

Burkina Faso | Create a mechanism to protect defenders and monitor the implementation of the law

26.02.2019



On 19 and 20 February, ISHR in collaboration with its long-time partner the Coalition Burkinabé des Défenseurs des Droits Humains (CBDDH) and the National Human Rights Commission (the Commission), organised a workshop on the structure a mechanism monitoring the implementation of the defender law and guaranteeing their protection should have. Under article 14 of the decree creating the newly established Commission, the protection of human rights defenders in the country falls under their mandate.

The workshop was opened by the Human Rights Advisor to the Minister of human rights and civic promotion in Burkina Faso who emphasised the need for the government to work collaboratively with the Commission and civil society in the implementation of the defender law. 'The implementation of the law necessarily requires the establishment of an adequate and inclusive protection mechanism' said Joël Aristide Djiguemde Z.

During these two days, participants heard about the new specific mandate of the Commission regarding the protection of defenders, discussed the possible structure of the protection mechanism and listened to a comparative analysis with mechanisms already functional in Latin America countries.

A presentation of the functions and structure that can adopt a defenders protection mechanism, as included in [the model law for the recognition and protection of human rights defenders](#), as well as practices and challenges of mechanisms already in place in Latin America was shared with participants. 'There can't be an effective mechanism if it doesn't work in close collaboration with those it is meant to protect, namely human rights defenders in Burkina Faso' emphasised Adélaïde Etong Kame, ISHR Africa Advocacy Consultant.

The Secretary General of the Commission, Somitié Sougue, added 'we are conscious that this mechanism can't be created and function without defenders'.

During his presentation on the experience of Côte d'Ivoire, Professor Andre Banhouman Kamate member of the Ivorian Coalition of Human Rights Defenders explained that to be as effective as possible the mechanism must be multi actors. 'A mechanism to protect defenders not including defenders in its functioning cannot fulfil its mandate. Likewise, in Côte d'Ivoire, in order to guarantee the quick circulation of information to ensure a

timely reaction from all actors, including judicial, of threatening situations for defenders the government will be involved in the mechanism' said Kamate.

Certain categories of defenders can be more at risk than others. While presenting the risks faced by the most vulnerable defenders in Burkina Faso, Florence Ouattara, Coordinator of the CBDDH pointed out the need for the mechanism to take into account the specific violence faced by women human rights defenders. 'In our society, women human rights defenders face particular risks such as sexual violence or persecutions based on their gender. It is vital that the mechanism takes into account the specificity of these violations in order to provide the adequate protection'.

The participants then broke into groups to work on a draft of the attributions of the protection mechanism. Following each groups presentation, the participants adopted a unified draft as well as an action plan leading towards the effective functioning of the mechanism.

Finally, ISHR and the CBDDH welcome the Commission's willingness and commitment to the establishment of the mechanism and remain ready to support all actors into towards the actual functioning of the mechanism.

Adélaïde Etong Kame, Africa Advocacy Consultant, a.etong@ishr.ch

Photo: ISHR

ISHR