



LE GOUVERNEMENT
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Item 5 – Interactive dialogue on the report on reprisals

Statement by H.E.M. Marc Bichler, Permanent Representative of Luxembourg

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Mr President,

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

We commend the ASG for her work and for her latest report. We strongly condemn all acts of intimidation or reprisal against all individuals seeking to engage or engaging with the UN, its representatives and mechanisms in the field of human rights. Such actions have a chilling effect, deterring individuals and communities from engaging in dialogue and cooperation with the UN, and in turn, hampering our collective pursuit of peace, security, and development.

In order to ensure accountability the Benelux finds it important that specific cases of reprisals and intimidation receive public attention. Therefore, we wish to express our particular concern about the following grave cases:

1. In **Bahrain**, we want to draw attention to the urgent situation of Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, who has been arbitrarily detained for ten years in connection with his human rights work, and whose health continues to severely deteriorate in prison.
2. In **Bangladesh**, Adilur Rahman Khan and Nasiruddin Elan, two human rights defenders from Odhikar, who were sentenced to two years of prison for the publication of a fact-finding report on extra-judicial killings in 2013.

3. In **Egypt**, Ibrahim Metwally Hegazy, who is the co-founder and coordinator of the Association of the Families of the Disappeared.
4. In **Nicaragua**, the reprisals against the Comisión Permanente de Derechos Humanos and its staff, and of Mr. Félix Alejandro Maradiaga, Mr. Aníbal Toruño and Ms. Vilma Nuñez de Escorcía indicate continued harassment of civil society, which has worsened recently, especially with the General Law No. 1115.
5. In **Belarus**, six members of the Human Rights Center Viasna, which promotes human rights and provides legal aid, are currently arbitrarily detained after having engaged with various UN human rights mechanisms to denounce violations by the Belarusian government.
6. In **Burundi**, human rights lawyers Armel Niyongere, Dieudonné Bashirahishize, Vital Nshimirimana and Lambert Nigarura, who were disbarred and forced to leave the country after engaging with the Committee Against Torture in 2016.
7. In **China**, the legal rights activist Jiang Tianyong, currently under house arrest, who is working at grassroots level to defend land and housing rights, to promote the rights of vulnerable social groups and to expose root causes of systemic rights abuses.

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.

[407 words]