

# CORPORATE ACCOUNTABILITY ACTIVISTS

*ISHR has campaigned for trumped-up charges against environmental human rights defenders, including the Venerable Luon Sovath in Cambodia, to be dropped.*

*LICADHO-Cambodia.*

# IMPACT 2014

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- Successfully lobbied the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights to prioritise the situation of corporate accountability activists as a key focus of its country mission to Azerbaijan
- Worked with community legal centres in Australia and UN experts in Geneva to secure important amendments to a Tasmanian anti-protest law targeting land and environmental rights defenders
- Convinced both Norway and Ecuador to recognise the crucial role of civil society in promoting corporate respect for human rights in two key UN resolutions on business and human rights
- Facilitated cross-regional strategy development and coordination among corporate accountability human rights defenders to support their engagement with the UN
- Campaigned for investigations of attacks on corporate accountability activists in Cambodia, Ecuador, Mexico, Russia, Thailand and Uganda, among others
- Assisted to secure the release of corporate accountability activists from detention in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Niger
- Jointly with Norway and the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, convened the first-ever dedicated panel on human rights defenders at the UN Forum on Business and Human Rights
- Published a special edition of the *Human Rights Monitor* focused on business and human rights defenders and featuring contributions from leading corporate accountability experts, activists and practitioners, in both English and Spanish
- Supported ISHR staff member Clément Voulé in his participation as an expert member of the African Commission Working Group on the Extractive Industries and Human Rights

**Throughout 2014, ISHR worked with human rights defenders to promote corporate respect for human rights and corporate accountability for violations. We also worked with States and experts to strengthen the protection of corporate accountability activists under international and national laws and policies.**

At the international level, ISHR advocacy ensured that two key Human Rights Council resolutions on business and human rights included provisions regarding the role of civil society in promoting corporate responsibility. Our work also resulted in strengthened efforts by the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights to engage and protect civil society. We worked closely with Norway and the High Commissioner's office to mainstream the concerns of human rights defenders at the UN Forum on Business and Human Rights, and with the UN, African Commission and Inter-American Commission Special Rapporteurs on Human Rights Defenders to dedicate attention to the situation of corporate accountability activists in both country missions and reports.

At the national level, ISHR advocacy contributed to the watering down of restrictive anti-protest legislation in Australia which would have particularly targeted those protesting the activities of forestry or mining companies. Working with partners such as the Business and Human Rights Resource Centre, the Pachamama Foundation and ProDESC, ISHR also campaigned for investigations and accountability in relation to attacks on human rights defenders working to promote corporate accountability in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

2015 is shaping up to be a seminal year for corporate accountability activists. ISHR is committed to providing strategic advice and support to human rights defenders in the negotiation of a new global treaty on business and human rights (the process for which will commence in Geneva in July), while also supporting work at the more local level to develop and ensure the effective implementation of national action plans on business and human rights. We'll also launch a major new resource for human rights defenders to assist them to develop capacities and activities to directly engage and positively influence business.

“Engagement with the UN human rights bodies, especially with the UPR process since 2010, has raised awareness on the issue of business and human rights in Mongolia. In fact, we are now at a point where monitoring the compliance of foreign and transnational corporations without the engagement of international human rights systems is simply dangerous as well as ineffective.”

**Sukhgerel Dugersuren**

*Executive Director  
of Oyu Tolgoi Watch,  
Mongolia*

“Around the world, business-related human rights abuses against individuals and communities continue to an astounding degree. In particular, human rights defenders face significant risks to their lives and livelihoods on a daily basis as they work under the threat of extrajudicial killings, abductions, surveillance and intimidation as a result of their efforts to defend human rights in the face of harmful business activities. Essential to the protection of human rights defenders is the development of National Action Plans on business and human rights.”

**Katie Shay**

*Legal & Policy Coordinator,  
International Corporate  
Accountability Roundtable*



A special edition of ISHR's Human Rights Monitor focused on corporate accountability and human rights was published in November 2014.



ISHR's Clément Voulé, who is also an expert member of the African Commission's Working Group on Human Rights and the Extractive Industries, says defenders across Africa face attacks for their work on business and human rights but that such attacks are under-reported for fear of further attacks and reprisals.

# VISION 2015

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*With your support we will:*

- Provide expert training and advocacy support to human rights defenders who work to promote corporate accountability in their engagement with the UN Human Rights Council and treaty bodies, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights
- Undertake extensive research and advocacy to ensure the effective participation of human rights defenders in the international process now underway to draft a treaty on human rights and transnational corporations
- Support these defenders in their advocacy for the implementation of the *UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights*
- Lobby and advocate for the inclusion of concrete measures and commitments to protect and support human rights defenders in National Action Plans on Business and Human Rights, including in Ireland, Norway and the United Kingdom
- Draw on the pro bono expertise of leading international law firms, such as DLA Piper and Allens Linklaters, to advise and support human rights defenders to engage and influence businesses
- Prepare detailed briefing papers for the UN Human Rights Committee and the UPR to support them in making concrete recommendations on the protection of corporate accountability activists
- Lobby for the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to hold its first-ever continent-wide hearing on the situation of defenders working on business and human rights



*ISHR joined community legal centres in Australia and UN experts to successfully advocate for reforms to Tasmanian anti-protest laws targeting land and environmental rights defenders.*

*David Burke, Flickr Creative Commons.*