

NGO Submission  
For the  
UN Human Rights Council  
UPR Submission  
(PALAU)

By:

VOICES Palau, Inc.

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Palau is a small island nation and with a small island country there are many challenges.

VOICES Palau, Inc. was formally established in 2006 as an advocacy rights group in Palau, this year, VOICES Palau was formally registered as a non-profit corporation in the Republic of Palau.

VOICES Palau, hereby submits its report to the Office of the Human Rights Council in hopes the our voices would be heard.

### **National Human Rights Institution**

In Palau, we do not have a national human rights institution, therefore, there are many rights, human rights and civil rights of person violated without any recourse for the individual. Of course, the legal system, judicial branch is available, however, access to justice is limited because of economics. The average working Palauan or Palauan resident cannot afford the high cost of litigating their human rights.

VOICES Palau has been advocating for the establishment of a human rights commission in the Republic of Palau.

An example of human rights violation by Palau Government and its agencies is the state action against the residents of Ngerumetek in Airai State, Republic of Palau. The residents, prior to their establishment of their residential homes, were not informed that the government was planning to expand the airport runway area. In 2009/2010 the Government/its agencies started building and bulldozing the area, when the residents expressed opposition to this airport extension they were called to a meeting and asked by the government to sign "waivers" and when they refused to sign the waivers they were told to move their homes. Since this

incident the residents have taken steps to communicate with the United State Federal Aviation Agency and other means to obtain help. The residents have also gone to several attorneys, including the Micronesian Legal Services, which is a non-profit legal services in Palau, however, they were turned down. The above is a prime example of the need for a National Human Rights Commission in Palau.

### **Ratification of CEDAW**

The ratification of CEDAW has also been a pending issue in the Republic of Palau, despite the fact that there have been trainings and requests by the people to the government to ratify CEDAW. In 2001, the Office of the Women's Affairs was eliminated and to this day, there is still yet to be a National Women's Office.

### **Ratification of Convention of Migrant Workers**

The ratification of the Convention of Migrant Workers is another necessity, considering that there are over 8,000 migrant workers in Palau, this is about 35% of the population. There are many rights that are violated, an example of just violation, is that national law that prohibits "transfers" ; migrant workers are prohibited from transferring from one employee to another, unless they return to their home country for seven (7)years and then return to Palau to a different employee.

Additionally, there is also legislation that provides for minimum wage to residents but not for migrant workers.

### **Children**

Despite ratification of CRC, over a decade ago, there is lack of implementation of CRC, especially in the area of updating domestic laws to uphold the CRC. An example, there is no protection for boys in cases of “rape” and sexual abuse.

### **Women**

Women’s rights are also violated in that, a woman in Palau can be “raped” by her husband and it would be “lawful”. There is no protection in the criminal statutes for women sexually assaulted by their husbands and/or common law partners.

Additionally, women are not being represented in the legislative branch and the executive branch, there are only two (2) women in the congress with a twenty-nine member congress.

There are no support mechanism for women to run for legislative bodies. More recently, there were two (2) women in the executive branch, the President’s cabinet, but early this year, President Toribiong terminated Sandra S. Pierantozzi from her post as Minister of State.

In conclusion, there are many other issues such as Economic and Social Development and the affects of Global Warming and Climate Change, as well as, Freedom of Expression and Access to Justice, however, because of time limitation, VOICES Palau can only submit the above but look forward to working with the Office of the Human Rights Council and other International Agencies to meet the needs of the citizens and residents of the Republic of Palau.