

## **UN High Commissioner calls for end to 'brutal reprisals' against human rights defenders**

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(Geneva - 14 March 2013) - Human rights defenders play a critical role in the promotion of human rights and must be protected from worsening attacks and reprisals, according to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay.

Speaking at a diplomatic reception hosted by the International Service for Human Rights, the High Commissioner said, "Human rights defenders often face brutal reprisals. Women human rights defenders in particular face specific threats, because in many parts of the world, standing up and speaking out defies gender norms that prescribe women's passivity."

The High Commissioner also emphasised the critical role that human rights defenders and NGOs have played in advancing accountability and the rule of law, including by addressing "violence against women as a human rights violation" and by giving "new recognition to discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity".

In her remarks, the High Commissioner recognised the "fundamental importance of human rights activists" and commended the International Service for Human Rights as "an organisation that provides invaluable contributions to the support of human rights defenders around the world".

Welcoming the speech, ISHR Director Phil Lynch thanked the High Commissioner and her office for their strong, principled and consistent support for human rights defenders.

"We thank the High Commissioner for standing up and speaking out for human rights defenders, particularly defenders at risk," said Mr Lynch.

"Around the world there are proliferating examples of the work of human rights defenders being unreasonably restricted and regulated, of human rights defenders being subject to intimidation and attacks, and of human rights defenders being subject to reprisal for standing up and speaking out."

"We call on all UN bodies and governments around the world to follow the High Commissioner's principled lead by supporting the critical work of human rights defenders."

The High Commissioner's speech is available [here](#).

A new ISHR manual on preventing and redressing reprisals against human rights defenders is available [here](#).

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