

[African Commission: Respond to protection needs of women defenders at regional and national levels](#)

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(Banjul, The Gambia) - Welcoming [a report of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights on the situation of women human rights defenders](#) in the continent, the International Service for Human Rights has called on Commissioners to mainstream the recommendations of the report into their own work and to promote reform to better protect women human rights defenders at the national level.

An [ISHR statement](#) delivered in response to a separate report of the ACHPR Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa, Ms Soyata Maiga, also welcomed the adoption of General Comment 2 to Article 14 of the Maputo Protocol. Article 14 guarantees women's right to health, including sexual and reproductive health.

'We appreciate Ms Maiga's close cooperation with women human rights defenders from Africa in the development of these General Comments, particularly as many women working in the area of sexual and reproductive health and rights are vulnerable to attacks, including from non-State actors and from within their own communities or families,' said Mr Ben Leather, Advocacy and Communications Manager with ISHR.

ISHR also encouraged Ms Maiga to work in collaboration with the ACHPR Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders to systematise the Commission's interactions with women human rights defenders.

'The Commission should ensure that women human rights defenders are aware of all the mechanisms available for their protection, including the communications procedures. We recommend that the Commission's own monitoring and response to human rights violations are sensitive to the experiences of women human rights defenders,' Mr Leather said.

Among its recommendations, the ACHPR report on women human rights defenders called on States to develop legislation that guarantees the rights of human rights defenders to safely and securely conduct their work. In particular, it highlights the need for specific provisions within such laws to recognise women human rights defenders and the specific protection they require. In this regard, ISHR welcomed the law passed in Côte d'Ivoire on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights Defenders in June 2014, Article 9 of which is a specific provision on women defenders.

'We recommend that the Commission work with the Côte d'Ivoire government and civil society to unpack this provision to develop national mechanisms that respond to the specific protection needs of women human

rights defenders and ensure an enabling environment for them to work safely. Furthermore, such protection mechanisms should promptly, effectively and impartially investigate all allegations of violations against women human rights defenders, particularly with the view to combating impunity,' Mr Leather said.

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