



Bulletin 2016/II

Summary of the work of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on minority issues, between July–December 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 sixth edition of this Bulletin summarizing my work during 1 July - 31 December 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). You can find my website at <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Minorities/SRMinorities/Pages/SRminorityissuesIndex.aspx>.

Happy reading!

IZSÁK-NDIAYE Rita
Special Rapporteur on minority issues

Reporting to the General Assembly

On 28 October 2016, I presented my annual report to the General Assembly (A/71/254), which focused on minorities in situations of humanitarian crises. I decided to address my thematic report to this important topic in light of my observations that minorities can be disproportionately affected during a crisis or in the aftermath, when seeking protection, owing to their minority status. I noted that the current global humanitarian context is alarming. Ongoing and protracted conflicts are leading to massive displacement crises: there are unprecedented numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons, and inter-ethnic and interracial tensions and conflict are erupting in nearly every region of the world. Many conflicts threaten to further deteriorate, and new conflicts are emerging. These conflicts are often rooted in power struggles, identity politics, competition for resources, rising income disparities and socioeconomic inequalities, and increasing polarization of societies, making national, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities particularly vulnerable; indeed, many of the persons who flee their countries for fear of persecution are members of minority groups targeted precisely because of their minority identity. Furthermore, with the impact of climate change, disasters are becoming all too frequent and widespread, further affecting minorities who often may reside in remote and marginal areas that are more susceptible to disasters, or have fewer resources to evacuate easily. In my report, I discuss some specific concern areas such as threats to existence, accessing basic services, housing, land, property rights, return, and the search for durable solutions. In my recommendations, I call on States to step up their efforts to build resilient and prepared minority communities to be able to respond when crises strike; and if and when crises occur, provide timely and appropriate assistance that is relevant to minority communities' needs. I stressed that meeting these responsibilities requires, among other things, comprehensive crisis and contingency planning with the effective and meaningful participation of minorities. I called for a systematic approach to minority rights to be pursued across all related UN work whenever developing and implementing humanitarian assistance programmes. You can find the report here: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Minority/Pages/Session9.aspx>

Forum on Minority Issues



The ninth session of the Forum was held in Geneva on 24 and 25 November 2016, with a thematic focus on minorities in situations of humanitarian crises in line with my latest GA report. I wish to thank the Chair, Mr Mario Yutzis and the invited panelists for their important contributions and commitment to the successful deliberations of the Forum. During the first morning, we focused on the legal framework and key concepts, and

participants discussed existing provisions in international human rights law, international humanitarian law, refugee law and disaster law as well as humanitarian principles relevant to the respect, protection and fulfillment of the rights of minorities in situations of humanitarian crisis. In the second session focusing on respecting minority rights as a means of preventing or mitigating the impact of humanitarian crises, the Forum identified and discussed key factors that lead to humanitarian crises — such as those resulting from conflicts, natural and man-made disasters and pandemics — having a disproportionate impact on minority groups. During the third session on the protection of minority rights during humanitarian crises, interventions were requested to focus on

identifying the needs of minorities, including the specific needs of minority women and children, during humanitarian crises and to assess the risk they run of suffering disproportionately from the impact of such crises. The last session on recovering from a crisis and ensuring durable solutions for minorities, examined the challenges faced by minorities seeking to return to a situation of normality after a crisis has ended. These include return to their place of origin, finding a new settlement after displacement, seeking to relaunch local economic development and social services after protracted isolation, reclaiming properties and goods after a crisis or reskilling and seeking a new occupation in a new environment. The final recommendations emanating from the 2-day-long discussion and all relevant documents are to be found here:
<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Minority/Pages/Session9.aspx>

Consultative session in New York

On 27 October, I convened a consultative session in New York ahead of the 9th session of the Forum on Minority Issues on the topic “Minorities in situations of humanitarian crises” to provide New York-based organizations and minority representatives an opportunity to get to know the Forum’s work and contribute to shaping its final recommendations. I would like to thank the panelists for their valuable contributions: Mr Andrew Gilmour, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, Director of the New York Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ambassador Jan Kickert, Permanent



Representative of Austria to the United Nations in New York, Mr Chaloka Beyani, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the human rights of IDPs, Ms Adlay Kejjan, Executive Director, Yazidi American Women Organisation and Ms Ninette Kelley, New York Office Director, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Country visit to Sri Lanka

I visited Sri Lanka from 10 to 20 October 2016 and would like to thank the Government for the support it provided to me before and during the visit. In my final press conference, I commended the National Unity Government for the important progress it has made towards adopting critical laws and policies and in strengthening institutions to better protect human and minority rights and I urged the Government to seize this momentum and to show its commitment to minority rights through concrete action. I noted that to achieve peaceful coexistence after the long, devastating civil war, a comprehensive, well-planned and well-coordinated truth, reconciliation, healing and accountability process must take place, and it could not be done overnight. However, I also stressed, that at the same time, the Government must rapidly put in place significant and concrete measures to clearly demonstrate its political will and commitment to better protect the dignity, identity, equality and right to participation in all walks of life of Sri Lanka’s minorities. Moreover, I called for the creation of an



independent minority rights body to provide expertise and information to legislative- and policy-making processes, encourage and coordinate programming on minority issues, and form a bridge between minority communities and the state. My final report on Sri Lanka will be presented to the 34th session of the Human Rights Council.

Side events/conferences/meetings/lectures

On 8 July, at the invitation of the Government of Hungary, I spoke at an international conference, held in Budapest, to mark the fifth anniversary of the adoption of the European Union Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020.

On 11 July, I delivered an opening speech focusing on the practical approach to who are minorities, at the Global Minority Rights Summer School in Budapest, organized by the Tom Lantos Institute, the Hungarian National University of Public Service and Middlesex University London.

On 12 July, I chaired an event titled "Leave no one behind: ensuring inclusion of the most marginalized and socially excluded communities in the Sustainable Development Goals", at United Nations Headquarters on the occasion of the high-level political forum on sustainable development. I also participated as a keynote speaker at an event on Dalit and other marginalized women challenging inequalities, organized by the Asia Dalit Rights Forum and other partners at the Bahai' Center in New York.



On 18 August, I briefed the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in Geneva about the work of the mandate and the Forum on Minority Issues, and discussed areas of mutual interest and potential collaboration.

On 5 October, I participated as a panelist at the fifth workshop on regional arrangements for the promotion and protection of human rights, organized by OHCHR in Geneva.

On 16 November, I participated as a panelist at the ninth Budapest Human Rights Forum, organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary and introduced my global study on the situation of Roma.

On 24 November, I spoke at the event titled "Promoting and protecting minority rights through visual arts", organized in Geneva by OHCHR and the Canton and City of Geneva.

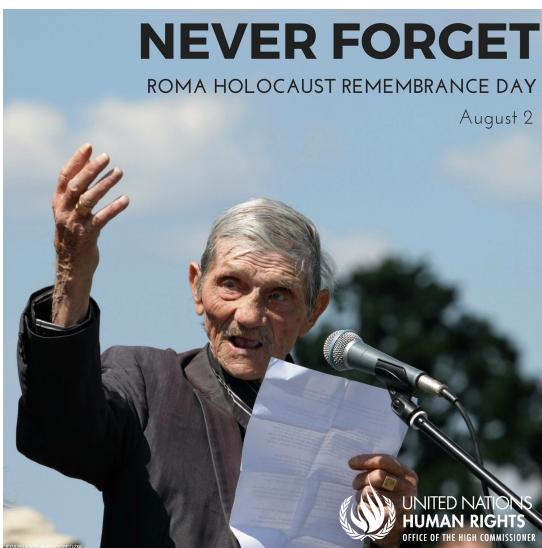
On 25 November, I participated as a speaker at the event "Excluded: stateless minorities in times of crisis", organized in Geneva by Minority Rights Group and the Permanent Mission of Austria to the United Nations Office at Geneva.

Communications (letters of allegations and urgent appeals)

I have 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 (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). Since the last Bulletin, no new Joint Communication Reports have been published so communications sent between 1 July 2016 - 31 December 2016 will appear in my next (and last) Bulletin.

Press releases

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.



UN experts call on all governments to recognise the right to remembrance for the Roma people: On 2 August 2016, on the 72nd anniversary of the Roma Holocaust –‘Porrajmos’ or ‘Pharrajimos’– the Special Adviser of the UN Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, Adama Dieng and myself urged all governments around the world to recognise and ensure the right to remembrance for the Roma people. We also called for stronger measures to stop the stigmatisation of Roma, and that Roma communities and others are able to commemorate the Roma Holocaust in a recognised and dignified manner. See more at:
<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=20327&LangID=E#sthash.cXur8m8v.dpuf>

UN experts urge Turkey to adhere to its human rights obligations even in time of declared emergency: On 19 August 2016, our group of experts urged the Turkish Government to uphold its obligations under international human rights law, even in the current time of declared emergency following an attempted coup. We stressed that while we understand the sense of crisis in Turkey, we are concerned that the Government’s steps to limit a broad range of human rights guarantees go beyond what can be justified in light of the current situation. See more at:
<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=20394&LangID=E#sthash.Cua3V4B0.dpuf>

Freedom of religion: UN expert urges Yemen to halt systematic harassment of Bahá’í community: On 4 October, together with the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, I

endorsed the statement of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, in which he called on the authorities in Yemen to put an end to the systematic harassment of the Bahá'í population in the country, including arbitrary arrests and detentions. We also called for the release of three leaders of the Bahá'í Yemeni community detained over two months ago. The Yemeni authorities were reminded that they must uphold their international obligations and do all they can to protect all citizens in the country under any circumstances. See more at:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=20635&LangID=E#sthash.yhbZF3ws.dpuf>

UN experts urge Myanmar to address serious violations of human rights in northern Rakhine State: On 24 October 2016, our group of experts urged the Government of Myanmar to address the growing reports of human rights violations in northern Rakhine State following the attacks on 9 October 2016 by armed individuals against three Border Guard Police posts in Maungdaw and Rathedaung townships, and subsequent security operations in search of suspected attackers. See more at:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=20742&LangID=E#sthash.H2qTVvez.dpuf>

Development agenda at risk unless States honour political and financial commitments, UN experts warn: On 2 December 2016, our group of experts issued a joint statement in which we urged Governments to meet their commitments if they are serious about delivering the right to development to all world citizens by 2030. We stressed that Governments need to move rapidly beyond rhetoric and political differences to make the right to development a reality for all. See more at:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=20973&LangID=E#sthash.mEAPJbGp.dpuf>

Human rights under increasing attack worldwide: Marking the Human Rights Day, on 10 December 2016, our group of experts issued a statement in which we urged all Governments around the world to stand up for human rights. We stressed that since the construction of an international human rights system based upon the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which was adopted 68 years ago, enormous strides have been made in establishing universal standards. However, today, a chill wind is blowing through much of the world and the very notion of human rights is under increasing attack. See more at:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=21009&LangID=E#sthash.6aRHfhEd.dpuf>

Cameroon: UN experts urge Government to halt violence against English-speaking minority protests: On 21 December 2016, together with the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association, we expressed concerns over the worsening violence in the north-west and south-west, which has included the use of force against English-speaking demonstrators protesting against the growing appointment of French-speaking civil servants in their regions. We have called on the government of Cameroon to exercise restraint and begin dialogue. See more at:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=21054&LangID=E#sthash.mrhemD8V.dpuf>

What's next? Where to keep an eye?



I will present my next and final thematic report to the Human Rights Council on 15 March 2017. It discusses my reflections on the six-year tenure of the Special Rapporteur, including: the list of priorities identified at the beginning of the mandate and updates on achievements; the major challenges I identified; commemoration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities; issues relevant to the Forum on Minority Issues; and my final conclusions and recommendations. During the 34th session of the Human Rights Council, I will also present the final recommendations of the 9th Forum on Minority Issues.

I am also working on finalizing some important additional researches. An analysis of all minority-related recommendations during the 2nd cycle of the Universal Periodic Review are being prepared in a collaboration with the Fletcher School. I have also reached out to all countries that have officially been visited by my predecessor and myself to obtain an update on the implementation of our recommendations. I am also working on analyzing all the communications sent by the mandate since the beginning which will contain some important statistics and charts. And finally, my practical handbook on implementing language rights of linguistic minorities is being translated in all six official UN languages and will be officially launched during March 2017.

My tenure as a mandate holder will come to an end as of 31 July 2017. Call for applications for a new mandate holder will be published soon and selection will take place starting from March 2017. My last Bulletin will be published at the beginning of August 2017.