



# Bulletin 2016/I

Summary of the work of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on minority issues, between January-June 2016

Dear Reader,

The first bulletin which I issued in June 2014 has been welcomed by readers from all sectors. I was informed that government officials, NGOs, members of international organizations and academia, and various community representatives found it useful to read all the developments related to the mandate in one comprehensive document. Therefore, I decided to continue with this practice and it is my pleasure to provide you here with the fifth edition of this bulletin summarizing my work during 1 January - 30 June 2016. You can continue reaching me on my social media sites (Facebook and Twitter account) or at the official e-mail address ([minorityissues@ohchr.org](mailto:minorityissues@ohchr.org)). You can find my website [here](#) .

Happy reading!

IZSÁK-NDIAYE Rita  
Special Rapporteur on minority issues

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## Reporting to the Human Rights Council

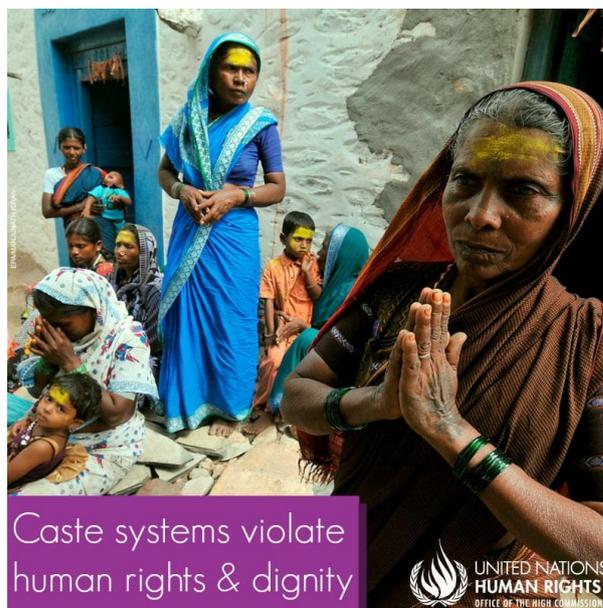
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### Thematic annual report

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On 15 March 2016, I presented my thematic report to the Human Rights Council discussing “Minorities and discrimination based on caste and analogous systems of inherited status”. In my report, I highlighted that at least 250 million people worldwide still face appalling and dehumanising discrimination based on caste and similar systems of inherited status. I emphasized that this is a global problem affecting communities in Asia, Africa, Middle East, the Pacific region and in various diaspora communities. I stressed that caste-based discrimination and violence goes against the basic principles of universal human dignity and equality, as it differentiates between ‘inferior’ and ‘superior’ categories of individuals which is unacceptable. I warned that discrimination leads to extreme exclusion and dehumanisation of caste-affected communities, who are often among the most disadvantaged populations, experience the worst socioeconomic conditions and are deprived of or severely restricted in the enjoyment of their civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. I also described positive developments, such as the adoption of constitutional guarantees, relevant legislation and establishment of dedicated institutions to monitor and overcome caste-based discrimination. I hope that my report will be used as an advocacy tool in supporting the efforts of caste-affected communities and others who are tirelessly working to relegate caste discrimination to history. You can check the full report [here](#).



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### Report on the Forum on Minority Issues

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On 16 March 2016, I presented the final recommendations of the 8th Forum on Minority Issues to the Human Rights Council. The Forum aimed to identify substantive recommendations to be applied to situations in which discrimination against minority groups in the criminal justice system is to be prevented and addressed. As a general recommendation, the Forum called on States to ensure that all individuals within their jurisdiction, regardless of the criminal law or procedures followed, enjoy their fundamental rights throughout the criminal justice system, as required by international law. The recommendations of the Forum are directed to States, non-State actors, including National Human Rights Institutions, civil society organizations and the media, and to international and regional organizations, including the UN. I encourage you all to study these important recommendations and make every effort to implement them to effectively combat discrimination against minorities in the criminal justice system. All documentation of the 8th Forum on Minority Issues are to be found [here](#).

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## Conference room paper on the workshop for Roma in Americas

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I have prepared a conference room paper summarizing the main discussion points during the workshop I held for Roma in Americas on 25 September 2015, in Brasília, Brazil. It brought together Roma communities across the Americas, including from Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru. The report provides an overview of the main issues raised by the participants in the workshop. It highlights a number of overarching thematic areas of regional concern and provides examples raised by participants of the specific challenges faced by the Roma communities in their countries. It also contains a number of conclusions and makes recommendations based on the information received. This conference room paper reflects the discussion during the one-day workshop and does not include further external information or research. All relevant information is [here](#) .

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## Country visits

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### Iraq

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I visited Iraq from 27 February to 7 March 2016, including the cities of Baghdad, Erbil and Dohuk, and their surroundings, and camps for internally displaced persons. I met Baha'i, Christians, Faili Kurds, Kaka'i, Sabian Mandaeans, Shabak, Turkmen, Yezidis and Zoroastrians communities, who constitute minority or 'component' groups in the country. I concluded that due to years of marginalization, conflict, ethnic and religious tensions, and recent terrorism, communities seem to have lost trust in each other and in the Government. This trust needs to be re-built in order to keep Iraq's unique cultural heritage and diversity. I urged the Government to take rapid and concrete steps to guarantee the future of some of the country's most threatened and marginalized ethnic and religious groups who feel that their very existence in the country is threatened. I acknowledged that the clear and immediate danger posed by 'Daesh' must be confronted as a high priority of the Government. However, for many minority groups the challenges that they face did not begin with it, and will not end with its defeat. Long-standing societal discrimination and marginalization of ethnic and religious groups must be more comprehensively acknowledged and confronted. A clear message must be sent to all of Iraq's diverse communities that they do have a future in Iraq. That message must come in the form of legal, policy and institutional protection frameworks with immediate and concrete measures to ensure their security, dignity, rights and equality. Efforts to forge a more inclusive government must include meaningful representation of smaller and historically marginalized ethnic and religious groups. See final press release [here](#) . Full country report will be presented to the Human Rights Council in March 2017.

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### Republic of Moldova

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During 20-30 March 2017, I visited the Republic of Moldova, including Chisinau, the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia, Balti, Edinet, Hincauti, Orhei, Otaci, Schinoasa, Soroca, and Taraclia and consulted widely with all kinds of stakeholders. In my final press conference, I stressed that diversity should be valued as an important asset and strength of the Republic of Moldova. Unity in

diversity should be promoted in school textbooks, especially in history teaching, through mass media programs and by ensuring the participation of all communities in decision-making processes. Reflecting on the possible deepening divide along ethnic, linguistic and other communal lines of the society, I stressed that the future of the Republic of Moldova must be shaped and defined based on such values and principles as respect for human rights, good and inclusive governance and minority rights protection and not by geopolitical labels. I have observed that the use of mother tongue is highly important and emotive for many communities and an essential aspect of personal and community identity. I urged for measures to be taken to minimize the politicization of the use of languages which often leads to polarization and might threaten peaceful coexistence if not resolved. I expressed concern over the economic, social and political marginalization of Roma and I stressed the need to fill all vacant mediator positions. See final press release [here](#). Full country report will be presented to the Human Rights Council in March 2017.




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## Unofficial visits/side events/conferences/meetings/lectures

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During 13-15 January 2016, I was a keynote speaker at a Wilton Park event in the United Kingdom, titled: "Protecting the rights of ethnic and religious minorities: addressing contemporary global challenges". The meeting examined protection of the rights of ethnic and religious minorities globally, with a focus on the Middle East region, and brought together policy makers and practitioners, with other experts. The full report of the meeting is available [here](#).

During 24-25 January 2016, I paid an unofficial visit to Japan on the invitation of the Japanese Federation of Bar Associations whom I sincerely thank for its professional and excellent work in organizing my program. The main purpose of the visit was to serve as a keynote speaker at a symposium dedicated to discuss hate speech in the media and possible regulations. During my stay, I had a chance to consult with Diet members, a government special adviser, representatives of civil society and academia, legal professionals and various communities about their experiences of hate speech and racial hatred in Japan. During my visit, I gave several interviews to Japanese media, including to the Japan times, which is available [here](#).



During 2-4 February 2016, I participated in the second international meeting of the Global Action Against Mass Atrocity Crimes in Manila, the Philippines, which focused on the theme of "Preventing atrocities: How to strengthen national atrocity prevention architectures." I held presentations in two group discussions: on combating incitement of hate speech & the role of local dialogue in atrocity prevention as key inhibitors; and on anti-discrimination laws and constructive policies for minorities and indigenous peoples. All documentation is available [here](#).

On 14 March 2016, at the margins of the 31 session of the Human Rights Council, I met a delegation of the European Parliament representing all political groups to discuss our common concerns over Europe's minorities, especially the need to better protect the rights of the Roma.

On 16 March 2016, I spoke at a Human Rights Council side event in Geneva called “Minorities and caste-based discrimination” organized by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The aim of the meeting was to advance discussion on this topic as well as to explore effective solutions and positive practices to combat discrimination based on caste and analogous systems with a particular focus on minorities. A report of the side event has been produced by the International Dalit Solidarity Network, you can read it [here](#).

During 4-8 April 2016, as a member of the Coordination Committee of Special Procedures mandate holders, I participated in our Geneva meeting discussing any outstanding issues and preparing for the annual meeting of mandate holders. During the week, the Coordination Committee met with a group of Member States, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, with the Human Rights Council President, and the Bureau.

During 26-27 April 2016, I participated in the 11th session of the Council of Europe’s Ad Hoc Committee of Experts on Roma Issues (CAHROM) in Sofia, Bulgaria. I presented the findings of my global study on the protection of Roma worldwide and talk about the workshop I held for Roma in Americas in Brasilia, Brazil, in September 2015. The Committee was interested in exploring further opportunities to connect with Roma outside of Europe, especially in Latin-America.

On 22-23 May 2016, I participated in the first ever World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul, Turkey, where world leaders from government, civil society and business came together to take action to prevent and reduce human suffering. It convened 9,000 participants from 173 Member States, including 55 Heads of State and Government, hundreds of private sector representatives, and thousands of people from civil society and non-governmental organizations. All documentation is available [here](#).



JFBA symposium, Tokyo, 25 January 2016

During 7-10 June 2016, I participated in the regular annual meeting of Special Procedures mandate holders where we discussed issues of common interest and ways to better coordinate our work. We also met with a group of Member States, civil society, the Human Rights Council President and Bureau, the heads of field offices of OHCHR and other stakeholders. All information about annual meetings are [here](#).

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## Communications (letters of allegations and urgent appeals)

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I continued issuing communications (including both urgent appeal letters to prevent human rights violations and letters of allegation in the case of alleged committed violations), as well as press releases when disturbing and urgent news of minority rights violations have reached my office. Since my last Bulletin, 27 communications have been made public between 1 June 2015 – 30 June 2016 (see all communications sent here). The mandate since the beginning until 31 May 2016 sent out 220 communications in total, with a response rate of 59% (130).

12/06/2015 – **Sudan**: Alleged arbitrary detention and criminal charges against two clergymen as well as undue restrictions of religious freedom of the Christian communities in Sudan. According to the information received, on 2 December 2014, 39 Sudan Evangelical Presbyterian Church members who peacefully assembled around the church to defend the property from being confiscated by the authorities were arrested. Reverends Yat Michael Ruot Puk and Peter Yien Reith were arrested separately on 14 December 2014 and 11 January 2015 respectively, and held incommunicado until their transfer to Omdurman Men's Prison on 1 March 2015. Reportedly, on 4 May 2015, they were both brought to the Khartoum Bahri Criminal Court for hearings. Reverend Michael and Reverend Peter reportedly face six criminal charges, some of which carry the death penalty or life imprisonment. Both clergymen were recently transferred to Kober prison, a high security facility, and have had no access to their families and lawyers since 4 June 2015. Reports also indicate that the religious autonomy of churches, the rights to freedom of expression, religion and of peaceful assembly of the Christian religious minorities have been seriously undermined by ongoing mass expulsions, arrests, detentions of foreign Christians and confiscation or destruction of church properties since the end of 2012. Full JUA: SDN 4/2015.

22/06/2015 – **Pakistan**: Alleged systematic and persistent human rights violations of individuals belonging to Shia, Christian, Ahmadi, Hindu, Sikh and Sufi minority communities in Pakistan by non-state actors, and failure of the authorities to prevent, protect and investigate those acts with due diligence. According to the information received, since 2013, a large number of attacks in the form of intimidation, forced marriage, including child marriage, forced conversion, persecution, discrimination, hostility, violence and killings, and targeting members of religious minorities have taken place. The climate of impunity is allegedly fostered by Pakistan's blasphemy laws and anti-Ahmadi laws, which allow for heavy punishments and have been used to prosecute and punish members of religious minorities and those who attempt to defend or speak out for them. Currently, there are at least 17 individuals on death row and another 19 serving life sentences for blasphemy in Pakistan. Full JAL: PAK 1/2015. Response of Pakistan: 21/08/2015.

29/06/2015 – **Italy**: Letter concerning the decision taken by the Civil Section of the Tribunal of Rome concerning a Roma camp located on the outskirts of Rome. According to the information received, on 30 May 2015, the Civil Section of the Tribunal of Rome handed down a decision which held that the construction of the Roma camp La Barbuta by the City of Rome was indirectly discriminatory, breaching paragraph 2 of Decreto Legislativo 215/2003 (prohibition of discrimination), which is the implementing legislation of EU Directive 2000/43 (the Race Equality Directive). The settlement, which was constructed under the "Nomad Emergency Framework", is fenced and far from basic services, without access to work and livelihoods, and has allegedly substandard housing facilities. Implementation of the ruling will require dismantling of the camp and addressing the needs of the affected Roma community. The ruling does not stipulate specific time limits or modalities for doing so. The Special Rapporteurs call for transparent consultation with affected Romani families currently living in the settlement regarding the planning, development and

implementation of non-discriminatory and adequate alternative housing solutions in line with Italy's human rights obligations. Full JAL: ITA 3/2015.

07/07/2015 – **Myanmar**: Allegations of incitement to discrimination and violence against members of the Rohingya community by a prominent member of a political party. According to information received, a politician addressing a rally in Yangon in May 2015, can be seen in a video encouraging the crowd to “kill and bury” all the Rohingyas. The crowd can be heard cheering and repeating his statements. The same politician is also reported to have addressed another meeting in May 2015, where he called upon the public to demand to the authorities to “shoot boat people whenever sighted on the sea and border”. Allegations of acts of discrimination based on race or religion have also been reported against the Rohingyas. It is alleged that this situation contributes to fuelling of inter-communal tensions and violence. Full JUA: MMR 7/2015.

13/07/2015 – **Bulgaria**: Alleged imminent forced eviction of two Roma families within a wider context of recent evictions orders affecting solely Romani-owned houses. According to the information received, the two Roma families, including eight children, of whom two with severe disabilities, and one eight month pregnant mother, are scheduled to be forcibly evicted from their homes in Gurmen municipality on 13 July 2015 under orders from the Directorate for National Construction Control (DNCC). Reportedly, the evictions will take place despite the urgent interim measures issued on 10 July 2015 by the European Court of Human Rights to stop the execution of the demolition order. It is further reported that these pending evictions take place in the context of other recent evictions of Roma households in Gurmen municipality carried out under other orders of the DNCC, including that of four Roma families, including fifteen children. There is reportedly also an ongoing threat of the demolition of a large number of other Romani households in Gurmen municipality with the issuance of 124 eviction orders by DNCC for other houses in the community. If carried out, these will affect approximately 700 Roma people. Allegedly these evictions have targeted solely Romani-owned houses and authorities have failed to engage in comprehensive consultations with the affected Roma community and provide information and propose appropriate alternatives to them. Full UA: BGR 1/2015. Response of Bulgaria: 07/08/2015.

21/07/2015 – **Serbia**: Alleged imminent eviction of approximately 40 Roma households residing in the informal settlement of Grmec in Zemun, Belgrade. According to the information received, most of these families, estimated between 200 and 250 people, many of them internally displaced from Kosovo, have been residing in the settlement since 1999, though most of them have not been able to officially register as residents of Belgrade. Among the residents at risk of imminent eviction there are a high number of children, including at least four infants, as well as two pregnant women. No alternative accommodation or resettlement plan has been offered to them. These 40 families face immediate eviction from their homes due to an eviction order issued on 7 July 2015 by the Construction Inspectorate of the Municipality of Zemun. Full JUA: SRB 2/2015. Response of Serbia: 25/08/2015.

24/07/2015 – **France**: Alleged forced eviction of Roma. According to information received, between 7 and 9 July 2015, over 500 Roma people were expelled from the cities of Ris Orangis, Ivry sur Seine and Porte d'Aubervilliers. The forced eviction was carried out without prior consultation and adequate alternative accommodation provided for the families. Full UA: FRA 4/2015. Response of France: 22/09/2015.

20/08/2015 – **Nepal**: Alleged excessive use of force by the police to disperse a peaceful protest in Kathmandu, and serious injuries sustained by several protestors. According to the information received, on 4 August 2015, approximately 100 Dalit human rights defenders took part in a peaceful demonstration in the Bijuli Bazar area in Kathmandu to protest against the current draft of the country's new Constitution that allegedly unduly restricts the political rights of the members of the Dalit community, and call on the law-makers to include them in the constitution-making

process. The police forces dispersed the peaceful crowd, reportedly using excessive force. 26 demonstrators were injured, including Ms. Kamala Hemchuri, President of the Professional Development Resource Center, Ms. Durga Sob, Chairperson the Feminist Dalit Organization, and Mr. Ganesh B.K., Chairperson of the Rastriya Dalit Network. Serious concerns are expressed about the alleged excessive use of force against peaceful demonstrators, in the exercise of their legitimate rights to freedom of opinion and expression and freedom of peaceful assembly. Further concerns are expressed about the situation of Dalit human rights defenders, including women human rights defenders, who are most at risk of attacks and retaliation. Full JAL: NPL 2/2015.

28/08/2015 – **Bulgaria**: Allegations concerning the implementation of eviction orders against sixty-one Roma households from the Maksuda Roma settlement in Mladost sub-municipality of Varna. According to the information received, the affected Roma communities were not informed regarding the date of eviction, which reportedly commenced on 20 August 2015, and over 1000 persons have been affected, including over 400 children. The evicted Roma have not been provided with any alternative accommodation. The only alternative provided by the municipality has been to offer to place evicted children in social institutions, including orphanages, thus separating families. Most of the affected families have indicated that they do not wish to place their children in institutionalized care. These latest evictions reportedly take place within a broader context of ongoing marginalization of the Roma community in Varna, including a number of prior evictions of Roma in 2014. A previous communication regarding the planned eviction of Roma in the city of Gurmen was sent on 13 July 2015, see above, case no. BGR 1/2015. Full UA: BGR 2/2015. Response of Bulgaria: 08/10/2015.

09/09/2015 – **Lithuania**: Alleged denial of entry to Lithuania of a human rights and minority rights defender as well as two conference participants to attend an international roundtable on minority rights. According to the information received, on 24 August 2015, Mr. Aleksandrs Kuzmins, the secretary of the Latvian Human Rights Committee, travelled to Klaipeda, Lithuania, to represent his organization at the international roundtable entitled “Ethnic nationalism as a threat to peace and stability”. At around 5 p.m., at the Klaipeda bus station, Mr. Kuzmins was stopped by Lithuanian Border Guard officers and informed that the Lithuanian Migration Department based on a section of the law covering “threats to national security” refused him entry to the country until 20 August 2020. Mr. Kuzmins was ordered to leave Lithuania by midnight at the risk of being arrested. Two other participants of the conference, Mr. Aleksandrs Rzavinst and Mr. Joseph Koren, also coming from Latvia, were similarly refused entry to Lithuania. Grave concern is expressed that the denial of entry of Mr. Kuzmins, Mr. Rzavinst and Mr. Koren to Lithuania appears to be related to their human rights activities, including their advocacy on minority rights. Full JAL: LTU 1/2015. Response of Lithuania: 17/12/2015.

15/09/2015 – **Bulgaria**: Allegations concerning the initiation of archaeological excavations in the vicinity of a mosque and planned conversion of the religious site into a museum. According to the information received, on 14 June 2015, the local government of Karlovo started excavation works aimed at exposing archaeological remains in and around Kurshun Mosque and at converting the site into a museum, without prior notification or consultation with the Muslim community of Bulgaria. The ownership of the Kurshun Mosque has been long disputed and is currently not open for worship; however, it reportedly bears great religious importance for the Muslim community, who views the works as an act of desecration. Similar projects of public works and excavations have allegedly also been carried out at other sites of religious significance for the Muslim community without prior consultation, including at Hamza Bey Mosque in Stara Zagora, Makbul Pasha Mosque in Razgrad and Mihaloglu Mosque in Ihtiman. Controversies regarding the ownership and use of mosques in Bulgaria have reportedly caused tension in the country, including protests against the religious use of Muslim places of worship. Full JAL: BGR 3/2015. Response of Bulgaria: 18/11/2015

21/09/2015 – **Kyrgyz Republic**: Alleged persecution of religious minorities in Kyrgyzstan in the form of a raid and closure order against a Baptist Church, and a raid, arbitrary detention and torture of Jehovah's witnesses. According to the information received, on 9 July 2015, authorities conducted an illegal raid on the premises of Baptist Church Elchilik Jiyini in Kemin. On 29 July 2015, authorities allegedly issued an official warning against Elchilik Jiyini Church for not having submitted compulsory reports and for possession of illegal publications. On 5 August 2015, authorities allegedly issued a decree ordering the suspension of the Church's activities. On 9 August 2015, in another case, the police, led by an officer who has reportedly been involved in previous violations against Jehovah's Witnesses, stopped a religious Jehovah Witnesses service in Osh city and arrested 10 of the participants, all of them male adults: Mr. Eldiyar Ormonov, Mr. Arstan Botokhanov, Mr. Iskander Kambarov, Mr. Zhakonchir Asanbayev, Mr. Nurlan Usupbayev, Mr. Chorobek Kadyrov, Mr. Bakytbek Kubanychbek Uulu, Mr. Manas Bilal Uulu, Mr. Razan Korgolov and Mr. Islamedin Kombarov. The police allegedly also tortured the latter six and filed an administrative case against Mr. Nurlan Usupbayev, the organizer, which was however dismissed by the Osh City Court. Full JAL: KGZ 3/2015. Response of Kyrgyz Republic: 18/01/2016.

15/10/2015 – **Albania** : Alleged imminent eviction of approximately 48 Roma families residing in an informal settlement close to the Artificial Lake in Tirana. According to the information received, most of these families face immediate eviction from their homes due to a recent announcement by the Tirana Municipality on 2 October 2015 that their camp will be dismantled. Families with residency in Tirana have reportedly been promised emergency accommodation at Tufina Centre, a transitory emergency centre. While this is not a long term solution it is feared that this temporary solution is being turning into a permanent segregated government-run Roma camp. Other families not registered in Tirana have been offered free return to cities of origin. However, as the families represent some of the most marginalized, poor, least educated and unskilled Roma, returning these families back to cities of origin without other effective measure and programs, will further deteriorate the living conditions of the families. Full JUA : ALB 1/2015. Response of Albania: 29/12/2015.

29/10/2015 – **Croatia**: Alleged increasing number of cases of ethnically motivated incidents, including hate speech and intolerance directed against the Serbian minority in Croatia. According to the information received, there has been an increased use of the Ustasha salute and symbols, and other graffiti with pro-Nazi, anti-Serb intent, and documented instances of severe hate speech that incite physical violence, as well as violent physical attacks on individuals and attacks on property, including sites of religious or historical significance, on the basis of Serbian ethnicity. The Croatian authorities have reportedly failed to effectively and systematically condemn such incidents. Full JAL: HRV 1/2015. Response of Croatia : 15/01/2016.

30/10/2015 – **Sweden**: Alleged imminent eviction of approximately 150 to 200 Roma individuals, including minors and pregnant women, residing in an informal settlement known as Sorgenfrilägret in the municipality of Malmö. According to the information received, Roma residents in the settlement face immediate eviction from their homes scheduled for 1 November 2015 due to a recent announcement by the Malmö Municipality on 27 October 2015 that their camp will be dismantled. The decision by the Municipality was made through a special legal mechanism (rättelse) that empowers authorities to act independently and is intended to be used in cases where there is a particular necessity to act to prevent environmental damage, despite the fact that this case is currently pending trial before the Environmental Court of Affairs. Full UA: SWE 1/2015. Response of Sweden: 13/11/2015.

06/11/2015 – **Indonesia** : Alleged attacks by protesters on, as well as Government-enforced closure and demolition of, Christian Catholic and Protestant churches in Aceh Singkil Province, Indonesia. According to the information received, on 12 October 2015, the Government decided to close down 10 churches. On 13 October 2015, a large number of anti-Christian protesters

gathered outside a Christian Protestant church in Suka Makur village. The protest turned violent and the church was burnt down. Protesters then attempted to attack another church in Dangguran village, but the police and the military intervened and protected the church. One protester was killed in the resulting confrontation. The attacks on churches have caused the internal displacement of around 4,000 Christians, who have fled to the neighbouring province North Sumatra. Some of the internally displaced persons have returned to Aceh Province, but the situation is still tense and the Christian community fear further attacks. Full JAL: IDN 9/2015.

11/11/2015 – **Russian Federation**: Alleged persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses in the Russian Federation. According to the information received, 16 Jehovah's Witnesses are currently on trial for their religious activities, all religious literature produced by Jehovah's Witnesses is banned from online access and importation, and their international website has been blocked. The Government, backed by a decision of the Supreme Court of 2 December 2015, considers Jehovah's Witnesses an "extremist" organization. It has criminalized all of its activities, including organizing and attending religious services, and its doctrine, liquidated local Jehovah's Witnesses groups, prosecuted and convicted its leaders, seized shipments of religious books and ordered all Internet providers to block access to the official international website of Jehovah's Witnesses. Full JAL: RUS 6/2015. Response of the Russian Federation: 21/12/2015.

26/11/2015 – **China (People's Republic of)**: Alleged demolition of 37 Christian Catholic and Protestant churches, removal of over 500 churches in Zhejiang Province and enforced disappearance of a Pastor for protesting against the planned demolition of a church. According to the information received, since October 2013, the Zhejiang provincial Government systematically removed and destroyed Christian symbols and places of worship in an attempt to reduce the visibility of the Christian religion. Pastor Huang Yizi was arrested and sentenced to one year imprisonment for publicly opposing the demolition of a church in Wenzhou, Zhejiang's biggest city. It is reported that he was repeatedly tortured while in custody. He was released on 1 August 2015 after serving his sentence, but arrested again on 12 September 2015. Authorities acknowledged the arrest but have kept him incommunicado and concealed his fate and whereabouts. Full JAL: CHN 11/2015.

20/01/2016 - **Sudan**: Allegations concerning a trial in Sudan against 22 Muslim men and three children for apostasy. According to the information received, 27 persons (24 male adults and three male children) were arrested in Khartoum on 2 and 3 November 2015 on the charge of apostasy, which is punishable by death under article 126 of the Sudanese criminal code. On 30 November 2015, the three boys, who had been held in custody together with adults, were released by the Khartoum Criminal Court on the condition that they attend the upcoming trial. On 9 December 2015, the Court released two of the men due to insufficient evidence. On 14 December 2015, the remaining 22 adult males were released on bail pending the next hearing, to be held on 9 February 2016. The 25 defendants follow an interpretation of Islam different from the Government-supported denomination and deny the charges of apostasy filed against them. Full JUA: SDN 1/2016. See the response of Sudan here: 29/04/2016.

02/02/2016 – **Pakistan**: Allegations concerning the reported abduction and subsequent forced conversion and marriage of a 15 year old Hindu girl, in Allah Dino Magsi Village, Qambar Shahdadkot, Sindh province. On 19 April 2015, six men allegedly kidnapped a 15 year old girl in her home at 1 p.m. in front of her parents. Thereafter her parents reportedly tried to register a First Information Report at the police station on several occasions but were repeatedly sent away. On 25 April 2015, a statement from the girl was reportedly published in a newspaper in which she declared that she was 22 years old, had converted to Islam, changed her name and had married a boy. The parents allegedly brought the case to the Session Court of Qambar Shahdadkot, Larkana, which decided on 2 June 2015 to have the girl placed in a shelter called Dar-ul-Aman and have her age determined. One of the alleged perpetrators reportedly filed an application before the High

Court Sindh, Circuit Court, Larkana to challenge the decision of the judge from the Session Court. On 24 June 2015, the High Court allegedly judged that the girl was an adult under Sharia law and suspended the decision of the Session Court thus sending her back to live with the aforementioned boy. Full JAL: PAK 2/2016.

03/02/2016 – **Colombia**: Alleged killings of, and death threats received by, a number of Afro-Colombian human rights defenders and community leaders; alleged persistent structural discrimination faced by Afro-Colombians which affects the enjoyment of their economic, social and cultural rights. According to the information received, there are patterns of human rights concerns arising from business ventures (including environmental damage, displacement of persons, etc.); the negative impact of extractive projects and illegal mining on the livelihood of Afro-Colombians. It is also reported that Afro-Colombians have faced a disproportionate impact of the armed conflict. Full JAL: COL 5/2015. See response of Colombia here: 28/04/2016

02/03/2016 – **United States of America**: Alleged high levels of lead found in water consumed by residents of Flint, Michigan; and allegations that Flint is not an isolated incident but that disproportionate health risks are faced by communities and/or people of lower socio-economic standing due to toxics, pollution and other hazardous substances and wastes in the United States of America. According to the information received, inhabitants of the city of Flint were consuming



water contaminated with lead when the state of Michigan changed the source for tap water in April 2014 but failed to apply standards to prevent contamination of the water. Several alerts and studies were dismissed by the authorities until 1 October 2015 when the Governor of Michigan admitted the gravity of the situation and urged residents to stop drinking water from the tap, declaring a state of emergency on 5 January 2016. On 16 January 2016 President Obama declared a Federal state of emergency for Flint in order to speed up distribution of bottled waters and filters. Up to 8,000 children under the age of six are alleged to have been exposed to lead poisoning and will need ongoing medical help with health and behavioural issues. Full JAL: USA 1/2016.

11/03/2016 – **Colombia**: Allegations of individual human rights violations as well as specific concerns particularly affecting the Afro-Colombian community in the municipality of Buenaventura, Valle de Cauca Department, Colombia. According to the information received, despite the increased presence of public security forces in Buenaventura since 2014, criminal organized groups continue to exercise strong social, economic and local control over the lives and activities of its inhabitants, including by implementing invisible frontiers and imposing curfews in some of the neighbourhoods. These groups are said to be responsible for various criminal activities such as extortion, death threats, murder, enforced disappearances, imposition of various types of punishments, sexual violence against women and girls, child recruitment and forced displacement and eviction, aimed at taking control of the territory and the different communities living in the urban area of Buenaventura. Full JUA: COL 2/2016.

09/05/2016 – **Spain**: Alleged violations of human rights to food, housing, water and sanitation, health, and education of the Roma community. According to information received, since 2005, about 435 people, residents of an informal settlement known as "El Gallinero" in Madrid, have been living in precarious and unsanitary conditions. The homes have limited access to electricity and clean drinking water; and they lack sanitation and adequate garbage collection. Serious health hazards and environmental pollution could be the cause of several cases of diarrhea and dehydration in young children. Due to administrative reasons related to the registration or irregular

situation of families, people also have limited access to medications or health services, educational services and financial assistance for food. Full JAL: ESP 3/2016. Response of Spain: 19/07/2016.

11/05/2016 – **France**: Concerns about the bill "Strengthening the fight against organized crime, terrorism and their financing, and improving efficiency and the guarantees of the criminal proceedings." According to reports, some provisions of the draft give broad discretion to the police, which could facilitate ethnic profiling practices with a discriminatory impact, especially for minorities. Concerns were expressed about the expansion of identity control capabilities easing the terms of criminal liability for police. Full JAL: FRA 2/2016.

11/05/2016 – **Russian Federation**: Allegations concerning the criminalization of a Hindu community and decision to demolish Hindu temples in Nizhny Novgorod, Russia. According to the information received, on 17 September 2015, the district court of Vetluzhsky, Nizhny Novgorod Region, ruled that three Hindu temples located in the district were "unauthorized construction" and ordered their demolition. On 22 December 2015, the decision was confirmed by the Appeals Court. The demolition order reportedly follows a series of attempts by the Government to put a halt to the activities of the Hindu community in Vetluzhsky, including through the initiation of criminal action against their members and the raiding of their premises based on Article 239 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation ('Creating a religious or public association, whose activities involve violence against citizens or somehow harm their health, as well as managing such an association'). It is reported that, as a result of the difficulties to exercise their religious freedom in the Russian Federation, the monks have left the country and continue their religious activities abroad. Full JAL: RUS 5/2016.

25/05/2016 – **Guyana** : Alleged failure of the Government to publish the "Detailed Census Analysis" for the 2012 census, which would provide important data disaggregated by ethnicity and other characteristics, about participation and outcomes for minorities in Guyana in different areas of economic and social life. According to the information received, there are reports of discrimination, in particular of Afro-Guyanese regarding the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, including in the fields of employment, housing, healthcare and education. However, without verifiable data, it is difficult for civil society organizations to draw conclusions or to advance these claims or to effectively advocate around these issues. There is also an alleged lack of investigation of allegations of cases and patterns of discrimination affecting ethnic minorities in Guyana, and lack of responsive mechanisms to respond to such cases. Full JAL: GUY 1/

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## Press releases

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Apart from the press releases announcing my country visit, sharing my preliminary findings after a country visit, or calling attention to my Human Rights Council and General Assembly reports, I spoke up on several other important issues relevant to minority rights protection which are summarized below.

**Flint: Fundamentally about human rights – UN experts underline**: An outrage over lead-contaminated water in the town of Flint, Michigan, in the United States, has drawn international scrutiny to the toxic threats faced by children, particularly in poor, African-American, minority, and Native American communities, in the US. On 3 March 2016, our group of UN experts on hazardous substances and wastes, health, water and sanitation, indigenous peoples, minorities, and racism urged the US to protect the rights of children and others who are most at-risk from pollution and toxic chemicals. See more [here](#).

**What is permissible and what is not when countering terrorism? UN experts welcome new African guidelines:** On 7 April 2016, our group of eighteen United Nations independent experts has welcomed the new Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights while Countering Terrorism in Africa launched this year by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR). Speaking ahead of an upcoming ACHPR's panel discussion in Banjul, The Gambia (11 April), in which Member States were briefed on the new Principles and Guidelines, we called on all African governments to fully implement the Commission's recommendations in order to respect human rights in the context of fighting terrorism. See more [here](#).

**Rights experts urge the UN to implement a panel opinion on Roma IDPs poisoned in camps in Kosovo:** On 15 April 2016, our group of four mandate holders called on the UN to implement the opinion of the Human Rights Advisory Panel of the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) made public the previous week, to hold the Mission accountable for leaving Roma families exposed to lead poisoning in camps for the internally displaced in Kosovo. See more [here](#).

**Human rights protection must gain new momentum at World Humanitarian Summit – UN experts First World Humanitarian Summit – 23-24 May 2016:** On 23 May 2016, in a statement addressed to the first-ever World Humanitarian Summit, we, 44 Special Procedures' experts urged all participants gathering this week in Istanbul to ensure that human rights are integrated into all aspects of the conference, including national commitments to improve the protection of all those affected by conflict, disaster and displacement – some of the world's most vulnerable people. See more [here](#).



**Inter-American Commission on Human Rights financial crisis:** On 6 June 2016, we, the two largest independent bodies and mechanisms in the United Nations human rights system, expressed our grave concern about the future of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) as it faces a financial crisis that threatens its existence. The Coordination Committee of Special Procedures and the Chairpersons of Human Rights Treaty Bodies called on all Governments and human rights stakeholders in the Americas to provide the necessary funds to save one of the leading regional rights systems. See more [here](#).

**UN expert group alarmed by increasing violence toward people of African descent in Colombia:** On 13 June 2016, I have endorsed a statement by the United Nations Working Group of Experts of People of African Descent which expressed alarm over reports of violence toward people of African descent in Colombia, and called on the authorities to take concrete and urgent measures to protect the Afro-Colombian communities in the country. See more [here](#).

**“Who is it for?” – UN experts call for a New Urban Agenda based on human rights for every one:** On 29 June 2016, we, a group of twelve United Nations human rights experts called for a New Urban Agenda that recognises the human rights deprivations caused by unrestrained urban economic growth, and commit to concrete human rights responses, including the regulation of private actors consistent with human rights norms. See more [here](#).

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## What's next? Where to keep an eye?

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My next country visit take place to Sri Lanka during 10-20 October 2016.

I will present my next report to the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly in New York on 26 October 2016. It is titled "Minorities in situations of humanitarian crises". A consultation will be organized with interested Member States, civil society and academia representatives and members of minority communities on the following day, on 27 November 2016 to discuss this report. As the next Forum on Minority Issues will have the same theme, this consultation will provide an excellent opportunity to raise awareness on the existence and work of the Forum for New York-based stakeholders. Moreover, it will provide them with an opportunity to contribute to the next Forum session in a form of concrete feedback and recommendations on the draft set of recommendations.

The 9th session of the UN Forum on Minority Issues will take place during 24-25 November 2016. The ninth session will reflect on the specific needs of and disproportionate impacts on minorities in times of humanitarian crisis such as conflict, disaster and pandemics. The participants will work on a set of draft recommendations regarding minorities in situations of humanitarian crises and strive to identify additional recommendations for states, intergovernmental and non-governmental humanitarian actors to ensure non-discrimination and respect and promotion of minority rights at all stages of any humanitarian crisis. The registration is now open. You can find all information at: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Minority/Pages/Session9.aspx>.