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## ANOTHER UNITED NATIONS EXPERT LABELS NORTHERN TERRITORY INTERVENTION 'RACIST'

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the human rights of Indigenous people has released an extraordinary report criticising the Australian Government on its approach to the Northern Territory Intervention. While the Special Rapporteur has welcomed the Government's efforts to address the conditions faced by many Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory, he has expressed concerns about several problematic aspects of the Northern Territory Intervention that breach Australia's international legal obligations.

"The Special Rapporteur's report confirms that the Intervention's measures are discriminatory, are not improving the lives of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory, and are damaging the Australian Government's relationship with Aboriginal communities," says Ben Schokman, a Senior Lawyer with the Human Rights Law Resource Centre.

The Special Rapporteur has chosen to devote special and urgent attention to the matter of the Northern Territory Intervention in advance of proposed legislation being considered by the Senate that seeks to partially reinstate the operation of the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*, but expand the income management provisions to apply across the entire country.

"The Special Rapporteur's report is particularly timely as the Rudd Government seeks to make technical and farcical amendments to the Northern Territory Intervention."

"The report indicates that there is no evidence that the Northern Territory Intervention measures have been necessary."

"The Special Rapporteur's report clearly states that any measures targeted at addressing Aboriginal disadvantage and 'Closing the Gap' will only be effective if the human rights of Aboriginal people are respected and they are directly involved in decision making regarding their own affairs."

"The Northern Territory Intervention is in clear breach of a number of Australia's international obligations to respect and promote the human rights of Aboriginal Australians."

"The world is watching Australia's treatment of its Aboriginal people, particularly now that the Special Rapporteur is the fourth respected United Nations body in the last twelve months to label the Northern Territory Intervention racist," says Schokman.

"Many of the Special Rapporteur's observations and recommendations mirror what the Government's own Review Board found more than twelve months ago – that the Northern Territory Intervention is racially discriminatory and is having a lasting negative effect on the relations between Aboriginal people and the Australian Government."

The report follows an official visit to Australia by the United Nations independent expert in August last year. The Special Rapporteur's full report on his country visit will be released in the coming months.

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