

Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Belarus; the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; and the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment

REFERENCE:
AL BLR 7/2021

30 June 2021

Excellency,

We have the honour to address you in our capacities as Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Belarus; Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; and Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 43/16, 44/19, 43/4 and 43/20.

In this connection, we would like to bring to the attention of your Excellency's Government information we have received concerning **the alleged physical and psychological abuse, coercion to leave Belarus, and ban on re-entry imposed on human rights defender and lawyer Mr. Volodymyr Yavorsky, as well as the alleged arbitrary detention, administrative charges, criminalisation and ban to leave Belarus imposed on woman human rights defender Ms. Tatsiana Hatsura-Yavorskaya**. We also bring to your attention **the alleged attempts by authorities to liquidate human rights non-governmental organisation (NGO) Zvyano**.

Ms. Tatsiana Hatsura-Yavorskaya is a woman human rights defender, head of Zvyano and co-founder of the International Human Rights Documentary Film Festival "WATCH DOCS Belarus", which aims to bring public attention to human rights issues in Belarus and the wider region. She also organises other cultural projects; in March 2021, she co-organised an exhibition "Machine is Breathing, and I Am Not" about the challenges medical professionals faced in 2020.

Mr. Volodymyr Yavorsky is a human rights defender, board member of the Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union and co-founder and chairperson of the board of the Docudays UA International Human Rights Documentary Film Festival. He has also worked for the Belarusian Human Rights House, was a coordinator of the working group on the Guidelines on the Definition of Political Prisoners, and participated in the election monitoring during the Belarusian presidential elections in 2020.

Zvyano is a public association that assists people in vulnerable social and economic situations through fundraising and public campaigns. It is also involved in human rights education and advocacy. Zvyano is a member of the International Committee for Investigation of Torture in Belarus that collected testimonies of victims of torture in detention following protests in Belarus in the wake of the 2020 presidential election.

According to the information received:

Ms. Tatsiana Hatsura-Yavorskaya and Mr. Volodymyr Yavorsky are married and lived in Belarus together with their four children. Ms. Hatsura-Yavorskaya

and three elder children are Belarusian citizens. Mr. Yavorsky is a Ukrainian citizen and a permanent resident of Belarus since 2012. Their youngest child holds both Belarusian and Ukrainian citizenships.

In October 2020, after the Investigative Committee had learned about Zvyano's role in documenting torture, Ms. Hatsura-Yavorskaya received phone threats from officials working for the Investigative Committee.

On 5 April 2021, the officers of the Financial Investigations Department of the State Control Committee – allegedly accompanied by the State Security Committee officers – conducted searches at Zvyano's office, Ms. Hatsura-Yavorskaya's and Mr. Yavorsky's apartment in Minsk, and their house near Minsk. Warrants were presented for the searches, but reportedly lacked specific details as to the grounds for carrying them out. The requests to invite a lawyer were denied. During the search at Zvyano's office, the officers seized Ms. Hatsura-Yavorskaya's laptop and mobile phone, six laptops belonging to Zvyano and its employees, as well as documents and all data storage devices. During the search at Ms. Hatsura-Yavorskaya's and Mr. Yavorsky's apartment and house, they seized a laptop, iPad, phone, documents, and money.

On the same day, Ms. Hatsura-Yavorskaya was detained in connection with an undisclosed criminal case. She was not provided prompt access to her lawyer.

A few days later, Ms. Hatsura-Yavorskaya was also found guilty of an administrative offence of "disobeying a lawful order of a police officer" and fined for the offence.

On 12 April 2021, the officers of the Financial Investigations Department of the State Control Committee – allegedly accompanied by the State Security Committee officers – conducted another search at Ms. Hatsura-Yavorskaya's and Mr. Yavorsky's apartment. The search lasted for three hours. The officers seized a laptop, data storage devices, and documents.

The warrant authorising the search reportedly lacked specific details as to the grounds for the search. The witnesses who attested the circumstances of the search had arrived together with the officers and left in their car. The requests to invite a lawyer were denied.

On 12 April 2021, after the apartment search, the officers took Mr. Yavorsky to the Financial Investigations Department of the State Control Committee, where he was interrogated by the officers of the Financial Investigations Department and also allegedly the State Security Committee officers. Mr. Yavorsky was denied access to a lawyer. He was questioned about his and his wife's human rights work. During the interrogation, the officers physically abused Mr. Yavorsky. As a result, he had extensive bruises on his arm, thigh, knee, and back. The officers also psychologically abused him. He was informed that, unless he left Belarus within 48 hours, he would be arrested under a criminal case and his nine-year-old child would be taken away and placed in an orphanage. At the end of the interrogation, Mr. Yavorsky was forced to sign a non-disclosure agreement on the details of the criminal case.

On 14 April 2021, Mr. Yavorskyy left Belarus with his nine-year-old child. He was informed that he had been banned from re-entering Belarus for ten years without any further explanation or official document. No consideration was given to the fact that he had been living in Belarus for many years and his wife and three children remained there.

On 15 April 2021, Ms. Hatsura-Yavorskaya was released from detention without criminal charges. However, she remains a suspect in a criminal case under article 342 (1) of the Criminal Code of Belarus (“organisation and preparation of actions that grossly violate public order, or active participation in them”). The status of the investigation is unclear. If convicted, she may be imprisoned for up to three years.

Ms. Hatsura-Yavorskaya is banned from leaving Belarus. She remains there with three elder children, one of whom is a minor.

On 9 June 2021, Zvyano received a written warning from the Ministry of Justice, which is an NGO regulator in Belarus, alleging that Zvyano had violated the law in the following ways:

- 1) By monitoring the healthcare system during the pandemic, allegedly in violation of the law and Zvyano’s Charter (the Charter reportedly explicitly permits such monitoring);
- 2) By not providing information and documents in response to a request allegedly sent to Zvyano on 19 May 2021 (Zvyano reportedly did not receive the request, and in any case, it was reportedly impossible for the organisation to comply with the request, as all documents and equipment were seized on 5 April 2021 and have not been returned);
- 3) By including in Zvyano’s activities listed on its website an activity that is not permitted in the Charter (the list reportedly does comply with the Charter).

Without wishing to prejudge the accuracy of the information received, we wish to express concern as to the physical and psychological abuse of Mr. Volodymyr Yavorskyy, coercion to leave Belarus, and the ban on re-entry for ten years, even though his wife and three children reside in Belarus. We also wish to express concern as to the alleged arbitrary detention of Ms. Hatsura-Yavorskaya, administrative and criminal cases against her, and the ban on leaving Belarus, even though her husband and nine-year-old child are outside Belarus. We are gravely concerned that these measures appear to be connected to their human rights work and the exercise of their rights to freedom of expression and of association.

We furthermore express our concern at allegations received about the searches and seizure of electronic devices, documents, and money by the law enforcement officers, as well as denial or restriction of access to a lawyer, and the requirement to sign a non-disclosure agreement, which seem to be aimed at intimidating and silencing Ms. Hatsura-Yavorskaya and Mr. Volodymyr Yavorskyy. We are furthermore concerned by the warning received by Zvyano with reportedly irregular or incorrect allegations directed at the NGO. We are deeply concerned that this may be the first step towards liquidating Zvyano for its legitimate human rights activities.

Finally, we express our most serious concern regarding the continuous intimidation and criminalisation of human rights defenders in Belarus in connection to their human rights work. In light of recent communications, we are concerned that Belarusian authorities are seeking to silence and criminalise all forms of dissent by targeting opposition (BLR 7/2020), peaceful protesters (BLR 5/2020, BLR 6/2020, BLR 10/2020, and BLR 1/2021), people who display symbols of the civic protest movement (BLR 3/2021), lawyers (BLR 3/2020 and BLR 9/2020), journalists and media personnel (BLR 4/2020, BLR 1/2021, and BLR 4/2021), human rights defenders (BLR 8/2020 and BLR 4/2021), and imposing restrictions on civil society organisations including those working for the promotion and protection of human rights (BLR 2/2021). We remain concerned at the chilling effect that all this has on human rights defenders in Belarus, discouraging them from exercising their human rights for fear of retaliation or harassment.

In connection with the above alleged facts and concerns, please refer to the **Annex on Reference to international human rights law** attached to this letter which cites international human rights instruments and standards relevant to these allegations.

As it is our responsibility, under the mandates provided to us by the Human Rights Council, to seek to clarify all cases brought to our attention, we would be grateful for your observations on the following matters:

1. Please provide any additional information and/or comment(s) you may have on the above-mentioned allegations.
2. Please provide the details, and where available the results, of any investigation, which may have been carried out in relation to the allegations of the physical and psychological abuse of Mr. Volodymyr Yavorskyy.
3. Please provide information on the legal and factual basis for the detention of Ms. Hatsura-Yavorskaya, any administrative and criminal cases against her, and explain how these are compatible with your Excellency's Government international human rights obligations.
4. Please provide information on the legal basis for the searches made on Ms. Hatsura-Yavorskaya's and Mr. Volodymyr Yavorskyy's homes, and on the office of Zvyano, as well as the seizure of electronic equipment, documents, and money and explain how these measures are compatible with your Excellency's Government international human rights obligations.
5. Please provide information on the status of Mr. Volodymyr Yavorskyy's permanent residence permit and the legal basis for the travel restrictions imposed on him and Ms. Hatsura-Yavorskaya and explain how these restrictions are compatible with your Excellency's Government international human rights obligations.
6. Please outline the steps taken to uphold and protect the rights of Ms. Hatsura-Yavorskaya, Mr. Volodymyr Yavorskyy, and their

children to family life.

7. Please provide information as to whether Ms. Hatsura-Yavorskaya and Mr. Volodymyr Yavorsky were provided prompt access to their lawyers and were required to sign non-disclosure agreements and explain how this is compatible with your Excellency's Government international human rights obligations.
8. Please provide information whether Zvyano faces the risk of liquidation, and explain how this is compatible with your Excellency's Government international human rights obligations.
9. Please indicate what measures have been taken to ensure that human rights defenders are able to carry out their legitimate work in Belarus in a safe and enabling environment without fear of harassment, criminalisation, threats or acts of intimidation of any kind towards them and their families.

We would appreciate receiving a response within 60 days. Passed this delay, this communication and any response received from your Excellency's Government will be made public via the communications reporting [website](#). They will also subsequently be made available in the usual report to be presented to the Human Rights Council.

While awaiting a reply, we urge that all necessary interim measures be taken to halt the alleged violations and prevent their re-occurrence and in the event that the investigations support or suggest the allegations to be correct, to ensure the accountability of any person(s) responsible for the alleged violations.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.

Mary Lawlor
Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders

Anaïs Marin
Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Belarus

Irene Khan
Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression

Nils Melzer
Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment

Annex

Reference to international human rights law

In connection with above alleged facts and concerns, we would like to draw the attention of your Excellency's Government to the following human rights standards:

The rights to freedom of opinion and expression and freedom of association

We would like to refer your Excellency's Government to articles 19 and 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), ratified by Belarus on 12 November 1973, that guarantee the rights to freedom of opinion and expression and freedom of association.

The right to freedom of expression includes the right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds. As interpreted by the Human Rights Committee in General Comment No. 34 (CCPR/C/GC/34), such information and ideas include, inter alia, political discourse, commentary on one's own and on public affairs, cultural and artistic expression, and discussion of human rights (Paragraph 11), and all forms of expression and the means of their dissemination are protected, including audio-visual modes of expression (Paragraph 12). Article 19 requires the States to guarantee the right to freedom of expression (Paragraph 11). It is the States' duty to put in place effective measures to protect against attacks aimed at silencing those exercising their right to freedom of expression (Paragraph 23). An attack on a person, because of the exercise of his or her freedom of opinion or expression, including such forms of attack as arbitrary arrest and torture, can under no circumstance be compatible with article 19 (Paragraph 23). All such attacks should be vigorously investigated in a timely fashion, and the perpetrators prosecuted, and the victims be in receipt of appropriate forms of redress (Id.).

We would also like to remind your Excellency's Government that any restrictions to the right to freedom of expression must meet the criteria established by international human rights standards, such as article 19 (3) of the ICCPR. Under these standards, restrictions must be provided for by law and conform to the strict tests of necessity and proportionality. As interpreted by the Human Rights Committee in General Comment No. 34 (CCPR/C/GC/34), article 19 (3) may never be invoked to justify the muzzling of any advocacy of human rights (Paragraph 23).

We would like to also remind your Excellency's Government of the Human Rights Council resolution 12/16 (A/HRC/RES/12/16), in which the Human Rights Council expresses its concern that violations of the rights to freedom of opinion and expression continue to occur, often with impunity, including arbitrary detention, torture, intimidation, persecution and harassment, threats and acts of violence, increased abuse of legal provisions on surveillance, search and seizure, and censorship against persons who exercise, seek to promote or defend these rights, including human rights defenders. In resolution 12/16, the Human Rights Council calls upon the States to respect and ensure the respect for these rights, take all necessary measures to put an end to violations of these rights, bring to justice those responsible, ensure that victims of violations have an effective remedy, and refrain from imposing restrictions which are not consistent with article 19 (3) of the ICCPR, including on reporting on

human rights and government activities, and expression of opinion and dissent.

The right to take part in cultural life

We would also like to refer to article 15 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), ratified by Belarus on 12 November 1973, that guarantees the right of everyone to take part in cultural life.

According to the General Comment No. 21 by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (E/C.12/GC/21), this right may be exercised by a person as an individual, in association with others, or within a community or group (Paragraph 9). It includes three interrelated main components: (a) participation in, (b) access to, and (c) contribution to cultural life (Paragraph 15). Everyone has, inter alia, the right to seek and develop cultural knowledge and expressions and to share them with others, as well as to act creatively and take part in creative activity (Id.).

Any limitations to the right to take part in cultural life must pursue a legitimate aim, be compatible with the nature of this right, strictly necessary for the promotion of general welfare in a democratic society, and proportionate (Paragraph 19). The States need to take into consideration existing international human rights standards on limitations that can or cannot be legitimately imposed on rights that are intrinsically linked to the right to take part in cultural life, such as the rights to privacy, to freedom of opinion and expression, to peaceful assembly and to freedom of association (Id.).

Ensuring this right requires from the State party both abstention (i.e., non-interference with the exercise of cultural practices and with access to cultural goods and services) and positive action (ensuring preconditions for participation, facilitation and promotion of cultural life, and access to and preservation of cultural goods) (Paragraph 6).

The States have the immediate obligation to guarantee that the right of everyone to take part in cultural life is exercised without discrimination, to recognise cultural practices, and to refrain from interfering in their enjoyment and development (Paragraph 44). Regressive measures are not permitted (Paragraph 46).

The right to liberty of movement and freedom to choose one's residence

We would also like to refer your Excellency's Government to article 12 of the ICCPR that provides that everyone has the right to liberty of movement and freedom to choose his or her residence. Everyone shall be free to leave any country, including his or her own. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of the right to enter his or her own country.

According to the Human Rights Committee's General Comment No. 27 (CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.9), the scope of one's "own country" is not limited to nationality in a formal sense and embraces, at the very least, an individual who, because of his or her special ties to or claims in relation to a given country, cannot be considered to be a mere alien (Paragraph 20). It might also embrace other categories of long-term residents (Id.). The reference to the concept of arbitrariness is intended to emphasise that it applies to all State action, legislative, administrative, and judicial; it guarantees that even interference provided for by law should be in accordance with the provisions, aims and objectives of the ICCPR and should be, in any event,

reasonable in the particular circumstances (Paragraph 21). There are few, if any, circumstances in which deprivation of the right to enter one's own country could be reasonable (Id.).

We would like to emphasise that any restriction to these rights must be compatible with article 12 (3) of the ICCPR, which establishes that restrictions are only acceptable if they are provided by law, are necessary to protect national security, public order (*ordre public*), public health or morals or the rights and freedoms of others, and are consistent with the other rights recognised in the ICCPR. According to the Human Rights Committee's General Comment No. 27 (CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.9), it would be a clear violation of the ICCPR if the rights were restricted by making distinctions of any kind, such as political or other opinion (Paragraph 18).

The right to family life and the rights of children

We would also like to refer to article 10 of the ICESCR, which guarantees the right to family life, including the protection of children. The widest possible protection and assistance should be accorded to the family, which is the natural and fundamental group unit of society, particularly while it is responsible for the care and education of dependent children.

We also refer to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by Belarus on 1 October 1990. Article 2 of the Convention requires the States to respect and ensure the rights of each child without discrimination of any kind, *inter alia*, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's political or other opinion. Article 3 gives the child the right to have his or her best interests assessed and taken into account as a primary consideration in all actions or decisions that concern him or her. Article 18 states that parents have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of the child.

Article 9 requires the States to ensure that a child shall not be separated from his or her parents against their will, except when competent authorities subject to judicial review determine, in accordance with applicable law and procedures, that such separation is necessary for the best interests of the child.

Article 10 states that a child whose parents reside in different States shall have the right to maintain on a regular basis, save in exceptional circumstances, personal relations and direct contacts with both parents. States shall respect the right of the child and his or her parents to leave any country, including their own, and enter their own country. The right to leave any country shall be subject only to such restrictions as are prescribed by law and which are necessary to protect the national security, public order (*ordre public*), public health or morals or the rights and freedoms of others and are consistent with the other rights recognised in the Convention.

As clarified by the Committee on the Rights of the Children in its General Comment No. 14 (CRC/C/GC/14), no right could be compromised by a negative interpretation of the child's best interests. The Committee draws up a non-exhaustive list of elements that could be included in a best-interests assessment by any decision-maker having to determine a child's best interests: (a) the child's views, (b) the child's identity, (c) preservation of the family environment and maintaining relations, (d) care, protection, and safety of the child, (e) situation of vulnerability, (f) the child's right to health, (g) the child's right to education. States must put in place formal

processes, with strict procedural safeguards, designed to assess and determine the child's best interests for decisions affecting the child, including mechanisms for evaluating the results. States must develop transparent and objective processes for all decisions made by legislators, judges, or administrative authorities, especially in areas that directly affect the child or children.

The rights pertaining to searches and seizure, interrogation, detention, administrative and criminal cases

We would like to remind your Excellency's Government of article 17 of the ICCPR, which provides for the rights of individuals to be protected against arbitrary or unlawful interference with their privacy, family, home, and correspondence.

We would also like to refer your Excellency's Government to the absolute and non-derogable prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment, as enshrined in article 7 of the ICCPR and articles 2 and 16 of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, ratified by Belarus on 13 March 1987. In its General Comment No. 20, the Human Rights Committee emphasised that the prohibition in article 7 of the ICCPR relates both to the acts that cause physical pain and those that cause mental suffering to the victim (Paragraph 5).

We would furthermore like to refer to articles 9 and 14 of the ICCPR, which guarantee the right not to be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention, unlawful deprivation of liberty, as well as the right to a fair trial.

In its General Comment No. 35 (CCPR/C/GC/35), the Human Rights Committee has stated that arresting or detaining an individual as punishment for the legitimate exercise of the rights guaranteed by the ICCPR, including freedom of opinion and expression, and freedom of association, is arbitrary (Paragraph 17).

The recent report of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention to the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/45/16) reiterated that the right to legal assistance is one of the key safeguards in preventing the arbitrary deprivation of liberty (Paragraph 50). The right to legal assistance must be ensured from the moment of deprivation of liberty and across all settings of detention, including, inter alia, criminal justice and administrative detention (Paragraph 51). Legal assistance should be available at all stages of criminal proceedings, namely, during pretrial, trial, re-trial and appellate stages, to ensure compliance with fair trial guarantees (Paragraph 53).

We would also like to refer your Excellency's Government to the UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers, adopted by the Eighth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, held in Havana (Cuba) from 27 August to 7 September 1990. Principle 2 requires governments to ensure effective and equal access to lawyers for all persons without distinction of any kind, such as based on political or other opinion. Principle 7 requires the governments to further ensure that all persons arrested or detained, with or without criminal charge, shall have prompt access to a lawyer. Principle 8 requires the governments to provide all arrested, detained, or imprisoned persons with adequate opportunities, time, and facilities to be visited by and to communicate and consult with a lawyer, without delay, interception, or censorship and in full confidentiality.

The rights of human rights defenders

Furthermore, we would like to refer your Excellency's Government to the fundamental principles set forth in the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, adopted on 9 December 1998 (also known as the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders). Articles 1 and 2 of the Declaration state that everyone has the right to promote and to strive for the protection and realisation of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels and that each State has a prime responsibility and duty to protect, promote and implement all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Likewise, we would like to bring to the attention of your Excellency's Government the following provisions of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders:

- Article 5 (b), which provides for the right to form, join and participate in non-governmental organizations, associations or groups for the purpose of promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms;
- Article 6 (a), which provides for the right to know, seek, obtain, receive, and hold information about all human rights and fundamental freedoms;
- Article 6 (b) and (c), which provides for the right to freely publish, impart or disseminate to others views, information and knowledge on all human rights and fundamental freedoms; and to study, discuss, form and hold opinions on the observance, both in law and in practice, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and to draw public attention to those matters;
- Article 9 (1), which establishes that in the exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the promotion and protection of human rights, everyone has the right to benefit from an effective remedy and to be protected in the event of the violation of those rights; and
- Article 12 (2) and (3), which provides that the State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection of everyone against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure, or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of their legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the Declaration. In this connection, everyone is entitled, individually and in association with others, to be protected effectively under national law in reacting against or opposing, through peaceful means, activities, and acts, including those by omission, attributable to States that result in violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and acts of violence perpetrated by groups or individuals that affect the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Both the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council repeatedly urged the States to create and maintain a safe and enabling environment in which human rights defenders can operate free from hindrance, reprisals, and insecurity (e.g., the General Assembly resolutions 74/146 (A/RES/74/146) and 70/161 (A/RES/70/161), and the Human Rights Council resolutions 22/6 (A/HRC/RES/22/6) and 13/13 (A/HRC/RES/13/13)).

They also repeatedly called upon the States to take all measures necessary to ensure the rights and safety of human rights defenders who exercise the rights to freedom of opinion, expression, peaceful assembly, and association (e.g., the General Assembly resolutions 74/146 (A/RES/74/146), 72/247 (A/RES/72/247), 70/161 (A/RES/70/161), 66/164 (A/RES/66/164), and the Human Rights Council resolution 22/6 (A/HRC/RES/22/6)).

They also strongly condemned the violence against and the targeting, criminalisation, intimidation, and torture of human rights defenders and stressed the need to combat impunity by ensuring that those responsible for violations and abuses against human rights defenders, including against their legal representatives, associates and family members, are promptly brought to justice through impartial investigations (e.g., the General Assembly resolutions 72/247 (A/RES/72/247), 70/161 (A/RES/70/161), and the Human Rights Council resolution 31/32 (A/HRC/RES/31/32)).

The General Assembly in resolutions 74/146 (A/RES/74/146), 72/247 (A/RES/72/247) and 70/161 (A/RES/70/161) specifically called upon the States to take concrete steps to prevent and put an end to the arbitrary arrest and detention of human rights defenders.

The need to investigate such violations, eliminate impunity, and as far as possible, to report publicly on investigations and proceedings was further repeatedly emphasised in the General Assembly resolutions 74/146 (A/RES/74/146) and 66/164 (A/RES/66/164), as well as the Human Rights Council resolution 31/32 (A/HRC/RES/31/32) and 13/13 (A/HRC/RES/13/13).

Furthermore, the General Assembly in its resolutions 74/146 (A/RES/74/146), 72/247 (A/RES/72/247), 70/161 (A/RES/70/161) and 68/181 (A/RES/68/181), as well as the Human Rights Council in resolutions 31/32 (A/HRC/RES/31/32) and 22/6 (A/HRC/RES/22/6) expressed their particular concerns about systemic and structural discrimination, violence and harassment faced by women human rights defenders.

Likewise, in the report on the situation of women human rights defenders (A/HRC/40/60), the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders particularly noted the targeting of family members and loved ones of women defenders – in particular, their children, partners, relatives, and close friends (Paragraph 41).