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

What is the Working Group?

The Working Group was established in 2005 by the Commission on Human Rights. It succeeded the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the use of mercenaries, which had been in existence since 1987.

The Working Group is composed of five independent experts, of balanced geographical representation, working collectively together and producing work in the name of the mandate.

Members are elected by the Human Rights Council for a term of no more than six years. They do not receive financial remuneration.

Their independent status is essential for them to be able to fulfil their functions in all impartiality. They work with the support of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The Working Group is mandated to:

- **Monitor mercenaries and mercenary-related activities** in all their forms and manifestations;
- **Study and identify sources and causes, emerging issues, manifestations and trends with regard to mercenaries and mercenary-related activities, offline and online, and their impact on human rights,** particularly on the right of peoples to self-determination.
- Continue the work already carried out by previous mandate holders on the **strengthening of the international legal framework for the prevention and sanction of the recruitment, use, financing, arming and training of mercenaries**;
- Actively **participate 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/or security companies.**

UNITED NATIONS
HUMAN RIGHTS
SPECIAL PROCEDURES
SPECIAL RAPPORTEURS, INDEPENDENT EXPERTS & WORKING GROUPS

How does the Working Group carry out its functions?

1. Transmits **communications** to Governments and other stakeholders with regard to specific allegations of human rights violations involving mercenaries, mercenary-related actors, or private military and/or security companies. Guidance on how to submit information is available at: **https://spsubmission.ohchr.org**;
2. Undertakes **country visits** to examine the impact of mercenaries, mercenary-related actors, or private military and/or security companies on the enjoyment of human rights in the respective country, and submits reports to the Human Rights Council on the findings of the visit, including concrete and constructive recommendations to the Government and other actors to address areas that may benefit from improvement;
3. Submits **annual thematic reports** to the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly on the activities of the mandate and specific thematic issues related to mercenaries, mercenary-related activities, and private military and/or security and companies.
4. Holds **sessions three times per year**, twice in Geneva and once in New York. Generally, the sessions are held in closed meetings during which the Working Group covers a wide range of issues, including, among other things, thematic work, communications and specific country engagement. During its sessions, the Working Group systematically engages with Member States, international and regional organizations, national institutions, UN entities, civil society, academics and other stakeholders.
5. Undertakes **other initiatives** including advocacy, raising awareness, public statements, position papers, amicus curiae briefs, participation in events, as well as **addressing acts of intimidations and reprisals in relation to cooperation with the mandate**, providing technical advice and **contributes to the development of human rights standards** and the work of others in the UN human rights mechanisms or UN system globally.

Contact Information of 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:

OHCHR-UNOG
8-14 Avenue de la Paix
1211 Geneve 10, Switzerland
Tel: +41 (0) 22 918 98 45
Fax: +41 (0) 22 917 90 06

Email: hrc-wg-mercenaries@un.org

Connect with UN Special Procedures on X:
@Un_spexperts

UNITED NATIONS
HUMAN RIGHTS
SPECIAL PROCEDURES
SPECIAL RAPPORTEURS, INDEPENDENT EXPERTS & WORKING GROUPS