

[UN human rights experts should investigate corporate abuses against human rights defenders in Russia](#)

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(Geneva, 21 August 2013) - The UN's expert group on business and human rights should investigate intimidation and reprisals against human rights defenders in Russia who work on issues of corporate accountability, the International Service for Human Rights said today.

The UN Human Rights Council's Working Group on Business and Human Rights is scheduled to visit Russia from 30 September to 9 October 2013. In a [letter released today](#), ISHR called on the Working Group to ensure that it consults extensively with human rights defenders who work on corporate accountability issues during its mission.

'Human rights defenders and civil society organisations have an important and legitimate role to play in raising awareness of the human rights impacts and risks of business,' said ISHR Director Phil Lynch.

'Meaningful consultation and engagement between human rights defenders, corporations and States can play a critical role in identifying, preventing, mitigating and ensuring accountability for the adverse human rights impacts of business.'

ISHR's letter draws the Working Group's attention to reports of harassment and [attacks against residents protesting against construction of a power plant](#) in Sochi, the site of the 2014 Winter Olympics. The attacks were allegedly perpetrated by private security forces engaged by a company involved in construction of the plant.

The letter also draws the Working Group's attention to [reports of harassment of Russian NGO Memorial](#), allegedly in retaliation for its work to expose and ensure accountability for migrant workers' rights violations by a Russian company.

'ISHR urges the Working Group to investigate allegations of harassment and reprisals against human rights defenders and NGOs in connection with their work on issues of corporate accountability,' Mr Lynch said.

As set out in the letter, States have a legal obligation to support and enable human rights defenders to exercise their fundamental rights and freedoms, including the rights to freedom of expression and association, to form and join trade unions, and to peaceful protest. Corporations have a correlate obligation not to interfere with the exercise of such rights and freedoms.

'It is a consequence of their work to expose and ensure accountability for human rights violations perpetrated

by powerful actors, including governments and corporations, that human rights defenders are often subject to attacks, intimidation and reprisals. In these circumstances, the UN's Working Group on Business and Human Rights has a critical role to play in protection and accountability,' Mr Lynch said.

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