

HRC 45 – September 29, 2020 4:30-6:00pm

**Interactive Debate Item 5 on co-operation with the United Nations
with ASG Brands Kehris**

**Intervention on behalf of Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg
(BENELUX)**

Speaking time: 1.30 minutes for all

Thank you Mme President,

I am honoured to deliver this statement on behalf of the 3 countries of the Benelux: Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg.

We thank Assistant Secretary-General Brands Kehris for the presentation of her first report. All forms of intimidation and reprisals against civil society actors who engage with the representatives and mechanisms of the United Nations are to be condemned. This is particularly the case when it concerns states that are candidate for Human Rights Council membership.

In order to ensure accountability the Benelux finds it important that specific cases of reprisals receive public attention. Unfortunately, some states display a pattern of intimidation and reprisals that is of such severity that most names of victims have been withheld from this report due to fears of further reprisals.

Mme President,

We are in particular concerned about the following specific cases of intimidation and reprisals:

- **In Egypt** several Human Rights Defenders suffer reprisals:
 - **Mr. Mohamed El-Baqer**, a human rights lawyer, has remained in pre-trial detention for nearly a year, after his engagement with Egypte’s UPR;
 - **Mr. Ramy Kamel Saied Salib** faced arbitrary arrest, detention and torture reportedly to prevent his participation at the November 2019 UN Forum on Minority Issues;
 - **Mr. Ibrahim Metwally Hegazy** of the Association of the Families of the Disappeared has been in prison for 3 years although the

Working Group on Arbitrary Detention found - already in 2019 -
Mr. Metwally's detention arbitrary;

- In **Burundi** human rights lawyers Mr **Niyongere**, Mr **Bashirahishize**, Mr **Nshimirimana** and Mr **Nigarura**, were disbarred or suspended after contacts with CAT in 2016. Up till this day the government has not responded to repeated letters of CAT.
- Finally, the disappearance of **Mr. Od Sayavong, a Lao refugee** living in Bangkok, raises a lot of concerns. He disappeared after having met the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights.

Thank you Mme President