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Agenda item 4

Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Written statement* submitted by Indigenous People of Africa Coordinating Committee, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[30 January 2023]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



Travel Bans On Human Rights Defenders from India

The purpose of travel bans is often to prevent HRDs from attending international conferences and events and thus speak about the human rights situation in their home country. In many cases, travel bans are imposed without following any legal procedure and HRDs are simply stopped at airports and prevented from leaving. Our organization wants to bring council attention towards India under agenda Item 4 where arbitrary travel bans have increasingly become the principal tactics of the Indian authorities to silence independent and critical voices. On 18 October 2022, photojournalist, Sanna Irshad Mattoo was stopped from travelling abroad by immigration authorities at the Delhi airport. She wanted to attend the 2022 Pulitzer Prize ceremony in New York. It was the second time this year that she was denied traveling outside India. On 6 April 2022, Aakar Patel, a former head of Amnesty International India, was stopped by Indian authorities from flying to the United States of America at the Bengaluru airport when he was on his way to attend multiple conferences in the United States of America.

These arbitrary executive actions against the above mentioned journalists and human rights activists are not backed by any court order, warrant or even a written explanation, making it difficult for the activists and journalists to challenge these in the courts. This has led to the authorities routinely using travel bans as a preferred tool in the wider crackdown on HRDs. In particular in 2022, the Indian authorities have increased the use of travel bans against journalists and human rights defenders who are critics of Indian government. The Indian authorities openly enforcing arbitrary travel bans and failed to protect human rights obligations by respecting, protecting, promoting and fulfilling the human rights including to freedom of expression and movement. This incessant witch-hunt is contrary to India's international human rights obligations and reflects poorly on its record. These bans – both judicial and non-judicial – are simply another facet of the pattern of repression, a tactics used by the authorities to suppress independent, critical voices inside and outside the country. We urge this council to ask Indian government must end arbitrary travel bans on journalists and activists and ensure protection of their human rights.
