



13 - 14 September 2014 –High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay, who has been one of the most visible UN actors of late, left her post in August.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon named the South African lawyer, who fought apartheid and was the first non-white women appointed to the High Court of South Africa in 1995, High Commissioner for Human Rights in 2008.

During her mandate, Pillay’s objective was to defend the rights of all people who fell victim to discrimination and injustice in the world, regardless of their background. In a world marked by ever growing conflicts, Ms. Pillay strived to protect the rights of all men, women and children threatened by these clashes.

Never the less, she has been criticised by certain governments and opponents who have accused her of not adopting a truly neutral position. Amongst the numerous criticisms that she has faced, Ms. Pillay has been qualified as the, “Tamil tigress”, by the Sri-Lankan government. Another detractor, the Syrian ambassador, called her a “lunatic” after her condemnation of

human rights violations perpetrated by the regime in Damascus.

Stalwart in the face of these attacks, Ms. Pillay says she remains convinced of the moral authority of the [United Nation's High Commissioner for Human Rights](#) and of the support this role brings to 190 countries, not only in development, but across the EU as well.

A battle relayed to Brussels

Created in 2009, the Brussels based [regional office of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights](#) (OHCHR) has taken the initiative to investigate human rights issues in numerous European countries. According to the Regional Representative Jan Jařab and his Deputy Paul d'Auchamp, the focus of the regional office has been primarily turned towards issues such as migration, Roma and persons with disabilities, including the mentally disabled.

With the economic crisis as a constant background and heavily contested austerity measures in many states, discrimination and racism continue to be serious problems in the EU member states.

“How can we live like this, in Europe, today?”

Mr. Jařab remembers having joined Navi Pillay in a Roma camp in Italy in 2010. Ms. Pillay, Mr. Jařab recalls, was shocked by the living conditions in the camp and remarked to him that she had no idea people could, in our day and age, still live like this in Europe.

The Brussels based office offers a forum for identifying, addressing and reacting to human rights issues, and assists governments in applying international human rights



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