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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 Organization for Defending Victims of Violence (ODVV), 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.

[19 August 2019]

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

Annual report presented by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation of human rights around the world

In line with the annual report presented by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation of human rights around the world, the Organization for Defending Victims of Violence (ODVV) would like to express its concerns over the human rights situation in the United States of America, the United Kingdom, France, Canada, Saudi Arabia, the Kingdom of Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates.

The following cases are causes for concern for us in these countries:

The United States of America

The United States policies regarding migrants and asylum-seekers in the first six months of the current year have drawn the attention of international observers more than any other subject and caused extensive criticism of human rights officials and activists. Some of these concerns include: terrible conditions of refugees detention centers, particularly the inhuman treatment of children and juveniles the centers, the continuation of the separation policy of children from their families by border officials, and detaining them, the nationwide deportation of undocumented migrants, the introduction of a new process towards ignoring immigration courts and swift deportation of migrants in the event they cannot prove their continued presence in America for two or more years, and taking legal action against volunteer human rights activists.

Other important human rights and humanitarian law violations in the United States in this period include rise in racist attacks against democratic members of Congress, federal courts re-imposing of capital punishment for serious crimes, and US government's refusal to cooperate and interact with UN human rights observers and experts.

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Britain's aggressive policies towards migrants and asylum-seekers, its participation in torturing jihadi suspects, outsourcing torture of terror related detainees, particularly in Iraq and Afghanistan; implementation of deliberate austerity policies and their consequences for the people of the country and millions falling below the poverty line; the appearance of modern forms of racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance and the influence of British government's policies in the rise in the number of these cases, are all some of human rights violations in the last few months.

Also, British government's challenging policies in the exploitation of children, as child informants or spies, and the dangers these children are put through; the country's actions in large arms exports to countries that are violating human rights in Yemen, are other causes for concern with regards to observation of human rights by this country.

France

It must be reminded that human rights organizations have strongly criticized the French government in the last six months for exporting weapons to Saudi Arabia and other countries that have a role in the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen, and have campaigned to stop or delay the loading of weapons on ships destined for these countries. This is while the journalists and whistle-blowers who published the reports in May this year on the role of French weapons sold to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates in Yemen war, were called to French intelligence and security organization.

Canada

Adoption of two controversial bills in the Quebec Parliament, first the banning of civil servants wearing and displaying religious signs, second, review of immigration laws, based on replacing skills based immigration with family based immigration, are some of the concerns of the Organization for Defending Victims of Violence. Also the secret construction of a detention center on the border of the province, and efforts to increase deportation of migrants and asylum-seekers by 25 to 35 percent, as well as the existence of inhuman conditions in migrants' detention centers, are some of the violations in this country.

Treatment of Natives by the Canadian government has been sharply criticized by international organizations, which resulted in an extensive national investigation into the killing or disappearance of thousands of Native women, and the government being accused of committing violence and discrimination against the Native population of the country, and failures in the protection of this sector of society. The most important difference of this report with the positions of previous Canadian governments is the authors of the report using the term "genocide" instead of "cultural genocide".

Saudi Arabia

Publication of UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Dr. Agnes Callamard's report on the murder of Jamal Khashoggi, journalist critic of the Saudi government, based on holding the Saudi government and high officials accountable in the prearranged execution of this journalist and secondly Saudi authorities mass execution of 37 nationals of the country, particularly from the Shia community that include 3 youths, putting them on the verge of unfair trials, and getting forced confessions from them, are our two main concerns with regards to the human rights situation in the Kingdom.

Destructive military intervention in the war in Yemen for the last four years, and the death, injuries and displacement of thousands of civilians, arrest or conviction of many civil society activists, and sentencing many of them to death and or long prison sentences, just because of anti-government protests are some of the other human rights violations in the country.

The Kingdom of Bahrain

Acts of torture and mistreatment of prisoners, that include subjecting them to solitary confinement for long periods of time, denying prisoners access to medical treatment, putting them in overcrowded cells and unhygienic environments, denying them access to clean drinking water, food and toilets, use of war on terror and other crimes laws to detain and prosecute many citizens of the country that include human rights activists, political and civil activists, religious leaders, journalists etc. as well as using long-term prison sentences and executions, stripping citizenship of many of the accused, systematic discrimination policies towards the Shia majority population of the country are among the human rights issues in the recent months which have continuously been condemned by international monitors and observers.

The United Arab Emirates

Arbitrary targeting of lawyers, human rights defenders, political and civil activists, bloggers, journalists and the academia, unfair trials and forced confessions, failure to observe minimum United Nations standards in treatment of prisoners (Mandela Regulations), solely for wishing peaceful enjoyment of their rights regarding freedom of expression and association, continuation of imprisonment of prisoners even after they have finished their sentences, are all instances which

have been a blight on the human rights record in the United Arab Emirates, and drawn sharp criticism of international organizations.

Recommendations:

١- We call upon the United Arab Emirates to explore all non-custodial alternatives for migrant and refugee children and adults. Any deprivation of liberty of adult migrants and refugees should be a measure of last resort. According to several UN human rights bodies, detaining migrant children may constitute cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment that is prohibited under international law. And we call upon countries of origin, transit and destination to do more to protect vulnerable migrants.

٢- We call upon the United Kingdom to end the unnecessary hardship of immigration detention; hence we call for a new vision that embodies compassion to end the unnecessary hardship. The government will have to re-evaluate the harsh caps, freezes and limits on benefits that have hurt the poorest residents of the United Kingdom. Also we call upon the new the United Kingdom government to maintain human rights protections at home and abroad.

٣- Due to the release of the Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG), we stress on the full implementation of the right of indigenous peoples to self-determination and urge UN to amend the current narrow definition of the crime of genocide in international law.

٤- We call upon the United States to continue to support human rights, remain committed to freedom of expression, association and assembly, end acts of torture of the opposition and civil society activists and to release them, develop and improve women's rights, guarantee the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms when countering terrorism, observe human rights and international humanitarian law principles with regards to the conflict in Yemen.