

Administrative Council

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October 04, 2023

Your Excellency:

On behalf of American Jewish Committee (AJC) and its Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights, I write to express concern regarding the upcoming election of States to membership on the UN Human Rights Council. On October 10, Albania, Bulgaria and Russia will compete for two seats on the Human Rights Council allocated to members of the Eastern European Group of States in elections that will be held at the UN General Assembly. We urge your government to ensure that Russia's bid for membership on the Council is not successful.

Russia is manifestly unfit for membership on the Human Rights Council. Its forces continue to commit the same patterns of "gross and systematic violations of human rights" in Ukraine that led the General Assembly to decide to suspend its membership on the Council in April 2022. As repeatedly documented by the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, most recently in an August 29, 2023 [conference room paper](#), Russian authorities have continued to commit serious offenses including widespread, systematic torture in detention facilities in Ukraine and Russia as well as a pattern of summary executions in towns and villages close to the frontlines. Most recently, the UN Special Rapporteur on torture [announced](#) at the end of a visit to Ukraine on September 10 that "the volume of credible allegations of torture and other inhumane acts that are being perpetrated against civilians and prisoners of war by Russian authorities appears to be unabating," and "These grievous acts appear neither random nor incidental, but rather orchestrated as part of a State policy to intimidate, instill fear, punish, or extract information and confessions."

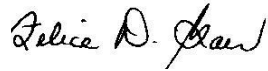
Russian authorities are also actively engaged in gross and systematic violations of human rights at home. As the Special Rapporteur on human rights in Russia documented in a [September 2023 report](#), the government has undertaken a "systematic crackdown" on Russian civil society since the invasion of Ukraine, including "mass arbitrary arrests" of critics and dissidents. These findings concur with those of AJC's Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights, as set out in its assessments including "[Appeal on the One-Year Anniversary of the Russian Invasion of Ukraine](#)" and "[Human Rights Violations inside the Russian Federation: A Catalyst and Consequence of Russia's Aggression](#)."

UN General Assembly resolution 60/251 establishing the Human Rights Council states that "when electing members of the Council, Member States shall take into account the contribution of candidates to the promotion and protection of human rights." Given

Russia's egregious human rights record, particularly since its February 2022 invasion of Ukraine, we call on your government to reject its candidacy for Human Rights Council membership and to vote in favor of the two alternative candidates from the Eastern European Group, Albania and Bulgaria.

Voting for Albania and Bulgaria will demonstrate your commitment to strengthening the legitimacy of the UN Human Rights Council by ensuring that its ability to respond to the most urgent human rights crises worldwide cannot be compromised by those responsible for precipitating them. Similarly, it will signal your support for the many victims of Russia's widespread and systematic rights violations.

Respectfully,



Felice Gaer  
Director

AJC's Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights

