

**NATIONS UNIES**  
**HAUT COMMISSARIAT AUX DROITS DE L'HOMME**



**UNITED NATIONS**  
**HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS**

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REFERENCE:

5 July 2007

Dear Mr. Levy,

Thank you for your letter dated 12 June 2007 and for sharing your views about the Human Rights Council.

As you are aware, the Human Rights Council as an institution is, in its very composition, a political body made up of its Member States, and its decisions and actions are the result of negotiations among those members. The Office of the High Commissioner provides secretariat support to the Council, but does not in any way determine the Council's decisions, resolutions, recommendations and actions.

No-one can deny that the human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territory is a serious one and warrants close international attention, but I recognize that the specific, explicit itemization of one situation is selective. Nevertheless, the Human Rights Council, while new, is rapidly evolving. In particular, as compared to the now defunct Commission on Human Rights, its consideration of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory now applies to all violations, by whichever party they are committed. Further, the new working methods adopted by the Council this month do permit consideration of other country situations; with the Council meeting with increasing regularity, it is entirely legitimate to expect that it will consider a range of pressing human rights situations, both thematic and country-specific. Thirdly, and most significantly, the new Universal Periodic Review process will bring 48 countries per year under scrutiny on an equal basis, with new possibilities for follow-up discussion and action. This will have a far-reaching impact on the dynamics of the Council, including with respect to the issue of Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory. In this regard, I also attach for your information the Secretary-General's recent statement on the work of the Human Rights Council.

Thank you again for sharing your views with me on these important matters.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Louise Arbour'.

Louise Arbour  
High Commissioner for Human Rights

Mr. Ronald H. Levy  
Second Vice-President, Lord Reading Law Society  
Montreal, Canada  
Fax: (514) 878-5751

20 June 2007



United Nations

# Secretary-General

## SG/SM/11053

### HRC/8

Department of Public Information • News and Media Division • New York

#### SECRETARY-GENERAL URGES HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITIES SERIOUSLY

#### STRESSES IMPORTANCE OF CONSIDERING ALL VIOLATIONS EQUALLY

The following statement was issued today by the Spokesperson for UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon:

The Secretary-General notes that the Human Rights Council has now completed the first phase of its institution-building work. The members of the Human Rights Council were charged with a great responsibility during this session.

The Secretary-General notes that the members of the Council worked hard to reach consensus on a number of issues.

The establishment of the modalities for a strong and meaningful Universal Periodic Review is to be welcomed. It sends a clear message that all countries will have their human rights record and performance examined at regular intervals, starting with members of the Human Rights Council. No country, big or small, will be immune from scrutiny. Civil society and non-governmental organizations will need to play an active part in this process.

The periodic review holds great promise for opening a new chapter in human rights promotion and underscores the universality of human rights.

The Secretary-General is disappointed at the Council's decision to single out only one specific regional item, given the range and scope of allegations of human rights violations throughout the world.

As regards the removal of mandates relating to two Member States, he wishes to emphasize the need to consider all situations of possible human rights violations equally and he notes that not having a Special Rapporteur assigned to a particular country does not absolve that country from its obligations under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and every other human rights treaty.

The Secretary-General trusts that members of the Council will take seriously their responsibilities and continue to seek out ways to improve the Council's work in the months and years ahead.

The pursuit of human rights for every citizen of the world lies at the heart of the mission of the United Nations.

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