

THE UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL : HOW EFFECTIVE IS IT?

Although seemingly committed to the concepts of equality, individual freedom and the rule of law, states with atrocious human rights records have secured membership and great influence on the Council, established to "uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights"

Despite Australia's membership of the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC), the Council's working group on arbitrary detention has condemned as arbitrary and illegal our indefinite incarceration of refugees and asylum seekers, issuing critical statements on five individual cases of detention in a year. But those unlawfully held remain in indefinite detention, where they have been held for up to nine years without charge, .

Members generally have failed to condemn human rights abuses in e.g., the Sudan, Byelorussia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and China, says Ibn Warraq. It is largely influenced by nations who have signed a Muslim-based Human Rights Convention. In June 16, 2008, discussion of religious questions was banned by the president of the Council, forbidding criticism of religious human rights breaches.

The UN recently voted to re-elect Saudi Arabia to the Council for the 2017-2019 term, despite its atrocities in Yemen and at home. The Council placed Saudi Arabia in 2015 at the head of a committee that selects investigators to scrutinise human rights in other countries.

It is also noted that failure to take appropriate means to prevent adverse effects of climate warming is a breach of human rights. Torres Strait Islanders have taken Australia to the UN Human Rights Committee arguing that our Government is in breach of their rights to meet its obligations under international agreements.