

Statement at 31st session of the UN Human Rights Council

Item 10: Interactive dialogue on the High Commissioner's report on South Sudan

Delivered by: Ms. Rumbidzai M. Masango
22 March 2016

Thank you Mr President,

ISHR welcomes the 11 March [report](#) by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. It recounts shocking and disturbing reports of human rights violations and abuses, as well as violations of international humanitarian law in South Sudan.

In particular we note with grave concern, *on p10 of your report*, that human rights defenders, journalists and civil society activists that try to expose the reality in South Sudan have suffered threats and reprisals and are in some cases killed. We are shocked and dismayed that women have been subjected to sexual violence and harassment as groups allied to the government are being permitted to rape women in lieu of wages.

Mr. High Commissioner, we second your decision to reiterate recommendations made in previous reports to the HRC. We specifically echo your call to all parties to the conflict to, 'respect and promote the role of civil society, including by ensuring that freedoms of opinion and expression and of peaceful assembly are guaranteed and ensure the protection of human rights defenders and journalists.' This recommendation accords with our own assessment that, since the beginning of the conflict, the space for civil society and independent media has significantly narrowed. ISHR and our NGO partners strongly believe that the harassment of independent civil society actors and the introduction of restrictive legislation limiting the rights to freedom of association, expression and assembly severely undermine on-going efforts to effectively monitor and report on the human rights crisis in the country.'

ISHR strongly believes the situation in South Sudan calls for urgent action. We call on the HRC to establish a proper and effective monitoring reporting and accountability mechanism. These may include, but may not be limited to, for example, a Special Rapporteur and a hybrid tribunal on South Sudan.

We call on HRC member States to end the relative inaction and complacency about the human rights situation in South Sudan, where there is a blatant disregard for human rights - and ultimately human life.

Lastly, South Sudan voted in favour of the December 2015 General Assembly Resolution on HRDs, "Recognising the role of human rights defenders and the need for their protection." We remind the government to adhere to its commitment to protecting and promoting HRDs in South Sudan.

We look forward to South Sudan's strong support for, and co-sponsorship of, the defenders resolution being considered at this session.

I thank you.