

28th Session of the UN Human Rights Council

Item 4 – General Debate, 17th March 2015

Statement by the Czech Republic

Thank you, Mr. President. We support the statement delivered on behalf of the EU.

In the national statement, the Czech Republic would like to focus on the shrinking space for civil society and on human rights in the conflict areas.

While appreciating expressions of willingness of the Government of **China** to discuss human rights issues, we remain concerned about continued detentions and sentencing of peaceful human rights defenders and independent activists, including, *inter alia*, the Nobel Peace Prize laureate Liu Xiaobo. There can be no sustainable development without an independent civil society and respect for human rights, including the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly. Persons detained for the peaceful exercise of their rights must be released without delay.

In **Azerbaijan** we are concerned about the harassing, arresting and sentencing of human rights defenders, journalists and peaceful political activists, and about the deteriorating environment for independent media and civil society.

We are worried about further measures adopted and prepared in **Russia** attempting to exert an undue state control over citizens' participation in public affairs, including online and through social media.

Further, we follow with concern the deterioration of the human rights situation in the illegally annexed **Crimea** and **Russia's** fuelling of the conflict in the east of **Ukraine** with grave human rights ramifications for civilians. All parties must honour the Minsk agreements and investigate allegations of human rights abuses and violations.

We are concerned about the increasing lawlessness in armed conflicts linked to the growing threat of violent extremism. Of concern are recent kidnappings in **Libya**. We condemn all the attacks launched by extremists, targeting people on religious, ethnic, national, racial or political grounds such as those of **Boko Haram** in Nigeria and neighbouring countries. We particularly condemn abductions of children, violence against them and use of child soldiers. Perpetrators of the cold-blooded murder of 140 people – including 132 children – by Pakistani **Taliban** in Peshawar must be held accountable. We strongly condemn the **ISIS** training camps for child soldiers under the guise of education, selling girls into sexual slavery; children as victims, perpetrators and witnesses of **ISIS** executions.

We also deplore human rights violations in the **DPRK, Syria, Eritrea, Iran** and **Myanmar/ Burma** the Council addressed in separate dialogues.

Thank you.