

**Human Rights Council****Fifty-fourth session**

11 September–13 October 2023

Agenda item 3

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development****Resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council
on 11 October 2023****54/3. Use of mercenaries as a means of violating human rights and impeding
the exercise of the right of peoples to self-determination***The Human Rights Council,*

Recalling all previous resolutions adopted by the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council and the Commission on Human Rights on the subject, including Assembly resolution 64/151 of 18 December 2009 and Council resolutions 10/11 of 26 March 2009, 15/12 of 30 September 2010, 15/26 of 1 October 2010, 18/4 of 29 September 2011, 24/13 of 26 September 2013, 27/10 of 25 September 2014, 30/6 of 1 October 2015, 33/4 of 29 September 2016, 36/3 of 28 September 2017, 39/5 of 27 September 2018, 42/9 of 26 September 2019, 48/5 of 7 October 2021 and 51/13 of 6 October 2022,

Recalling also all relevant resolutions that, inter alia, condemn any State that permits or tolerates the recruitment, financing, training, assembly, transit or use of mercenaries with the objective of overthrowing the Governments of States Members of the United Nations, especially those of developing countries, or of fighting against national liberation movements, and recalling further relevant resolutions and international instruments adopted by the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the African Union and the Organization of African Unity, inter alia, the Organization of African Unity Convention for the Elimination of Mercenarism in Africa,

Reaffirming the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations concerning the strict observance of the principles of sovereign equality, political independence, the territorial integrity of States, the self-determination of peoples, the non-use of force or threat of use of force in international relations and non-interference in affairs within the domestic jurisdiction of States,

Reaffirming also that, by virtue of the principle of self-determination, all peoples have the right to determine freely their political status and to pursue freely their economic, social and cultural development, and that every State has the duty to respect this right in accordance with the provisions of the Charter,

Reaffirming further the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations,



Extremely alarmed and concerned about the threat posed by the activities of mercenaries to peace and security in developing countries in various parts of the world, in particular in areas of conflict, and about the threat they pose to the integrity of and respect for the constitutional order of the countries affected,

Deeply concerned at the loss of life, the substantial damage to property and the negative effects on the policies and economies of affected countries resulting from international criminal mercenary activities,

Reaffirming the need to refrain from undertaking any activities that threaten peace, security and the self-determination of peoples and constitute obstacles to the enjoyment of human rights,

Acknowledging that the increasing involvement of private military and security companies in humanitarian action poses concerns with regard to security, both as a public good and as a State function,

1. *Reaffirms* that the use of mercenaries, and their recruitment, financing, protection and training, are causes for grave concern to all States and violate the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations;

2. *Recognizes* that armed conflicts, terrorism, arms trafficking and covert operations by third Powers encourage, inter alia, the demand for mercenaries and for private military and security companies on the global market;

3. *Urges once again* all States to take the necessary steps and to exercise the utmost vigilance against the threat posed by the activities of mercenaries, and to take legislative measures to ensure that their territories and other territories under their control, and their nationals, are not used for the recruitment, assembly, financing, training, protection and transit of mercenaries for the planning of activities designed to impede the right to self-determination, to overthrow the Government of any State or to dismember or to impair, totally or in part, the territorial integrity or political unity of sovereign and independent States conducting themselves in compliance with the right of peoples to self-determination;

4. *Requests* all States to exercise the utmost vigilance against any kind of recruitment, training, hiring or financing of mercenaries;

5. *Also requests* all States to exercise the utmost vigilance in banning the use of private companies offering international military consultancy and security services when intervening in armed conflicts or actions to destabilize constitutional regimes;

6. *Calls upon* States to ensure that private military and security companies in their territory are required to operate under contractual obligations, monitoring and controls that comply with national laws and relevant international humanitarian and human rights obligations;

7. *Encourages* States that import the consultancy and security services provided by private companies, including in the extractive industries, to establish national regulatory mechanisms for the registering and licensing of those companies, for accountability of the companies and their personnel and for remedies for violations resulting from their activities in order to ensure that imported services provided by those private companies neither impede the enjoyment of human rights nor violate human rights in the recipient country;

8. *Calls upon* all States that have not yet become a party to the International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries to consider taking the necessary action to do so;

9. *Welcomes* the cooperation extended by those countries that were visited by the Working Group on the use of mercenaries as a means of violating human rights and impeding the exercise of the right of peoples to self-determination, and the adoption by some States of national legislation that restricts the recruitment, assembly, financing, training and transit of mercenaries;

10. *Condemns* mercenary activities in any country, in particular in areas of conflict, and the threat they pose to the integrity of and to respect for the constitutional order of those countries and to the exercise of the right to self-determination of their peoples, and

stresses the importance for the Working Group of looking into sources and root causes, and into the political motivations of mercenaries and for mercenary-related activities;

11. *Calls upon* States to investigate the possibility of mercenary and mercenary-related involvement whenever and wherever criminal acts of a terrorist nature occur, and to bring to trial those found responsible or to consider their extradition, if so requested, in accordance with national law and applicable bilateral or international treaties;

12. *Recognizes* that mercenary activity is a complex crime in which criminal responsibility falls upon those who have recruited, employed, trained and financed the mercenary or mercenaries, and upon those who have planned and ordered their criminal activity;

13. *Condemns* any form of impunity granted to perpetrators of mercenary activities and to those responsible for the use, recruitment, financing and training of mercenaries, and urges all States, in accordance with their obligations under international law, to bring them, without distinction, to justice;

14. *Calls upon* the international community and all States, in accordance with their obligations under international law, to cooperate with and assist the judicial prosecution of those accused of mercenary activities in transparent, open and fair trials;

15. *Notes* the work and contributions of the Working Group, and takes note of its most recent report;¹

16. *Encourages*, in that context, continued cooperation and dialogue in the interaction among the Working Group, Member States and other relevant stakeholders, including inter alia, with regard to the use of sources of information, verification of facts on the ground and the issuance of communications, among other aspects,

17. *Acknowledges* that the active involvement of private military and security companies in the humanitarian space may create additional risks, when safeguards and checks are not in place to prevent their excessive use of force, of violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, and undermines humanitarian principles;

18. *Requests* the Working Group and other experts to broaden their active participation, including by submitting contributions, in other subsidiary bodies of the Human Rights Council considering issues related to the use of mercenaries and mercenary-related activities in all their forms and manifestations, including private military and security companies;

19. *Requests* the Working Group to continue the work already carried out by previous mandate holders on the strengthening of international law and the international legal framework for the prevention and sanction of the recruitment, use, financing and training of mercenaries, taking into account the proposal for a new legal definition of the term “mercenary” drafted by the Special Rapporteur on the use of mercenaries as a means of violating human rights and impeding the exercise of the right of peoples to self-determination in his report submitted to the Commission on Human Rights at its sixtieth session,² and also the evolving phenomenon of mercenaries and its related forms;

20. *Also requests* in this regard the Working Group to continue to monitor mercenaries and mercenary-related activities in all their forms and manifestations in all parts of the world, including instances of protection and financing provided by Governments to individuals involved in mercenary activities, and to continue to update the database of individuals convicted of mercenary activities;

21. *Further requests* the Working Group to continue to study and identify new sources and causes, emerging issues, manifestations and trends with regard to mercenaries and mercenary-related activities and their impact on human rights, particularly on the right of peoples to self-determination, and to consult in this regard with Member States and

¹ A/HRC/54/29.

² E/CN.4/2004/15.

regional and international organizations, academia, civil society, as well as with other relevant stakeholders;

22. *Urges* all States and other stakeholders to cooperate fully with the Working Group in the fulfilment of its mandate;

23. *Requests* the Secretary-General and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to provide the Working Group with all the assistance and support necessary for the fulfilment of its mandate, both professional and financial, including by promoting cooperation between the Working Group and other components of the United Nations system that deal with countering mercenary-related activities, in order to meet the demands of its current and future activities;

24. *Requests* the Working Group to consult States, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and other relevant civil society actors in the implementation of the present resolution, and to continue to report its findings on the use of mercenaries as a means of violating human rights and impeding the exercise of the right of peoples to self-determination to the Human Rights Council and to the General Assembly in accordance with their respective programmes of work;

25. *Decides* to continue its consideration of this matter under the same agenda item at its fifty-seventh session.

*46th meeting
11 October 2023*

[Adopted by a recorded vote of 32 to 13, with 2 abstentions. The voting was as follows:

In favour:

Algeria, Argentina, Bangladesh, Benin, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Cameroon, Chile, China, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Eritrea, Gabon, Gambia, Honduras, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Paraguay, Qatar, Senegal, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan and Viet Nam

Against:

Belgium, Czechia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Romania, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America

Abstaining:

Mexico and Morocco]
