



DEFENDDEFENDERS

East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project

UN Human Rights Council – 56th regular session

Item 2: Interactive dialogue on the High Commissioner’s annual report

Oral statement

Delivered by: Estella Kabachwezi

Mr. President, Mr. High Commissioner,

We share your concerns about democratic backsliding, attacks on civic space and human rights defenders (HRDs), and attempts to undermine the rules-based multilateral order. We call on states to follow a principled approach that prioritises human rights, addressing all situations of violations based on their merits and objective criteria.

In a new report¹, we comprehensively analyse Africa-focused resolutions adopted since the Council’s creation, in 2006, namely from its 1st to its 55th session. [“Is the Tide Turning?”](#) covers 176 resolutions addressing African countries (28 resolutions adopted by vote and 148 resolutions adopted by consensus). Findings point to geopolitical divisions and disparities between regional groups’ voting record. Beyond sterile accusations of “bias” or narratives of double standards, the situation the Council has reached, with more and more resolutions being put to a vote (including those establishing or extending vital independent mechanisms), does not benefit victims and survivors of violations.

Mr. President, Mr. High Commissioner,

We flag as deserving priority attention:

- Armed conflicts in Africa and their impact on HRDs and civic space; and
- Identification of early warning signs and patterns of violations, in line with HRC [resolution 45/31](#), especially ahead of elections.

Finally, Mr. President, we reiterate the concerns we repeatedly expressed in this room, about human rights violations and abuses committed in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Egypt, Ethiopia, Eswatini, Mali, and Zimbabwe, among others. These situations deserve more attention by UN and African human rights bodies and mechanisms and by the High Commissioner’s Office.

Thank you for your attention.

¹ DefendDefenders, “Is the Tide Turning? How states vote on Africa-focused resolutions at the UN Human Rights Council,” 14 June 2024, <https://defenddefenders.org/is-the-tide-turning/>