

# The Assembly and Association Briefing

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

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Scene from a Black Lives Matter protest in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on July 26, 2016, during the Democratic National Convention. The Special Rapporteur observed the protest as part of his official visit to the United States.

# USA visit: Inequality casts dark shadow over assembly and association rights

GENEVA / WASHINGTON, DC — The United States of America is struggling to live up to its ideals in the area of racial, social and economic inequality, which is having a negative impact upon the exercise of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, United Nations human rights expert Maina Kiai said at the end of his first official fact-finding mission to the country on July 27, 2016.

The UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association singled out race as a particularly pernicious issue. He emphasized that while his mandate does not cover racial discrimination, it was impossible to carry out his mission “without issues of racism pervading the discussions.”

“Racism and the exclusion, persecution and marginalization that come with it, affect the enabling environment for the exercise of association and assembly rights,” Kiai said, noting that understanding its context means looking back at 400 years of slavery and post-Civil War Jim Crow laws which “enforced segregation and marginalized the African-American community to a life of misery, poverty and persecution.”

In more recent times, the Special Rapporteur noted, “old philosophies of exclusion and discrimination were reborn, cloaked in new and euphemistic terms,” such as the so-called “War on Drugs” and “three strikes” sentencing policies. The effects of harsh law-and-order policies often snowball, he added, with a minor criminal conviction — or even an arrest at a protest without substantiated charges — making it difficult to find a job, secure a student loan or find a place to live.

“There is justifiable and palpable anger in the black community over these injustices. It needs to be expressed,” he stressed. “This is the context that gave birth to the non-violent Black Lives Matter protest movement.”

The independent expert also highlighted a long list of other issues affecting the environment in which association and assembly rights are exercised — including economic inequality, unnecessarily aggressive and militarized policing at some peaceful assemblies, intimidation of activists, lack of accountability for rights violations, permit requirements for protests, disproportionate counter-terrorism measures, increasing corporate power and “a free market fundamentalist culture that actively discourages unionization.”

“The situation of migrant workers throughout the United States is characterized by the precariousness and exploitation of their employment situation, retaliation for drawing attention to adverse working conditions and a fear of taking action to seek improvement of the violations,” he said.

Kiai also drew attention to the H2B work visa program, which gives employers “immense control over the employee.” He called the arrangement “not dissimilar to the Kafala system of bonded labor practiced in a number of countries in the Gulf region.”

The independent expert further noted the lack of robust labor rights protections as a major hurdle to exercising the right to freedom of association in the workplace.

“I was shocked to see that in states such as Mississippi, the lack of unionization and ability to exploit workers is touted as a great benefit for employers,” he said, citing the situation at a Nissan plant in Canton, MS, as a prime example. “The figure that stands out for me is this: Nissan reportedly operates 44 major plants throughout the world; all of them are unionized, except for two of them in the US south. Why not Mississippi?”

But the Special Rapporteur called the United States a “nation of struggle and resilience,” and had high praise for the civil society sector, calling it one of the country’s greatest strengths and it is something that the United States and its people should be thankful for.

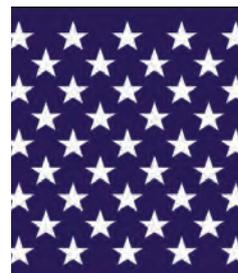
“People have good reason to be angry and frustrated at the moment,” he said. “And it is at times like these when robust promotion of assembly and association rights are needed most. These rights give people a peaceful avenue to speak out, engage in dialogue with their fellow citizens and authorities, air their grievances and hopefully settle them.”

During his 17-day visit, Kiai met numerous officials at the federal, state and local levels and members of civil society. His visit included stops in Washington, New York, Baltimore, Ferguson, MO, Cleveland, Phoenix, New Orleans, Baton Rouge, Jackson, MS, and Philadelphia.

A final report on the visit will be presented to the Human Rights Council in June 2017. The full version of this story is available via our website.

## STATEMENT

[Click to read the Special Rapporteur's full statement at the conclusion of his visit to the United States](#)



“PEOPLE HAVE GOOD REASON TO BE ANGRY AND FRUSTRATED AT THE MOMENT. AND IT IS AT TIMES LIKE THESE WHEN ROBUST PROMOTION OF ASSEMBLY AND ASSOCIATION RIGHTS ARE NEEDED MOST. THESE RIGHTS GIVE PEOPLE A PEACEFUL AVENUE TO SPEAK OUT, ENGAGE IN DIALOGUE WITH THEIR FELLOW CITIZENS AND AUTHORITIES, AIR THEIR GRIEVANCES AND HOPEFULLY SETTLE THEM.”

Special Rapporteur Maina Kiai at the conclusion of his official visit to the United States on July 27, 2016

## PHOTOS

[Click for pictures of the Special Rapporteur's visit to the United States](#)

Pictured: The Special Rapporteur listens to a question from a reporter during a press conference in Washington, DC, on July 27, 2016

## AUDIO

[Audio of Maina Kiai's concluding press conference in Washington, DC, on July 27, 2016](#)



# UN experts urge Turkey to adhere to its human rights obligations even in time of declared emergency

GENEVA — A group of United Nations human rights experts, including Maina Kiai, urged today the Turkish Government on Aug. 19 to uphold its obligations under international human rights law, even in the current time of declared emergency following an attempted coup.

The experts' call came as Turkey's invocation of Article 4 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) entered into effect, following the Government's proclamation of a state of emergency. The derogation provision in Article 4 allows States to temporarily relax some of their obligations under the Covenant under certain narrow conditions. Turkey signed the ICCPR in 2000 and ratified it in 2003.

"The invocation of Article 4 is lawful only if there is a threat to the life of the nation, a condition that arguably is not met in this case", the experts noted. "Even in situations that meet this high threshold, Article 4 establishes limits to how much a state may deviate from its obligations under the Covenant", they added.

"One cannot avoid, even in times of emergency, obligations to protect the right to life, prohibit torture, adhere to fundamental elements of due process and non-discrimination, and protect everyone's right to belief and opinion," the experts underscored.

"The derogation provision under Article 4 does not give a *carte blanche* to ignore all obligations under the ICCPR," the experts said. "Even where derogation is permitted, the Government has a legal obligation to limit such measures to those that are strictly required by the needs of the situation."

Since the attempted coup on July 15, and in particular since the declaration of the state of emergency on July 20, Turkish society has seen an escalation of detentions and purges, in particular in the education, media, military and justice sectors.

In addition, allegations of torture and poor detention conditions have been raised following legislative provisions that enable wide and indiscriminate administrative powers that affect core human rights.

"While we understand the sense of crisis in Turkey," the experts said, "we are concerned that the Government's steps to limit a broad range of human rights guarantees go beyond what can be justified in light of the current situation".

In recent statements, UN human rights experts have urged the Turkish Government to uphold the rule of law in time of crisis, voicing their concern about the use of emergency measures to target dissent and criticism.

"Turkey is going through a critical period. Derogation measures must not be used in a way that will push the country deeper into crisis," the experts stressed.

Note: On July 21, 2016, the Turkish Government notified the UN Secretary-General of its invocation of [article 4 of the ICCPR](#), and that the derogation involved obligations under Articles 2/3, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 17, 19, 21, 22, 25, 26 and 27 of the ICCPR. The action was effective on Aug. 2. Prior to this, Turkey had already notified its similar derogation from the European Convention on Human Rights.

Other experts signing the statement included Karima Bennouna, UN Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights; Chaloka Beyani, UN Special Rapporteur on internally displaced persons; Heiner Bielefeldt, UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief; Agnes Callamard, UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary execution; François Crépeau, UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants; Pablo de Greiff, UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence; Alfred de Zayas, The Independent Expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order; Leilani Farha, UN Special Rapporteur on the right to housing; and Michel Forst, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; Rita Izsák-Ndiaye, UN Special Rapporteur on minority issues; David Kaye, UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; and more. For the full list of experts, [see the story on our website](#).



The Turkish flag hangs on the side of a building as show of solidarity following a July 15 Coup (photo: US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Flickr page)



Scene from a protest outside the Maldives Parliament in 2012 (photo: [Dying Regime/Flickr](#))

## Bill threatens expressive freedom in Maldives, expert warns

GENEVA — The UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of expression, David Kaye, deplored the adoption on Aug. 9 of the “Protection of Reputation and Good Name and Freedom of Expression Bill” by Parliament in the Maldives, warning that it limits the right to freedom of expression to such a degree that the right itself is in jeopardy. His call was endorsed by Special Rapporteurs Maina Kiai and Michel Forst.

“Criminalising speech on such vague and broad grounds as set out in the Bill is a direct attack on the exercise of the right to freedom of expression in the Maldives,” said Kaye. “Freedom of expression is a fundamental right and any restrictions on it must be a narrowly and objectively defined, not a matter of common routine.”

The adopted Bill would criminalise speech deemed to be defamatory, to comment against “any tenet of Islam”, to “threaten national security” or to “contradict general social norms”. Those committing an offence under the bill can face fines and failure to pay the fine will result in jail sentence of three to six months.

Kaye underlined his concerns on the vague use of religion, social norms and defamation as reasons for punishing expression. “The broad grounds for restrictions in the Bill contradict not only international human rights standards recognized by the Maldives, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, but also the Maldives Constitution, which protects the

right to freedom of expression. The Bill will have a strong chilling effect on media and civil society, making reporting and criticism truly risky,” the expert stressed.

“The use of religion as a ground for limiting free speech is particularly worrying. International human rights law protects individuals from discrimination and violence based on their religion or belief, but it does not protect from comment or criticism religion or belief as such,” Kaye noted.

Concerns were also raised with respect to the extensive restrictions imposed on the media.

“The threat of additional penalties for the media are likely to lead to even greater self-censorship on issues perceived to be sensitive, limiting public debate on issues of public interest and depriving society from accessing important information on sensitive affairs,” said Kaye.

“I would be eager to engage in discussion with the Maldivian authorities and hope the President will reverse the decision by sending back the bill to Parliament for further review in consultation with independent institutions, journalists, civil society organizations and human rights defenders and bring it in compliance with international human rights standards.”

The full press release is available [via our website](#).



## Israel: UN experts caution against NGO law

GENEVA — Three United Nations human rights experts on June 24 urged Israeli lawmakers not to approve the so called ‘NGO transparency bill’ that would, in effect, target non-governmental organizations that are critical of government policy. The experts expressed grave concern that the legislation would chill the speech of human rights NGOs by subjecting them to harsh penalties for violations and delegitimizing them publicly.

The law was [ultimately passed on July 12](#).

The stated aim of the legislation is to increase transparency by requiring NGOs that receive more than half of their funding from foreign government entities to disclose certain information, such as the names of their donors in all publications intended for or made available to the public, or in any written appeal to a public employee or public representative.

The proposed legislation went before the Knesset in June, after having passed the first reading earlier this year. The newer version of the legislation appears to have removed some requirements, such as the need for representatives of qualifying NGOs to wear a special identification tag in the Knesset and in every other government building.

“By differentiating between donations from foreign political bodies and donations from other sources, the proposed legislation will likely lead some NGOs to be perceived as agents of foreign entities, regardless of how autonomously they operate,” warned the UN Special Rapporteur on the freedom of association and peaceful assembly, Maina Kiai.

The full press release is [available here](#).

# Rights experts condemn killing of Cambodian political analyst Kem Ley

GENEVA — A group of United Nations human rights experts, including Special Rapporteur Maina Kiai, issued a statement on July 13 condemning the murder of Cambodian political analyst and social activist Kem Ley, known for his struggle for justice and human rights in Cambodia.

“We are shocked to learn about the death of Mr. Kem Ley. We call for a prompt, thorough and impartial investigation into the crime that ensures no perpetrator goes unpunished. This investigation should be conducted by an independent body with no ties to the government.”

Mr. Kem Ley, who was shot dead at a convenience store in a petrol station on July 10, was the founder of the grassroots network Khmer for Khmer and a prominent political commentator who had frequently criticized the government. His network had recently registered the Grassroots Democracy Party with the intention of fielding candidates for local elections in 2017. Prior to his civic engagement work, he had a prominent role in the HIV and health sector for many years.

“The circumstances of Mr. Kem Ley’s death have given rise to deep concerns in view of his standing as a critic of the government and his regular comments in the media highlighting governance and human rights concerns,” the experts said.

The Special Rapporteurs welcomed the Cambodian Government’s commitment for a thorough investigation into the crime, and emphasised that they will be following it closely. “Every person responsible should be brought to justice,” the UN human rights experts stressed.

The UN human rights experts also called upon the Cambodian government to urgently implement effective protection measures to safeguard those active in the civic sphere.

“This shooting exemplifies an alarming negative trend in Cambodia whereby political activists and human rights defenders are facing increasing restrictions to exercise human rights and fundamental freedoms,” the Special Rapporteurs said. “The authorities must act swiftly to reverse this trend as this killing is likely to have a chilling effect on the pursuit of democracy and human rights in Cambodia.”

“THIS SHOOTING EXEMPLIFIES AN ALARMING NEGATIVE TREND IN CAMBODIA WHEREBY POLITICAL ACTIVISTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS ARE FACING INCREASING RESTRICTIONS TO EXERCISE HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS, THE AUTHORITIES MUST ACT SWIFTLY TO REVERSE THIS TREND.”

The experts: Michel Forst, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; Rhona Smith, Special Rapporteur on Cambodia; David Kaye, Special Rapporteur on freedom of opinion and expression; Maina Kiai, Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; and Christof Heyns, Special Rapporteur on summary or arbitrary executions.

The full press release is [available via our website](#).



A crowd gathers around a car transporting the body of slain Cambodian activist Kem Ley in Phnom Penh on July 10, 2016 (photo: Heng Chivoan/Phnom Penh Post)

# “End police impunity” — alarm over pattern of extrajudicial killings in Kenya

GENEVA — A group of United Nations human rights experts, including Maina Kiai, expressed deep concern on July 28 about the on-going pattern of extrajudicial executions in Kenya. They urged the Government to put an end to police violence and ensure accountability for the perpetrators.

The experts’ call came as four police officers were charged with the murder of human rights lawyer Willie Kimani, his client Josephat Mwenda, and their driver, Joseph Muiruri, in the latest high-profile case in a long list of enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings in Kenya.

“The recent murder of a well-known lawyer and human rights defender is having a dramatic and detrimental impact on civil society, especially on those active in the field of human rights,” the experts noted. “It is urgent for the Government of Kenya to address the apparent structural and systemic motives behind police brutality.”

The Kenya National Commission on Human Rights documented a pattern of widespread and systematic human rights violations which include extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances, as well as arbitrary arrests, extortion, arbitrary detention and torture, in a 2015 preliminary report about alleged human rights violations by police and other security agencies in relation to counter-terrorism measures.

“The murder of Mr. Kimani, who was renowned for his work with the International Justice Mission, which fights police abuse of power, among many other rights violations, is a dramatic loss for the human rights community in Kenya. This heinous human rights violation should prompt the authorities to take concrete measures to put an end to police impunity,” the experts underscored, stressing that this should include, but not be limited to, providing adequate support and capacity to the Independent Police Oversight Authority.

Kimani had been representing Mwenda, who filed a complaint with Kenya’s Independent Policing Oversight Authority when a police officer shot at him at a traffic stop following an incident in April 2015. On July 1, Kimani, Mwenda and Muiruri were found in a river in Ol-Donyo Sabuk, Machakos county, with apparent signs of torture, one week after they had been abducted by unidentified persons.

For the full press release, [please see our website](#).

The world's got  
**99**  
Problems

Willie  
**Kimani**  
Wasn't one of them

#24: Extrajudicial killings are. Kenyan lawyer Willie Kimani worked for the NGO International Justice Mission and was helping client Josephat Mwenda make a legal claim against police. After a court hearing on June 23, 2016, both disappeared, along with driver Joseph Muiruri. A week later, all three were found dead. Fighting injustice shouldn't be a death sentence; join us in calling for their killers to be held accountable.

1966  
2016  
#FOAArt50 #ICPRt50  
#StopExtrajudicialKillings  
freeassembly.net

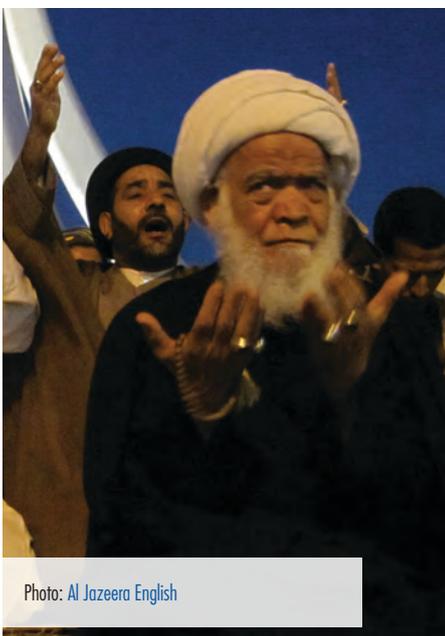


Photo: Al Jazeera English

# Bahrain urged to end ‘systematic’ persecution of Shia

GENEVA — The systematic harassment of the Shia population by the authorities in Bahrain, including stripping many of them of citizenship, is deeply concerning, a group of United Nations human rights independent experts, including Maina Kiai, said in a statement issued Aug. 16.

“The intensified wave of arrests, detentions, summons, interrogations and criminal charges brought against numerous Shia religious clerics and singers, human rights defenders and peaceful dissidents is having a chilling effect on fundamental human rights,” the human rights experts said.

“Shias are clearly being targeted on the basis of their religion,” the experts highlighted. “Recently, we witnessed the dissolution of Al-Wafaq National Islamic Society, the shutting of faith-based organizations, restrictions on the practice of religious rites, on Friday prayers and peaceful assemblies, restrictions on movement, restricted access to the Internet and a ban on Shia religious leaders from preaching.”

A wide range of charges are brought against the Shias including ‘illegal gathering’, ‘inciting hatred against the regime’, ‘money laundering’ and ‘acts of terrorism’ in relation to their peaceful gatherings and religious congregations and peaceful expression of their beliefs, views and dissenting opinions, which the experts described as “groundless accusations used to hide a deliberate targeting of Shias in the country.”

“These charges should not be used as a pretext to restrict the freedom of expression, freedom of association and peaceful assembly and freedom of religion or belief,” they stressed.

“The authorities are also using the Bahrain Citizenship Act or Protection of Society against Acts of Terror law to revoke citizenship. People are being left stateless and are facing deportation from Bahrain,” they said.

The full statement and list of experts is [available here](#).

# Assembly & association rights:

## By the numbers

44

Number of automotive factories that Nissan Motor Corporation operates worldwide, according to information provided to the Special Rapporteur during his visit to the United States

2

Number of these factories that are not unionized (both of which are in the United States)

2,000

Number of consecutive weeks that Argentine human rights group Mothers of Plaza de Mayo has held Thursday rallies in Buenos Aires calling for justice for victims of the 1976-83 military regime

1977

Year that the group started holding the weekly rallies

19

Number of human rights lawyers in China who are still detained incommunicado, as of July, following a major government crackdown in 2015

175

Minimum number of activists, journalists, religious figures, politicians, and human rights workers have been banned from leaving Egypt since the military removed former President Mohamed Morsi in July 2013.

Number of countries in which one or more core civil society freedoms were seriously violated in 2015, as documented by CIVICUS

109

Number of countries in which these rights were seriously violated in 2014

96

Protesters demonstrate against the United Kingdom's vote to leave the European Union in London on July 2, 2016 (photo: Garon S/Flickr)



## Expert urges Thailand to ensure free debate ahead of constitutional referendum

GENEVA — The United Nations Special Rapporteur on freedom of opinion and expression, David Kaye, [issued a statement on July 26](#) condemning the alarmingly high number of arrests and charges over public and social media expression brought under military orders and the Constitutional Referendum Act in Thailand. The Act, adopted ahead of the constitutional referendum scheduled for Aug. 7, criminalise expression and access to information about the draft constitution. His call was endorsed by Special Rapporteur Maina Kiai, fellow UN expert Michel Forst and the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention.

The referendum went forward as planned on Aug. 7, and Thai voters [approved the new constitution](#).

Since June this year, it is reported that at least 86 people have been investigated or charged under the government clampdown on dissenting voices ahead of the Aug. 7 vote. Earlier this month, several activists were charged under the Constitutional Referendum Act for a campaign urging voters to reject the draft constitution. A journalist covering the campaign was also arrested and charged with violating the Act. Violation of the Act carries a penalty of up to 10 years imprisonment, heavy fines and the loss of voting rights for 10 years.

"I am seriously concerned that military orders and the Constitutional Referendum Act

restrict expression and access to information about the draft constitution," Mr. Kaye said. "The idea of a referendum is to allow for full debate followed by public vote, and particularly where the subject is of extraordinary public interest, a wide range of opinions should be encouraged, freely expressed, and open to rigorous debate."

"Instead of criminalizing expression on the draft constitution, the Thai government should encourage an open environment for public discourse to ensure an informed participation during the constitutional referendum", the expert advised.

Article 61 of the 2016 Referendum Act, which governs the referendum process, criminalizes 'anyone who disseminates text, pictures or sounds that are inconsistent with the truth or in a violent, aggressive, rude, inciting or threatening manner aimed at preventing a voter from casting a ballot or vote in any direction or to not vote'.

"Everyone must have the right to hold opinions without interference," said the UN Special Rapporteur, while urging the Thai Government to halt the enforcement of the Constitutional Referendum Act and to drop all charges under the Act and related military orders.

*Photo: Mike Behnken/Flickr*

## China: stop ill-treatment of Guo Feixiong

GENEVA — A group of United Nations independent experts, including Maina Kiai, expressed deep concern on Aug. 4 about the critical health condition of prominent Chinese human rights defender Yang Maodong, known by his pen-name Guo Feixiong. They called on the Government of China to urgently provide Guo with specialized medical care, based on his full and informed consent, and stop all forms of ill-treatment.

"We are concerned about repeated incidents of degrading and humiliating treatment suffered by Mr Guo in detention, both at the hands of other inmates and prison guards at Yangchun Prison in Guangdong province," they said. Mr. Guo has been on a hunger strike for almost three months demanding to be transferred to another prison where he would be free from ill-treatment.

"His public profile as a human rights defender seems to have been the cause and aggravating factor for the denial of appropriate medical care and ill-treatment, which included sleep deprivation, harassment, and humiliating medical procedure filmed by prison officials for public release," the experts stated.

The human rights defender was arrested in August 2013 for taking part in a public protest against official censorship of a Guangzhou newspaper. In November 2015, he was sentenced to six years of imprisonment on charges of 'gathering crowds to disturb public order' and 'picking quarrels and provoking trouble'.

"Mr. Guo's six-year imprisonment is connected to his peaceful and legitimate human rights activities," the experts said. "His only wrong-doing was to have exercised his rights to peaceful assembly and expression concerning censorship in China."

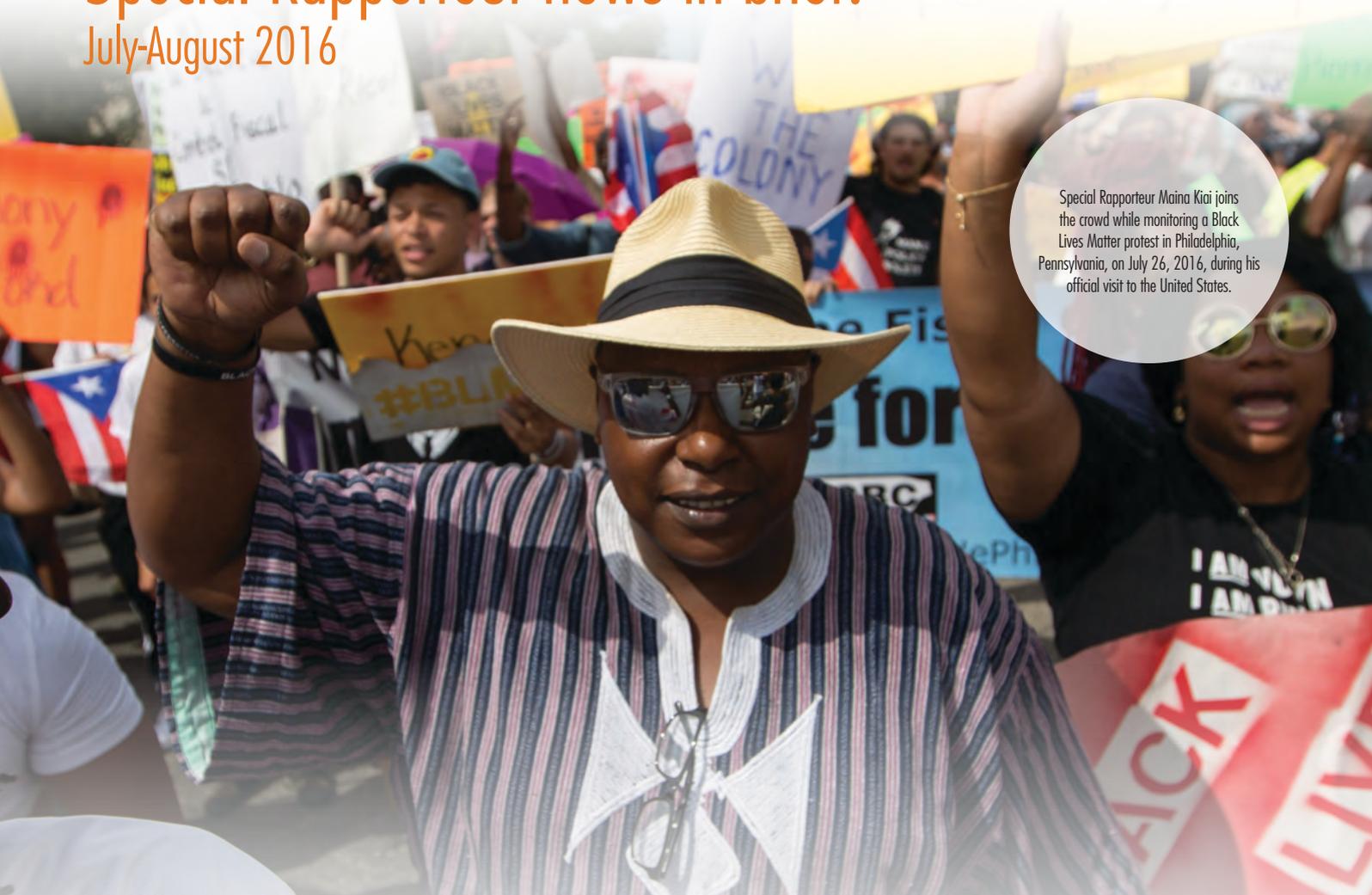
"The Chinese Government should heed Mr. Guo's demands and take immediate measures to stop the degrading and humiliating treatment, ensure independent medical care with Mr. Guo's consent and transfer him to another prison," they underscored.

For the full press release and the list of experts who signed on, [please see our website](#).



# Special Rapporteur news in brief:

## July-August 2016



Special Rapporteur Maina Kiai joins the crowd while monitoring a Black Lives Matter protest in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on July 26, 2016, during his official visit to the United States.

### Decisions in two of the mandate's amicus brief cases: Bolivia and Mexico

Courts in Bolivia and Mexico have reached decisions in two separate cases where the Special Rapporteur intervened as part of his mandate's [litigation project](#).

The [Bolivia case](#) involved a challenge to a national law and accompanying Supreme Decree which regulated the granting of legal personality to NGOs. The Special Rapporteur filed an amicus curiae brief in May 2015 arguing that the law and decree violated the international right to freedom of association, but the Constitutional Court of Bolivia upheld the provisions. Media coverage of the decision can be found [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#) (all stories in Spanish only).

The [Mexico case](#) was a matter before the Supreme Court challenging three provisions in Mexico City's Mobility Law which affected demonstrations; one involved a requirement for protest organizers to seek permission from the authorities, while the other two concerned the use of public roads by protesters. The Special Rapporteur filed an amicus brief in Aug. 2015 arguing that these provisions constituted impermissible restrictions on the international right to freedom of peaceful assembly.

On Aug. 11, 2016, the Supreme Court of Mexico ruled that the provisions were constitutional, but stated that permission requirement should not be interpreted as an obligation – it is up to demonstrators themselves to decide whether to notify authorities of their assembly. A full story on the decision is [available via Article 19](#) (Spanish only).

### Special Rapporteur: 'It's Time for Development Banks to Start Listening'

On July 19, Special Rapporteur Maina Kiai authored an [op-ed in Foreign Policy](#) in which he called upon international financial institutions to counter the global trend of closing civil society space by promoting more community participation in their activities.

His call came roughly one year after the United Nations set [the Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#), an ambitious blueprint for governments and financiers to use their political power and resources to end poverty, hunger, and disease. Kiai notes in the op-ed that while development banks play a key role in ensuring the success of the SDGs, they cannot do it alone.

"Far more important than governments and international donors are the individuals and civic organizations that will help design, carry out, and monitor the development projects on which the whole scheme depends," Kiai wrote in the piece. "Without vibrant civil societies, the Sustainable Development Goals are dead in the water."

The Special Rapporteur's call came one week after a group of 150 civil society organizations from around the world [delivered a statement](#) with similar sentiments to the most prominent international financial institutions.

The piece was reprinted in OpenGlobalRights on Aug. 17, in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

### Kiai joins World Social Forum in Canada and FIDH Congress in South Africa

The Special Rapporteur was in Montreal, Canada, on Aug. 11 to take part in the [2016 World Social Forum](#) - billed as "the largest gathering of civil society to find solutions to the problems of our time." The Special Rapporteur spoke on a panel discussing the state of dissent and free expression in Canada and meet with various civil society groups.

In late August, the Special Rapporteur traveled to Johannesburg, South Africa, for [FIDH's 39th Congress](#). The event was attended by the 178 FIDH member organizations and more than 400 human rights defenders from around the world.

### Upcoming & other news

• **Renewal of the FOAA mandate:** The Human Rights Council [adopted a resolution](#) to renew the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association for an additional three years. After serving the maximum six years as Special Rapporteur, Maina Kiai will step down on May 1, 2017, to be replaced by a successor chosen by the Council.

• **71st Session of the United Nations General Assembly:** The Special Rapporteur will present his fourth and final report to the UN General Assembly in late October. The report – which is expected to be released sometime before the presentation – addresses the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association in [the context of labor](#), with a focus on marginalized workers.

# World briefing: Assembly & association rights in the news

A woman holds a sign at an Aug. 5, 2016, protest in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, against the “exclusion of the Olympic games” (photo: JOGOS DA EXCLUSÃO RIO 2016/ Flickr)

## Brazil

The Brazilian city of Rio de Janeiro hosted the 2016 Summer Olympic Games Aug. 5-21, which set the stage for a number of protests. On Aug. 4, hundreds of demonstrators angry at the high cost of hosting the Games [protested](#) the arrival of the Olympic torch in Rio. Riot police used tar gas and pepper spray to disperse the crowd. During the games themselves, spectators were [removed from their seats](#) at least twice for calling for the ouster of Brazil’s interim President Michel Temer. Another spectator was asked to [take down a sign](#) reading “Let Iranian women enter their stadiums.” In late June, Rio [police officers protested](#) the late payment of salaries and a lack of equipment ranging from car fuel to toilet paper.

## Ethiopia

Anti-government protests that started last year among the Oromo – Ethiopia’s largest ethnic group – [spread in July](#) to the Amhara, the country’s second-largest group. Authorities responded to some demonstrations with deadly force, [reportedly killing 30 people](#) at an August protest in Bahir Dar. The government also reportedly [shut down](#) the country’s Internet for two days. Human Rights Watch estimated on Aug. 13 that security forces have [killed at least 500 protesters](#) since Nov. 2015. Ethiopian marathoner [Feyisa Lilesa](#) used the Olympic marathon on Aug. 21 to stage a protest of his own, raising his arms to form an “X” – a protest gesture used by the Oromo people – as he crossed the finish line.

## Financial Action Task Force

In late June, the Financial Action Task Force [revised Recommendation 8](#) – a controversial regulation intended to protect the nonprofit sector from abuse through terrorist financing. The original version of Recommendation 8 labeled the non-profit sector as “particularly vulnerable” to terrorist abuse; revised Recommendation calls on countries to apply proportionate measures only towards non-profits identified as being at risk. Civil society groups [had complained for years](#) that this language provided a convenient excuse for governments to clamp down on their activities. [See here](#) for more on the Special Rapporteur’s engagement with FATF.

## Armenia

A wave of protests swept through Armenia starting on July 17, marking the [fourth consecutive summer](#) that the capital of Yerevan has seen major demonstrations. The

protesters were rallying in support for a group that seized a police station on July 17, taking [hostages](#). Human Rights Watch [said in a statement](#) that the authorities’ response to the “largely peaceful protests has been excessive and cruel.”

## United States

The shooting by police of two African-American men in Minnesota and Louisiana in July set off a fresh wave of Black Lives Matter protests in the United States, with thousands of people taking to the streets. [Hundreds were arrested](#) in connection with the protests. The situation took a dark turn on July 7 when five police officers were [killed](#) by a sniper in during a protest in Dallas, Texas. Roughly a week later, three more police officers were killed by a lone gunman in [Baton Rouge](#), Louisiana. Neither of the police shootings were linked to protests, but [tensions](#) were high in the [weeks](#) following the events.

## Elsewhere

Six human rights activists in Sudan were reportedly charged with crimes [carrying the death penalty](#), prompting an outcry from civil society • Three student leaders who led massive pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong in 2014 were sentenced on Aug. 15, but [avoided jail time](#) • Two Global Witness staffers were accused of inciting a revolt and [expelled](#) from the Democratic Republic of Congo on July 14; Global Witness strenuously denies the charges • Over 100 members of a right-wing student organization [attempted to storm](#) Amnesty International’s office in Indiranagar, India, on Aug. 19 • Tens of thousands of people joined a [pro-democracy rally](#) in Istanbul following an attempted coup in July (see item on [page 3](#)); the rally was organized by the opposition party CHP but backed by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s AK party • A court in South Korean sentenced Korean Confederation of Trade Unions president [Han Sang-gyun to five years in prison](#) on July 4 for organizing a 2015 protest that turned violent • Police in Indonesia arrested seven [Papuan students](#) in Yogyakarta to prevent them from attending an event organized by the People’s Union for West Papua Freedom • Zimbabwe saw several protests over the economy, including the [#ShutDownZimbabwe2016](#) day on July 6 and a peaceful march on Aug. 3 that was [forcibly dispersed](#) by police • The UN Economic and Social Council [overturned a decision](#) by its NGO Committee to deny consultative status to the Committee to Protect Journalists