

This is a joint statement. We thank the High Commissioner and the HRC President for their leadership in convening this briefing. We hope this will be the first opportunity of many – to share good practices, address violations and provide a forum for discussion. This is a much-needed regular activity for the Council while the formal session is suspended.

We call on the **HRC Presidency** to continue examining possibilities to ensure that the Council is able to discharge its duties despite the crisis, including addressing violations. We urge you, Madam President, to ensure that civil society participation is not restricted and to meaningfully consult with civil society on participation modalities.

The **Council** should convene a special session on the impacts of COVID-19 on human rights, once feasible. The Council should reaffirm human rights as central to States' responses to the crisis including by providing leadership and sending a clear message: this is not the time for business as usual, there should be a zero-tolerance policy for gross and systematic violations and any abuse of the current crisis to crackdown on human rights.

The crisis needs a multi-faceted response by the OHCHR and the HRC's mechanisms. The **Special Procedures** should continue to work together to provide clear guidance to States, respond to violations, and address the impacts of COVID-19 in their upcoming reports in a coordinated manner.

Certain **groups** are more vulnerable, more at risk, and are more acutely experiencing the impact of both COVID-19 and emergency measures taken by governments. For example, measures taken increase women and girls' vulnerability to violence, exacerbate the feminisation of poverty, and put further pressure on women and girls in their caretaking roles.

We welcome the focus by the High Commissioner and [Special Procedures](#) regarding **marginalized groups and populations** and urge them to continue issuing guidance and recommendations highlighting the specific impacts and necessary action. This is critical to ensure that no one is left behind.

As the UN works out how its mechanisms can operate virtually, new and increased risks of **reprisals** could emerge. Relevant mechanisms, including the HRC, must remain vigilant about attempts to intimidate and attack those who engage and must respond.

Human rights must be central to the UN's response across the board. The crisis makes the implementation of the UN Secretary General's Call to Action even more urgent. **The SG** should push for the immediate release of human rights defenders, journalists and indeed anyone arbitrarily deprived of liberty or disappeared for exercising their human rights.