

UN: Human Rights Violations Rampant in Many Countries | Africa | English

Lisa Schlein | Geneva 04 March 2010

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay says too many countries continue to abuse the rights of their people. In her annual report to the UN Human Rights Council, the High Commissioner presents a snapshot of the violations rampant throughout the world.

UN High Commissioner, Navi Pillay, says discrimination, in particular racism and intolerance, are at the root of many of the abuses and injustices experienced by indigenous groups and ethnic minorities around the world.

She says many people are excluded from the benefits of their societies and denied their rights on the basis of their sex, disability or religion.

She says the list of abusive countries is extensive. They include Afghanistan, Bolivia, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Nepal and Sierra Leone.

She says she is disappointed that the Sri Lankan government has made no headway in reconciling the majority Sinhalese and minority Tamil communities since the country's long civil war ended last year.

"In Sri Lanka, I welcome the progress made in returning displaced persons and hope the review and release of security detainees can similarly be expedited," Pillay said. "But, the opportunity for peace and reconciliation continues to be marred by the treatment of journalists, human rights defenders and other critics of the Government."

Pillay calls on the Sri Lankan government to undertake an international investigation of the grave violations of human rights committed by all sides during the war.

The High Commissioner also expresses her deep concern about the deteriorating human rights situation in Iran.

"There has been a violent crackdown on dissent, including the arbitrary arrest of demonstrators, human rights activists, journalists and prominent political figures," Pillay said. "Many have been given harsh sentences, including capital punishment, for their role in post-election protests after questionable trials."

Skipping quickly over the records of other countries, she condemns the wave of executions in Sudan and the killing by Egyptian security forces of unarmed migrants from sub-Saharan Africa trying to cross into Israel.

But, she praises the International Commission of Inquiry conducted by the United Nations, the African Union, and the Economic Community of West-African States into the deadly violence that erupted in Guinea last September.

Pillay also has harsh words regarding the actions of developed countries. She accuses the European Union and some European countries of discrimination against migrants and minorities, such as the Roma or Gypsies.

"Roma in many European countries continue to face open racism and racially motivated attacks from non-state actors... Reports over the past year of a spate of attacks on Indian residents in Australia are also disturbing," Pillay said.

The UN's top human rights official voices concern regarding murderous attacks against human rights defenders in Russia and says she is dismayed that none of the assailants have been brought to justice.

Pillay welcomed the U.S. decision to close the detention facility in Guantanamo Bay and calls for a thorough investigation into allegations of torture at Guantanamo and the detention center of Bagram in Afghanistan.