

Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression

CRIN has conducted an analysis of the Special Rapporteur's work since 2008, identifying the extent to which children's rights have featured (and in particular, which children's rights), together with an assessment of the broader issues being addressed. This short report summarises CRIN's research and provides links to reports and statements made by the Special Rapporteur, together with details of country visits undertaken.

- [Read about the Special Rapporteur's work on the OHCHR webpage.](#)
- [Visit CRIN's main Special Procedures webpage.](#)

Summary

Frank La Rue (Guatemala) has been the Special Rapporteur since 2008. He has submitted three annual reports to the Human Rights Council, undertaken several country visits (including Algeria and Israel), and made several statements on other countries (including Libya and Bahrain).

At the 17th Session of the Human Rights Council in June this year, Mr La Rue's annual report will focus on access to electronic communications and freedom of expression on the Internet. CRIN will be publishing the report as soon as it becomes available and covering the interactive dialogue between the Special Rapporteur, States and NGOs. ([Visit our HRC 17th session page](#)).

In his 2010 annual report, Mr La Rue focused on four key themes, including a section dedicated to groups in need of particular attention. Children featured prominently in this section of the report, notably concerning child participation, the importance of expression in early childhood development, the protection of children from 'bad' information, and the role freedom of expression plays in combating child abuse and domestic violence.

Also in 2010, a joint declaration was made outlining the ten biggest challenges facing freedom of expression in the next decade.

Children's rights in the Special Rapporteur's work

The Special Rapporteur dedicated a section to children in his [2010 annual report](#) to the Human Rights Council. He focused on four key issues concerning children and freedom of opinion and expression:

a) Child participation: The Special Rapporteur (SP) stated that freedom of expression is “the primary channel for participation and serves as a mechanism for inclusion”. This right, the SP states “is therefore necessarily linked to the recognition of, and respect for, human dignity from childhood onward.”

b) Importance of expression in early childhood: The SP made the following comment in his 2010 annual report: “The evolution of one’s own thinking, the ability to express one’s thoughts clearly and the capacity to use alternative means of expression, such as art and electronic and audiovisual means of communication, begin to be developed in childhood. Therefore, child protection programmes should make a special effort to focus on respect for children’s freedom of opinion and expression. Early stimulation and learning programmes should also be promoted, as should full access to schooling and participatory educational programmes that encourage critical thinking, the capacity for expression and a culture of peace.”

c) Protect children from 'bad' information: On protecting children, the SP stated, “while upholding the right to freedom of expression, Governments have a duty to protect children from information that could undermine their dignity and development. They should establish protective mechanisms”.

d) Freedom of expression important in combating child abuse and domestic violence: The SP points out that respecting children's freedom of expression and listening to them attentively are also an important factor in combating child abuse and domestic violence, and in ensuring that these acts do not go unpunished.

Broader issues featured in the Special Rapporteur's work

- Ten key challenges to freedom of opinion and expression made in joint declaration

On the 10th anniversary (2010), a joint declaration was made outlining the ten biggest challenges for freedom of expression in the next decade. They are:

1. Government control over media
2. Criminal defamation
3. Violence against journalists
4. Limits on the right to information
5. Discrimination in the enjoyment of the right to freedom of expression
6. Commercial pressures
7. Support for public services and community broadcasters
8. Security and freedom of expression
9. Clampdown on Internet
10. Access to information and communication technologies

[Click here to read the joint declaration.](#)

Focus for 2011 report

- The Internet / Electronic Communications:

Access to electronic communications and freedom of expression on the Internet will be the theme of the Special Rapporteur's 2011 annual report to the Human Rights Council. This report will be presented during the 17th session of the HRC in Geneva. The presentation will be followed by an interactive dialogue between the SP, States and NGOs.

Read CRIN's coverage of the 17th Session (30 May – 17 June).

Issues raised in past reports

CRIN has researched past reports and statements made by the Special Rapporteur and identified the key issues being focused on. These issues include:

- Right of access to information. *Issue focused on in 2010 HRC report.*
- Access to means of communication. *Issue focused on in 2010 HRC report.*
- Permissible restrictions and limitations on freedom of the expression; *(2010 HRC report)*
- Protection of journalists and freedom of the press. *(2010 HRC Report)*
- Freedom of expression and particular groups: *(2010 HRC Report)*

: *Women*

: *Persons living in extreme poverty*

: *Minorities and Indigenous people*
: *Community-based media*

- Panel discussion on protection of journalists in armed conflict (2010)
- The right of access to information in situations of extreme poverty (2009 HRC session)
- The protection of journalists and media professionals in conflict zones. (2009 HRC session)

Access the above reports / panel discussions

NGO Statements

The following NGOs have made statements to the Human Rights Council on the freedom of opinion and expression:

- Reporters Without Borders International
- Article 19 / International Centre Against Censorship (joint statement)
- Freedom House
- Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development
- European Region of the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA-Europe)
- Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines
- International PEN

[Click here to read the NGO statements.](#)

Country Visits

The Special Rapporteur has undertaken the following recent country visits:

- Algeria: 10 – 17 April 2011
- Hungary 3 – 5 April 2011
- Israel 16 – 31 January 2011
- Mexico 9 - 24 August 2010
- South Korea 6 – 14 May 2010
- Maldives (March) 2009

Click here to read about the country visits.

General Statements

In addition to country visits, the Special Rapporteur has made statements on the following countries (often in conjunction with other Special Rapporteurs):

- Bahrain
- Pakistan
- Libya
- Tunisia

- Yemen

[Click here to read the general statements.](#)