

UPCOMING APPOINTMENT OF KEY POSTS IN THE UN HUMAN RIGHTS STRUCTURE

4th of December, 2019

His Excellency
Mr. António Guterres
Secretary-General United Nations
New York, NY 10017

Your Excellency,

The undersigned civil society organisations working to advance human rights in all regions of the world would like to acknowledge and thank the distinguished service of Ms Kate Gilmore, in her position as Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, and Mr Andrew Gilmour, as Assistant-Secretary-General for Human Rights. We greatly valued their commitment and contribution to the promotion and protection of human rights and engagement with civil society organisations for the past years.

The roles of Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights and Assistant-Secretary-General for Human Rights, together with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, are crucial to promoting human rights and sustainable and inclusive development worldwide. Together, they work to protect human rights defenders and civic space, prevent human rights abuses and strengthen accountability for violations where they occur, enhance equality and counter discrimination, and facilitate dialogue between diverse stakeholders on human rights issues. The designation of the Assistant-Secretary General as the UN's Senior Official on Reprisals is also indispensable to ensuring that rights holders, victims, witness and defenders are able to engage with the UN safely and without being subject to acts of intimidation or reprisal.

Given these functions, we firmly believe that the criteria for selection should take into consideration, first and foremost, a demonstrated commitment and significant experience and expertise in the field of human rights, with special consideration given to those who have worked as human rights advocates and defenders. We particularly urge appointment of a human rights defender with a substantial civil society background as Deputy High Commissioner. It is vital that the persons appointed to each post be both principled and strategic, independent and collaborative, and frank and fearless. They should also be prepared to speak strongly and publicly, as well as privately and diplomatically, to address human rights issues and, where appropriate, to condemn violations and call perpetrators to account.

Civil society organisations and human rights defenders resort to the UN Human Rights system to make their voices heard in the most challenging circumstances. The Deputy High Commissioner and

Assistant-Secretary-General for Human Rights play a key role in enabling the functioning of international human rights apparatus to address their claims effectively.

Considering that the mandates of the Deputy High Commissioner and the Assistant-Secretary-General for Human Rights will come to an end on the 31st of December, 2019 we urge the Secretary-General to take into consideration the importance of these roles, not only for the work of civil society around the globe, but also for the effectiveness of the UN as a whole.

Sincerely yours,

1. African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies (ACDHRS)
2. Alhaq Foundation for Human Rights
3. ARTICLE 19
4. Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)
5. Baroness Helena Kennedy
6. Bena Institute for Training and Development
7. Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS)
8. Campagne Publiez ce que vous payez Congo
9. Center for Reproductive Rights
10. CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation
11. Coalition Burkinabé des Défenseurs des droits Humains (CBDDH)
12. Comisión Colombiana de Juristas
13. Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI)
14. Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR)
15. Faili Women Forum
16. FIDH - International Federation for Human Rights
17. Forum Menschenrechte
18. Franciscans International
19. Geneva for Human Rights (GHR)
20. Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
21. Human Rights Defenders Network-Sierra Leone
22. Human Rights House Foundation
23. Human Rights Law Centre
24. Human Rights Watch
25. Humanists International
26. Impact Iran
27. Indonesian Institute for Independent Judiciary (LeIP)
28. International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI)

29. International Centre for civil initiatives "Our House"
30. International Centre for Gender Initiatives "Adliga: Women for Full Citizenship"
31. International Commission of Jurists
32. International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR)
33. International Service for Human Rights
34. Intersex Society of Zambia (ISSZ)
35. Iraqi Al Amal Association (IAA)
36. Iraqi Women Human Rights Defenders Coalition
37. Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights
38. Justice Centre Hong Kong
39. MENA Rights Group
40. Minority Rights Group International
41. Peace Brigades International
42. Rencontre Africaine pour la Défense des Droits de l'Homme (RADDHO)
43. Rencontre pour la Paix et les Droits de l'Homme (RPDH)
44. RFSL - Swedish Federation for LGBTQ Rights
45. Right Livelihood Foundation
46. Save the Children
47. Swedish Association for Sexuality Education - RFSU
48. Tournons la Page Congo-Brazzaville
49. Wenshe Centre for Human Rights Education
50. West Africa Human Rights Defenders Network (ROADDH/WAHRDN)
51. Women Human Rights Defenders Network Uganda