

Speaker: Thank you Chair. On behalf of Association Ma'onah for Human Rights and Immigration, supported by the Geneva center for Justice. Our organization wants to express deep concerns regarding the shrinking civic space for defenders of Muslim rights in France and across the French speaking world. Over the last few years the fight against terrorism has become a door growing wider and wider that permits the state to exploit vague definitions to clamp down and shut down organizations that provide vital features of support to minority populations in France, including those that belong to the Muslim community. Numerous examples have been raised by our colleagues just over the border. Organizations that are non-profit, non-political and non-religion specific organizations, including those that give simply legal and psychological support to victims of discrimination face threats from state bodies, organs and even order by decree from the Interior Ministry. That are notably not all subject to proper legislative or judicial scrutiny, even if minorities are represented in those bodies. Justifications are based on vague unspecified concepts like 'assisting terrorism,' or 'disruption of public order.' These assertions are very rarely specified, individualized to the specific context and often lack any concrete evidence at all. Yet again in western Europe, it is minorities who suffer because of the instrumentalization of the terrorism threat, as perceived as it may be and security imperatives. Security considerations displace human rights considerations and we won't see progress until human rights takes center and the heart of every decision that is made. Looking constructively, we ask whether the Special Rapporteur, the forum of the experts, is looking at efforts to link with the work done to improve accountability and justice for individual and group for part of the counterterrorism international framework. And we hope the greatest scrutiny can protect human rights defenders, organizations like the ones we have mentioned and stop the shrinking of vital space for minorities to help each other. Thank you.