

[UN Human Rights Council must act to stop attacks and reprisals on human rights defenders](#)

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(Geneva - 11 March 2013) - The world's peak human rights body should take decisive action to prevent intimidation, attacks and reprisals against human rights defenders, the International Service for Human Rights said today.

"Retaliation against human rights defenders for speaking out against human rights abuses is a widespread and popular method employed by governments intolerant of criticism," said Michael Ineichen of ISHR.

"In recent months, we have witnessed a crackdown on bloggers in Vietnam, an escalation of attacks against journalists in Pakistan, Syria and Russia, and Sri Lankan attempts to silence human rights defenders at the UN," Mr Ineichen said.

The UN Human Rights Council is currently meeting in Geneva and will today [discuss a report outlining ways to prevent and address intimidation](#) and reprisals against those who cooperate with the Council and other UN representatives and bodies.

According to Mr Ineichen, while the UN and many member states have spoken out on the issue of reprisals, they have so far failed to take adequate and decisive action.

"The UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has himself said that when States fail to respect human rights and protect human rights defenders, 'the United Nations must stand up and speak out.' As the UN's peak human rights body, the Human Rights Council must unequivocally condemn reprisals and hold states to account for all attacks against human rights defenders," Mr Ineichen said.

According to ISHR Director Phil Lynch, reprisals against human rights defenders who seek to hold their governments to account at the UN are particularly concerning, amounting to an attack on international human rights, the rule of law and the UN itself.

"We are appalled by recent reports in the Sri Lankan press that plans are in place to arrest opposition parliamentarians and human rights advocates who are currently in Geneva lobbying for international support for a UN resolution on the investigation of war crimes in Sri Lanka," Mr Lynch said.

"This latest attempt to intimidate human rights defenders is a continuation of a disturbing pattern. Last time human rights defenders from Sri Lanka came to the UN to support calls for an independent investigation into alleged war crimes a cabinet Minister personally threatened to 'break their limbs'," Mr Lynch said.

"Speaking out in defence of human rights, democracy and the rule of law is itself a fundamental human right," said Mr Lynch. "When a state moves to systematically deny and violate this right the international community - both collectively and individually - has a responsibility to act."

- ISHR's statement to the United Nations Human Rights Council is available [here](#)

Contacts

Michael Ineichen (French, German, English) +41 78 827 77 86 • m.ineichen@ishr.ch

Phil Lynch (English) +41 76 708 47 38 • p.lynch@ishr.ch