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The FoAA Chronicle

Vol. 4 – September 2022

Newsletter of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association

Voile on Civic Space at the Council of Europe



On 13 September UNSR Voile was invited to give an opening address at the **International Round Table** at the **Council of Europe** in Strasbourg.

The UNSR spoke of the alarming trend of increasing restrictions to civil society organization's access to funding and the impact it has on the existence of the NGOs concerned, the societies they serve, and ultimately on society as a whole.

Watch highlights of his address here [📺](#)

The mandate's News in brief



UNSR Voule at the Warsaw Human Dimension Conference

On **28 September** UNSR Voule participated at the OSCE **Warsaw Human Dimension Conference**, organized by the OSCE Polish Chairmanship-in-Office and ODIHR.

The UNSR attended as one of the international speakers during the panel at the plenary session dedicated to discussing the freedom of assembly and association in the OSCE region.

On the occasion the UNSR stressed the importance of respecting and protecting **freedom of peaceful assembly and of association for enhancing peace and security in the region**, insisting also on its importance for the **preservation of our democracies**.

He raised his concern on **the global trend of the suppression of fundamental freedoms**, including in the advanced democracies such as the OSCE region, noting **the need for people's voices to be heard, especially in times of crises**.

The UNSR also spoke at the **side event** organised by ODIHR, dedicated to **"Ensuring and monitoring the right to freedom of peaceful assembly during and in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic"**. The UNSR discussed the impact of COVID-19 measures on the right to freedom of assembly and stressed the need for States to involve civil society in crisis responses and crisis restoration.

[Joint Declaration](#)

SPYWARE: A THREAT TO HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY



The UNSR on FoAA rights in the digital sphere

On **29 September** UNSR Voule attended, at the invitation of the Government of Catalonia and Access Now, the UNHRC side-event titled **"Spyware: A threat to Human Rights and Democracy"**.

Voule on this occasion reiterated the significant contributions that digital technologies have had on opening new opportunities for civil society to associate, but that they have also been **used by authorities as a tool to restrict these fundamental right**, as previously outlined in his report on FoAA rights in the digital age.

The UNSR raised concern about States' use of (surveillance) technology to silence, surveil and harass those with dissenting views and those who express them, including civil society leaders, human rights defenders and journalists, specifically those used en mass, which cannot be considered proportionate and should be prohibited.

UNSR Voule ended by calling for **urgent actions to address the spread of spyware, suggesting the creation of a general framework so that these technologies are reined in by effective regulation based on international human rights law**.

[Read the report](#)



Voule at Equitalks on Human Rights education

On **5 October** Voule participated at the **Equitalks** event titled “**Bridging our Diversities through Human Rights Education**”, organized by Equitas, the Permanent Mission of Canada to the UN in Geneva and OHCHR, where he discussed the role of **human rights education to strengthen civil society**.

Voule noted the importance of human rights education in establishing a **human rights culture where human rights are respected**, hence **empowering people** to exercise their rights and to participate in public life; as well as **strengthening the respect and protection of civil society**. He also stressed the key role civil society plays in human rights education, contributing at grassroots and national level to raising awareness of human rights through education programmes. The UNSR noted that **human rights education** in turn is also vital for creating civic space and **for creating a safer and enabling environment for civil society to operate in**.

At the same time he **highlighted the contributions of Special Procedures in advancing human rights education**, noting in particular his UNHRC commissioned mission for the **development of tools for the training of law enforcement personnel** in protecting peaceful protests, in response to his **UNHRC report** on the protection of **Protest Rights in the context of crises**.

[Read the report](#)



Human Rights in Iran - Violent Crackdown on Women and Protesters

On **5 October** at the HRC51 side-event, organized by **Impact Iran**, Voule expressed deep concern regarding the repression of the ongoing women led peaceful protests in Iran. He called on the Iranian authorities to **deescalate tensions by listening to the protesters' demands**, rather than oppressing them through the excessive use of lethal force and other tactics that infringe on fundamental human rights.

He equally raised deep concern regarding the **ongoing impunity for serious violations in the context of assemblies** in Iran, reiterating his demands and those of the UNHRC to **establish an international independent investigative and accountability mechanism to collect, consolidate, preserve, and analyze evidence** of the most serious crimes under international law committed in Iran in the context of the recent mass protests.

[Watch the full event](#)

The UNSR on workers and unions for climate justice

On **8 October** the UNSR traveled to Brussels for the 3 day **Global ILAW Network Conference**, which focused on the rights of workers and unions to shape a just transition to generate decent work while preventing a climate disaster.

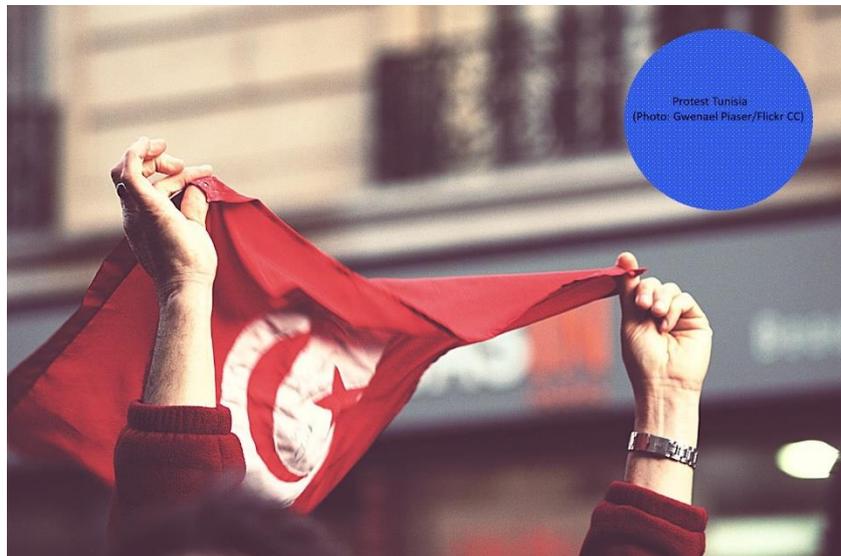


Voile stressed the **vital role of civil society**, in particular trade union and workers' organizations, **in advancing climate justice**. He raised concern about the **stigmatization** towards those working for meaningful climate action, noting also the **near systematic exclusion of workers and unions from climate policy discussion**, which he labeled as particularly counterproductive as they are often directly impacted by the adverse effects of climate change, **putting them in a unique position to help countries mitigate, adapt and transform from the devastating socioeconomic development effects caused by the climate crisis**.

The UNSR called for the ability of **individuals to mobilize, organize and connect and to contribute to shaping public opinion and decision-making**, if we want to achieve effective climate action and just transitions. In his address, he also referred to his **report on Climate Justice**, which was presented at the UNGA in 2021

[Read the report on Civic space & Climate Justice](#)

Country News

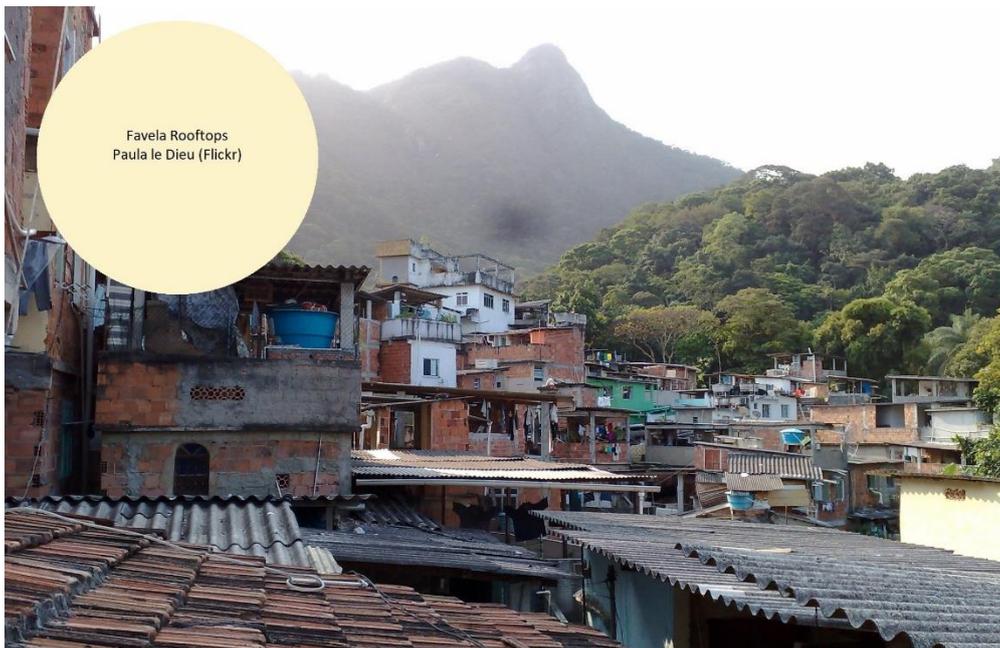


Authorities must avoid using exceptional measures and respect & protect the independence of the judiciary and the rights to peaceful assembly and association

Tunisia: Judges' right to association and protest must be respected

I Press Release | GENEVA (14 September 2022) – Diego García-Sayán, the Special Rapporteur on Independence of Judges and Lawyers, and Clément Nyaletossi Voule, Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association, expressed grave concern over the excessive restrictions on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association of judges peacefully protesting recent Presidential decrees in Tunisia.

[Read the full press release](#)



Authorities and candidates must ensure election-related violence is prevented and guarantee peaceful and representative elections

Brazil: UN experts call for peaceful elections

I Press Release | Geneva (22 September 22) – UN experts urged authorities, candidates and political parties in Brazil to ensure upcoming general elections are peaceful and election-related violence is prevented.

[Read the Press Release](#)

[Em português](#)



Government must heed the legitimate demands of #women to respect their most fundamental human rights

Iran: UN experts demand accountability for death of Mahsa Amini, and call for end to violence against women

| Press Release | Geneva (22 September 2022) – UN experts strongly condemned the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini, who died in police custody after her arrest for allegedly failing to comply with Iran’s strict rules on women’s dress by wearing an “improper hijab”.

[Read the full Press Release](#)



Serious concerns about continued participation of Armed Forces in security tasks

Mexico: UNSR Voule asks to reverse legislative reforms

| Letter | - In a communication sent to Mexican authorities, independent experts called to take the necessary measures to reverse the legislative reforms regarding the National Guard. They called on authorities NOT to approve the constitutional reform that aims to extend the participation of the Armed Forces in security tasks.

[Read the OL in Spanish](#)

Resources

FoAA rights in emergencies

In the face of ongoing threats to democracy & growing emergencies worldwide, UN & Regional mechanisms issued a [#JointStatement](#) urging States to respect & protect our essential right to p assembly in emergency situations.

[Read it here](#)

JOINT DECLARATION INTERNATIONAL DEMOCRACY DAY

15 September 2022



Key recommendations:

[Read Declaration](#)



End stigmatization of assemblies

- Change the rhetoric
- Stop labeling peaceful assemblies as a threat
- Stop smear campaigns against activists



Enable and protect assemblies in emergencies

- Stop militarization of policing assemblies
- Stop misuse of emergency measures
- Train law enforcement on de-escalation techniques



Ensure accountability

- Ensure prompt & impartial investigations
- Hold all responsible accountable
- Prioritise accountability of those with command responsibility
- Provide effective remedies & reparations

Up Next

Protecting the Right to Protest in Africa at the 10th anniversary of the Addis Ababa Roadmap

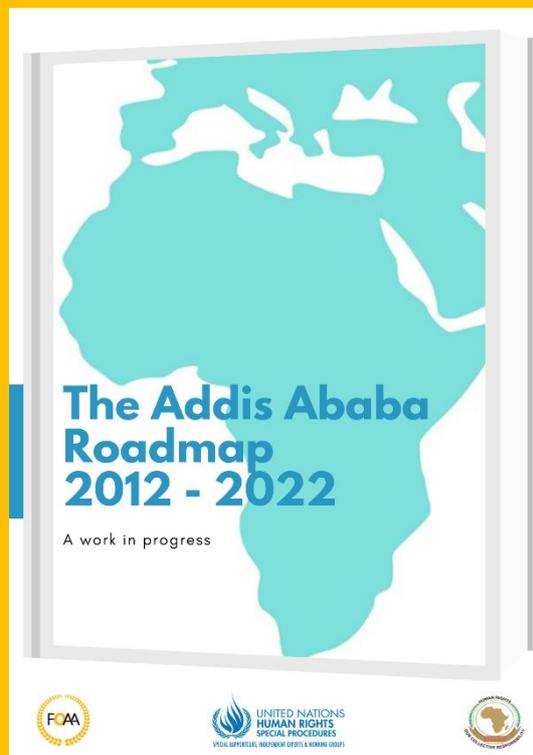
To mark the 10th anniversary of the **Addis Ababa Roadmap** in 2022, the UNSR will travel with other mandate-holders to **Banjul** (Gambia) to engage with the **African Commission** on human and peoples' rights (ACHPR) during its 73rd session in October.

They will take stock of the 10 years since the Addis Ababa Roadmap was launched. It will also be a moment to look ahead and set the strategic steps for the Roadmap for the years to come.

On the side-lines of the ACHPR 73rd Ordinary Session, the UNSR organises, in partnership with **Amnesty International**, the **Centre for Human Rights** and the **University of Pretoria**, an event on **Protecting The Right To Protest in Africa**.

Follow us on twitter [@cvoule](https://twitter.com/cvoule) or on our [website](https://www.unhcr.org/uk/about-us/our-work/our-approach/our-approach-to-work) for updates on the Roadmap anniversary.

[Register here for the event](#)



Voule at the UN General Assembly in New York this October

On 28 October 2022, the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, Clément N. Voule, will present to the UN General Assembly at its 77th session his thematic report dedicated to social movements and their essential role in building back better.

The report explores the **important impact of social movements in achieving progress towards more equal and sustainable societies**, and how threats and attacks to freedoms of peaceful assembly and association affect them.

You can view the report here: [A/77/171](https://www.unhcr.org/uk/about-us/our-work/our-approach/our-approach-to-work)



The Special Rapporteur will organise a series of events with States and civil society in New York, following the presentation of his report to discuss how the international community can better protect and sustain social movements.

Follow us on [Twitter](#) for the latest news on the events.

[Read the report in all UN languages here](#)

Voile at the Geneva Peace Week in November



On **3 November**, as part of the Geneva Peace Week, the UNSR together with the **Quaker United Nations Office** is co-organising a virtual workshop to discuss "**Intersectional approaches to prevention: Protecting the right to protest in conflict and crisis**"

The workshop aims at bringing together practitioners and experts from the peace-building and human rights community to **discuss best practices and recommendations to strengthen protection of peaceful assemblies in contexts affected by armed conflict.**

Civil society and experts working in conflict prevention and in conflicted-affected areas are encouraged to sign up.

[Register here by 28 October](#)

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