

22 June 2018

Dear Ambassador Haley,

We write in response to your letter of 20 June 2018, in which you suggest that NGOs are somehow responsible for your decision to withdraw from the Human Rights Council. The decision to resign from the Council was that of the US administration alone. We had legitimate concerns that the US's proposal to reopen the Council's institutional framework at the General Assembly would do more harm than good. We see it as our responsibility to express those concerns and would do so again.

Although the Human Rights Council is not perfect, it does play an essential role. It makes a significant contribution to strengthening human rights standards, providing protection and justice to victims, and promoting accountability for perpetrators. The Council and its mechanisms have played a key role in securing the freedom of detained human rights defenders, and investigating rights violations in Syria, Yemen, Burundi, Myanmar, South Sudan, Sri Lanka and North Korea, to name but a few. It continues to address thematic issues of global concern including non-discrimination, freedom of expression online and offline, freedom of assembly, housing, migration, counterterrorism, and the protection of the rights of women, rights of LGBTI people, and rights of people with disabilities.

As you know, we are independent organizations that do not work on behalf of any government. We focus on building support for policies we believe will better the lives of those most affected by abuse - which does mean we are sometimes opposed to proposals laid out by certain governments, or the proposed means of pursuing them, especially when we believe such an initiative could be more harmful than not. With regard to the Council, our goal continues to be strengthening and supporting reform efforts that are ongoing in Geneva to ensure that they are informed by the experience and expertise of national and regional level actors, including rights-holders, human rights defenders and other civil society actors, victims, survivors (and their representatives).

We are committed to the international system, including the Human Rights Council, and to ensuring the system is fit for the purpose of promoting and protecting human rights. We will continue to work towards those goals.

Signatories:

1. Amnesty International
2. ARTICLE 19
3. Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (Forum-Asia)
4. Asian Legal Resource Centre (ALRC)
5. Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies
6. Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales (CELS)
7. Child Rights Connect
8. Conectas Direitos Humanos

9. DefendDefenders (the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project)
10. Human Rights Watch
11. International Commission of Jurists (ICJ)
12. International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
13. International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU)
14. International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA)
15. International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)
16. International Women's Health Coalition
17. OutRight Action International
18. Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights