

**HRC 43
ITEM 2 GENERAL DEBATE
JOINT STATEMENT LEAD BY COSTA RICA AND SWITZERLAND ON PEACEFUL
PROTESTS**

Madam President,

I have the honor of delivering this statement on behalf of Costa Rica and Switzerland as well as xx States. The full list of States joining this statement will be made available on the HRC Extranet.

All around the world, people are raising their voices and demonstrating to advance their human rights. By taking their claims to the street, protestors exercise their right to freedom of expression; they contribute to spur a sound democratic debate, to inclusive public participation and to holding their governments accountable for their action or their lack thereof. Last year has been a record year in terms of protests and the trend is likely to continue in 2020.

We are deeply concerned by the fact that in many instances public protests have been met with repression, including the disproportionate use of force by law enforcement officials, arbitrary arrests and detention of protesters, as well as Internet shutdowns. We are particularly alarmed by the contexts where protests are marked by the intentional use of lethal force against protesters, torture and enforced disappearances. We recall that participation in peaceful protests is an important form of exercising the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly, of expression, of association and of participation in the conduct of public affairs and that these rights are essential components of democracies based on human rights and the rule of law.

Because each protest takes place in its own context and for its own reasons, it is essential to listen and aim to address the grievances being expressed rather than to repress the protests themselves with the risk of adding on to rising social tension.

We call upon States to facilitate such protests by providing protestors, to the extent possible, with access to public space within sight and sound of their intended target audience, and by protecting them, without discrimination, against any form of violence, threat or harassment, and underlining the role of local authorities in this regard. This includes also the safety and protection of those observing, monitoring and recording such protests, including journalists and human rights defenders. Finally, nothing can ever justify the indiscriminate use of lethal force against a crowd.

Any death or significant injury incurred during protests, as well as any allegations of human rights violations must be promptly and effectively investigated and perpetrators must be held accountable.

Thank you Madam President