



DEFENDDEFENDERS

East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project

UN Human Rights Council – 54th regular session

Item 2: General debate on the oral update by the High Commissioner

Oral statement

Delivered by: Estella Kabachwezi

Mr. President, Mr. High Commissioner,

We thank you for your update. Once again, we highlight the importance of the work of your Office on civic space. While we would welcome a substantial enhancement of the capacity of your Office to work on economic, social and cultural rights, we stress that this should come with an enhancement of both OHCHR country presences and OHCHR's civic space-related work.

As the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) celebrates its 75th anniversary, the UN Declaration on human rights defenders (HRDs) its 25th, and your Office its 30th, we highlight the value of these instruments and your Office for HRDs across Africa. DefendDefenders will dedicate its next report to the impact of the UDHR and HRD Declaration on HRDs in Africa.

Mr. President,

We are concerned about unconstitutional changes of government in Africa. In just a month, coups have affected Niger and Gabon. These follow coups in West Africa. While we condemn military coups, which are never an adequate answer to people's frustrations and anger, we stress that civic space, including people's freedom to associate, demonstrate, and express criticism of incumbent governments, is key to building better, fairer societies in which governments are accountable and can change peacefully.

Last, we reiterate our concerns over [Kenya](#). We condemn actions of security agencies during the Saba Saba nationwide demonstrations as well as demonstrations against the high cost of living. We call upon the Kenyan government to uphold its constitutional and international obligations to protect the right to protest, and upon all those who seek to exercise fundamental freedoms to do so lawfully and peacefully.

Thank you.