



**31th session of the
Human Rights Council**

Item 5

**UNSRs annual report by CC chair
16 March 2016
Delivered by Renate Bloem**

Thank you, Mr. President,

CIVICUS thanks the OHCHR for this very thorough and comprehensive report on Special Procedures and also laud the Council for providing time to discuss it. We equally welcome the Chair of the Coordinating Committee for his delivery. With its new transparent annexes it provides an overview of a COUNCIL mechanism which is truly the ‘Crown Jewel of the system’. Mandate holders’ independence and expertise and access to the ground help the Council to better fulfil its mandate in relation to its founding resolution A/60/251 “to address situations of violations of human rights, including gross and systematic violations...”

Mandate holders, be they thematic or country specific, are there to help governments through dialogue and recommendations to better understand their obligations and commitments taken with regard to uphold universal human rights standards. Mandate holders are not calling for regime change but rather for change of minds of governments on how to govern their people.

We therefore do not understand the current discourse in the Council that country specific mandates would violate the sovereignty of any given government. What legitimacy and sovereignty can a government claim that massacres and kills its own people?

Given the integrality of the Special Procedures to the work of the Council we are deeply concerned that it is not more widely used by so many governments. We deplore the huge gap in communication responses and even more the lack of cooperation with or non-response to Special Rapporteurs’ requests for visits, including by members of the Council, or even Bureau members.

To further quote Res. 60/251: “...Members elected to the Council shall uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights shall fully **cooperate** with the Council and be reviewed under the universal periodic review mechanism...” It does not say shall be “**only**” reviewed by the UPR.

Thank you, Mr. President