

[ACHPR65 | States must ensure the effective cooperation of civil society with human rights mechanisms.](#)

28.10.2019



In accordance with Articles 23 (3) and 72 of the Rules of Procedure of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, Commissioners must submit and present a [progress report](#) at each session of the African Commission. The reports expose the activities undertaken by the mandate holders over a 6-month period. On this occasion civil society organisations can deliver statements highlighting particular issues in relation to each Commissioners' mandate and raising specific questions.

On 28 October 2019, the Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders and focal point on reprisals in Africa, Pr Rémy Ngoy Lumbu, presented his report compiling the activities implemented under his mandate since the 64th Ordinary Session of the ACHPR held in Sharm El Sheik, Egypt.

According to his [report](#), human rights defenders continue to see their activities threatened by the gradual restriction of civic space. He emphasised the need for a stronger collaboration between civil society and other stakeholders, especially the authorities, to end this constant disapproval of civil society we can witness in some countries.

Nevertheless, 'it is important to note that some countries have been open and collaborating with civil society. This is the case in particular in Côte d'Ivoire where there is a willingness of the authorities to ensure a better collaboration with civil society. However, freedom of peaceful assembly continues to be increasingly restricted in many countries' said Rémy Ngoy Lumbu.

He also recalled the launch on 23 October 2019 of his new policy and information note on reprisals in Africa during the panel on the protection of human rights defenders. 'I encourage organisations to keep working with national, regional and United Nations mechanisms on the protection of human rights in order to prevent and respond to human rights violations' he added.

Following the presentation of the report, ISHR's Africa Programme advocate consultant, Stéphanie Wamba, delivered [a statement](#) in which she noted that there unfortunately are instances where State institutions are simply unable, wilfully neglectful, or deliberately obstructive when it comes to ensuring that defenders can cooperate safely with regional human rights bodies and mechanisms. In those situations, defenders who dare to speak out face heightened risks. 'It would be extremely detrimental to the effective functioning of regional human rights systems if, because of the risks faced, human rights defenders avoided interacting with them. Defenders bring crucial information and perspectives regarding human rights situations on the ground, and regional mechanisms depend on that knowledge and input to make informed decisions' added Stéphanie

Wamba.

ISHR took note of the [call for contributions](#) to the first ever report on cases of reprisals by the Special Rapporteur and called on States parties to:

- refrain from intimidation and reprisals against those who cooperate or seek to cooperate with international or regional human rights bodies and mechanisms;
- to cooperate fully, substantively and promptly with the Focal Point on reprisals, including by providing good faith undertakings to prevent and investigate cases, and to report back as to investigative, protective, prosecutorial and remedial steps taken;

With regard to reprisals against human rights defenders in Africa, it was an opportunity for Rémy Ngoy Lumbu, the African Commission's Focal point on reprisals in Africa, to 'thank ISHR for facilitating the online briefing note on the Commission's website and to call on all defenders and organisations of human rights defenders to send cases of reprisals. States should take concrete measures for the protection of human rights defenders'.

Contributions can be provided [here](#) **(until 31 December 2019)**

Contact: *Stéphanie Wamba, Africa Programme Advocate Consultant*, s.wamba@ishr.ch

Photo: ISHR

ISHR