

[Honduras: Strengthen and enact draft law on the protection of human rights defenders](#)

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New briefing paper in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

(Geneva) - Authorities in Honduras should urgently strengthen and enact a draft law on the protection of human rights defenders currently before Congress, the International Service for Human Rights said today.

The call came as the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights [concluded a country visit to Honduras](#) and expressed alarm at the high level of violence against human rights defenders, journalists and their families, and the impunity with which the vast majority of such attacks are perpetrated.

In a [press release](#), the Inter-American Commission said that authorities in Honduras should 'adopt urgent measures to attack the structural causes of this violence and impunity' and 'ensure that the Bill currently before Congress for the protection of journalists, human rights defenders, and justice operators meets all human rights standards and is urgently approved.'

'The legal recognition and protection of human rights defenders in a specific law is a necessary, although by no means sufficient, element of establishing a safe and enabling environment for their work,' said Ben Leather of ISHR.

'Authorities in Honduras should consult and work closely with civil society actors to ensure that the draft law fully incorporates the international Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, effectively responds to the situation and protection needs of defenders at the national level, and is implemented with adequate resources and without delay,' Mr Leather said.

The forthcoming Universal Periodic Review of Honduras, scheduled for April 2015, presents an opportunity for States and other stakeholders to increase pressure on authorities to strengthen and enact the draft law. In a [Briefing Paper](#) prepared specifically for the UPR, ISHR calls on States to recommend to Honduras that it enact and fully implement a law on the protection of human rights defenders, while also reviewing and repealing

legislative provisions which restrict and criminalise their work.

'ISHR calls on Honduras to refrain from criminalising the legitimate activities of human rights defenders - particularly those working to promote lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender rights or to oppose large-scale development projects - and repeal all laws and policies that restrict their activities,' Mr Leather said.

The recommendations of both ISHR and the Inter-American Commission in relation to Honduras reflect key recommendations contained within ISHR's recent global report '[From Restriction to Protection](#)', which calls on all States, in consultation with civil society actors, to develop, enact and effectively implement a national law on the protection of human rights defenders and to repeal laws which criminalise or otherwise restrict their vital work.

The recommendations also largely reflect those set out in an important [new report by Protection International](#) which analyses national laws and policies on the protection of human rights defenders in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

'Honduras should seize the opportunity to show international and regional leadership by responding positively to recommendations made by the likes of Protection International, ISHR, the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders and now the Inter-American Commission to give full legislative force and effect to the international Declaration on Human Rights Defenders at the national level,' Mr Leather said.

Contact: Ben Leather, International Service for Human Rights, on b.leather@ishr.ch

Photo: Agence France Press

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