

[“Reprisals must stop,” urge top international experts on human rights defenders](#)

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A group of international experts on the situation of human rights defenders has [urged world governments to halt reprisals](#) against individuals and groups seeking to cooperate with the United Nations and regional human rights systems.* They also called on States to ease, rather than hinder, civil society’s access to the UN and regional human rights institutions.

'Reprisals have to cease immediately and credible investigations into pending cases of reprisals have to be carried out,' said the Rapporteurs on Human Rights Defenders from the United Nations (UN), Ms Margaret Sekaggya; the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights (ACHPR), Ms Reine Alapini-Gansou; and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), Mr José de Jesús Orozco.

'These reprisals against individuals and/or groups engaging directly with the UN, the ACHPR and the IACHR, or otherwise providing information on particular countries’ human rights situations, take the form of smear campaigns, harassment, intimidation, direct threats, physical attacks and killings,' they said.

In an effort to safeguard the vital collaboration between civil society and the UN and regional human rights mechanisms, the three Rapporteurs appealed for enhanced monitoring and action to respect the UN, ACHPR and IACHR normative agreements and rules of procedure explicitly prohibiting acts of reprisals by States and non-State actors.

'Such steps towards full accountability for reprisals are an important preventive measure that should be combined with those that facilitate, rather than deter, civil society’s safe and unimpeded access to the UN and the regional human rights institutions,' stressed Ms Sekaggya, Ms Alapini-Gansou and Mr Orozco.

The three international Rapporteurs also supported the recent initiative by the President of the UN Human Rights Council, Ms Laura Dupuy Lasserre, calling on Governments to immediately put an end to harassment and intimidation of individuals and groups attending the on-going session of the Human Rights Council, taking place in Geneva, Switzerland.

Ms Dupuy Lasserre expressed her concern about reports of State and other representatives using aggressive and/or insulting language against civil society representatives, and photographing and filming them without their consent on UN premisses, including in the main Council’s chamber, with a view to intimidate and harass them. She announced that those accusations will be investigated.

ISHR facilitated a meeting between the Rapporteurs on human rights defenders of the UN and the IACHR, on common efforts to address acts of reprisals against those collaborating with the UN and the regional systems. As an outcome of the meeting, the Rapporteurs decided to produce the issued [statement on reprisals](#). The Rapporteur on human rights defenders of the ACHPR also chose to support the initiative.

ISHR made its own [statement to the Human Rights Council](#) today on reprisals against those that cooperate with the UN, its representatives, and mechanisms in the field of human rights. The statement acknowledged efforts to date to try and address the issue of reprisals, and highlighted the need for such efforts to be continued and enhanced.

(*) Check the official joint statement, available in [English](#) (original), [French](#) and [Spanish](#).