

# UNHRC comes under fire at human rights forum in Joburg



By [Danette Breitenbach](#)

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The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) came under heavy criticism at the [Oslo Freedom Forum](#) (OFF) held in Johannesburg earlier this week. Founder of OFF and CEO of the [Human Rights Foundation](#) [Thor Halvorssen](#) referred to the body as a "generation of swindle of giant proportion".

“ Each figure represents 10 million people - [@ThorHalvorssen](#) kicks off [#OFFinJoburg](#) [pic.twitter.com/VO0hlztLo4](#)—

[Bilal Randeree](#)     ([@bilalr](#)) [March 26, 2018](#) ”

Halvorssen said that the UNHRC represents the confusion that exists among us. “It is ironic that some members of council lack human rights, such as freedom of speech, in their own countries.”

[Zineb El Rhazoul](#), a Moroccan-born French human rights activist and former columnist for the satirical weekly magazine *Charlie Hebdo*, said as long as these countries sit on the council and can vote, we will never solve any issues, such as women's rights. “No salvation can come from this council and that is why we need to build other alternative ways to rid society of dictators.”

[Iyad el-Baghdadi](#), a prominent Palestinian intellectual, writer and activist, added his voice to the debate saying that he is not a fan of over reliance on government for change. “Citizens are the ones who bring about change. It is up to us to pressure our officials to achieve change. They do what you ask them to do.” If you can vote in democracy, then you are already privileged, he added.

## Zimbabwe's new government

Governments are not in the business of social justice, said [Evan Mawarire](#), a civil rights activist and leader of the #ThisFlag movement in Zimbabwe. “Governments are in the business of retaining power. That is what they do. Therefore, in the future, citizens need to find and develop global platforms because that is our business. Our business is protecting ourselves.”



[Evan Mawarire](#) is a civil rights activist, pastor, and leader of the #ThisFlag movement in Zimbabwe.

He is under no illusion that the new government in Zimbabwe is promoting freedom. “The new government in Zimbabwe has its own agenda and none of the changes they make are addressing the freedom of the people. Zimbabwe may be open for business, but it is not open for freedom.”

Halvorssen said the council has not addressed any of the issues any of the speakers at the forum will address: "Not freedom in Zimbabwe and Angola, gay rights in Egypt, or female genital mutilation (FGM) in Somalia."

## ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

Danette Breitenbach is a marketing & media editor at Bizcommunity.com. Previously she freelanced in the marketing and media sector, including for Bizcommunity. She was editor and publisher of AdVantage, the publication that served the marketing, media and advertising industry in southern Africa. She has worked extensively in print media, mainly B2B. She has a Masters in Financial Journalism from Wits.

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