

[Submission: Creating a safe and enabling environment for human rights defenders](#)

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(Geneva) – States should enact specific laws and policies to protect human rights defenders and to provide the basis for a safe and enabling environment for their work, according to a new report by the International Service for Human Rights.

In a [major submission to the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders](#), Margaret Sekaggya, ISHR says that States, corporations and the UN itself must all take steps to end restrictions and reprisals against human rights defenders and ensure an environment which supports and enables their work.

ISHR's submission is intended to inform the next report of the UN Special Rapporteur to the UN Human Rights Council.

'Creating and maintaining a safe and enabling environment is essential to ensuring that human rights defenders can effectively undertake their valuable work to promote human rights, democracy and the rule of law,' said ISHR Director Phil Lynch.

'The Special Rapporteur's next report is a timely response to continuing attacks and restrictions, including of a legislative nature, on the work of human rights defenders in all regions of the world,' he said.

ISHR's submission to the Special Rapporteur focuses on:

- the role of laws and policies which specifically recognise and protect the work of human rights defenders in creating and maintaining a safe and enabling environment for that work;
- the right of unhindered access to international bodies, and the obligations of both States and international bodies in that regard;
- the particular recognition and protection needs of vulnerable groups of defenders, specifically women human rights defenders and those working on issues of sexual orientation and gender identity;
- the importance of high-level political support for, and public education regarding, the work of human rights defenders; and
- the obligations of non-State actors, especially corporations.

The submission concludes with recommendations as to the steps and measures that States, the United Nations and other relevant actors should take to create and maintain a safe and enabling environment for the valuable work of human rights defenders.

Photo credit: UN Photo/Jean-Marc Ferré - Margaret Sekkagya, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, briefs the Human Rights Council.

ISHR