

# HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS WORKING TO PROMOTE DEMOCRACY AND END IMPUNITY

*Ramy Raouf, Flickr Creative Commons*

# IMPACT 2014

---

- Provided intensive training and strategic advocacy support to more than 70 human rights defenders and democracy activists from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Thailand and Tanzania, among others
- Worked in partnership with Chinese Human Rights Defenders to secure key recommendations on the protection of democratic rights and freedoms in China from the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
- Worked with civil society and government officials to secure the first-ever review of Liberia by the African Commission and supported human rights defenders to participate in that review
- Provided expert training and facilitated a strategic advocacy workshop for activists in Venezuela to engage with the UN, following Venezuela's withdrawal from the Inter-American Convention on Human Rights
- Advocated successfully for 46 States to raise concerns regarding the situation of human rights defenders in Bahrain at the Human Rights Council, working in partnership with organisations such as Human Rights Watch, the Gulf Center for Human Rights and the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies
- Secured strong UN Human Rights Committee recommendations regarding the need to protect defenders and ensure effective investigations and accountability for attacks against journalists in Sri Lanka
- Campaigned in relation to the disappearance or detention of defenders and democracy activists in Bahrain, Egypt, Maldives, Myanmar, Niger, Sri Lanka and Thailand, among others, assisting to secure the release of some activists from detention
- Provided expert advice, training and advocacy support to human rights defenders in Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone to achieve the implementation of recommendations made through the UPR at the national level

**UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of association and assembly and former ISHR trainee Maina Kiai wrote recently that 2014 may well be remembered as 'the year of the protest, the year of the revolution, the year of shrinking space'. Certainly it was a year in which ISHR was called upon more than ever to support and stand with human rights defenders working in States where increasing demands for democratic rights and freedoms were met by desperate regimes with worsening attacks and restrictions. ISHR's work with grassroots human rights defenders has helped shine an international spotlight on many of these situations – from Egypt to North Korea, and from Sri Lanka to Bahrain – and increase international pressure for accountability and change.**

This work is vital. As the cases of States such as Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia demonstrate, the combination of domestic civil society activism and international human rights advocacy can be powerful factors contributing to democratisation and accountability for past violations. In this regard, ISHR was proud and privileged to collaborate closely with civil society in Côte d'Ivoire to secure the enactment of Africa's first-ever law on the protection of human rights defenders, and with partners in Liberia to secure that country's review by the African Commission for the first time. We were also pleased to be strongly associated with the development of National Human Rights Action Plans by the governments of Liberia and Sierra Leone.

As Maina Kiai wrote, 'people today are more connected, more informed of their rights, and probably more emboldened to seize those rights than at any time in history. They have a vision for the world that they live in, and they want to take control of it.' ISHR's work with human rights defenders to promote democracy and accountability, and to end corruption and impunity, helps communities realise this vision.

Paul Jones, Flickr Creative Commons



“You can add to your list of achievements the substantial contributions that ISHR made to the effort to render the Democratic Peoples’ Republic of Korea accountable for its serious human rights violations, including crimes against humanity. The vote of the Security Council to keep this subject on its agenda is another important achievement. Thank you for all that you and your colleagues do for global human rights.”

**The Hon. Michael Kirby**  
*Chair of the  
UN Commission of Inquiry  
into North Korea*



“It is impossible to overstate the impact and importance of ISHR’s cooperation and partnership with human rights defenders, increasing our access to and understanding of regional and international human rights mechanisms, improving our capacity to engage and influence decision-makers in human rights law and policy reform, and substantially assisting us to monitor the government’s implementation of its international obligations.”

**Alphonsus B.M. Gbanie**  
*Human Rights Defenders  
Network of Sierra Leone*



**Number of countries in relation to which ISHR undertook advocacy or provided advocacy support**



**Percentage of trainees who reported they were ‘satisfied’ or ‘very satisfied’ with ISHR’s training and advocacy support**



**Percentage of beneficiaries who consider they fully or partially achieved their advocacy objectives with ISHR’s support**

# VISION 2015

*With your support we will:*

- Build the capacity of human rights defenders working in States undergoing transition – particularly in Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa – to use international and regional mechanisms to promote democracy, accountability and the rule of law at the national level
- Work with Chinese human rights defenders to ensure effective scrutiny of China as it is reviewed by the UN Committee against Torture, and to promote implementation of recommendations and commitments made under the UPR and by CESCR and CEDAW
- Monitor and advocate for the release of human rights defenders detained in connection with the exercise of their fundamental rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly
- Work with NGO partners to promote accountability for repression and excessive use of force against peaceful protesters in States such as Bahrain and Egypt
- Continue to provide human rights defenders with timely, analytical information on key developments and advocacy opportunities at the UN and the African Commission



*Nicole Améline, Chairperson of CEDAW. CEDAW and CESCR made recommendations to China on the protection of democratic rights and freedoms following advocacy by ISHR and Chinese Human Rights Defenders.*

*Evan Schneider, UN Photo.*



*Liberia was finally reviewed for the first time by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights following sustained advocacy by ISHR and others.*