

[Combating reprisals against human rights defenders who expose torture](#)

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(New York) - All 193 States in the UN General Assembly have joined in condemning intimidation and reprisals against human rights defenders and others who work to expose and combat torture and ill-treatment.

In a [significant resolution proposed by Denmark](#) and sponsored by over 60 other States from all regions, the General Assembly recognised the absolute prohibition against torture in all circumstances whatsoever and the absolute imperative of protecting those who work to prevent it.

'In recent years human rights defenders around the world have played a crucial role in exposing instances of torture and ill-treatment. Unfortunately, many such brave persons have faced reprisals and retaliation for this important work,' said Madeleine Sinclair, Legal Counsel with the International Service for Human Rights.

In 2013 alone, the UN Committee against Torture expressed concern about retaliation against non-governmental organisations from Russia for their cooperation with the UN, while the [Secretary-General highlighted cases of reprisals](#) against human rights defenders and others who work to combat torture in Iran, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tajikistan and the United Arab Emirates.

'All persons have the right to unhindered access to UN human rights bodies to expose and seek accountability for human rights violations. Protection and exercise of this right is especially important in order to shine an international light on the dark practice of torture,' Ms Sinclair said.

'Reprisals and intimidation against human rights defenders who expose cases of torture are committed with the intent of shielding torturers and others who perpetrate or acquiesce in ill-treatment. In this context, we welcome the commitment of States through the resolution to thoroughly investigate and ensure accountability for reprisals, and to provide redress to human rights defenders and others who are victims of such attacks,' Ms Sinclair said.

Speaking after the unanimous adoption of the resolution, the Danish Minister of Development Cooperation, Mr Christian Friis Bach, said: 'Regretfully, the use of torture is still widespread, even though an absolute prohibition of torture exists within international law. With this resolution Denmark now put the fights against torture even higher on the agenda and we are focusing on key areas such as torture victims' right to redress and the importance of individuals' ability to freely contact the institutions working to prevent and combat torture.'

The International Service for Human Rights congratulates and thanks Denmark for its important leadership on this General Assembly resolution, which builds on a [landmark resolution specifically addressing reprisals against those who cooperate with the UN adopted by the UN Human Rights Council in September](#).

'It is very pleasing to see the emerging international consensus condemning reprisals against those who cooperate with the UN. The next step is for States to translate this consensus into concrete action by enacting [specific laws and policies at the national level](#) to protect human rights defenders and others who seek accountability for human rights violations through the UN,' Ms Sinclair said.

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Photo: UN Photo/Rick Bajornas - Christian Friis Bach, Minister for Development Cooperation of Denmark

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