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Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Written statement* submitted by Organization for Defending Victims of Violence, 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.

[24 January 2022]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only. The views expressed in the present document do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations or its officials.

Human Rights Concerns in the United States of America, the United Kingdom, France and Canada

Introduction

We would like to draw the attention of the Human Rights Council towards the extensive violation of human rights in the United States, the United Kingdom, France and Canada. Over the previous years, the situation of refugees, spreading hate speech, killing ordinary citizens with impunity and weapons sales to oppressive countries have been our main four concerns in the aforementioned countries. With the hope of the improvement of conditions, some examples are highlighted below.

1 – Refugees

Over the recent years the outbreak of civil and regional conflicts have forced many people to displacement most of whom seek refuge in other countries as the only source of hope for a better life and unfortunately, the situation of refugees have worsened particularly in the United States and the United Kingdom.

- United States of America

On the pretext of protecting public health and preventing people from greater risk of contracting COVID-19, the United States has repeatedly abused Title 42 (1) for mass expulsion and prevention of Haitians and other migrants from seeking asylum, a decision which is extensively criticized by the United Nations' health experts, human rights organizations and even by some US officials and contributed to further racism, xenophobia and discrimination in US border policies. (2)

From January 2019 to January 2021 the US Administration, deported more than 71,000 refugees including tens of thousands of children and persons with disabilities or contractual diseases to Mexico under the “Remain Mexico” program. (3)

Relying on the zero tolerance policy, the Administration separated around 5500 children from their parents to dishearten migrants from crossing the borders. (4) Sadly, most of the anti-immigrant polices has continued in the current Administration.

- The United Kingdom

In spite of the promises of Britain’s Home Ministry regarding the review of the refugees’ situation, reports indicate that they are experiencing terrible conditions, after entering Britain.

According to the reports, most women migrants have been sexually abused by traffickers and necessary support has not been provided by aid officials to them. Also, in spite of some limited improvements, detainees including a large number of unaccompanied minors experience terrible conditions and mistreatment. (5) The Nationality and Borders Legislation” is criticized as the cruelest immigration legislation in the history of Britain. (6)

In addition, the UK Home Ministry has been reported to house hundreds of asylum-seekers in hostels which have cells like prisons. Overpopulation in these hostels increases the risk of COVID-19 infection and addressing the situation, in accordance with refugee regulations, is urgent. (7)

- The United States

According to figures released in December 2021, hate crimes committed against Asians increased by 361 percent in New York. The hate attacks and Islamophobia in 2021 increased by 106 percent compared to the previous year and 250 arrests have been made in this regard. (8) Unfortunately, both Democrat and Republican Parties have roles in fueling the fire of hate crimes in their anti-Asian policies and speeches. (9)

Following a visit to the United States, the UN Special Rapporteur on Minorities Issues called on the country to amend laws to prevent rise in discrimination, hate speech and crimes against minorities in the country. (10)

According to a report, in the first half of 2021 more than 500 Islamophobic incidents have been registered causing further concern with regards to a rise in Islamophobia. (11)

- Canada

In the beginning of 2021, the remains of indigenous children were discovered in a school which was run by the Catholic Church from the late 1800s to 1990 in Canada. Following the discovery of the mass graves, the UN human rights experts called on the Government and the Vatican to launch serious investigations into the case. The experts also asked Canada to conduct similar investigations on other indigenous schools. (12) But there are concerns that investigations and clarifications of the case may be ignored.

- France

Throughout 2021, the French Government closed 17 mosques in the country on the pretext of violation of ambiguous security laws and or lack of having suitable standards and this is while another 89 mosques are being monitored. Thus, the civil society, the international human rights organizations and the Muslim community are highly concerned about the French Government taking steps to disproportionately target Muslims to please the far-right voters, in view of the looming presidential elections. (13)

2 – Anti-human rights military policies

- The United States

In 2021 the US State Department approved the sale of 280 air-to-air AMRAAM AIM-120 missiles to Saudi Arabia worth 650million dollars while the State Department said the Congress had no information of the case. (14)

It must be said the in the last five years, the US military has conducted more than 50 thousand airstrikes in Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan. According to Pentagon figures, 1417 civilians have been killed in airstrikes against Syria and Iraq from 2016 to-date and 188 civilians killed in Afghanistan from 2018 to-date. (15)

- The United Kingdom

The British Government has set new regulations on arms trade, which due to ignoring human rights challenges has become cause for concern of experts. Between 2011 and 2020 the British Government approved the weapons sales to the value of 16.8 Pounds Sterling to countries which have been criticized by human rights groups.

Among the 53 countries criticized for poor political and human rights records, Britain sold weapons and military equipment to 39 countries. Previously the British Government has confessed that the Saudi-led Coalition has used weapons manufactured by this country's companies in attacks in Yemen, and Britain has supplied more than half of fighter jets used by the Kingdom in airstrikes which has faced serious accusations of human rights violation. (16)

3 – Killing Ordinary Civilians with Impunity

- The United States

In a report, deep concerns have been expressed over the United States' failure to accept the responsibility for killing 10 civilians in a drone attack in Kabul in August 2021 and deems

the Defense Department's decision to acquit its forces from criminal indifference not justifiable. (17)

- The United Kingdom

Documents that have been handed over to the country's Supreme Court by the Defense Ministry show that despite suspecting their own forces, UK Special Forces, have covered up evidence in the killing of Afghans by their own forces, and not reported it to the Royal Constabulary. According to reports, detained Afghans were unarmed individuals who were not deemed any threats. Out of 11 operations only 3 have been investigated and two of the suspected officers have been removed from the case files without any interrogation. (18)

According to reports Britain has announced that independent investigations on more than 1200 complaints against British soldiers accused of war crimes in Iraq between the years 2003 and 2009 ended with no criminal investigation.

Recommendations

- ODVV express its grave regret on the destructive and negative effect of the sale of fighter jets, bombs and military equipment, and calls on the Special Rapporteur on Fundamental Freedoms while fighting against terrorism to study the issuing of the permits and weapons sales figures.

- ODVV calls upon the Human Rights Council to reiterate on the urgency to halt selling of weapons to countries who abuse weapons for violation of human rights.

- ODVV expresses concern over spreading hate, racial discrimination and xenophobia by western governments and strongly calls on them to eradicate Islamophobia, investigate the widespread hatred in their countries and address discrimination against Muslims.

- ODVV calls on the Special Rapporteur on the situation of migrants to investigate the conditions of refugees in western countries and call on them to hold the officials who mistreat asylum-seekers accountable and to stop the mistreatments in accordance with Convention on Elimination of Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading punishments.

1. Title 42 is a Public Health and Welfare Act which gives the director of the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention permission to determine whether an epidemic in another country can be a serious threat of spread in the United States or not. If this order is given all border patrol personnel in the United States can prevent migrants from entering the country.

2. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/12/haiti-us-must-stop-deportations-abuse-against-haitians>

3. <https://hrw.org/news/2021/12/09/restaring-remain-mexico-traversty>

4. <https://abcnews.go.com/Lifestyles/wireStory/us-reunited-100-children-parents-trump-81914536>

5. <https://per.euronews.com/2021/12/16/channel-migrants-still-held-in-inadequate-conditions>

6. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/12/07/draconian-uk-law-puts-vulnerable-asylum-seekers-risk>

7. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2021/oct/29/asylum-seekers-in-uk-housed-in-converted-hostel-with-prison-cells>

8. <https://thehill.com/blogs/blog-briefing-room/news/585405-anti-asian-hate-crimes-in-nyc-rose-361-percent-police?amp>

9. <https://thehill.com/blogs/blog-briefing-room/news/585405-anti-asian-hate-crimes-in-nyc-rose-361-percent-police?amp>

10. <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27842&LangID=E>

11. Council on American-Islamic Relations CAIR report available at: <https://www.cair.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Anti-Bias-Incident-Report-2021-online.pdf>

12. <https://bbc.com/persian/world-58690675>

13. <https://www.trtworld.com/magazine/french-government-seeks-new-initiative-targeting-islam-52640>
14. <https://b2n.ir/b08326>
15. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/18/us/airstrikes-civilian-casualty-files-pentagon.html>
16. <https://amp.theguardian.com/world/2021/dec/12/new-rules-on-uk-arms-trade-make-it-easier-to-sideline-human-rights>
17. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/12/14/us-end-impunity-civilian-casualties>
18. <https://www.bbc.com/persian/afghanistan-59255988>