

## [Rwanda: Briefing paper on the situation of human rights defenders](#)

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Rwanda must reform laws and put in place mechanisms to guarantee the safety of those who defend human rights and freedom of expression. ISHR's new briefing paper makes the case for human rights defender related recommendations at Rwanda's upcoming Universal Periodic Review



(Geneva) - Rwanda is scheduled to be reviewed at the 23rd session of the Universal Periodic Review in November 2015.

In its last Universal Periodic Review in January 2011, Rwanda accepted all four recommendations specific to human rights defenders, with a subsequent amendment to the restrictive 2009 Media Law. However, human rights defenders continue to face harassment, intimidation, arbitrary arrest and unfair trials, whilst laws for the prevention of ethnic divisionism and hatred are abused to restrict freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

Especially vulnerable are corporate accountability and environmental rights defenders, who are frequently accused of being anti-development and risk threats of violence, intimidation and the closure of their organisations.

Key recommendations that should be made to Rwanda at the UPR in 2015 include that the Government should enact specific laws and policies to protect the work of human rights defenders and should combat impunity by ensuring investigations into violations and attacks against defenders and other civil society actors. Rwanda should also reform laws based on genocide ideology that can be arbitrarily used to restrict freedom of expression, as well as sanction any authority found to be abusing such laws.

This [Briefing Paper on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders in Rwanda](#) is intended to assist States and other stakeholders to formulate questions and recommendations regarding the protection of human rights defenders during the UPR.

For further information about the Briefing Paper or for any assistance or advice in the formulation of recommendations, please contact ISHR's Clement Voule, on [c.voule@ishr.ch](mailto:c.voule@ishr.ch).

*Photo: Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (left) meets with Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda / UN Photo*

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