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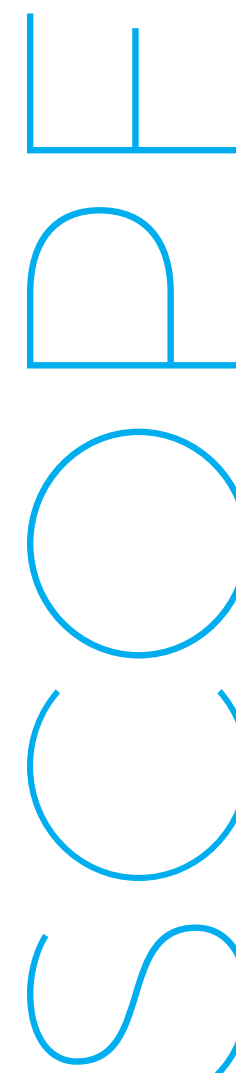
# 2016

## MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

AN ANALYSIS OF PRESS COVERAGE OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL IN 2016



UNIVERSAL RIGHTS GROUP

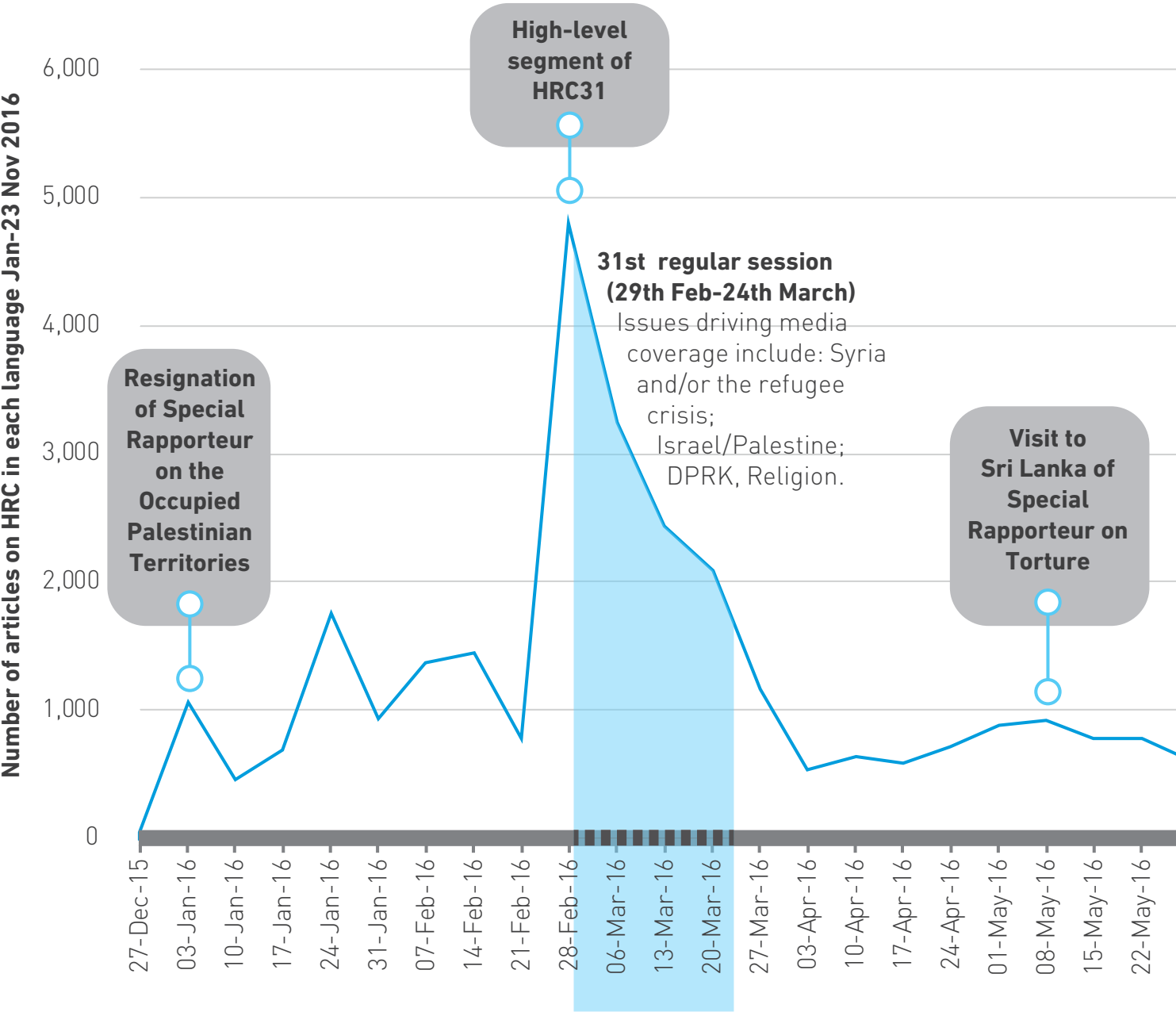


This report provides an analysis of global media coverage of the United Nations Human Rights Council ('the Council') from 1<sup>st</sup> January – 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2016. This period covers three regular sessions of the Council (31<sup>st</sup>-33<sup>rd</sup>) and one special session – the 25<sup>th</sup> special session on the situation in Aleppo (21<sup>st</sup> October). In total 58,791 news articles (in English, French and Spanish) were captured from online sources and analysed to inform this report.

Additionally, this report includes analysis of online media coverage of the United Nations as a whole for a three-month period<sup>1</sup> (23<sup>rd</sup> July-31<sup>st</sup> October 2016), allowing for comparative analysis between its various organisations and 'pillars.' In this context, 293,114 online articles (in English, French and Spanish) were analysed.

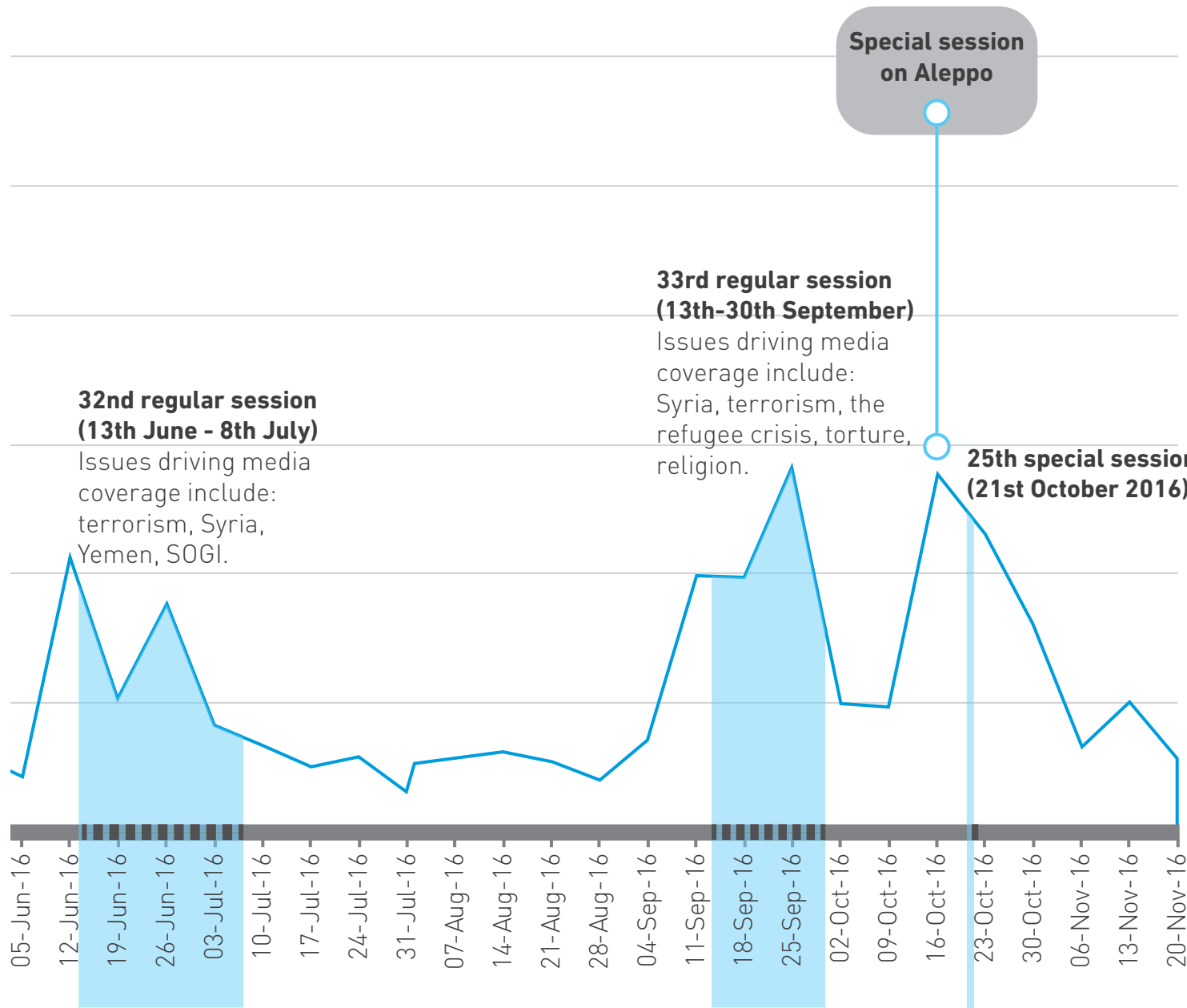
<sup>1</sup> Limited to three months due to the very high volume of articles yielded.

# COUNCIL-RELATED MEDIA COVERAGE DURING 2016: QUANTITATIVE TRENDS



The High-Level Segment of the 31st session of the Council generated the highest peak in coverage during 2016. Other peaks were driven by the other two regular sessions (particularly the first and last weeks of those sessions), and the only special session convened in 2016 (as of the end of November) – on the situation in Aleppo. 2016 also saw some smaller peaks in coverage in between Council sessions, driven, for example, by the resignation of the Special Rapporteur on the Occupied Palestinian Territories (January),

## Press Coverage of HRC 2016



the visit of the UN Special Rapporteur on torture to Sri Lanka (May) and a press release by the COI on Syria (also May). However, these peaks were less significant. This suggests that a significant proportion of international media interest in the Council is driven by developments during regular sessions (international-level developments), rather than by the Council’s real-time response to emerging human rights situations or issues (i.e. local-level developments).



# SUBSTANTIVE FOCUS OF COUNCIL-RELATED PRESS COVERAGE DURING 2016

The human rights consequences of the on-going conflict in Syria dominated press coverage of the Council in 2016, with 21% of articles mentioning the Council also mentioning Syria. Media interest in/coverage of Syria peaked during the high-level segment of the 31<sup>st</sup> session of the Council (29th February-1st March), which saw statements on the human rights situation in the country delivered by, *inter alia*, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, and the Deputy Prime Minister of Turkey. During this two-day period, 65% of the 2,901 articles on the Council also mentioned Syria. Coverage also peaked in the context of the Council's special session on Aleppo on 21<sup>st</sup> October (with 74% of the 2,281 articles published from 19th-22nd October mentioning Syria). Another driver of media interest in the Council's work *vis-à-vis* the situation in Syria was the High Commissioner's interactive dialogue with the Council on 10th March, during which he expressed concern over the plight of 4.2 million Syrian refugees in Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan, and Europe's 'race to repel' migrants travelling by sea. The High Commissioner's remarks on Syria were covered in 606 articles published that day.

The second most covered Council ‘story’ in 2016 was the human rights implications of the migrant or refugee crisis. This issue was referenced in 12% of articles mentioning the Council, often in relation to the conflict in Syria. Coverage of the migration crisis peaked (as did coverage of Syria) on 10<sup>th</sup> March, predominantly driven by a strong statement by High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein.

Other key drivers of media interest in 2016 included Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, torture, terrorism, religion, Yemen, Iran, women's rights and summary executions. Over the course of the year, economic, social and cultural rights issues received far less media coverage than civil and political rights or country situations. Notwithstanding, the impact of climate change and the environmental degradation on economic, social and cultural rights did make it into the 'Top 20' of topics covered in relation to the Council.

**Media coverage of the work of the Council in 2016 covered a wide range of thematic and country-specific topics.**



# GEOGRAPHIC OR GEOPOLITICAL FOCUS OF COUNCIL-RELATED PRESS COVERAGE DURING 2016



These graphics show the frequency of mentions of Council members over the course of 2016, as well as those observer States elected to the Council in late 2016 (that will therefore take up their seat on 1st January 2017). It is important to note that mentions of States in press articles does not necessarily mean that the country in question was the source of the story, nor the subject. Rather, the analysis picks up on all articles in which a given State is mentioned.

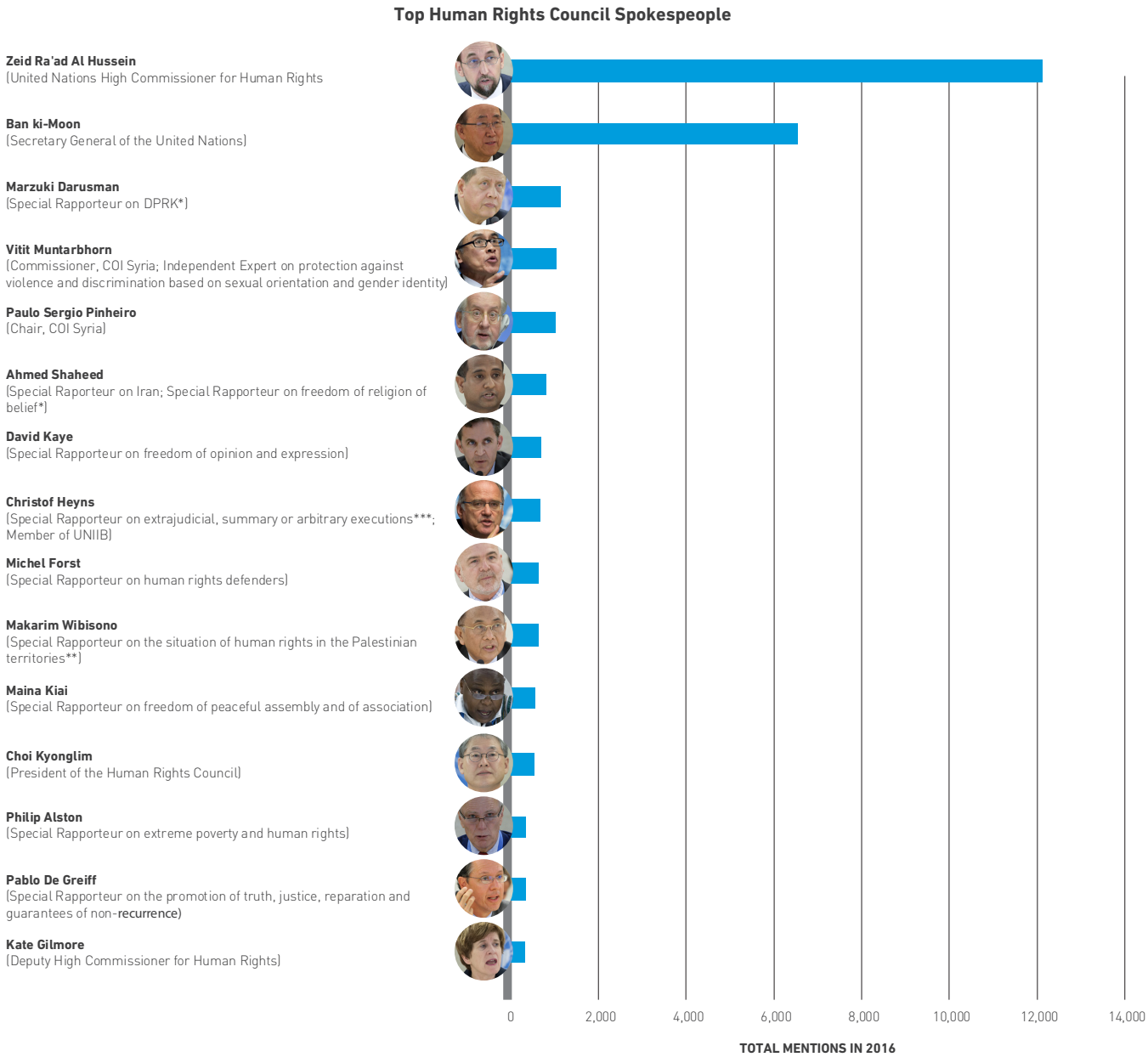
Ranking	Country	Total Mentions	Ranking	Country	Total Mentions
1	USA	15,079	29	Philippines	1,618
2	Russia	11,934	30	Bangladesh	1,501
3	China	9,922	31	Belgium	1,433
4	Saudi Arabia	7,427	32	Kenya	1,375
5	Iraq	5,780	33	Bolivia	1,273
6	India	5,624	34	Croatia	1,257
7	France	5,243	35	Ethiopia	1,250
8	UK	5,168	36	Macedonia	1,163
9	Egypt	4,161	37	Netherlands	1,070
10	Germany	4,034	38	Paraguay	1,044
11	Switzerland	4,002	39	Ecuador	957
12	Venezuela	3,876	40	Albania	907
13	Cuba	3,463	41	Botswana	876
14	Japan	3,389	42	Slovenia	847
15	Burundi	3,383	43	Panama	813
16	South Africa	3,086	44	Côte d'Ivoire	776
17	Brazil	2,519	45	Guatemala	746
18	Republic of Korea	2,407	46	Portugal	692
19	Hungary	2,369	47	Georgia	651
20	Mexico	2,295	48	El Salvador	592
21	Algeria	2,261	49	Congo	507
22	Rwanda	2,243	50	Maldives	429
23	United Arab Emirates	2,172	51	Ghana	411
24	Morocco	2,144	52	Kyrgyzstan	283
25	Qatar	1,871	53	Togo	239
26	Indonesia	1,825	54	Mongolia	228
27	Nigeria	1,820	55	Namibia	190
28	Viet Nam	1,819	56	Latvia	166

# TOP 5 COUNCIL MEMBERS (CURRENT AND INCOMING) MENTIONED IN COUNCIL-RELATED NEWS ARTICLES

- Mentions of the **USA** were mainly in the context of news coverage of the situation in Syria (36% of articles mentioning the USA) and, to a lesser extent, the situation in Israel/Palestine (21%), Yemen (20%) and terrorism (19%). This coverage was spread fairly evenly across the year, though there were peaks during the first weeks of the 31<sup>st</sup> and 32<sup>nd</sup> sessions of the Council, and to a lesser extent during the final week of the 33<sup>rd</sup> session and the special session on Aleppo.
- The majority of the coverage (66% of English language news) mentioning **RUSSIA** was driven by an interest in, and focus on, their role in the conflict in Syria. As with press coverage of the situation in Syria generally, such coverage peaked in the context of the special session on the situation in Aleppo (21<sup>st</sup> October,) as well as in the context of the High-Level Segment of the 31<sup>st</sup> session of the Council (March).
- Articles mentioning **CHINA** and **SAUDI ARABIA** tended to be focused on the situations in Syria, Iran and Yemen.
- The media also devoted significant to the issue of the death penalty in **SAUDI ARABIA**, especially juxtaposed with the its status as a member of the Human Rights Council (13.3% of English-language articles mentioning Saudi Arabia and the Council also mentioned executions or beheadings, and membership).
- **IRAQ** was mentioned mainly in the context of coverage of the Council's work *vis-à-vis* Syria.

# TOP HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL SPOKESPEOPLE 2016

## Top 15 Council Spokespeople 2016



The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad al Hussein was the Council's top spokesperson in 2016, quoted or otherwise referenced in 21% of articles analysed (in English, French and Spanish). UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon was the second most quoted/referenced spokesperson (mentioned in 11% of articles).

All others in the 'Top 10' were either Special Procedures mandate-holders, or Commission of Inquiry (COI) commissioners. Also in the 'Top 15' were the President of the Council, Ambassador Choi Kyonglim and Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, Kate Gilmore.

Photographs by Jean-Marc Ferré, except:  
• Ban Ki-moon by U.S. Mission Photo, Eric Bridiers;  
• Christof Heyns by Maina Kiai;  
• Pablo De Greiff by Violaine Martin.

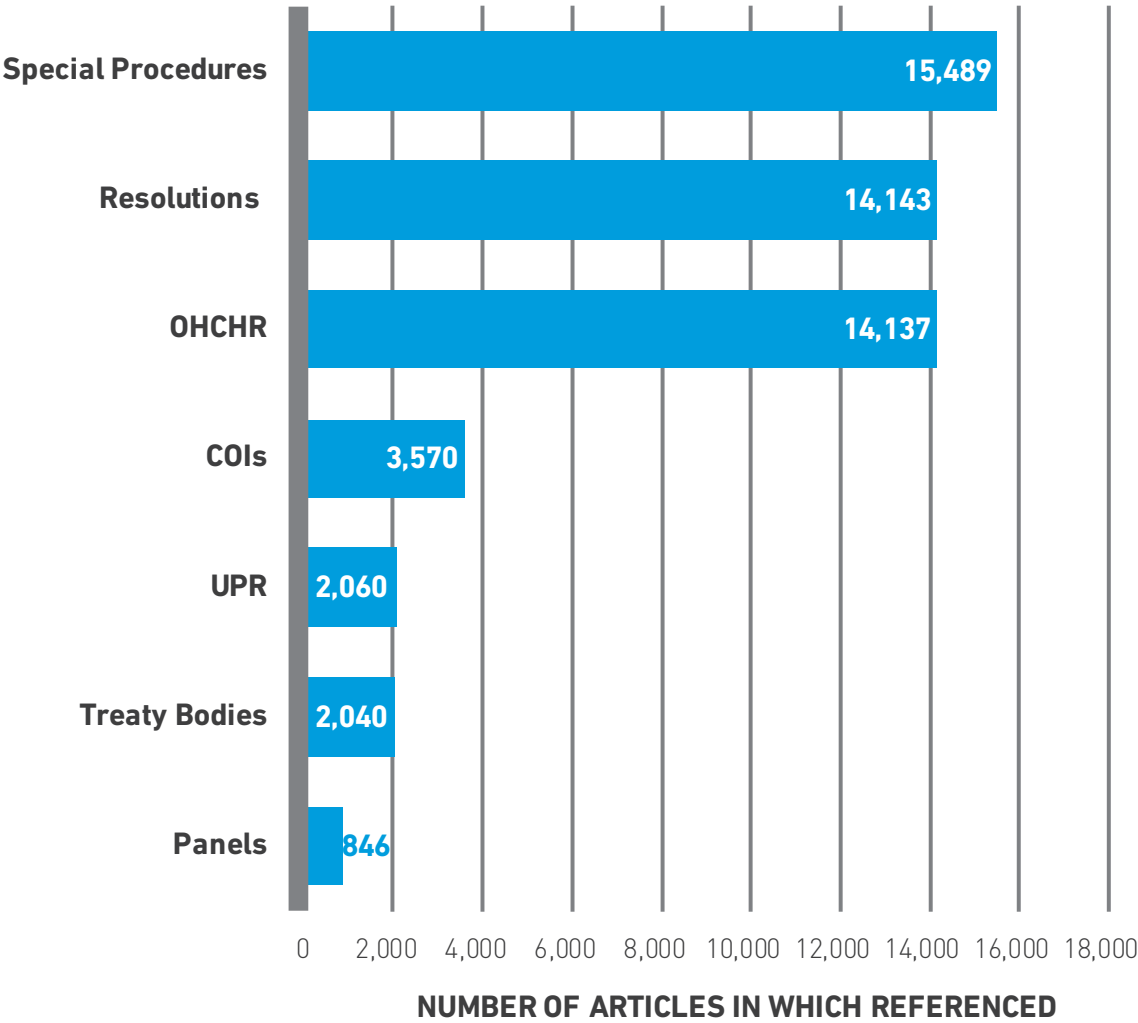
# MECHANISMS AND OUTPUTS OF THE COUNCIL: ‘MIND SHARE’

The Special Procedures appear to have generated the most media coverage in 2016 (26% of articles analysed mentioned one or more of them), followed (fairly closely) by Council resolutions, and OHCHR/ the High Commissioner for Human Rights (which were both mentioned in 24% of articles analysed). The work of Council’s COIs, the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), and Treaty Bodies received relatively little media attention, (they were referenced in only 6%, 4% and 3% of articles, respectively). The Council’s panels debates received the least attention. This suggests public interest in the work of the Council is much higher when the ‘spokesperson’ or protagonist is an independent UN expert or senior UN official, rather than States talking in the context of the UPR or panels. Regarding the Special Procedures, media coverage in 2016 suggests mandate-holders should be known as the ‘mouths’ of the UN human rights system, not just as its ‘eyes and ears.’

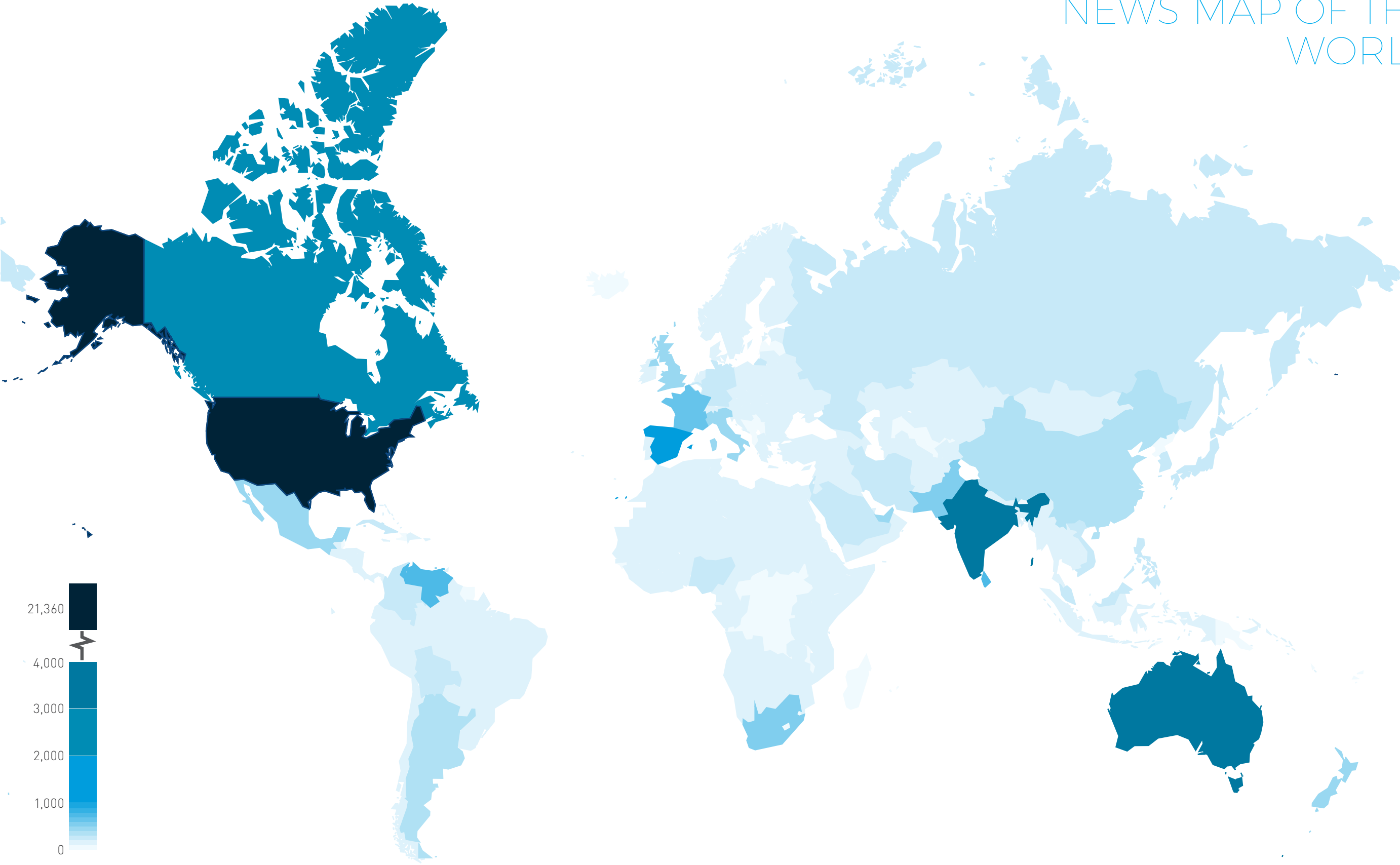
The ‘Top 5’ topics covered by articles referencing the Special Procedures were: torture, religion, racial discrimination, women’s rights and summary executions. Coverage of Special Procedures ebbed and flowed fairly consistently throughout the year, but peaked during the 31<sup>st</sup> session of the Council, and saw a slight dip over the Geneva summer months (July and August).

Syria, religion, terrorism, Iran and torture were the most commonly mentioned themes in articles referencing Council resolutions. The Council’s 2016 resolution on sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) and the subsequent establishment of, and appointment to, a new Special Procedures mandate on the issue also generated a significant amount of media coverage.

Mechanisms Mindshare



NEWS MAP OF THE WORLD



The above map shows the number of articles published in French, Spanish and English (available on the Vuelio web platform used for the analysis) by country. By far the greatest

number of articles (in French, Spanish and English) were published in the USA, followed by India, Australia, Canada, Spain, Sri Lanka, Venezuela, France, South Africa, Pakistan and the UK.

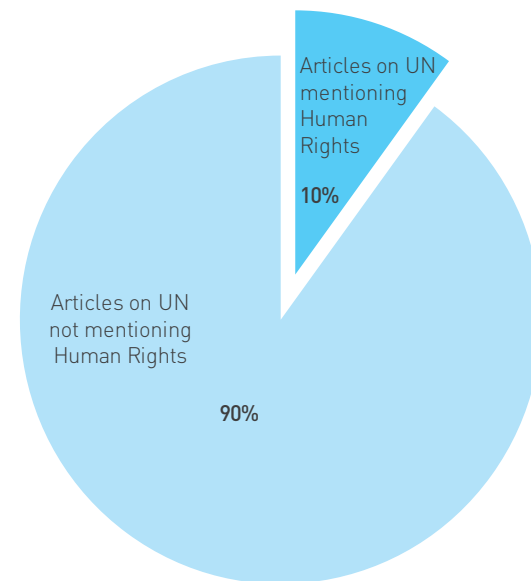


# HUMAN RIGHTS: THE UN'S LITTLE PILLAR

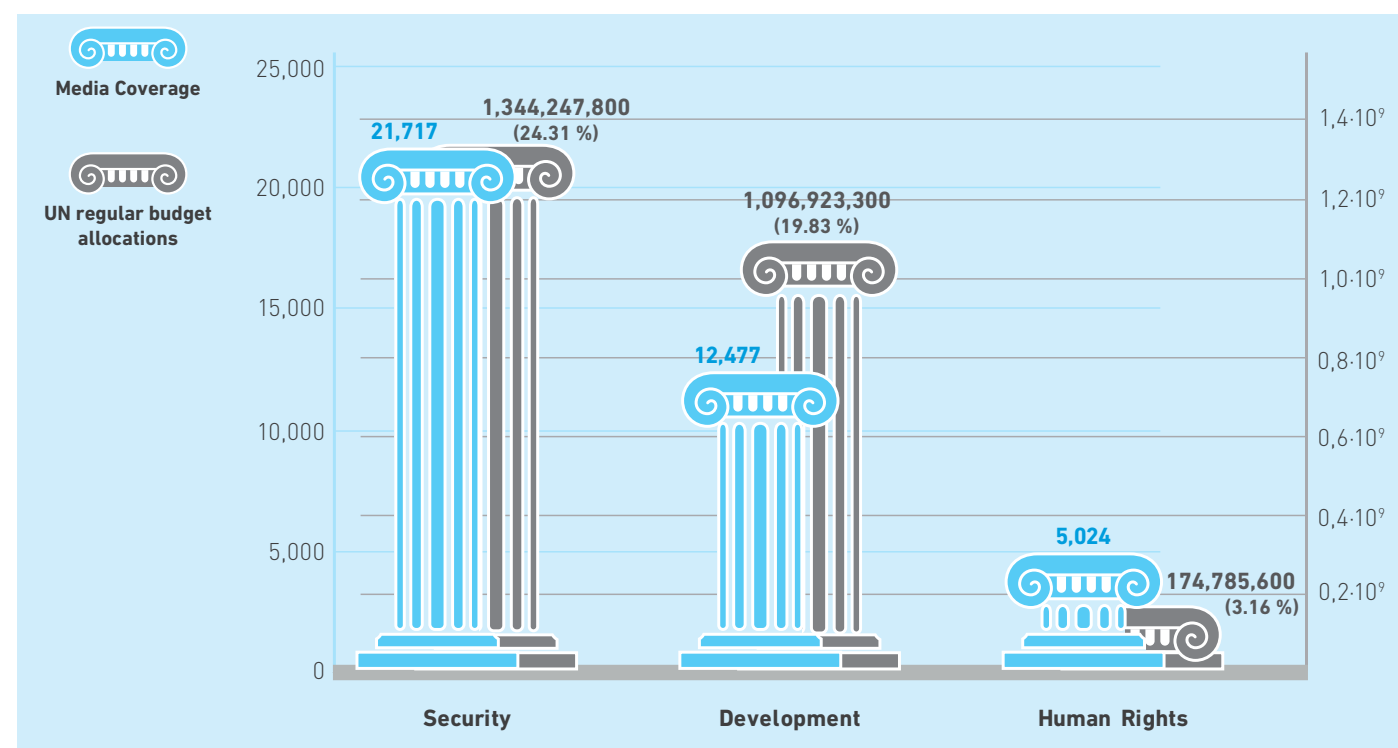
In addition to a comprehensive analysis of global media coverage of the work of the Council in 2016, the URG also conducted an at-a-glance analysis of press coverage of the UN as a whole over a three-month period (23<sup>rd</sup> July-31<sup>st</sup> October 2016) to assess the volume of coverage of the human rights pillar compared to the rest of UN and to other international organisations.

Overall, around 10% of articles mentioning the United Nations published online (in English, French or Spanish) during the review period also mentioned 'human rights.'

## Media Coverage of United Nations 2016



## The UN's three pillars: media coverage v.s. regular budget allocations

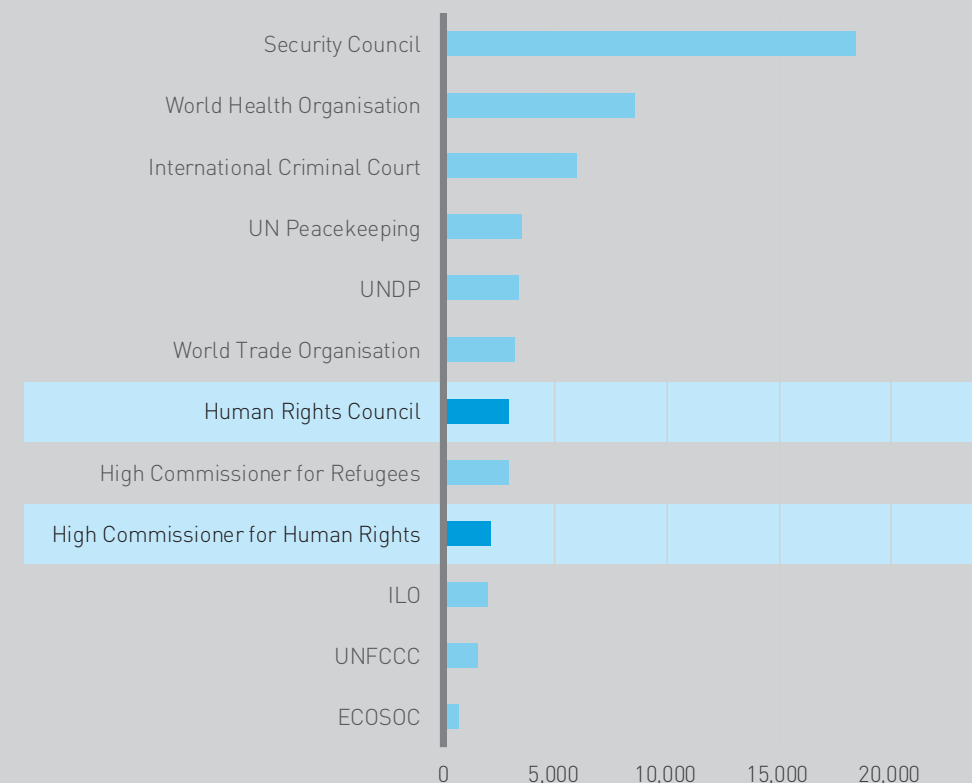


Our analysis shows that global media coverage of the Council is, in quantitative terms, similar to the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, and higher than the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

and the International Labour Organization (ILO). It is, however, far less than media coverage of the Security Council, the World Health Organization (WHO), or the International Criminal Court (ICC).

## Coverage of Selected International Organisations

### Coverage of Selected International Organisations



Cumulatively, the media appears to have paid far greater attention, during 2016, to the security and development pillars of the UN than to the human rights pillar.<sup>2</sup> Interestingly the amount of media interest in each of the three pillars is, in relative terms, very similar to the proportion of UN's regular budgetary resources devoted to each of them. Notwithstanding, media coverage generated by

the human rights pillar is somewhat higher than the proportion of the regular budget it receives from the UN (3%), suggesting the human rights pillar is 'punching above its weight' in terms of global media and public interest.

<sup>2</sup> The data in the above infographic ('Media Coverage of the Three Pillars of the UN') is based on the addition of the number of articles mentioning each of mechanism in each of the three pillars. Because it is possible that one article might mention more than one mechanism from that pillar (i.e. the categories are not mutually-exclusive), the total number of articles published referencing each pillar might be lower than it appears in the infographic.

## METHODOLOGY

All data in the report is based on analysis of media articles published online – in English, French or Spanish – between 1 January and 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2016 (unless otherwise stated) mentioning the ‘Human Rights Council’ and/or the ‘United Nations,’ using the Vuelio web platform. Search terms for topics, spokespeople and mechanisms were programmed into the system using all expected variations, and the totals recorded for all articles in English, French and Spanish published online.

Because of the incredibly high volume of coverage and related data storage issues, analysis of broader coverage of the United Nations needed to be limited to a 3-month period. Based on search terms provided by the URG – in English, French and Spanish – the volume of coverage was determined by Vuelio analysts, using an alternative media monitoring platform.



Permanent Mission  
of the Federal Republic of Germany  
to the Office of the United Nations and  
to the other International Organizations  
Geneva



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