

29th Session of the Human Rights Council,

Item 4 – General debate

24th June, 2015

Statement of the Czech Republic

Thank you, Mr. President.

The Czech Republic aligns itself with the statement of the EU.

For many people on the ground human rights remain but a distant glimpse of hope in their suffering.

While appreciating expressions of willingness of the Government of China to discuss human rights issues, we remain concerned about the silencing of dissenting voices in China, as witnessed by the charges brought recently against Mr. Pu Zhiqiang and Ms. Qu Zhenhong. In Azerbaijan, the persecution of dissenters continues unabated as shows the recent sentencing of human rights activists Mr. Aliyev and Mr. Jafarov. In Venezuela, opposition leaders Mr. López, Mr. Ceballos, Mr. Ledezma and others remain arbitrarily detained for the peaceful exercise of their rights. We also closely follow the situation in Bahrain and believe that it will be solved peacefully and within democratic framework. The Czech Republic joins the UN human rights mechanisms and the High Commissioner in their call on the authorities of China, Azerbaijan, Venezuela and Bahrain to release all those detained for exercising their rights or defending the rights of others.

We condemn the sharp increase in executions in Iran, in many instances unreported by official sources, in several cases taking place in public and frequently carried out for charges which do not meet the threshold of the “most serious crimes” and do not exclude juvenile offenders. We are concerned over the ongoing freedom of association restrictions faced by human rights organizations in Egypt and the mass death sentences issued by Egyptian courts often without safeguards of fair trial and in trials before military courts. We call on Egypt to respect international fair trial standards. The culture of impunity which has flourished in Syria is alarming: ISIS brutal executions including of men accused of homosexuality and women accused of “adultery”; torture and no medical treatment in Government detention facilities.

In Russia, we regret that the so-called “undesirable” foreign and international organizations bill has been signed into law – yet another measure stifling civil society. The state-driven propaganda continues to plague the media space in Russia. We are also worried about the grave situation in the illegally annexed Crimea, including the sentencing and alleged torture of Mr. Kostenko. The escalation of the conflict in the east of Ukraine by the pro-Russian armed groups openly backed by the Russian Federation must stop. All parties must honour the February peace agreement.

Finally, we remain alarmed by the human rights violations in the DPRK, in Eritrea and in Belarus. The last two country situations were addressed earlier through our statements in separate dialogues.

Thank you.