

Human Rights Council – 37th Session

General debate on Item 10
22 March

Australian Statement

Australia commends the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights for the support it offers to states willing to cooperate with it to improve their domestic human rights situations. In this context, we regret that some states considered under this agenda item are not following the trajectory offered to them by this Council.

Australia is perturbed by ongoing sectarian violence in the **Central African Republic** that is causing displacement and hindering aid delivery. We are concerned about reports of rising hate speech, which is inciting violence against both CAR's Muslim population and UN peacekeepers.

We are deeply concerned by reports of grave human rights abuses occurring in **Mali**. In particular, the security situation is negatively affecting a range of human rights, including preventing thousands of children from obtaining an education. Australia urges the Government of Mali and all other parties to the conflict to adhere to the peace process.

Australia deplores the dire humanitarian situation in **Yemen**. We welcome the High Commissioner's oral update and continue to urge all those involved in Yemen to return to UN-led negotiations aimed at a permanent end to the conflict. We urge all parties to cooperate with the recently-established Group of Eminent Experts on Yemen, which includes Australian former parliamentarian, Ms Melissa Parke.

We continue to be deeply concerned by the narrowing of the democratic space in **Cambodia** through actions that restrict opposition parties, civil society and the media. It is troubling that the leader of the now-dissolved main opposition, Kem Sokha, remains in detention. The February 2018 Constitutional amendments and the new *lèse majesté* provision further undermine human rights in Cambodia. The concerted shrinking of democratic space means that the February Senate election cannot be described as free and fair. Australia calls on the Cambodian Government to allow the July 2018 national election to be based on a credible multi-party democratic process.

310 Words