

[HRC41 | Governments must push for accountability, not acquiesce in impunity](#)

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In a speech to the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, ISHR has said that impunity for human rights violations fuels further and often more widespread and systematic violations.

Delivering a [statement](#) in response to a [speech by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights](#), Michelle Bachelet, to open the 41st session of the Council in Geneva, ISHR Director Phil Lynch warned that 'too often, this Council and its member States acquiesce in such impunity, despite pledges to apply objective criteria to country situations or to ensure the Council fulfils its prevention mandate, including through accountability for past or ongoing violations.'

Addressing a range of country situations, Lynch said:

- 'To those States which espouse a commitment to women's rights and the protection of civil society, show some courage by holding [Saudi Arabia](#) accountable for the arbitrary detention, detention and ill-treatment of women human rights defenders', as well as for the murder of journalist [Jamal Khashoggi](#)
- 'To those States which prioritise combating racial and religious discrimination, show some integrity by holding [China](#) accountable for potential crimes against humanity against Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims in Xinjiang and elsewhere.'
- 'To those States which decry extrajudicial killings and support human rights defenders, show some resolve by strongly supporting and matching the leadership shown by Iceland in addressing situations such as the [Philippines](#).'

'Quiet diplomacy and [general expressions of concern](#) do little to ensure accountability for gross human rights violations or to address the impunity which fuels and licences them,' Lynch said.

'These violations are not abstract or general. They happen to real people in real situations. Governments from all regions should show courage, integrity and resolve in protecting our common humanity by holding to account those abusive governments which violate it.'

Access to justice and accountability for human rights violations are integral to the realisation of Sustainable Development Goal 16.

In addition to addressing country situations, ISHR also called on States which:

- 'promote a preventative approach, or the business and human rights agenda, to show some principle by

legislating for **human rights due diligence by companies** and by **preventing the development or sale of weapons and surveillance technologies** which enable these violations'

- 'call for cooperation and dialogue, to show some consistency by **cooperating fully and in good faith with the UN human rights mechanisms**, providing unfettered access to places like Xinjiang, desisting from reprisals, and cooperating with Special Procedures rather than supporting initiatives to restrict their effectiveness'

Watch the statement here:

Further information on the key issues on the agenda at the 41st session of the UN Human Rights Council, which runs from 24 June to 12 July 2019, is available in ISHR's [Council Alert](#).

Contact: Phil Lynch, ISHR Director, on p.lynch@ishr.ch

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