



Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development
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39th Regular Session of the UN Human Rights Council
Item 5: Interactive Dialogue with Assistant Secretary General on the Secretary General's report on reprisals
Oral Statement Delivered by Hkaung Stelar Naw on behalf of Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)

Wednesday, 19 September, 2018

Mr. President, we welcome the report of the Secretary General on reprisals against those who cooperate with UN and its mechanisms in the field of human rights.

We share concerns on disturbing reports of intimidation and reprisals against human rights defenders, including threats of sexual and gender based violence. We are particularly concerned about cases of reprisals in a number of Asian countries including cases in the report on India, Maldives, Myanmar, Philippines and Thailand, as well as increasing trend of reprisals committed by non-state actors. These cases of reprisals have a serious chilling effect on the already restrictive environment in which human rights defenders operate.

We echo the Secretary General's recommendation to the UN to do more to ensure that views and experience of women and sexual minorities are properly documented to ensure that they are not exposed to additional risks. We also note that ethnic and religious minorities face disproportionate threats and require appropriate attention.

We are particularly concerned about increasing attacks and threats against human rights defenders online and serious consequences of such attacks offline. For instance, the report of the UN Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar has found credible evidence of serious implications of hate speech and threats against minorities and human rights defenders on social media platforms such as Facebook.

We believe that the UN system can contribute significantly to addressing and preventing reprisals through a comprehensive system-wide approach that shows genuine commitment to the UN's human rights objectives. In this regard we ask the Assistant Secretary General:

- How can resident UN coordinators contribute to protecting human rights defenders on the ground?
- How can the UN Human Rights Up Front Action Plan be implemented to protect human rights defenders and prevent reprisals against human rights defenders that cooperate with UN agencies and other related stakeholders on the ground?
- What are your recommendations for the UN and the Council to meaningfully hold members of the Council that persistently attack human rights defenders who seek to cooperate with the Council accountable?
- How can business enterprises and social media outlets such as Facebook contribute to preventing reprisals?

Thank you.