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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Joint written statement* submitted by Institute for Human Rights, Institute for Reporters' Freedom and Safety, non- governmental organizations 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.

[12 August 2024]

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



Urgent Call for Action: Addressing Human Rights Violations Ahead of the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP29)

As the UNFCCC Climate Change Conference COP29 is set to be held in Azerbaijan in November 2024, Institute for Human Rights and co-sponsoring NGOs regretfully acknowledge the deteriorating human rights situation in the host country.

The Institute for Human Rights and co-sponsoring NGOs condemn the deliberate persecution of civil society activists, which undermines the rights to freedom of expression, association, and assembly. These limitations pose a significant threat to achieving inclusive and meaningful climate discussions, as they hinder the participation of diverse voices and stifle the essential contributions of civil society to the global climate agenda.

The UN Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the Context of Climate Change, in her scene-setting Report A/HRC/56/46, emphasized that states have obligations, both individually and through international cooperation, to respect human rights in the development and implementation of international climate change law.

The UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association recalled that: “Countries with serious limitations of human rights and freedom of assembly and association cannot continue to be chosen as venues and hosts of conferences associated with UN Human Rights Treaties.”

The UN Special Rapporteur on Environmental Defenders under the Aarhus Convention highlighted that, as a member of the Aarhus Convention, Azerbaijan must respect all its obligations, including Article 3.8, which provides for the protection of environmental defenders.

The European Parliament, in its resolution of 25 April 2024, adopted in procedure 2024/2698, recalled that there are 300 political prisoners in Azerbaijan.

Additionally, Azerbaijan ranks 164th out of 180 countries in the 2024 Press Freedom Index, published by Reporters Without Borders. This low ranking reflects the severe restrictions on journalistic freedom and the widespread repression faced by independent media in the country. Journalists and media outlets that attempt to report on sensitive issues, including human rights abuses and environmental challenges, are often subjected to censorship, harassment, and even imprisonment. This oppressive environment significantly hampers the free flow of information, stifling public discourse and undermining the principles of transparency and accountability that are essential for effective governance and meaningful climate action.

Admitting that human rights are central to the discussion on climate change, Institute for Human Rights and co-sponsoring NGOs assert that the current environment in Azerbaijan is incompatible with the principles of openness, transparency, and inclusivity that are essential for effective climate negotiations. The suppression of independent voices and the lack of free expression compromise the integrity of the COP29 process and undermine the potential for achieving just and equitable outcomes.

The organizations call on the Human Rights Council to take immediate and decisive action to address continuous human rights violations in Azerbaijan. We urge the Council to utilize its influence to facilitate the release of political prisoners in Azerbaijan, ensure freedom of the press, and protect the rights of civil society activists. By actively monitoring and responding to these abuses, the Human Rights Council can uphold its mandate to promote and protect human rights globally and send a clear message that violations will not be tolerated.

It is imperative that the Council works collaboratively with international partners to ensure accountability and foster an environment where all individuals can exercise their rights without fear of persecution.

Climate Observers Partnership Human Rights Club Media Monitoring Institute NGO(s) without consultative status, also share the views expressed in this statement.