

September 30, 2020

## STATEMENT

### **45th session of the Human Rights Council Item 5**

#### **Interactive Dialogue on the Secretary General's report on cooperation with the United Nations its mechanisms and representatives in the field of human rights**

Madame President,  
Madame Assistant Secretary General,

GANHRI thanks the Secretary General for his annual report on cooperation with the United Nations and welcomes the opportunity to engage in today's interactive dialogue with the Assistant Secretary General.

We are deeply concerned about reprisals against those who engage or seek to engage with UN bodies and mechanisms.

The UN relies on information from the ground so it can be more effective in addressing human rights situations at the national and local levels.

We must ensure that channels for cooperation with and participation in UN fora and mechanisms remain open and effective. This is all the more important during the COVID-19 global health emergency.

We recall Council resolution [42/28](#) and its call on all States to combat impunity and to report back to this Council on steps undertaken to prevent reprisals, and strengthen accountability.

We acknowledge the specific risks to individuals in vulnerable situations or belonging to groups and welcome the UN's efforts in implementing gender-responsive policies to end reprisals.

NHRIs too have been subject to reprisals or other acts of intimidation as a result of the mandated work they are undertaking, including in cooperation with the United Nations.

NHRIs are established by the State to assist the State.

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Through their mandate, and drawing on the expertise within the institution, they are able to provide independent advice to support States meet their human rights obligations.

NHRIs can only be effective when their independence is supported and fully respected by States.

GANHRI is deeply concerned by ongoing threats our members institutions across all regions are currently facing some of which are documented in the ASG's report.

In Guatemala, the NHRI and Ombudsperson Jordan Rodas have been subject to ongoing reprisals since 2017, with attempts to remove the Ombudsperson which constitutes a threat for its independent work.

In Georgia, the NHRI has faced deliberate attacks from high-ranking Government officials, especially in relation to its mandated activities as the designated National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) under UN OPCAT and national law. This negatively affects and undermines the effective operation of the office, as the target of the attack is not only the Public Defender but also the staff and the whole institution.

Lack of awareness or appreciation, or outright refusal from States to acknowledge the fundamental mandate of NHRIs can set a dangerous precedent for misinformation on human rights work and engagement with international human rights mechanisms.

Against these alarming developments, the United Nations General Assembly and the Human Rights Council have called upon States to promptly and thoroughly investigate cases of alleged reprisal or intimidation against NHRI members or staff, or indeed against individuals who cooperate or seek to cooperate with them, and to bring perpetrators to justice.

GANHRI will always act to protect the independence of our NHRIs facing threats or reprisals for undertaking their work according to their mandate, and we thank our partners from OHCHR and UNDP, civil society and member states for their continued support.

We pay tribute to our colleagues Fatima Khalil and Ahmed Jawid Folad from the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, who were killed by an explosive device while on their way to the Commission's office in Kabul, on 27 June. We renew our call for an independent and comprehensive investigation into the killings.

Thank you, Madame President