



*For immediate release*

**Role and responsibility of States and social media platforms in preventing direct and public incitement to genocide in the digital space**

**(Geneva - New York, NY; 5 December 2023)** An intersessional meeting, convened by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in accordance with Human Rights Council Resolution 49/9 on the prevention of genocide to mark the 75th anniversary of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide was held in Geneva on 4 December, focusing on the role of social media platforms and their instrumentalization by those seeking to spread hate leading to real-world discrimination and violence.

The meeting heard from Member States, the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, representatives of treaty bodies, Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council and regional human rights mechanisms, as well as civil society, and national human rights institutions, academic experts, and other stakeholders in open-space discussion over three dedicated panels.

Opening the meeting, the *UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk* reminded that “genocide is often preceded or accompanied by statements from political leaders and other public figures that dehumanize and demonize people from targeted communities. Disinformation campaigns on social media can further amplify these statements, until condoning and justifying violence becomes normalized. The knowledge that the international community is monitoring statements and events, and that justice will come, has deterrent impact on perpetrators”.

At the opening of the session, and welcoming the engagement of the Human Rights Council, *Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, Alice Wairimu Nderitu* highlighted “The number of situations across the world where communities are at risk of genocide and related atrocity crimes remains of concern – many of which I highlighted in my interactive dialogue with this Council last July. The situations across the world in which hate speech and incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence are being spread and instrumentalized continue to be alarming.”

H.E. Mr. Ararat Mirzoyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Government of Armenia, joined the opening via video message, welcoming the discussion and highlighting the relevance of genocide prevention in today’s world in which many face danger of destruction.

The *first dedicated panel* looked into *defining the problems* when it comes to the use of social media platforms to amplify hate speech that could lead to genocide, with Ms. Peggy Hicks, Director of the Thematic Engagement, Special Procedures and Right to Development Division at OHCHR; Professor Mehrdad Payandeh, Member of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD); and Ms. Simona Cruciani, Senior Political Affairs Officer at the United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide. The *second panel focused* on the *State obligations* for preventing direct and public incitement to genocide in the digital space, with a discussion led by Mr. Fabian Salvioli, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Truth,

Reparations, and Guarantees of Non-Recurrence, Mr. Luis Moreno Ocampo, Former Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC), Dr. Ibrahim Salama, Chief of the Human Rights Treaties Branch at OHCHR and Ms. Yasmin Ullah, Executive Director of the Rohingya Maiyafuino Collaborative Network. The *final panel looked* at the *role of Social Media platforms* in responding to content that incites violence and discrimination with Ms. Nighat Dad, the founder of Digital Rights Foundation and member of Meta Oversight Board, Mr. Scott Campbell from OHCHR and Ms. Maria Westergren from the United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide.

Closing the meeting, the UN Special Adviser Nderitu thanked the participants for the engagement and efforts on this important topic, stressing that early prevention starts with early action, she welcomed to strong engagement of the Human Rights Council on the prevention of genocide as it relates to its mandate and urged it to continue and further build on this engagement to address situations at risk.

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\*The entire session can be [watched here](#). More information on the main commemoration of the 75 Anniversary of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and the International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and of the Prevention of this Crime can be [found here](#).\*

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