



UN Special Rapporteur Maina Kiai to address high-level UN panel hosted by President Obama

Nairobi (Sept. 19, 2013) – United Nations Special Rapporteur Maina Kiai will address a high-level UN panel hosted by US President Barack Obama on Sept. 23, 2013.

The panel, which will be held on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York, is focused on supporting civil society in the face of shrinking space globally. Kiai is the UN special rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, a position he has held since May 2011.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and several heads of state are expected to be in attendance. Presentations will also be made by Presidents Obama, Enrique Peña Nieto of Mexico and Tsakhiagiin Elbegdorj of Mongolia.

“It is a great honor to be invited to address this distinguished group,” Kiai said. “It is also a great opportunity – a chance to directly address these leaders on the most pressing issues confronting civil society globally.

“This is an ideal forum to urge the governments of the world to recognize and cement the role that civil society plays in political, civic, economic and social development. ”

Kiai’s speech, titled “Sounding the Alarm: emerging threats to civil society and the need for a coordinated international response,” is expected to focus on emerging areas of concern, particularly governmental restrictions on funding for civil society and the shrinking space for civil society during election periods.

Kiai’s most recent report –which was just released publicly this week – focuses on a growing trend toward human rights violations and abuses being committed against those who exercise or seek to exercise their assembly and association rights in the context of elections.

“In recent years we’ve seen new and innovative manifestations of the freedoms of assembly and expression,” Kiai said. “Unfortunately, we’ve also seen authorities develop new and innovative ways of shrinking the space for people to assemble and associate in response.”

The report is available here: <http://www.scribd.com/doc/169311665/UNSR-elections-report-to-UNGA-Aug-2013-pdf>

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