

**47th Regular Session of the UN Human Rights Council**  
**Item 3: Interactive Dialogue with Special Rapporteur on peaceful assembly**

**Oral Statement delivered by Edwin Makwati on behalf of the Legal Resources Centre  
(LRC) / the International Network of Civil Liberties Organisations (INCLO)**

**1 July 2021**

Ms. President Khan,

On behalf of LRC, a member of INCLO, we address this Council on issues of global concern relating to the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of protests.

The ability to freely express oneself collectively is sometimes the only avenue to manifest grievances and advocate for political and socio-economic reforms.

We are concerned about the continued repression of dissent and curtailment of the right to protest by violent law enforcement - including militarised police and military in domestic security - and by laws that criminalise protestors.

In South Africa, unarmed, peaceful demonstrators are regularly mortally wounded by the police or criminally charged for actions which UN guidelines would not categorize as violent, such as blocking public roads. The same response has been present in Colombia during recent protests, which has targeted the youth and vulnerable populations, as well as Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities. A similar trend has been seen in the U.S. where since 2017, 36 states have adopted measures restricting the right to peaceful assembly.

We call upon the Council to engage in dialogue with these states, to condemn state violence and stigmatisation against protestors, to emphasize the role of police as facilitators of the right to protest, and to promote the implementation of relevant standards. It is critical that states address the root causes of protests and their validity as democratic expression in order to advance towards meaningful and long-term solutions.

We welcome Mr. Voule's recent report on **Access to justice** and ask the Council to hold states accountable so that victims of police violence have access to justice and there can be an end to cycles of impunity.

Thank you.

**Endorsed by:**

American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)  
Canadian Civil Liberties Association (CCLA)  
Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales (CELS/Argentina)  
Dejusticia  
Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR)  
Hungarian Civil Liberties Union (HCLU)  
Human Rights Law Centre (HRLC/ Australia)  
Irish Council for Civil Liberties (ICCL)  
Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC)  
KontraS (Indonesia)  
Liberty (United Kingdom)