



26th session of the
Human Rights Council
Item4

**Human rights situations that require the Council's attention
Delivered by Renate Bloem**

Thank you Mr. President

CIVICUS is shocked about the lethargy of the International Community when innocent civilians in **Syria** are living through unspeakable horror and the Security Council fails to reach consensus to help stop the bloodshed or provide minimum life-saving assistance. We are equally concerned about **DPRK's** consistent denial of its systemic human rights violations, but share the Special Rapporteurs cautious hope that the Commission of Inquiry's report may lead to a more cooperative approach in addressing persistent and gross violations in the country.

Similarly, in light of the egregious human rights violations examined in the recent report of the UN Special Rapporteur on **Eritrea**, including a strong indication that crimes against humanity have been committed in the country, we strongly urge the Council to consider establishing a Commission of Inquiry on Eritrea. In **Bahrain**, the human rights situation continues to be of serious concern. The prisons are overcrowded with political prisoners; a 14 year old boy was shot and killed by police just last month, and systematic torture continues. Despite repeated promises by the Government of Bahrain to reform, the human rights situation continues to deteriorate. Real pressure must be applied here at the Council to end the widespread human rights abuses.

CIVICUS laments **Belarus'** failure to cooperate with the UN Special Rapporteur. Since last year the human rights situation in Belarus has deteriorated further, including severe restrictions on the rights fundamental to civil society. Although we herald the release of Ales Bialiatzki last Saturday, we ask the Council to extend the mandate of the Special Rapporteur and ask in particular that allegations of torture be further examined.

Finally, in **Ethiopia**, the government has severely escalated its campaign to silence all independent dissent in the run-up to elections scheduled for May 2015 - bloggers, freelancers and other journalists are serving lengthy prison sentences under the 2009 Anti-terrorism Proclamation. CIVICUS is deeply concerned that similar laws and tactics are being adopted across East Africa to create a dis-enabling environment for independent civil society and urges

the Council to immediately address the situation in Ethiopia by publicly condemning the unwarranted restrictions on fundamental freedoms.

Thank you, Mr. President