Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

Baroness Anelay on conclusion of UN Human Rights Council

2015-03-27

Baroness Anelay said:

Today, the Council draws to an end, after four weeks of intense exchanges on what more the Human Rights Council, its mechanisms and its members can do to strengthen and protect human rights. As I said at the

opening session of the Council

we have a collective responsibility to address human right concerns whenever and wherever they occur. I am pleased therefore that the Council has passed a number of important resolutions which will ensure that scrutiny of human rights violations and abuses can continue.

Four years have passed since the start of the conflict in Syria. The Assad regime continues to carry out the most barbarous acts, including the use of chemical weapons and barrel bombs on civilians. Assad has lost all legitimacy and control over large parts of his country. The rise of ISIL and the atrocities it has committed shock us all. The UK welcomes the renewal of the mandate of the Commission of Inquiry and will continue to call for those responsible for violations and abuses of international law - war crimes and crimes against humanity - to be held to account.

We remain concerned by the human rights situation in Iran, particularly the increased use of the death penalty and ongoing discrimination against minority religious groups, including the Baha'is and Christians. We regret that the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran rejected one of the UPR recommendations made by the UK Government and offered only partial support for the second. We do, however, welcome the renewal of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Iran, and recommend that the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran invite him to visit the country and engage in a full dialogue with him.

The UK welcomes the Council's passing of a strong resolution on the situation in Libya, which establishes an Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights mission to investigate violations and abuses. The UK is closely monitoring the deterioration in the human rights situation in Libya caused by the continuing violence and political crisis. We are appalled by

the numbers of civilians killed and injured by indiscriminate shooting and shelling and air attacks on residential areas. I also condemn the brutal and cowardly attacks by ISIL terrorists. There must be accountability for these crimes, and for all violations and abuses of human rights. It is imperative that the fighting stops, and that all parties commit wholeheartedly to the political process led by the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General to end the suffering of the Libyan people.

2015 will be an extremely important year for Burma's reform process and we, therefore, welcome the adoption, by consensus, of the resolution on Burma. We also welcome the renewal of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur. We recognise the significant steps towards democratic reform that the government of Burma has taken over the past two years. However, progress has declined in some areas of late and much more remains to be done. If this transition is to be kept on track, we look to the Burmese government to ensure credible and inclusive elections later this year, continue to work towards national reconciliation and urgently address the situation in Rakhine State.

The Council has once again supported a resolution sending a clear message to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea of the international community's deep concern at the systematic violation of human rights. I call on the DPRK authorities to engage fully with the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights and all other relevant UN mechanisms. On a positive note, I welcome the imminent opening of the new field office in Seoul which will support the UN Special Rapporteur and ensure a continued focus on accountability, awareness raising and technical assistance.

I welcome the continuing consensus on the EU's resolution on freedom of religion or belief and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation text on combating religious intolerance. These resolutions are in important tool in ensuring states work together to protect this fundamental human right. The international community must continue to protect the mutually reinforcing rights to freedom of expression, freedom of religion or belief and non-discrimination. The UK looks forward to the continued constructive exchange of ideas, which can play a positive role in combating religious hatred and in ensuring that everyone can practice, share and change their faith without fear of discrimination or violence.

The Human Rights Council will meet again in June and the Council's attention will unfortunately return to many of these issues. As long as these abuses and violations of human rights continue to take place, the UK will continue to speak out and demand that those responsible are held to account.

Resolutions can be found

here

Further information

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