**48th session of the Human Rights Council**

**Panel discussion on the promotion and protection of human rights   
in the context of peaceful protests**

*Concept note (as of 23 September 2021)*

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| **Date and venue:** | **Wednesday, 29 September 2021, 3 to 5 p.m.  Room XX, Palais des Nations, Geneva and online platform (Zoom)** *(will be broadcasted live and archived on* [*http://webtv.un.org*](http://webtv.un.org)*)* |
| **Objectives:** | The panel discussion will focus on the protection and promotion of human rights in the context of peaceful protests, with a particular focus on achievements and contemporary challenges. The panel discussion aims to:   * Take stock of progress made in respecting and ensuring human rights in the context of assemblies, with particular attention to existing tools to assist States in the management of assemblies with due respect for human rights, and assess their effective implementation; * Discuss emerging challenges and opportunities, such as the impact of new technologies and the online space on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly, of expression and of association, which would require further work and clarification; * Identify areas where further guidance and cooperation may be needed. |
| **Chair:** | H.E. Mr. Yuri Borissov Sterk, Vice-President of the Human Rights Council |
| **Opening statement:** | **Ms. Michelle Bachelet**, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights *(live video message)* |
| **Panellists:** | * **Mr. Clément Nyaletsossi Voule**,Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association * **Mr. Yuval Shany**,Hersch Lauterpacht Chair in Public International Law at the Hebrew University of Jerusalemand former Chair of the Human Rights Committee*(video message)* * **Ms. Lysa John**, Secretary General of CIVICUS *(video message)* * **Commissioner Luís Carrilho**, United Nations Police Adviser*(video message)* |
| **Outcome:** | The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) will prepare a summary report on the panel discussion. |
| **Mandate:** | In its resolution [44/20](https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/RES/44/20) on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of peaceful protests, the Human Rights Council decided to convene, at its 48th session, a panel discussion on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of peaceful protests. |
| **Format:** | The panel discussion will be limited to two hours. The opening statement and initial presentations by the panellists will be followed by a two-part interactive discussion and conclusions from the panellists. A maximum of one hour will be set aside for the podium, which will cover the opening statement, panellists’ presentations and their responses to questions and concluding remarks. The remaining hour will be reserved for two segments of interventions from the floor, with each segment consisting of interventions from 12 States or observers, 1 national human rights institution and 2 non-governmental organizations. Each speaker will have two minutes to raise issues and to ask panellists questions.  The list of speakers for the discussion will be established through the online inscription system and, as per practice, statements by high-level dignitaries and groups of States will be moved to the beginning of the list. Delegates who have not been able to take the floor due to time constraints will be able to upload their statements on the online system to be posted on the HRC Extranet. |
| **Accessibility:** | In an effort to render the Human Rights Council more accessible to persons with disabilities and to promote their full participation in the work of the Council on an equal basis with others, the panel will be webcast and made accessible. International sign interpretation and real-time captioning in English will be provided. During the event itself, participants can access live English captioning on the StreamText web page (<https://www.streamtext.net/player?event=CFI-UNOG>). In Room XX, four seats are reserved for participants using wheelchairs, in the seventh (last) row. Hearing loops are available for collection from the Secretariat desk. Oral statements may be embossed in Braille from any of the six official languages of the United Nations, upon request and following the procedure described in *The accessibility guide to the Human Rights Council for persons with disabilities* (available on <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/Accessibility.aspx>). |
| **Background:** | In its resolution 44/20, the Council recognized the importance of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly, of expression and of association, noting that peaceful protests historically have played a constructive social and political role in the development of more just and accountable societies. The Council further affirmed that such protests continue to make a positive contribution to human development and to the full enjoyment of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. Peaceful protests can also make a positive contribution to the development, strengthening and effectiveness of democratic systems and to democratic processes, including elections and referendums.  Despite its importance, the rights to freedoms of peaceful assembly, of expression and of association are under pressure. In its resolution, the Human Rights Council expressed concern that peaceful protests have been met with repression, such as through the unlawful use of force by law enforcement officials. It further expressed concern at other undue restrictions, such as the criminalization, in all parts of the world, of individuals and groups solely for having organized or taken part in peaceful protests or for having observed, monitored or recorded protests. The Council further expressed concern about internet shutdowns, the misuse of new technologies, and at measures preventing or impairing an individual’s ability to have access to or disseminate information at key political moments, with an impact on the ability to organize and conduct assemblies. |
| **Background documents:** | * Human Rights Committee, [General comment No. 37 (2020)](https://undocs.org/CCPR/C/GC/37) on the right of peaceful assembly * Human Rights Committee, [General comment No. 36 (2019)](https://undocs.org/CCPR/C/GC/36) on the right to life * Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the [impact of new technologies on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of assemblies, including peaceful protests](https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/44/24) (A/HRC/44/24), 24 June 2020 * Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association on [the exercise of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association in the digital age](https://undocs.org/A/HRC/41/41) (A/HRC/41/41), 17 May 2019 * Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association on [ten years protecting civic space worldwide](https://undocs.org/A/HRC/44/50) (A/HRC/44/50), 13 May 2020 * OHCHR, Human rights [guidance on less-lethal weapons in law enforcement](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/CCPR/LLW_Guidance.pdf) * OHCHR, [Guidelines for States on the effective implementation of the right to participate in public affairs](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/PublicAffairs/GuidelinesRightParticipatePublicAffairs_web.pdf) |