

Human Rights Council – 34th session

Item 3: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association



Thank you Mr. President,

Action Canada makes this statement in collaboration with the Sexual Rights Initiative.

As the Special Rapporteur's report states, the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association are essential components of democracy.

The report highlights the contributions of civil society in strengthening and promoting human rights, as well as the achievements made.

However, it presents an incomplete analysis of a deeper phenomenon currently occurring in all regions of the world in which States are effectively blocking civil society from being able to play its role in society and in many cases condoning reprisals against those seeking accountability for violations of human rights.

There can be no doubt that civil society is under immense pressure. Some governments are using legal and illegal tactics to shrink its space. They target organizations that work on contested issues, mainly related to groups that are vulnerable, including those that work on issues related to defending gender and sexuality, protecting and promoting the human rights of women, adolescents, and LGBTI persons amongst others.

Many governments are attempting and succeeding in closing space for civil society to operate through a broad range of strategies such as prohibitions, refusals and delays to registrations, restrictions on their activities, using anti-propaganda language and protection of minors laws, arrests and detentions during protests and restrictions on the ability of CSOs to access to resources.

As the Special Rapporteur recognizes, with closing spaces for Civil Society, state and non-State actors around the world today are attempting to destroy the hope that brings action and consequent change that every society needs to fully enjoy human rights.

We call upon States, as a matter of priority, to ensure that their domestic legislation and policies are consistent with their international human rights obligations and commitments in relation to rights to freedom of peaceful assembly, expression and opinion, to pay particular attention to the safety and protection of women and LGBTI persons and human rights defenders from acts of intimidation, harassment and arbitrary detentions in the context of peaceful protests and to ensure accountability in their obligations related to this matter.

Thank you,