



Maina Kiai

UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association

Special Rapporteur Maina Kiai to present elections report to UN General Assembly

New York (Oct. 28, 2013) – United Nations Special Rapporteur Maina Kiai will appear before the UN General Assembly on Oct. 29 to present a key report on worldwide threats to freedom of assembly and associations during election periods.

Kiai's presentation will begin at 3 p.m. (US Eastern Standard Time), and will be broadcast live on the UN website, www.un.org.

The report documents a growing crackdown on assembly and association rights during election periods, and contends that such measures threaten to "indelibly stain" the legitimacy of democracy in some countries. It concludes that genuine elections cannot be achieved if the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association are curtailed.

"Election periods are a time for people to express the collective will and confer legitimacy on governments," said Kiai, who is the UN Special Rapporteur on the freedoms of peaceful assembly and of association. "But if people are not allowed space to express that will, it undermines the legitimacy of the process. And that calls into question the legitimacy of the government itself."

The report documents scores of serious violations of assembly and association rights during election periods stretching back to 2005, from the harassment of civil society groups in Zimbabwe, to death threats against activists in Nicaragua, to smear campaigns against election monitors in Malaysia.

The report also details the killing of 150 protesters – and the gang rape of others – following an election demonstration in Guinea, the arrest of hundreds of protesters in Belarus, and the "deregistration" of a trade union in Swaziland after the group called for an election boycott.

"The incidents documented in the report are shocking in their own right," Kiai said. "But they are even more outrageous given the context: Elections are a time when governments should give people more space – not less – to organize, voice their concerns and express their collective will."

The report calls upon UN member states to improve efforts to facilitate and protect assembly and association rights during election periods, and to be particularly vigilant in relation to the needs of groups which are at greater risk for attacks.

The Special Rapporteur has also called upon the UN General Assembly, the Human Rights Council and other stakeholders to address thoroughly the issue of human rights violations and abuses in the context of elections.

"Too often the international community judges the legitimacy of elections solely upon on what happens during the vote," Kiai said. "That's not good enough. Elections don't take place in a vacuum. It is equally important to examine what happens before and after elections, and judge elections after surveying the rights landscape as a whole."

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The report is [available](#) in all six UN languages at freeassembly.net, Kiai's website for the Special Rapporteur mandate.

The report's UN document number is A/68/299.

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