

Minority Rights Group International

Agenda item 2

Thank you, Mr. Chair,

On this occasion of the 30th anniversary of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Minorities, I am here from Minority Rights Group to both mark this milestone and critique its implementation.

30 years ago, this document was drafted as an acknowledgement of the centrality of minority rights in the mission of the United Nations. The Declaration was a welcome step but has failed to uphold its initial promise.

In Tajikistan, Pamiris are forced to migrate due to intensive securitisation and militarisation of their homeland, and now face discrimination both in Tajikistan and Russia, where evidence shows that minorities and migrants are targeted for military conscription.

In Egypt, where the existence of minorities is denied, the state has intimidated, arrested, banned from travel and charged with terror offenses minority rights defenders belonging to communities including Copts, Atheists, Quranis, Nubians and Sinai Bedouins.

In India, refugees who fled Myanmar, and then again the squalid conditions of camps in Bangladesh, find themselves in the double bind of being both Muslim and Rohingya: caught between persecution at home and in their place of refuge.

What can the UN do to improve the minority rights framework?

For one, address skepticism about the UN system's effectiveness towards minority concerns. An independent accountability mechanism should regularly review the UN's performance and response, and articulate concrete recommendations for improvement.

Second, disaggregate data, while taking into account intersectionalities, identifying the particular obstacles faced by women, persons with disabilities and other marginalized groups belonging to minorities.

Lastly, make the UN Forum on Minority Issues more accessible. Set up a voluntary fund for financial assistance, ensure an intersectional dimension to its sessions and increase the amount of time dedicated to it.