation of the Tibetan plateau has led to many protests within the region which have been met with police and cyber force, with protestors deprived of any due process. The full **statement** can be found here:

[📺 GHRD Statement: 58th session HRC Statement on Human Rights Situation in Tibet](#)

⁷ Global Human Rights Defence, 'Human Rights Violations in Bangladesh' (27 January 2025) A/HRC/58/NGO/172.

The critical situation in Tibet has also been the topic at a **side event** during this 58th Human Rights Council session. Tibet is facing severe social, environmental, and human rights challenges, particularly related to China's expansion of hydropower dams. Since 2000, nearly 193 dams have been planned, potentially generating 270 gigawatt of electricity which is far more than Tibet's needs. The dams pose threats to both the environment and local communities by displacing 1.2 million people, destroying cultural and religious sites, and causing ecological harm, including methane emissions, disrupted ecosystems, and reduced water quality. Despite these impacts, there is no public discourse or civil society involvement. Tibetans, including monks, activists, and environmental defenders, face arrests for protesting these developments, such as the recent February 14, 2024, demonstrations in Derge. The state's control over Tibetan life extends to suppressing resistance, even as the region is disproportionately affected by the climate crisis and ecological hazards like earthquakes and floods.

5. Protest and Exhibition: awareness-raising for minority rights in Bangladesh and Pakistan

Next to its active advocacy inside the United Nations at the 58th Human Rights Council session, GHRD has also taken its advocacy to a more public, accessible place: the Broken Chair square, just outside the Palais des Nations in Geneva. Here, GHRD organized a protest and an exhibition between March 13 and 15, highlighting ongoing atrocities and human rights abuses against ethnic and religious minorities in Bangladesh and Pakistan.

The **protest** expressed GHRD's grave concerns about the ongoing systematic human rights violations in the State of Bangladesh and was accompanied by the participation of several Bangladeshi civil society actors. Hindu, Buddhist and Christian minorities, along with Indigenous communities, continue to face systemic repression, discrimination and persecution. The protestors demanded that these atrocities must stop immediately and that perpetrators urgently need to be brought to justice. GHRD organized this protest to reiterate that it stands in strong solidarity with its partners in Bangladesh and joins them in their call for action. The full statement given by Kavita Pajan on behalf of GHRD can be found under **point D. of the Annex**.



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The wave of violence that began amidst the protests in August 2024 has further escalated under the new administration of the interim-government, with reports of targeted assaults on religious and ethnic minorities, destruction of property, and desecration of cultural and religious sites, especially in the Chittagong Hills. GHRD highlighted that it is essential that the interim-government under Professor Yunus ensures that such violations are appropriately addressed and prevented.

The protest further also emphasized that the international community cannot remain silent in the face of these ongoing violations. GHRD and its partners called for concerted efforts to restore a situation of democracy and civil society in Bangladesh. Comprehensive reforms of the judicial system and the security sector are required to guarantee a fair and just Bangladesh for all. The organization also strongly urged the international community to demand for justice and accountability to be ensured and to work towards a referral of the situation in Bangladesh to the International Criminal Court. The full **protest** can be watched back here: [📺 Live at the UN: Bangladesh Minorities Protest](#)

After the protest, GHRD also had the opportunity to hold a meeting with members of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in charge of the report presented this month on the human rights violations committed during the protests of July and August 2024. During this meeting the team has delivered a **Memorandum** which can be found under **point E. of the Annex**.

In addition to the protest, GHRD's **exhibition** attracted many interested spectators. The brutality of the atrocities faced by minorities in Bangladesh and Pakistan caused great shock but also much empathy with the people passing through the Broken Chair square. Overall, GHRD succeeded in raising awareness about this concerning human rights violation and hopes that this awareness is soon met with action, specifically from the United Nations. Many of GHRD's partner organizations voiced their strong support for this cause, which became apparent even more during two crucial events hosted by such partner organizations.



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The first crucial event in this regard was the **World Sindhi Congress** on the 19th of March 2025. The congress was attended by a series of experts and shed light on the detrimental situation of Sindhis in Pakistan. Dr. Lakthu Luhana here provided concerning insights: The Indus River, stretching 3,200 kilometers, is the longest river in South Asia and has played a vital role in shaping the identity of the region. The province of Sindh, named after the ancient river Sindhu, has retained its name for over 4,000 years. However, the region now faces severe environmental and socio-economic challenges. Systematic theft of water through dam construction has led to the degradation of 80% of the delta areas, turning once fertile land barren. As sea water encroaches onto agricultural fields, many residents are being displaced. Plans for six new canals threaten to worsen the situation.

Furthermore, despite Sindh producing 74% of Pakistan's gas and 52% of its oil, its people are often viewed as obstacles to resource extraction rather than beneficiaries. Poverty affects 70% of the population, while 25% suffer from hepatitis strains due to unsafe drinking

water. Additionally, half of the region's children experience stunted growth, highlighting the dire health and nutritional crisis faced by Sindh's people. Dr. Luhana emphasized that these highly concerning numbers provide a strong argument for genocidal intent and called for accountability to be ensured at the international level for this crime against humanity. To that extent, GHRD has submitted a **written statement** to the Human Rights Council that can be found in its entirety under **point F. of the Annex**.

Fazal ur-Rehman gave an account of another ethnic minority in Pakistan, the Baloch people. In 2024, the Baloch Tahafuz Movement (BTM) was illegally banned under the guise of national security and anti-terrorism laws, leading to the arrest of over 400 activists. Reports detail enforced disappearances, arbitrary detentions, and torture, primarily by state forces, especially the military, with no accountability. Activists in Pashtun regions have also faced targeted attacks. The judiciary has become increasingly politicized, influenced by both the military and government, while the media faces intense restrictions, censorship, and violence. Freedom of expression and the right to protest have been severely curtailed, contributing to a broader climate of impunity. These developments, according to Rehman, should draw concern from the international community and the United Nations.

The second crucial event in support of GHRD's cause organized by a partner organization was the **Balochistan Conference** hosted by the Baloch National Movement (BNM) on the 27th of March. Faheem Baloch, head of BNM in the diaspora, provided much insight into the struggle of Baloch people. Balochistan, annexed by Pakistan in March 1948 despite its previously recognized right to self-determination following British independence, has since endured a persistent cycle of repression and resistance. The region faces widespread human rights abuses, including the systematic exploitation of its natural resources and the political marginalization of its people. Punjabi dominance in state institutions has further deepened local disenfranchisement.



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Faheem Baloch illustrated the devastating impact of this exploitation: Although Gwadar Port is located in Balochistan, the Baloch people are excluded from employment opportunities and are being displaced. The Pakistan Coast Guard, with a force of 15,000 but less than 2% Baloch representation, denies locals access to fishing routes and economic resources, amid ongoing allegations of corruption. Balochistan's vast mineral wealth consisting of millions of ounces of gold and copper has further been exploited by international actors from Chile, Canada, and China. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor has led to massive displacement, restricted fishing rights, and the establishment of a Chinese naval outpost. Environmental degradation is rampant, with arsenic and cadmium polluting water sources, widespread deforestation, and ecosystem destruction. Politically, Baloch nationalism is falsely labeled as terrorism, resulting in brutal crackdowns, assassinations, and enforced disappearances (over 20,000 since 2000) with many victims later found mutilated or buried in mass graves. These conditions contribute to what Faheem Baloch describes as a gradual, ongoing genocide.

6. Enforced Disappearances in Pakistan: our side event

On April 1st, 2025, GHRD organized an important **side event** at the 58th Human Rights Council session. The full event can be watched here:

[▶ Live streaming of GHRTV World News: UN side event Human Rights Council Enforc...](#)

The event was moderated by GHRD's Charlotte Zehrer and featured several expert panelists: Isabelle Wachsmuth from WHO, Jamal Baloch, human rights activist from Balochistan, Ammarah Balouch, UN Women UK representative and human rights activist from Sindh, and Anwar Mehmood Rehman, Swiss politician and activist for the Ahmadiyya community.



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GHRD, just last week, has released a **report** exposing the systematic use of enforced disappearances in Pakistan, particularly targeting ethnic and religious minorities such as Balochs, Sindhis, Hindus, Christians, and Ahmadis.⁸ Speaking on the findings, Charlotte Zehrer highlighted that enforced disappearances are used to suppress political dissent, silence activists, and exploit minority communities, with victims often vanishing without a trace while their families face intimidation, psychological distress, and economic hardship. The report underscores Pakistan's failure to uphold international human rights obligations and the continued impunity of perpetrators, as domestic efforts to address the crisis remain inadequate. With at least 619 cases recorded in Balochistan alone in 2024, GHRD warns that the situation is worsening. On behalf of the organization, Charlotte therefore called for urgent legal reforms, independent investigations, judicial accountability, support for victims' families, and greater civil society involvement to combat this grave human rights violation.

⁸ Global Human Rights Defence, 'Enforced Disappearances in Pakistan' (28 March 2025).

Isabelle Wachsmuth, who serves as project manager at the WHO and has herself been to Pakistan, highlighted the highly traumatic impact that enforced disappearances have on victims and their families. From depression and post-traumatic stress disorder, to loss of self-worth and confidence – individuals who have been direct victims of enforced disappearances as well as their family members suffer even years after the occurrence of such traumatic events. Mrs Wachsmuth greatly emphasized the need to be solution-oriented, especially when it comes to delivering psychosocial support to victims and families. As an artist herself, she highlighted the role that art can play in therapy but also in awareness-raising all over the world, as it serves as a reminder for humanity and the shared struggle between oppressed people. She concluded by stressing that it is essential that organizations on the ground, in Balochistan and other regions, who provide therapeutic and support service are supported and their capacity enhanced by other states and the international community.

Jamal Baloch who is part of the human rights arm of the Baloch National Movement provided some more insights into the grim reality of the people in Balochistan. Balochistan is a region rich in resources, yet, its people continue to see little of the economic revenue. Any protest against the exploitation of the region or against the increasing numbers of enforced disappearances is met with brutal crackdown and even more enforced disappearances. Jamal Baloch highlighted the case of a mother who had already lost two of her sons to enforced disappearances by the Pakistani military forces and who kept returning every time a body was found to verify whether it was her third son who was still considered missing. Such fates are no single, tragic incidents in Balochistan, they are part of a widespread pattern of suppression of political dissidents and ethnic cleansing of Baloch people from their homeland. Mr Baloch concluded on a strong quote, saying that “everybody who has lived this, will agree that it is a genocide” and appealed to the United Nations to intervene and protect the people of Balochistan.



The next panelist, Ammarah Balouch, highlighted a gender-specific aspect of the cruel practice of enforced disappearances in Pakistan: the forced conversion and marriage of Sindhi girls. In 2024 alone, over 1,200 cases of forced conversions were documented in Pakistan, with nearly 850 occurring in Sindh, where young girls, some as young as 14, are abducted, forcibly converted, and married against their will. Beyond these horrors, Sindhi women face pervasive gender-based violence, honor killings, limited access to education, and early marriages, with over 2 million girls out of school in the region. Ammarah Balouch stressed that this constitutes a grave violation of human rights, particularly the CEDAW convention. She strongly urged the Pakistani government, civil society, and the international community to take immediate action by enforcing legal protections, ensuring access to education, and supporting survivors to break the cycle of oppression and injustice.

Anwar Mehmood Rehman, as the last panelist, stressed the precarious situation of Ahmadiyya Muslims in the state of Pakistan. Ahmadis face relentless persecution and enforced disappearances simply due to their religion. Through the Pakistani constitution and other decrees, they are forbidden from labeling themselves as Muslims, to have places of worship and to engage in Muslim traditions and prayers such as the Salat. Disobedience is punishable by death, which has instigated mob violence and vigilante justice against Ahmadis across the country. Mr Rehman highlighted a series of incidents that had occurred just a day before on the Muslim holiday of Eid, the end of the Ramadan month. Thousands of Ahmadi Muslims across Pakistan, but mainly in the capital, were prevented from entering places of worship and from celebrating this important holiday and were met with police forces when trying to enter buildings or even streets. Additionally, amplified by political hate speech, houses and properties belonging to Ahmadis were vandalized, with graffiti citing the persecution laws and openly calling for the death of all Ahmadis.

All panelists stood united in one central demand: Enforced disappearances and the persecution of ethnic and religious minorities in Pakistan must end immediately. The culture of impunity must end, and accountability for perpetrators must finally be ensured. The United Nations and the international community play a crucial role in this cause. They must amplify the voices of the oppressed and must not forget their daily struggle. And they must apply pressure, both diplomatically and financially, on the state of Pakistan with a view to bringing to an end their horrendous practices as soon as possible. Their call for justice was met with applause in the room – whether it will be met with action now remains crucial. For upcoming sessions, together with the panelists and their organizations, GHRD plans to hold a photo and art exhibition inside the UN as well as a conference about the abuse of blasphemy laws imposing the death penalty against minorities in Pakistan which is set to take place in September.

7. General Debates, Interactive Dialogues, Panel Discussion and Side Events: the hot topics of the session

During the Human Rights Council session, the UN Team participated in numerous interactive dialogues, panel discussions and general debates. These form the main elements of the Human Rights Council, where the special mechanisms of the Council present their thematic and visit reports. Such reports allow the team to understand the progress or setbacks of the human rights situation in different parts of the world and on different issues. Often, they serve as starting points for articles on the reports, where the team considers them to include a notable change in the human rights panorama. It is during these meetings that **oral statements** take place and that **written submissions** are considered.

One such **written statement** that GHRD has submitted for consideration by the Council, next to the ones mentioned above, is one in partnership with the Khmer-Krom Federation (KKF). The Khmer-Krom are an indigenous population in Vietnam that has faced decades of oppression and human rights violations at the hand of the state. The full written statement can be found under **point G. of the Annex**.

In addition, the UN team has attended more than thirty **side events** organized by member states of the Council, international organizations or non-governmental organizations with ECOSOC status at this 58th session alone. Participation in these events is crucial to learn about human rights situations around the world from different perspectives, learn about the priorities of States and engage and network with all stakeholders active in Geneva. Often, the team provides social media coverage of the most interesting events that are in line with GHRD's agenda, the links to which can be found below.



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7.1. Palestine

Without a doubt one of the most popular issues during this 58th Human Rights Council session was the deteriorating situation of human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. It was extensively discussed during an **Interactive Dialogue** in Room XX, as well as during numerous **side events**.

During the **Interactive Dialogue**, High Commissioner Volker Türk presented a comprehensive report detailing serious human rights violations across the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. Based on findings from OHCHR and other investigative bodies, the report covered the period from November 2023 to October 2024 and highlighted escalating violence, mass displacement, and deepening humanitarian crises, particularly in Gaza, where Israeli military operations have led to widespread civilian harm and forced displacement. The report raises grave concerns over violations by Isrealian authorities, specifically its military, and Palestinian armed groups such as Hamas.

The report found that Israeli military actions, including indiscriminate airstrikes and systematic obstruction of humanitarian aid, may constitute war crimes and potentially genocide, especially in light of mass displacement, starvation policies, and continued occupation. In the West Bank, disproportionate use of force, arbitrary restrictions on movement, and settler violence are contributing to what the report calls systemic oppression and a de facto apartheid regime.

Palestinian armed groups, including Hamas, are accused of war crimes such as hostage-taking, indiscriminate attacks on Israeli civilians, and cruel treatment of detainees.

Both Israeli and Palestinian authorities were also found responsible for gender-based and sexual violence and arbitrary detention. The report calls for an immediate ceasefire, full cooperation with international investigations, and accountability mechanisms to address war crimes and crimes against humanity. The High Commissioner also expressed deep concern about Israel's ban on UNRWA operations and emphasized the agency's critical role in humanitarian assistance.

Side events hosted by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch amplified these concerns. Amnesty International presented its new comprehensive report investigating the genocide of Palestinians, citing widespread destruction, starvation tactics, and statements by officials indicating genocidal intent. Human Rights Watch highlighted the water crisis in Gaza, noting that 97% of water is unfit for human consumption and linking the destruction of infrastructure to preventable deaths.

Member states in the Human Rights Council responded with strong calls for accountability, humanitarian access, and an end to impunity. Many reaffirmed support for a two-state solution based on pre-1967 borders, expressed alarm over forced displacement, and condemned restrictions impacting women, children, and civilians. The High Commissioner concluded by stressing the need for objective, rights-based responses and warned against dehumanizing rhetoric that fuels further violence. Overall, the session and accompanying events underscored the urgent need for international legal action and systemic reform to protect civilians and uphold international humanitarian and human rights law.

A more detailed **article** about the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and the main outcomes of this Human Rights Council session can be found on our website:

<https://ghrd.org/article/the-58th-human-rights-council-session-the-situation-of-human-rights-in-the-occupied-palestinian-territories/>

7.2. Syria

Another point of concern during this Human Rights Council session was highlighted by a **report** submitted to the Council for the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, which was drafted between December and late January of 2025. On 8th of December 2024, President Bashar al-Assad's government was overthrown by a coalition led by Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), ending over 50 years of Assad family rule. The caretaker government, formed under Ahmed al-Sharaa, initiated a transitional period promising national dialogue, constitutional reform, and future elections. The new leadership dissolved key institutions of the former regime and opened Syria to international investigators for the first time since 2011, revealing extensive crimes against humanity, including torture, enforced disappearances, and mass executions.

The report exposed that while the fall of the regime raised hopes, Syria remains deeply fragmented and volatile. Clashes continue in the north and east among various armed

groups, including the Syrian Democratic Forces, the Syrian National Army, and remnants of Assad's military. Regional tensions have escalated, notably with Israeli incursions into southern Syria and ongoing Turkish airstrikes. The humanitarian situation is dire, with over 16 million people in need and hundreds of thousands displaced amid widespread destruction, looting, and food insecurity. Despite these challenges, over 200,000 refugees have returned, many to devastated communities.

Looking forward, the report emphasized the need for justice, institutional reform, and preservation of evidence to support accountability. The new authorities must rebuild trust, protect human rights, and enable civil society participation. The Commission called on the international community to support Syria's recovery by lifting sanctions that hinder humanitarian aid and reconstruction, and ensuring that Syrians lead the process of rebuilding their country with dignity and independence.

7.3. Nicaragua

During another **Interactive Dialogue**, the OHCHR presented its new report on the situation of human rights in Nicaragua, which carries special significance given the state's recent withdrawal from the Human Rights Council. The comprehensive report, based on over 1,500 interviews and 7,500 documents, highlights severe and ongoing violations under the Ortega-Murillo regime. Despite Nicaragua's withdrawal from the Human Rights Council, which occurred just a day before the report's presentation, the findings remain valid and the crisis unchanged.

According to the report, the regime has implemented a four-phase strategy aimed at consolidating absolute power: violently suppressing protests, carrying out extrajudicial killings and arbitrary arrests, enacting an amnesty law to ensure impunity, and intensifying persecution of political opponents. This has included the elimination of political opposition, mass expulsions, revocation of nationality, asset confiscation, and the dismantling of democratic institutions. The concentration of power solely in the executive branch has dismantled the rule of law. The OHCHR report underscores that individual criminal responsibility can be established and calls for international accountability through mechanisms like the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the Committee Against Torture (CAT), and the Statelessness Convention. It also emphasizes the urgent need to support civil society, impose sanctions, and protect Nicaraguans stripped of their nationality and unable to return home.

7.4. Afghanistan

The 58th Human Rights Council session also spotlighted the escalating human rights crisis in Afghanistan, with UN Special Rapporteur Richard Bennett presenting a **report** and a study on the Taliban's newly enacted "Law on the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice" (PVPV law) during an **Interactive Dialogue**. His report covers the period from August

to December 2024 and paints a grim picture of systematic gender-based oppression, a shrinking civic space, and increased violence and discrimination against minorities. Women and girls remain barred from secondary education and most employment, while civil society, media, and activists face censorship, detentions, and surveillance. The PVPV law enforces extreme restrictions on women's mobility, dress, and speech, criminalizes same-sex relationships, and bans cultural practices, effectively institutionalizing gender apartheid and religious persecution. The Special Rapporteur warned these policies may amount to crimes against humanity and urged for global action, including accountability efforts and recognition of gender apartheid as a crime.

In addition to the report, **side events** further highlighted the inhumane conditions in Taliban-run prisons and the systematic use of torture, arbitrary detentions, and repression, particularly against women and minorities. Survivors and experts described inhumane detention conditions and the use of sexual violence, solitary confinement, and forced confessions, with no legal safeguards. Afghan women, in particular, emphasized that they are not passive victims but active resisters of the Taliban's erasure of their rights and public presence. They called for urgent international action through legal, diplomatic, and economic means to ensure justice and accountability. The events underscored the critical need for continued international pressure, solidarity with Afghan civil society, and mechanisms to address the Taliban's widespread and systematic abuses.

A detailed **article** about the human rights situation in Afghanistan and main outcomes at this Human Rights Council session can be found on our website: [Human Rights in Afghanistan at the 58th Human Rights Council Session – ghrd](#)

7.5. Bangladesh

Next to the **side event** already outlined above in section 4 chaired by the High Commissioner Volker Türk, other **side events** concerned themselves with the human rights situation in Bangladesh. One such side event was hosted by Human Rights Watch and attempted to sketch a roadmap for lasting reforms in the country.

A recent Human Rights Watch report presented during this side event highlights the excessive use of force by Bangladeshi security forces against unarmed protesters, most of whom are youth raised under Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's regime. The report warns that extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances will persist without meaningful reform. Security forces have claimed they acted on orders from above or were motivated by the promise of promotion, indicating a systemic issue that cannot be resolved without accountability.

The report as well as the panelists at the side event called for legal reforms to ensure access to counsel, guarantee fair trials, and implement comprehensive police training and security sector reform. One panelist further emphasized that the repressive machinery of the state has also been misused for corrupt purposes, for instance, military intelligence abducted a bank's board of directors to force resignations and install a new board. In one particularly

concerning case, a young woman, abducted at age 11 along with her mother over a land dispute with a battalion commander, was later dumped from a bus as her “release” while her mother remains missing. Following this, the side event concluded that development in Bangladesh cannot come at the cost of democracy and human rights.

Another **side event** looked at the human rights situation in Bangladesh beyond the brutal crackdown on the student-led protests, specifically at the persisting violations, even under the new regime, against minorities and dissidents in the country.

All panelists highlighted that the human rights situation in the country is marked by deepening religious persecution, extrajudicial killings, and mass arrests of dissenters, alongside the growing weaponization of the military. Extremist groups operate freely without accountability, posing a serious threat to pluralism and contributing to widespread violence, particularly against religious minorities such as Hindus, Christians, and the Ahmadiyya community. The LGBTQ and transgender populations also face targeted attacks. According to the panelists, local media and journalists are heavily repressed, often harassed through the judicial system, while lawyers are assaulted and the judiciary operates under executive pressure. Thus, a climate of intimidation, impunity, and fear prevails, fueled by rising mob violence and the lack of legal redress.

A young investigative journalist from the UK gave powerful testimony after following a father and son through the ruins of their Hindu-majority village, which also housed some Muslim minorities. The village had been ravaged, with religious sites demolished and lives lost. Despite clear evidence, local leaders continue to deny any religious motivation behind the violence. In an effort to trace the perpetrators, the journalist visited a mosque controversially built atop a Hindu crematorium. There, after speaking with the imam, a violent mob appeared, assaulting the young woman and her companions, attempting to set their car on fire. Their lives were only saved by the intervention of a few individuals before the authorities arrived. This account underscored the urgency of addressing the worsening human rights crisis and the growing culture of impunity; a call that was made by all panelists during this side event.

8. Social media coverage

During the course of this 58th Human Rights Council session, the UN team has shown a strong presence on GHRD’s social media accounts, always keeping viewers and followers up-to-date with the most recent developments at the Palais des Nations.

8.1. YouTube

Our side event:

 [Live streaming of GHRTV World News: UN side event Human Rights Council Enforc...](#)

Our protest:

▶ Live at the UN: Bangladesh Minorities Protest

Livestream side event Tunisia:

▶ Live at the UN: Human Rights in Tunisia

Livestream side event MENA:

▶ Live at the UN: Vulnerable Groups in the Middle East and Asia

Livestream side event Pakistan:

▶ Live at the UN: Human Rights in Pakistan

Livestream side event Bangladesh:

▶ HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AND RISE OF ISLAMIC EXTREMISM IN BAN...

Livestream side event Germany:

▶ GHRD Live in UN Geneva: State Religious Segregation and Discrimination.

Statement Jamal Baloch:

▶ Jamal Baloch - Victim of Enforced Disappearances in Pakistan

8.2. Oral statements

Death penalty:

https://www.instagram.com/p/DGf7fAMRs9_/

▶ GHRD Statement High-Level Panel Death Penalty 58th Session Human Rights Council

Sudan:

https://www.instagram.com/p/DGssyg_xpf_/

▶ 58th session HRC Statement on Human Rights Situation in Sudan

Bangladesh:

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DGx0u-DRZ32/>

▶ GHRD HRC Oral Statement March 4, 2025 (Bangladesh situation)

Tibet:

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DHb0rhBxop3/>

▶ GHRD Statement: 58th session HRC Statement on Human Rights Situation in Tibet

Falun Gong:

https://www.instagram.com/p/DG0Qpx0xN_E/

▶ 58th Session Human Rights Council - Falun Gong Practitioner speaking up

8.3. Instagram

Footage from our Bangladesh protest:

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/DHc8Z2Gohjc/?igsh=ZWt4cjJhc205aDdq>

Side event Egypt:

https://www.instagram.com/p/DHf3F2PAU5o/?img_index=1

Statement from Mr Ravi, General Secretary of the British Tamil Forum:

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DHf8DAzsTyN/>

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DHiTTL1iBz8/>

Side Event ICC and accountability:

https://www.instagram.com/p/DHisCajqr2V/?img_index=1

Side Event Iran:

https://www.instagram.com/p/DHnngETiltb/?img_index=1

Interview with Julie Jones (MP) about Pakistan:

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DHdbVlup9vI/>

More footage from our Bangladesh protest:

https://www.instagram.com/p/DHs3vVRIBz3/?img_index=1

Side Event Bangladesh:

https://www.instagram.com/p/DHtbKQHiDMC/?img_index=1

Side Event Pakistan:

https://www.instagram.com/p/DHv30DhIzjh/?img_index=1

Jamal Baloch at our side event:

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DIBeYV8v5gC/>

Isabelle Wachsmuth at our side event:

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DIB6Kl9xD4A/>

Charlotte Zehrer at our side event:

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DIB6VWfRGJJ/>

Conclusion

This 58th Human Rights Council session has probably been the most impactful and fruitful session in the history of GHRD so far. And where it was impactful for GHRD, it was impactful for minority voices worldwide. We have organized our own protest and exhibition to amplify the voices of victims of religious and ethnic persecution in Bangladesh and Pakistan. We have hosted our own side event to raise awareness and call for action about the practice of enforced disappearances in Pakistan. We have intervened in Interactive Dialogues and discussion at the Human Rights Council and raised the issues and continuing human rights violations in Sudan, Bangladesh, Tibet, with regards to the death penalty and the Falun Gong in China. We have rallied and attended side events where we were able to expand our network and connect with important people in the world of human rights.

These achievements are of course manifested by the increasing reach of GHRD's social media accounts. But more importantly they are manifested in the increased attention that we have witnessed at the United Nations and beyond to the issues that we keep on raising. Our advocacy is being heard - and so are the voices of all those previously silenced and unheard, discarded and forgotten. With this Human Rights Council session we have come one step closer in fulfilling GHRD's mission. And it will not be the last step we have taken.

Now, we are looking forward to things to come and for projects to be realized. Based on our new connections and new standings, we will continue to advocate and raise awareness in order to make this world more just and safeguard human rights for all across the globe. Despite concerning global trends, we stand committed to this cause, and this report, we hope, is evidence of that commitment. At GHRD we believe that, together, we can achieve great things, so let us stand united in working towards safeguarding and realizing human rights for all, everywhere, at any time.

Signed in Geneva, 9th of April 2025,

The UN Team

Annex

A. Written statement Falun Gong

United Nations

A/HRC/58/NGO/169

General Assembly

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Fifty-eighth session

24 February–4 April 2025

Agenda item 4

Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Written statement* submitted by Stichting Global Human Rights Defence, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[26 January 2025]

Forced Organ Harvesting in Living Falun Gong Practitioners

Forced organ harvesting, referring to the coerced procurement of organs from living people without consent and killing the 'donor' through the process, has been a prevalent practice in the People's Republic of China (PRC), which lacks

the rule of law and where the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), the incumbent government, dictates the legal prosecution of crime.

Global Human Rights Defence (GHRD) is gravely concerned about the human rights abuses towards Falun Gong practitioners in China, who have been victims of forced organ harvesting. The ongoing human rights violations committed against Falun Gong practitioners have been met with impunity as a result of being concealed and denied by the CCP. This statement outlines GHRD's concerns towards Falun Gong practitioners in China and proposes recommendations to the Human Rights Council to mitigate these human rights violations.

Falun Gong practitioners have been victims of state-sanctioned forced organ harvesting practices since 1999. The Chinese government's persecution of Falun Gong practitioners through forced organ harvesting stems from the financial, ideological, and political benefits it gains through perpetuating the practice. Over the past two decades, the Chinese government has gained substantial profit from harvesting the organs of living Falun Gong practitioners and prisoners. These financial gains have incentivised the state and medical personnel within China's transplant infrastructure to continue the practice. Moreover, the incompatibility of the core tenets of Falun Gong, rooted in a strong moral code, with CCP's communist ideals has motivated the ultimate destruction and silencing of the Falun Gong discipline.

The continuation of this unethical and criminal practice for over two decades indicates the ineptitude of the international community in effectively tackling this crime against humanity. The silence of world leaders and governments on China's transplant crimes has further empowered the Chinese government to continue to inflict such atrocity on Falun Gong practitioners without fear of potential repercussions. The inadequate intervention of the international community and world leaders has also emboldened China to commit serious human rights violations through similar crimes against Tibetans, Uyghurs, and other Muslim groups in the country.

In July 2006, at the World Transplant Congress in Boston, DAFOH's Executive Director, Torsten Trey, outlined that his conversations with Chinese doctors revealed that the Tianjin Hospital had conducted about 2,000 liver transplants in 2005. This large number of transplants was unfounded, considering China's lack of a public organ donation system until the launch of the China Organ Transplant Response System (COTRS) in 2013. Subsequently, a Chinese doctor revealed these organs to be from Falun Gong practitioners. After 1999, China's transplant numbers grew rapidly, with the number of officially reported transplants exceeding 12,000 by 2004, a threefold increase.

Beyond the large number of transplants, the availability of transplant organs at short notice for patients further reveals the dire extent of organ harvesting in living Falun Gong practitioners. In 2020, several lung transplants on COVID patients were performed, with the wait times for the donor lungs unusually ranging from one day to a few days. These

developments are indicative of China's exploitation of living Falun Gong practitioners, many of whom are prisoners, as a year-round, on-demand organ source, which explains its substantial increase in organ transplants.

The key principles underpinning the WHO Guiding Principles on Human Cell, Tissue, and Organ Transplantation are transparency and traceability. As organ transplants involve numerous parties, such as doctors, organ donors, and organ recipients, transparency between all parties is paramount in accounting for ethical considerations. However, the Chinese government has obscured transplant data by providing manipulated and fabricated numbers that mislead those trying to gain a transparent picture of transplant operations in China. For instance, while the Chinese government publishes annual reports detailing the number of transplants, these numbers cannot be verified due to the lack of available data on the number of transplants at individual transplant centres across the country. Hence, the data provided by the government is open to manipulation and thus lacks transparency.

Falun Gong practitioners who escaped detention recounted being subjected to invasive medical tests, including blood and organ function checks, despite no medical necessity and reported being threatened with organ harvesting if they refused to comply. Witnesses have also reported that Falun Gong prisoners were subject to an ultimatum to sign a form to voluntarily donate their organs and suffer painless death or be subject to a torturous death.

As per an anonymous military veteran doctor, in a letter to the Epoch Times in 2006, there were more than 36 detention camps in China, holding up to 14,000 Falun Gong practitioners in one. As per eyewitness testimony, in these detention centres, written consent used for transplantations were counterfeits, often using the same handwriting; the eyewitness had seen about 60,000 such counterfeits. The adoption of such reprehensible strategies by authoritarian regimes like the PRC is indicative of the misleading and camouflaged nature of organ transplant programs in authoritarian regimes, compounded by the lack of oversight and the rule of law.

To protect itself against potential accusations of human rights violations, the Chinese government has adopted a strategy of deception to persuade other actors to believe factually false claims. In 2017, the President of China's Supreme Court said that the CCP's power transcended the Chinese constitution and its stipulated laws. These internal revelations suggest that the CCP does not necessarily adhere to the Chinese constitution and thus openly disregards ethical considerations, with complete jurisdiction to dictate domestic institutions such as China's transplant industry to abide by its own norms. As such, the CCP also does not adhere to international ethical standards.

To further cover up its heinous human rights violations, the CCP has outright denied the execution of forced organ harvesting against Falun Gong practitioners with no supporting justifications. Such statements, along with the dissemination of disinformation, continue to mislead the Chinese public about the atrocities committed by the government and present a fictional narrative of the government's good intentions. By manipulating public opinion to

conceal its human rights atrocities, the CCP is only further emboldened to consolidate power and violate internationally agreed human rights norms.

As per the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations, China's persecution of Falun Gong practitioners aligns with the stipulated definition of genocide due to China's demonstrated intent to destroy, in whole or in part, the members of the Falun Gong community by causing serious bodily harm to and killing members of the group. China's destructive intention towards Falun Gong practitioners was verbalised in 1999 by Jiang Zemin, the former head of the CCP, who expressed the state's intent to physically destroy Falun Gong and its members.

Recommendations

In light of China's serious human rights violations and its demonstrated act of genocide, we urge the UN to enact relevant legislation and punish the perpetrators of genocide in line with the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. China's assertion of interference in the government's internal affairs when condemned should be dismissed outright, as acts that represent crimes against humanity must not be tolerated in a civil and just world.

In line with the convention on genocide, we also believe that the responsible perpetrators must be tried and referred to a competent state tribunal or an international penal tribunal that may have jurisdiction over contracting parties that have accepted its jurisdiction to provide justice for victims without further delay. Therefore, accountability mechanisms for the violation of human rights and international law should be strictly enforced. The absence of justice for Falun Gong victims will inadvertently perpetuate an incessant cycle of injustice and genocide if substantial steps are not taken by the international community against China. Responding with impunity will likely set a dangerous precedent for other states violating human rights that they are immune from any potential repercussions.

We also earnestly request the UN to urge governments and world leaders to sign the Universal Declaration on Combating and Preventing Forced Organ Harvesting and condemn China's impermissible abuse of Falun Gong practitioners. In doing so, we also appeal to the international community to raise awareness of the atrocities committed by the Chinese government and extend their support towards both Falun Gong practitioners who have been victims of the CCP's abuse and other minority communities in China who are also subject to forced organ harvesting, including but not limited to Uyghurs, Tibetans, Muslims, and Christians.

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.

B. Sudan speech

Today, we are gathered here to shed light on one of the most devastating human rights crises of our time. Sudan is in the grip of a humanitarian catastrophe, with millions displaced, essential services obliterated, and civil society under siege. But among the countless atrocities, one stands out in its sheer brutality and inhumanity— and that is the systematic and targeted violence against women and girls. And this is not just collateral damage; it is a deliberate weapon of war.

Humanitarian crisis

The ongoing war in Sudan has triggered the world's largest displacement crisis. Just as of November 2024, over 11 million people have been forced to flee their homes within Sudan, while more than 3 million have sought refuge in neighboring countries. The suffering of internally displaced persons is compounded by forced evictions, lack of access to aid, and obstruction of humanitarian relief by warring factions.

More than half of Sudan's population, which is over 24.8 million people, require humanitarian assistance, yet deliberate interference has severely limited the delivery of aid. A glaring example occurred in August 2024, when the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) blocked trucks carrying life-saving medical supplies in North Darfur for over a month. While we have seen some progress, such as the reopening of the Adre crossing, humanitarian access remains alarmingly restricted.

Civic space

On top of the humanitarian crisis, civic space in Sudan has been eroded through arbitrary arrests, media crackdowns, and emergency measures restricting freedom of expression. Individuals have been imprisoned simply for expressing opinions against the war, and journalists face relentless persecution. In the months of May and June alone, at least 12 journalists have been killed, including two in detention, and over 100 human rights violations against journalists have been documented, and these are only cases confirmed by the United Nations. We must expect that the actual numbers will be much higher.

Civil society organizations struggle to operate in Sudan due to burdensome registration fees, event cancellations, and direct intimidation from authorities. Furthermore, a nationwide telecommunications blackout in early 2024 deprived 30 million Sudanese of internet and phone services, silencing voices and blocking the flow of critical information. While connectivity has been partially restored, restrictions remain, with Starlink access banned in some regions by the Sudanese Armed Forces. The relentless suppression of civic space aims to dismantle resistance and prevent the world from witnessing the extent of human rights violations. This is not acceptable.

VAW

Against this deeply concerning situation of continuous human rights abuses, however, there is one atrocity that stands out and that is the ever-increasing violence against women and girls. The sheer scale and severity of gender-based violence in Sudan is staggering. Since the outbreak of the war, the OHCHR alone has documented at least 120 cases of conflict-related sexual violence, affecting over 200 victims. From other reports we know that the real numbers here are far, far higher due to widespread underreporting, fueled by fear of retaliation, stigma, and the collapse of medical and judicial institutions.

Over 70% of documented sexual violence cases implicate men of the RSF or RSF-affiliated armed groups. Sudanese Armed Forces personnel have also been involved, though in fewer incidents. The deliberate and systematic use of sexual violence as a weapon of war—particularly in the Darfur region—bears the hallmarks of ethnic-based targeting, especially of Masalit and other ethnic minorities. In one horrific case that dates back to June 2023, a survivor recalled an RSF soldier telling her, “This year, all Masalit girls will deliver our children.”

Gang rape has become a disturbingly common tactic. Survivors report that perpetrators follow a hierarchical order based on military ranks. One survivor in South Darfur described being raped in February 2024 by five men in RSF uniforms, each taking turns based on their seniority. This proliferation of mass rapes suggests a coordinated strategy of terrorizing women and destroying communities.

And the consequences of this widespread sexual violence are devastating. Reports of pregnancies and children born from rape have increased fivefold. Some women and girls have been held in slave-like conditions, subjected to repeated sexual violence by RSF-affiliated armed groups.

Service providers report overwhelming demand for medical, psychological, and social support, yet access to services remains dire. Less than 10% of targeted survivors can receive essential medical care, and safe shelters are virtually non-existent. The Saudi Maternity Hospital, the only facility offering support for survivors in North Darfur, has been under repeated attack since May 2024, further limiting access to crucial care.

Beyond physical violence, the conflict has deepened structural gender inequalities. Women and girls are disproportionately affected by food insecurity, making up 64% of the households experiencing extreme hunger. More than 160,000 pregnant women lack access to essential healthcare, and over 2.5 million girls, which correspond to 74% of school-aged girls, are out of school. This puts them at greater risk of early marriage and female genital mutilation.

The increase in economic desperation has forced some women and girls into transactional sex, exposing them to further violence, exploitation, and the risk of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. The lack of safe water and sanitation, particularly for displaced women, further exacerbates vulnerabilities. At least 80% of internally displaced women struggle to access clean water due to cost, distance, and safety concerns.

The use of sexual violence as a weapon of war is a grave violation of international law. It is imperative that these crimes are not met with impunity. Perpetrators must be held accountable, and urgent measures must be taken to protect Sudanese women and girls from further violence and suffering.

Call to action

Together with everybody here today, Global Human Rights Defence therefore urgently calls for action, on the warring parties and on the international community.

First, it is imperative to refrain from restricting civic space and the work of civil society representatives, human rights defenders, including women human rights defenders, and journalists. This includes restrictions on the basis of states of emergency and emergency orders. An open, unrestricted civil society is essential in securing a state of democracy and rule of law and in protecting those who defend human rights. It is also paramount for both the RSF and Sudanese Forces to ensure the rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief and the safe and unimpeded access of humanitarian organizations to all areas under their control.

Most importantly, we also call on both parties to the conflict to comply with their obligations under international human rights and international humanitarian law and to take specific measures for the protection of civilians in line with their commitments. This must include the issuing and enforcing of strict command orders to end the recruitment and use of children and sexual violence in conflict. Women and girls in Sudan must be protected at all costs.

It is, however, not enough to cease violations immediately. What is essential is to prevent and to punish violations of international humanitarian law and violations and abuses of human rights. Without accountability and guarantees of non-repetition, there can be no lasting peace and no justice.

The international community plays an important role in ending violations and ensuring peace and justice too. It is vital that States and international organizations continue to engage in and support efforts to reach a cessation of hostilities. The community must work collectively on a unified resolution of the conflict, while the main aim must always be to ensure the guarantee of human rights and accountability for their violations.

Here it is important to support inclusive dialogue that reflects the diversity of the Sudanese population. While paving the way for a transition to a civilian-led Government, we must not forget the specific role of women and young people in ensuring a just society for all.

We also strongly urge the international community to support local civil society and other relevant actors where they can, by providing resources and strengthening their capacities on the protection and promotion of human rights. The provision of comprehensive services to survivors of human rights violations should be a priority.

At the international level, we call on all States to encourage the Sudanese authorities and neighboring countries to cooperate with the independent international fact-finding mission for the Sudan and any other mechanism aimed at investigating human rights violations in the country.

Lastly, the most important duty of all of the international community is to ensure that accountability measures are pursued at different levels, including in international and national forums. The imposition of arms embargoes can help greatly in the cessation of hostilities, but our strongest effort as international community towards ensuring accountability must be the expansion of the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court over the whole of the Sudan.

Conclusion

The war in Sudan is not just a humanitarian disaster—it is a human rights catastrophe. Women and girls are being brutalized on an unprecedented scale, their suffering compounded by displacement, hunger, and lack of access to essential services. The world must not look away. Sudanese women and girls deserve more than our sympathy; they need our unwavering commitment to justice, protection, and peace. Let us show them that they are not forgotten. The time for action is now.

Thank you.

C. Bangladesh written statement

United Nations

A/HRC/58/NGO/172

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Agenda item 2

Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner

for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the

High Commissioner and the Secretary-General

Written statement* submitted by Stichting Global Human Rights Defence, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[27 January 2025]

Human rights violations in Bangladesh

Since the interim government under Muhammad Yunus was formed in Bangladesh on August 8, 2024, following the resignation and fleeing of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the country has witnessed significant political upheaval

and unrest. While this transition initially sparked hopes for a more inclusive and democratic governance structure, the reality for many minority groups does not reflect initial expectations.

Hindus, Buddhists, and Indigenous populations in particular continuously face harrowing attacks, systemic injustices, and widespread persecution. The wave of violence that began amidst the protests in August 2024 has only escalated under the new administration, with reports of targeted assaults on religious and ethnic minorities, destruction of property, and desecration of cultural and religious sites. These attacks exhibit pre-existing, deep-rooted communal tensions, exacerbated by political instability and a lack of effective protection for vulnerable communities. Furthermore, the failure by state authorities to address violations of the rights of minorities undermines trust in the interim government and threatens the principles of equality and justice fundamental to a democratic society.

Between August 4 and August 20, 2024, the Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council (BHBCUC) reported 2,010 incidents of communal violence. The violent attacks targeted homes, businesses, and places of worship, resulting in deaths and widespread displacement. Hindu communities in Bangladesh have experienced a series of targeted attacks that have left families displaced and communities seriously injured.

On August 5, 2024, Lalit Chandra Burman, residing in South Botina, Akcha Union, Thakurgaon District, suffered significant losses when a mob attacked his shops and home, extensively looting and vandalising his property. This violent act, reportedly fuelled by communal tensions, forced Burman and his family into displacement. Similarly, Jogesh Chandra Roy, from Baripara, Magura Union, Thakurgaon District, faced an attack on August 11, 2024, during which a group of looters ransacked his house. The attackers stole valuables, set parts of the property on fire, and issued threats against Roy's family, compelling them to flee. Also on August 5, 2024, Jagannath Roy, living in Gobindapur, Khanshama Upazila, Dinajpur District, became the target of a coordinated attack. His house was looted and vandalised, leaving his family traumatised and seeking refuge in neighbouring areas. These incidents illustrate the grave challenges faced by Hindu communities in Bangladesh, emphasising the need for urgent intervention to protect their rights and ensure their safety.

The Indigenous communities in Bangladesh, particularly those residing in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), have faced an alarming increase in targeted violence and systemic oppression since the formation of the interim government. These attacks, often motivated by disputes over land and ethnic tensions, highlight the precarious situation of these marginalised groups. In several villages across the CHT, armed groups have reportedly invaded Indigenous lands, forcing residents to flee their homes. For example, in October 2024, a town in Rangamati District was attacked by a group of settlers backed by local political groups, resulting in the displacement of over 50 families. Homes were burned, and crops were destroyed, leaving the community without a means of sustenance.

Prominent Indigenous leaders advocating for the rights of their communities have been subjected to harassment and violence. In November 2024, an Indigenous activist in

Bandarban District was abducted and later found severely injured, a tactic aimed at silencing voices that speak out against injustices. Furthermore, Buddhist temples and traditional Indigenous places of worship have been vandalised or destroyed under the pretext of land development. In one incident, a historic temple in Khagrachari was desecrated in December 2024, with religious artifacts stolen and walls defaced. These acts of aggression underscore the critical need for protection and accountability to address the continued marginalisation and violence faced by Indigenous populations in Bangladesh.

All above-illustrated incidents underline the urgent need for the government to address the vulnerabilities of Indigenous populations. The lack of accountability and the complicity of local authorities exacerbate the situation, undermining the promises of equality and democracy. The interim government must take concrete measures to uphold the terms of the 1997 Chittagong Hill Tract Peace Accord and ensure the safety and rights of Indigenous communities.

While Dr Yunus' statement in the historic Dhakeshwari temple promising to protect the rights of minorities is reassuring, it does not reflect the reality faced by minorities in Bangladesh, and it appears as though the state is complicit in violations of their rights. The ongoing case concerning Chinmoy Prabhu Das and the interim government's attempt to ban ISKCON particularly illustrate this.

The arrest of Chinmoy Prabhu Das

On the 26th of November, Das was detained by police at the Dhaka Shah Jalal International Airport and transported to the Chittagong Central Jail, where he remains in custody under false sedition charges filed by a member of one of Bangladesh's political parties.[1] It must also be noted that the prison holds individuals convicted of Islamist-related terror offences and hence poses a significant risk to Das' safety. Subsequently, following Das' arrest, two more monks were jailed.[2] In contrast to this, several individuals convicted of terror offences were released soon after the instalment of the interim government including Jashimuddin Rahmani, the leader of the Al Qaeda-affiliated Ansarullah Bangla Team, who was involved in the murder of a secular blogger in 2013.[3]

The false nature of the charges

Evidence presented in support of the sedition charge entails a video taken from a peaceful demonstration that Das participated in. The video depicts Hindu protesters placing saffron flags, associated with Hindu identity, above the national flag of Bangladesh. Das alleges that he was not present when this incident occurred. Beyond this, the act in question hardly constitutes an attack on the integrity of the state legitimising a sedition charge.

In India, there has been a near-universal cross-party condemnation of Das' arrest including by opposition parties that have positioned themselves against Hindutva politics.[4] The arrest has also been condemned by the Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council who have reported on communal violence under the interim government.[5]

The likely motivation behind Das' arrest

Das was the spokesperson for the Bangladesh Sammilit Sanatan Jagaran Jote, a Hindu advocacy organisation, and associated with ISKCON, perhaps the country's most financially powerful Hindu organisation with a global network of places of worship and sub-organisations. ISKCON is probably the most capable Hindu organisation to bring international attention to human rights issues affecting its members. ISKCON, as the most influential Hindu organisation, also has notable soft power and public representation in Western countries. Hence, it can mobilise protestors to demonstrate against human rights violations to an extent unparalleled by other, international Hindu organisations. It is therefore reasonable to assume that the motivation behind Das' arrest relates to matters of public and international reputation.

Another important factor is Das' association with Farhad Mazhar, a Bangladeshi intellectual who has notably criticised the management of the current interim government. Though the motivation behind Das' arrest cannot be ascertained, he was likely seen as a political opponent or publicity threat.

The interim government's attempt to ban ISKCON

The attempt to suppress Hindu voices in the country has not ended with the arrest of Chinmoy Das. There have been petitions presented to the Bangladesh High Court attempting to ban ISKCON in its entirety,[6] with the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement branding it as a "terrorist organisation". This case has so far not been taken up.

The obstruction of justice

Following Das' arrest, his legal representative was the victim of a violent attack, resulting in his admission to an intensive care unit and inability to provide legal counsel.[7] Threats have also been issued towards lawyers considering providing defence counsel, with around 70 prospective lawyers having false charges filed against them, subsequently disqualifying them from practising law and delaying court proceedings.[8] Many of these lawyers are currently in hiding, while Das remains imprisoned, due to the Supreme Court rejecting the appeal for his release.[9]

Recommendations:

1. GHRD urges the interim government to protect the right of organisations representing religious minorities to conduct religious activities without fear of violence, intimidation, or political repression.
2. GHRD implores the new government to protect places of worship including ancient and historic Hindu and Buddhist temples.

3. GHRD demands the new government to ensure that the country is governed according to secular principles and that religious minorities should not be under any constitutional or legal obligation to affirm any religious or doctrinal belief.
4. GHRD further requests the new government to uphold the terms of the 1997 Chittagong Hill Tract Peace Accord.
5. GHRD lastly requests the government not to facilitate any more settlements in the CHT region, to take measures to reduce tension in this region, and to guarantee freedom of expression in written, journalistic, and social media to Indigenous communities.

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* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.

D. Speech Bangladesh protest

Global Human Rights Defence is organizing this protest in front of the United Nations to express its grave concerns about the ongoing systematic human rights violations in the State of Bangladesh. Hindu, Buddhist and Christian minorities, along with Indigenous communities, continue to face systemic repression, discrimination and persecution. These atrocities must stop and perpetrators need to be brought to justice. We therefore stand in strong solidarity with our partners and Bangladesh and join them in their call for action.

The wave of violence that began amidst the protests in August 2024 has only escalated under the new administration of the interim-government, with reports of targeted assaults on religious and ethnic minorities, destruction of property, and desecration of cultural and religious sites, especially in the Chittagong Hills. It is essential that the interim-government under Professor Yunus ensures that such violations are appropriately addressed and prevented.

The international community cannot remain silent in the face of these ongoing violations. We call for concerted efforts to restore a situation of democracy and civil society in Bangladesh. Comprehensive reforms of the judicial system and the security sector are required to guarantee a fair and just Bangladesh for all. We also strongly urge the international community to demand for justice and accountability to be ensured and to work towards a referral of the situation in Bangladesh to the International Criminal Court.

E. Memorandum Bangladesh



OFFICIAL MEMO

To: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
From: Global Human Right Defence
Date: 13th March 2025
Subject: Protest about the human rights situation in Bangladesh

Global Human Right Defence has organized a protest at the Broken Chair Square in Geneva to denounce the ongoing violations of human rights of minorities in Bangladesh.

Hindus, Buddhists and indigenous peoples, in particular, continually face vicious attacks, systemic injustices and widespread persecution. Targeted aggression against religious and ethnic minorities, destruction of property and the desecration of cultural and religious sites have been reported.

We call for the immediate release of Chinmoy Prabhu Das who is currently arbitrarily detained on sedition charges in the Chittagong Central Jail and whose health condition continues to deteriorate.

We urge the Office to establish a permanent mission of the U.N. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Bangladesh to support efforts of the interim-government of comprehensive reform and restoration of democracy and civil society in Bangladesh, with a view to ensuring the protection of the minorities and the respect for their human rights.

Regards,

Sradhanand Sital
President

RIVIERVISMARKT 5-UNIT 2.07
2513 AM THE HAGUE
PHONE +31 62 72 41006

F. Sindh written statement

United Nations

A/HRC/58/NGO/170

General Assembly

Distr.: General

XX January 2025

English only

Fifty-eighth session

24 February–4 April 2025

Agenda item 3

Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Written statement* submitted by Stichting Global Human Rights Defence, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[26 January 2025]

Exodus of Sindhi Hindu from Sindh Pakistan

We would like to request your urgent attention to the grim human rights issue of multifaceted persecution of Sindhi Hindus carried out systematically in Pakistan through religious fundamentalists, local influentials with support from the state, and multilayered discrimination that is resulting of exodus of Sindhi Hindus from Pakistan.

In 2024 the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) produced a Fact-finding Study titled ‘Exodus – Is the Hindu Community Leaving Sindh?’. While the study suggests further

research is needed for such a critical issue recognises that around 5000 Sindhi Hindus are migrating from Sindh and the process is gearing pace.

The ongoing exodus of Sindhi Hindus from Sindh, Pakistan, is a significant humanitarian concern that demands urgent attention from the international community. The reasons behind this alarming trend are multifaceted, encompassing insecurity, economic struggles, and threats to women's safety. Additionally, there are indications of state-sponsored plans aimed at facilitating the departure of Sindhi Hindus from their ancestral homeland to make Pakistan a puritan Muslim state and convert Sindhis into minority.

In recent years, Sindhi Hindus have faced increasing insecurity characterized by kidnappings for ransom, violent attacks, and the looming threat of blasphemy accusations. The admission by prominent political figures, including Bilawal Bhutto, head of the Pakistan Peoples Party, and Murad Ali Shah, Chief Minister of Sindh, regarding the well-armed dacoits operating in the region, highlights the challenges faced by religious minorities. This violence is often exacerbated by a lack of effective law enforcement and a judiciary that fails to protect vulnerable populations.

Moreover, economic struggles have compounded the plight of Sindhi Hindus. Systematic discrimination and a lack of opportunities have stifled their ability to thrive economically. Many have been forced into situations of poverty, leading to a loss of social stability and further prompting migration.

Women in the Sindhi Hindu community are particularly vulnerable, facing threats such as harassment, kidnapping, and forced conversions, often perpetrated with the tacit support of state actors. These violations not only undermine their safety but also strip them of their fundamental rights and freedoms, creating an environment of fear and desperation.

The migration of Sindhi Hindus from Sindh is not merely a demographic shift but a symptom of broader societal and political driven agenda in Pakistan. It reflects the urgent need for comprehensive measures aimed at safeguarding the rights and dignity of religious minorities.

We request the UN to press upon the Pakistani government to take proactive steps to address these challenges, including:

1. Establish law and order to protect religious minorities from violence and discrimination.
2. Legislation Against Forced Conversions: Enact and enforce robust laws to prevent forced conversions and underage marriages, ensuring that the rights of women and children are protected.
3. Ban the extremist outfits preaching violence and hatred against religious minorities
4. Revoke the controversial blasphemy laws

5. Punish the perpetrators of forced conversions of minority girls and women, particularly the known such as Mian Mithu and Pir Sarhindi
6. Get the Priya Kumari, a 7-year child girl abducted three years ago, released
7. Review the syllabus to remove all references to religious hate and intolerance

In conclusion, the plight of Sindhi Hindus in Sindh requires immediate and concerted action from both the Pakistani government and the international community. We call upon the Human Rights Council to urge Pakistan to fulfil its obligations under international human rights law and to take definitive steps to protect its religious minorities.

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.

G. Khmer-Krom written statement

United Nations

A/HRC/58/NGO/171

General Assembly

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Fifty-eighth session

24 February–4 April 2025

Agenda item 5

Human rights bodies and mechanisms

Written statement* submitted by Stichting Global Human Rights Defence, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[26 January 2025]

Human rights violations against the Khmer-Krom people in Vietnam

Global Human Rights Defence respectfully submits this written statement to the Human Rights Council to address ongoing violations of freedom of religion or belief faced by the Khmer-Krom people in Vietnam. These violations are characterized by the persecution and imprisonment of Khmer-Krom Buddhist monks and activists, who have been targeted for exercising their fundamental human rights.

Vietnam, as a member of the Human Rights Council and a party to the United Nations Convention Against Torture (UNCAT), bears significant responsibilities to uphold international human rights standards. However, recent developments demonstrate a concerning gap between Vietnam's international obligations and its domestic actions.

In recent years, Khmer-Krom Buddhist monks and activists have been subjected to imprisonment, with sentences ranging from two to six years. Their only "offense" has been the peaceful advocacy for their religious freedom and indigenous rights, as protected under international law. These actions represent clear violations of the Khmer-Krom people's rights to freedom of religion, freedom of expression, and self-determination, all of which are enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

The detentions of these individuals were marked by serious violations of due process and fundamental legal safeguards. Following their arrests, they were held incommunicado for eight months, denied access to legal counsel and family visits, and subjected to forced confessions. These coerced statements, extracted under duress, were subsequently broadcast on state-controlled media, violating the detainees' dignity and undermining their presumption of innocence, as guaranteed by Article 14 of the ICCPR.

Reports from family members and trial observers indicate that detainees appeared disoriented and incapable of responding coherently to court proceedings. These observations raise credible concerns about the use of torture or other forms of coercion during their detention. Such treatment constitutes a direct violation of Vietnam's obligations under UNCAT and contradicts its domestic legal commitments to protect human dignity and integrity.

The persecution of Khmer-Krom Buddhist monks is emblematic of a broader state policy aimed at controlling and assimilating the Khmer-Krom's distinct religious and cultural identity. The Vietnam Buddhist Sangha (VBS), a state-controlled religious organization, is frequently used as a tool to suppress Theravada Buddhism, which is integral to Khmer-Krom spiritual life. This interference seeks to marginalize the Khmer-Krom's religious practices and silence monks who advocate for their community's rights.

These measures violate not only the Khmer-Krom's freedom of religion or belief, as guaranteed by Article 18 of the ICCPR, but also their right as an indigenous people to maintain and develop their cultural traditions and institutions, as protected by UNDRIP.

Global Human Rights Defence respectfully urges the Human Rights Council to take the following actions:

Call for the immediate and unconditional release of all imprisoned Khmer-Krom Buddhist monks and activists. Those who have been defrocked must be permitted to be re-ordained and resume their religious practices freely and without fear of reprisal.

Demand an end to the use of torture and forced confessions, in line with Vietnam's obligations under UNCAT. Independent investigations into all allegations of mistreatment must be conducted, and those responsible must be held accountable.

Insist on fair and transparent judicial processes, including access to legal counsel, interpretation services in indigenous languages, and family visitation rights for all detainees.

Urge Vietnam to respect the Khmer-Krom's right to religious autonomy by ceasing interference in their religious practices and allowing them to manage their institutions independently of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha.

Advocate for the cessation of assimilationist policies that threaten the Khmer-Krom's distinct cultural and religious identity. Vietnam must recognize and protect the Khmer-Krom as an indigenous people with inherent rights to self-determination, as outlined in UNDRIP.

As a member of the Human Rights Council, Vietnam has a heightened obligation to uphold the principles of human rights, equality, and dignity. Its ongoing repression of the Khmer-Krom people undermines these principles and tarnishes the Council's credibility.

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.

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