

[HRC President | Call on member States to cooperate with UN experts](#)

16.09.2016

The President of the Human Rights Council should ensure full State cooperation with the Council and its human rights experts, and States must act to make the Council more accessible, effective and protective, ISHR has said in a statement to the 33rd session of the Council.



(Geneva) - The President of the Human Rights Council should ensure full State cooperation with the Council and its human rights experts, and States must make the Council more accessible, effective and protective, ISHR [said today](#).

In a statement to the Human Rights Council's 33rd session, ISHR has highlighted that 19 of the Human Rights Council's members - Bangladesh, Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, Ethiopia, France, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Macedonia, Mexico, Morocco, Nigeria, Philippines, Russia, South Africa, Venezuela and Viet Nam - ignore [concerns expressed](#) at alleged violations in their countries by the UN's human rights experts. 52 countries in total have failed to respond to at least one communication by UN independent experts.

'Full cooperation is not limited to replying to letters,' emphasised Nolan. 'The ongoing targeting of Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (El Consejo Cívico de Organizaciones Populares e Indígenas de Honduras - COPINH), which has been the subject of several exchanges between the Government and UN human rights experts, demonstrates that States may respond to communications, but without taking concrete action to change the situation on the ground, human rights defenders will continue to be victims of threats, violence and assassination,' said ISHR's Training and Advocacy Support Manager Helen Nolan.

ISHR also called on members of the UN General Assembly to make use of the historic opportunity of the 10th anniversary of the Human Rights Council to make the Council more [accessible, effective and protective](#).

In that light, Nolan explained that ISHR welcomed the participation of States seeking election to the Council in [Geneva's first event](#) to discuss the visions and aspirations of potential new Council members, bringing much needed transparency to the election process.

Members of the General Assembly must only vote for States that uphold the highest human rights standards at home, and that cooperate with the Council,' said Nolan.

Watch the video of the statement

Full text of the statement:

Mr President,

ISHR welcomes the special procedures' latest [joint communications report](#), which provides a troubling picture of threats and attacks against civil society actors and human rights defenders across all regions, whose work and safety is critical to healthy societies that respect human rights and the rule of law.

Mr President, as the guardian of the Council's founding texts, we look to you to ensure full cooperation with the Council's mechanisms. Among the more than 52 States listed in the present [joint communications report](#) as having yet to respond to at least one initial communication alleging rights violations, 19 are Council members. We urge you to request updates from Bangladesh, Burundi, Congo (DRC), Ecuador, Ethiopia, France, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Macedonia, Mexico, Morocco, Nigeria, Philippines, Russia, South Africa, Venezuela and Viet Nam on the status of these communications.

Council members are required under GA Resolution 60/251 to 'fully cooperate with the Council.' A lack of timely and substantive response to Special Procedures not only undermines the integrity of this forum, but is plainly incompatible with membership.

Moreover, full cooperation is not limited to replying to letters. As the case of COPINH demonstrates in Honduras, States may respond to communications, but without taking concrete action to change the situation on the ground, human rights defenders will continue to be victims of threats, violence and assassination.

This session also considers the report on the Council's tenth anniversary panel held in June. Without further individual and collective leadership, States will squander the historic opportunity of making the Council more accessible, effective and protective.

In this regard, we welcome the participation earlier this week of the majority of candidates in Geneva's first event to discuss the visions and aspirations of potential new Council members, bringing much needed transparency to the election process. At the same time, we regret that a minority chose not to face questions on their pledges - or their performance in the case of existing members - thus depriving GA members of the opportunity to cast a more informed vote in October.

We nevertheless call on all members of the GA to only vote for States which uphold the highest human rights standards at home, and cooperate with the Council. Several of this year's candidates clearly fall short even of these basic requirements.

We also look to current and future members of the Council to formally pledge to bring a situation to the Council's attention based on objective criteria and if flagged by a range of expert voices external to the Council, including the High Commissioner, the Secretary-General, or Special Procedures. In this regard, we welcome and encourage the swift operationalization of the end-of-session statement delivered by Ireland on behalf of more than 30 States in June.

Thank you.