

[Fiji | End the harassment of human rights defenders](#)

17.10.2019



On 6 November 2019, Fiji's human rights record will be reviewed as part of the 34th session of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). During the UPR, UN Member States speak to the human rights situation in their country, and receive recommendations from other countries on how to improve the human rights situation.

Although conditions for human rights defenders in Fiji have improved in recent years, more remains to be done. 'The Constitution of Fiji provides for the right to freedom of expression and assembly, however, there are instances when these rights are restricted by law. Often, these restrictions end up curtailing the rights of defenders,' says ISHR's Legal Counsel Tess McEvoy.

Reports have been made of peaceful protesters being arbitrarily arrested and journalists being harassed and intimidated. Defenders working for the promotion and protection of the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons have faced societal discrimination and harassment despite the Constitution banning discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity or expression. Rainbow Pride Foundation, a civil society organization in Fiji, reported that 'LGBTI human rights defenders continue to face multiple levels of threats and sexual harassment.'

ISHR submitted a [briefing paper in collaboration with Rainbow Pride Foundation on the situation of human rights defenders in Fiji](#). The submission intends to assist States and other stakeholders in formulating questions and making recommendations to Fiji during its UPR.

The briefing paper outlines key recommendations that should be made to Fiji at the UPR, including:

- Demonstrate strong, high-level political support for human rights defenders;
- Refrain from criminalising the legitimate activities of human rights defenders and repeal all laws and policies that restrict their rights;
- Enact laws and policies that give full force and effect to the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders;
- Investigate and hold security forces accountable for the torture and ill-treatment of detainees; and
- Incorporate sexual orientation into anti-discrimination laws and their enforcement to help reduce targeting and harassment of LGBTI human rights defenders.

In the run-up to the UPR and as part of the UPR pre-session on 11 October 2019, civil society organisations and human rights defenders from around the world called on States to make various recommendations to Fiji. Critically, the International Trade Union Confederation echoed calls made in ISHR and Rainbow Pride Foundation's briefing paper by emphasising the lack of progress in amending restrictive laws and calling on the Government to halt on arbitrary arrests of defenders.

Contact: Tess McEvoy, t.mcevoy@ishr.ch.

Photo: Flickr Tom Vierus

ISHR