

## 58th SESSION OF THE AFRICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES' RIGHTS

*Observer status number: 53*

Delivered: 7 April 2016, Banjul – The Gambia

### **STATEMENT UNDER ITEM 4 - Human Rights situation in Africa**

Madam Chair, Honourable Commissioners, State parties, fellow human rights defenders,

The International Service for Human Rights wishes to highlight the gains and setbacks with regards to the status of human rights on the continent.

Madam Chair,

The International Service for Human rights welcomes the recently adopted African Commission Resolution 336 on Measures to protect and promote the work of **Women Human Rights Defenders**. The resolution reinforces a key element of the African Commission's report on the situation of women human rights defenders in Africa, which encourages African governments to work in partnership with women human rights defenders in the dissemination and implementation of its recommendations.

Some calls include:

- ending impunity by adopting specific laws and relevant measures to promote and protect the work of human rights defenders,
- ensuring that efforts designed to prevent and address violations and discrimination against women human rights defenders are developed and monitored
- reporting on the progress made in the promotion and protection of the work of women human rights defenders in accordance with the (Maputo Protocol).

This resolution is timely as we celebrate the African Union year of Human Rights - with a particular focus on women. ISHR encourages Member States to demonstrate their commitment to women's rights by adopting the Maputo Protocol and implementing the recommendations in the report and resolution 336.

Madame Chair,

Although some progress has been made on the promotion and protection of human rights, the continent is still facing numerous challenges.

We are deeply concerned about the deteriorating human rights situation in **Burundi**. Since the beginning of the political crisis, 260,000 Burundians have fled their country, including many prominent human rights defenders. Defenders pay a high price in this ever-worsening situation, with restrictions on the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly, targeted killings and forced exile affecting them directly. Burundian citizens and HRDs are paralysed by fear. The government, military and opposition forces must immediately break the cycle of violence and rein in violent elements and supporters.

In **South Sudan**, 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.

We are concerned about the continued persecution and prosecution of HRDs in **Angola**, including the recent conviction of the 17 human rights activists who met to discuss the political situation in the country and the continued detention of José Marcos Mavungo. We call on the authorities to immediately release José Marcos Mavungo and to further release and drop all charges against all HRDs detained for exercising their rights.

Lastly, ISHR joins the African Commission and other stakeholders in commemorating this important year.

I thank you.