



**49<sup>th</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council**

**Item 5 – General Debate**

Intervention by Luxembourg on behalf of the Benelux

22 March 2022

Thank you, Mister President.

I am honoured to deliver this statement on behalf of the three countries of the Benelux, Belgium, the Netherlands and my own country, Luxembourg.

We confirm our principled position and condemn all forms of intimidation and reprisals against civil society actors who engage with the representatives and mechanisms of the United Nations in the field of human rights.

Mister President,

The effective functioning of the UN Human Rights system relies largely on the meaningful engagement with civil society actors. We encourage you, the Bureau and the Secretariat to play a proactive role in investigating and following up on cases of intimidation and reprisals. Above all, we call upon all States, to take all necessary measures to prevent and ensure accountability for acts of intimidation or reprisal and report back to the Council on action taken.

We would like to follow up on unresolved cases related to HRC or UN engagement previously raised in our statements and highlight particularly urgent cases:

- The enforced disappearance of **Lao HRD Od Sayavong** in August 2019, after having met the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, remains unsolved until today.

- In **China**, WHRD **Chen Jianfang** who campaigned for civil society participation in the UPR and was a victim of enforced disappearance in 2019, has been convicted to a three-year prison sentence for "inciting subversion of State power" in March 2021.
- In **Bahrain**, WHRD **Ebtesam Abdulhusain Ali-Alsaegh** is the object of targeted digital surveillance while **Sayed Ahmed Al-Wadaei** lives as stateless refugee in exile, after their engagement with the Treaty Bodies and the HRC.

We want to draw the attention of this Council the urgent situation of Bahraini HRDs **Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja** and **Abduljalil Al-Singace**, who have been arbitrarily detained for ten years in connection to their human rights work, and whose health continues to deteriorate in prison.

- In **Cameroon**, we condemn the intimidation and death threats faced by the members of the civil society organization Organic Farming for Gorillas Cameroon (OFFGO), **Jan Joris Capelle**, **Prince Vincent Awazi** and **Elvis Brown Luma Mukuna**, following their public submission to the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of HRDs.

We welcome information from the above-mentioned states concerning these cases and call for the unconditional liberation of those who are still detained.

Thank you very much.