

Growing number of rights defenders facing reprisals for cooperating with UN

20 September 2017 – A growing number of human rights defenders around the world are facing reprisals and intimidation for cooperating with the United Nations, ranging from travel bans and the freezing of assets to detention and torture, says a new report issued by the world body.

“It is frankly nothing short of abhorrent that, year after year, we are compelled to present cases of intimidation and reprisals carried out against people whose crime – in the eyes of their governments – was to cooperate with UN institutions and mechanisms,” said Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights Andrew Gilmour.

“We should see these individuals as the canary in the coalmine, bravely singing until they are silenced by this toxic backlash against people, rights and dignity – as a dark warning to us all,” Mr. Gilmour told the Human Rights Council in Geneva, as he presented the Secretary-General’s report.

The report, the eighth of its kind, names 29 countries where cases of reprisal and intimidation have been documented; this is higher than the previous highest number of 20. Eleven of the States are current members of the Human Rights Council, a [news release](#) pointed out. Some have featured in the annual report on reprisals nearly every year since it was instituted in 2010.

“People engaging with the United Nations experienced intimidation, harassment, threats online and offline, derogatory media campaigns, travel bans, arbitrary arrests and detention, enforced disappearances, torture and ill-treatment, disbarment, and dismissal from their posts, amongst other measures,” the report says.

“Beyond the grave impact on the life of persons concerned and their relatives, intimidation and reprisals also systematically undermine United Nations action on human rights and shake partners’ trust in the Organization,” it adds.

Mr. Gilmour told the Council that the problem was much more widespread than presented in the report.

“Since this report is limited to reprisals against people cooperating with the UN, the cases covered in it represent only a small portion of a far more generalized backlash against civil society and others challenging State authorities, especially human rights defenders,” he noted.

The report urges all States to stop reprisals, investigate existing allegations, provide effective remedies and adopt and implement measures to

prevent recurrence.