

## [UN experts launch practical advice on management of protests](#)

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(Geneva) - UN human rights experts have launched a major [new report](#) on the proper management of assemblies at the Human Rights Council in Geneva. The compilation of practical recommendation, which seeks to ensure that the management of assemblies and protests comply with international law through which to apply international law, was drafted by the Special Rapporteurs on Freedom of Association and Assembly and on Extrajudicial Executions, after a series of consultations with multiple stakeholders including civil society.

In a [statement](#) delivered to the Council and to the Rapporteurs, Maina Kiai and Christoph Heyns respectively, ISHR called upon all States to carry out comprehensive reviews of their laws and practises on the management of assemblies, making any amendments necessary to bring them into line with the report's findings.

ISHR also welcomed the report's emphasis on the responsibilities of business. 'We hear increasingly of abuses by private security firms against protesters, as well as strategic lawsuits against public participation brought by companies and the enactment, by States, of laws which specifically target and restrict protests against business operations,' said ISHR's Ben Leather. 'States should take heed of the recommendations made in the report to reverse these trends'. ISHR called upon the Rapporteurs to provide input to the development of National Action Plans on business and human rights.

An interactive dialogue with the Rapporteurs followed the report's presentation, and several States - including Norway, Egypt and Ireland - reiterated the responsibilities of business. Whilst a broad range of States - including Costa Rica, Turkey and Tunisia - acknowledged the report's importance, others used their interventions to emphasise the responsibilities of protesters. In response to Russia, Botswana and Cuba amongst others, Mr Heyns was clear: 'Rights come before responsibilities. The report does not challenge that responsibilities are an inherent component of human rights, but one must come before the other.' Maina Kiai underlined that 'requiring authorisation for a protest dilutes a right to a mere privilege'.

ISHR's statement reiterated that free assembly is a vital component of a safe and enabling environment for human rights defence, and highlighted how vague laws such as the *Ley de Tumulos* in Guatemala, repressive clampdowns on protest such as in Gezi Park in Turkey, and the imprisonment of protesters such as the Bahrain 13 are being used to hamper the work of human rights defenders.

'As more States develop much-needed laws for the protection of human rights defenders, it is vital they include provisions which protect the right to peaceful assembly and facilitate the repeal or amendment of any existing legislation which unduly restricts it,' the ISHE statement read. 'We call upon the Rapporteurs, in consultation with civil society, to support States in the development of such laws, ensuring that they facilitate the implementation of the report's recommendations'.

'Another strength of the report is its emphasis on ensuring that vulnerable groups can fully enjoy the right to assembly,' said Mr Leather. However, Morocco, Iran and Russia suggested that the report's credibility was undermined by references to sexual orientation and gender identity. Mr Kiai responded by underscoring that the LGBTI population is particularly marginalised and therefore needs not only to be protected, but to be given a voice.

Today on the sidelines of the Human Rights Council, the Rapporteurs will consult both States and NGOs regarding how to ensure a successful implementation of the report's recommendations.

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