

Human Rights Council 37th session

Speaker: Helen Nolan – Check against delivery

ITEM 3 – GENERAL DEBATE

Mr President,

ISHR and Amnesty International welcome the Special Procedures' latest [joint communications report](#), although it again provides a troubling picture of new threats and attacks against *civil society actors and human rights defenders across the globe*. Some of the organisations and defenders cited have already been the subject of communications *several times*, and yet they remain at serious risk.

Mr President, as the guardian of the Council's founding texts, we look to you to ensure full cooperation with the Council's mechanisms. Among the [71 States](#) listed in the present [joint communications report](#) as having yet to respond to at least one *initial* communication alleging rights violations, 21 are Council members. That amounts to almost half of the Council membership. 16 of these have shown themselves to be repeat offenders, *having failed to reply to two or more communications*, with Brazil, Egypt, Kenya, Mexico, Pakistan, Peru and the United States of America having failed to respond to four or more.

In light of this deeply concerning situation, we urge you to request updates before the end of this session from these, as well as Afghanistan, Burundi, Chile, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Nepal, Nigeria, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, Venezuela and other non-responders, on the status of these communications.

Council members are required under GA Resolution 60/251 to 'fully cooperate with the Council.' A lack of timely and substantive response to Special Procedures not only undermines the integrity of this forum, but is plainly incompatible with membership.

As the Human Rights Council regularly emphasises, the work and safety of human rights defenders is critical to healthy societies that respect human rights and the rule of law. It is thus essential that the Council's members act to prevent and remedy any attempts to restrict the activities of human rights defenders or to put them at risk. Yet, the report cites fresh cases of reprisals – the ultimate proof of a State's failure to create a safe and enabling environment for human rights defenders engaging with the UN.

It describes how, in Egypt, Ebrahim Abdelmonem Metwally Hegazy was abducted and detained, and Hanane Baderradi Abdalhafez Othman was arrested and detained, both for cooperating with the Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances. In the United Arab Emirates, Ahmed Mansoor has been detained in solitary confinement and has been unable to access an attorney since 20 March 2017 due to his work with various UN human rights mechanisms.