



ISHR

INTERNATIONAL SERVICE
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

ANNUAL REPORT 2018

FOR YEAR ENDING
31 DECEMBER 2017



Supporting Defenders | Strengthening Systems | Achieving Impact





*“The work of human rights defenders
has perhaps never been more
important nor more imperiled.”*

PHILIP LYNCH, LUCIA NADER

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Front cover: Karla Avelar (El Salvador),
Iulia Pascu (Romania), Adaobi Egboka (Nigeria).
Back cover: Otgonbaatar Tsedendemberel
(Mongolia)

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Message from Chairperson and Director



Time for ambition, cause for hope

Quiana

Philip Lyne

Dear Friends

2018 is a major year for human rights and their defenders. It marks the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the cornerstone of the international human rights framework. It is the 25th anniversary of the Vienna Declaration, which recognises the vital role of independent civil society in promoting human rights and the rule of law. And it marks the 20th anniversary of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, which elaborates the rights of defenders and articulates the obligations of States to respect and protect their vital work.

These anniversaries should be cause for celebration. They should be seized as an opportunity to reflect on progress and to develop the same kind of bold and ambitious agenda for the coming decades as those which resulted in the adoption of these landmark standards in decades past.

The anniversaries come, however, at a time when the work of human rights defenders has perhaps never been more important nor more imperiled.



ISHR is governed by a Board of Directors which is responsible for the overall strategy and governance of the organisation.

Around the world, human rights defenders face mounting attacks and criminalisation for standing up to power, privilege, prejudice and profit. They face worsening reprisals for providing information, evidence and testimony to regional and international human rights watchdogs.

Activists like Mohamed Zaree in Egypt face criminal charges and travel bans for their work to defend the rights to freedom of association and assembly. And defenders like former ISHR trainee Karla Avelar, a trans woman defending LGBTI and migrant rights in El Salvador, face sexual assault and imprisonment for their work to protect the rights of the vulnerable and marginalised.

Yet, even within these contexts, there is cause for celebration, ambition and hope.

At the international and regional levels, human rights bodies are continuing to develop and strengthen jurisprudence and standards on the protection of defenders. Earlier this year, a body of UN experts held, for the first time, that international law prohibits discrimination against human rights defenders in the same way as it prohibits discrimination on grounds such as race, religion or gender. Within days of their launch in November, a landmark decision of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights relied on the Yogyakarta Principles Plus 10 – the development of which were facilitated by ISHR – in a case regarding gender identity and freedom of expression. And as recently as December, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution by consensus affirming the vital and legitimate nature of defenders’ work.

At the national level, there are a number of jurisdictions which have incorporated the Declaration into binding national law through the enactment of specific human rights defender laws and the establishment of specialised protection mechanisms. In 2017, Burkina Faso and Mali joined Côte d’Ivoire as West African countries to have adopted such laws, with evidence associating the Ivorian law with a decline in threats and attacks against defenders. Other States, such as Canada and Finland, have adopted or strengthened guidelines for their diplomatic representations on the protection of human rights defenders abroad.

“In 2018, we won’t harbour false hopes, nor indulge in fantasy – but we will remain steadfast to our cherished ideals of freedom, democracy, the rule of law, and we will not stop in our defense and safeguarding of human rights. We’ll be tenacious in our defense of the wronged, the prisoners of conscience, and the pursuit of justice.”

CHINA HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYERS GROUP,
31 DECEMBER 2017

Within the business community, there is a growing recognition and increasingly sophisticated discussion of the shared interests of business and civil society in free and open democracies. In 2017, for the first time ever, the World Economic Forum’s Global Risks Report identified closing civil society space as a key business risk. A small but growing and influential number of companies have responded by developing specific corporate policies on protecting human rights defenders, while

others have spoken out publicly to condemn threats and attacks against individual defenders or to warn against the adoption of restrictive laws.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, defenders worldwide – defenders like Mohamed Zaree and Karla Avelar – continue to courageously stand up and speak out, often in the face of risk, retaliation and repression. Across both the Global South and the Global North, people are protesting against power, prejudice and privilege – whether on the streets in Women’s Marches or on social media in #MeToo. They’re demanding participation, accountability, representation and respect for fundamental human rights.

In late 2017, Karla was forced to leave El Salvador due to threats against her organisation, her family and her life. Even outside her country, she continues her vital human rights work, saying ‘my thirst for justice and equality motivates me and I will continue to push for reform and the full enjoyment of human rights for all’.

Here at ISHR, despite the difficult days, our thirst for justice and equality remains unquenched. And like Karla, Mohamed and thousands of other advocates, activists and peaceful protesters, we will continue to push. Thank you for standing with ISHR and supporting defenders at this vital time.

Yours sincerely

Philip Lynch
Executive Director

Lucia Nader
Chair of the ISHR Board

 **ISHR** | INTERNATIONAL SERVICE
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Our record of impact and agenda for change



2017 and 2018 at a glance

As democratic rights and accountability mechanisms are attacked and eroded at the national level, more and more defenders turn to ISHR to support them in using the international and regional human rights system to seek protection, to expose violations, and to push for change. From Burundi to China, from Egypt to the Philippines, and from Russia to Venezuela, more than ever defenders need our support.



We use the human rights system to expose violations and to push for change.

In 2017 we commissioned an independent expert evaluation which found that our work is distinctive and high impact. In particular, it found that:

Our capacity and coalition building activities make human rights defenders better networked, more resilient and more influential.

Our research and strategic advocacy make international and regional human rights laws and systems more accessible, effective and protective for defenders and victims.

And our national-level partnerships, technical expertise and advocacy support lead to concrete change on the ground.

Here are a few examples of our collective impact in 2017 and our ambitious agenda for change in the year ahead.

SUPPORTING HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

OUR GOAL:

Human rights defenders are better networked and trained and more strategic and effective in using international and regional human rights mechanisms to push for change on the ground.

HOW WE GET THERE:

We provide defenders with practical and expert training, advice and advocacy support, enabling them to use international and regional human rights mechanisms to achieve change on the ground. We play a unique role coordinating NGO strategy and action at the UN in Geneva and New York, and securing and facilitating civil society access to officials at the highest political levels.

WHAT WE ACHIEVED:

Through our Human Rights Defender Advocacy Programme, we helped at-risk defenders from across the world develop networks of support and influence, build energy and resilience, and become even more effective advocates for national-level change.

Together with national partners in countries including Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Mexico, the Philippines and Tanzania, we provided targeted training in the field, equipping grassroots defenders with international advocacy networks and tactics.

Drawing on our own networks of influence, we mobilised high-level actors, including the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the UN's independent human rights experts, to intervene to prevent or denounce attacks and restrictions against human rights defenders in States including Bahrain, Burundi, China, El Salvador, Egypt and the Philippines.

We opened the door to the UN for civil society organisations from across the world by advising and assisting them in obtaining accreditation through ECOSOC and the NGO Committee in New York, while also pushing for accreditation processes to be more fair, transparent and expeditious.

We provided human rights defenders with powerful international and regional advocacy platforms by supporting them in giving evidence and testimony at the Human Rights Council in Geneva and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights in Banjul.

We provided defenders with comprehensive and practical guidance to leverage the UN, with a new manual on engaging with the Third Committee of the General Assembly in English, Spanish and French, and a fully revised manual on navigating the UN Committee on NGOs in Arabic, Spanish, French and English. We also provided defenders with access to the most up-to-date information and advice via social media in Chinese, French, English and Spanish.

When our partners in Russia were attacked for their advocacy to combat torture and uphold LGBTI rights, we launched legal proceedings at the European Court of Human Rights and in the UN Human Rights Committee to contribute to their protection and hold perpetrators to account.

NEXT ON THE AGENDA:

- We will provide human rights defenders from across the world with an innovative online platform, giving them access to training and tactical support and linking them with a community of practice and solidarity.
- Through our Human Rights Defender Fellowship Programme, we will provide at least three defenders at risk with up to six months of intensive training and strategic advocacy support.
- Our Human Rights Defender Advocacy Programme will substantially strengthen the skills, networks, resilience and impact of defenders working on women's rights, LGBTI rights and in restrictive environments.

STRENGTHENING STANDARDS AND SYSTEMS FOR DEFENDERS' PROTECTION

OUR GOAL:

International and regional mechanisms are more accessible, effective and protective for human rights defenders. These mechanisms develop standards and make recommendations which respond to and positively influence the operating environment for defenders on the ground. Multinational business

enterprises and associations recognise the value, and act to protect, human rights defenders and civic space and freedoms.

HOW WE GET THERE:

Our policy research and advocacy, our authoritative papers and briefs, our strategic legal advocacy, and our access and influence with high-level decision-makers within the UN, regional bodies, governments and business enterprises, help make those systems and bodies more accessible, responsive, effective and protective for human rights defenders.



FACEBOOK FOLLOWERS

10,900



10%
from 2016

VISITORS TO WWW.ISHR.CH

144,457



9%
from 2016

WHAT WE ACHIEVED:

In consultation with LGBTI persons and organisations from all regions, and with input from eminent legal experts from across the world, we developed the Yogyakarta Principles Plus 10. These authoritative new guidelines on international law as it applies to issues of sexual orientation, sex characteristics, gender identity and expression mark a significant legal and practical contribution to the advancement of trans and intersex rights in particular.

Against the trend, we worked with diplomatic allies and a global network of civil society partners to secure the

adoption of significant resolutions at the UN General Assembly in New York and the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva to strengthen the protection of defenders and the prohibition of reprisals.

With business and civil society having a shared interest in free and open societies, we collaborated with companies, business networks and international sporting associations to develop corporate policies on human rights defenders and draft guidelines on the role and responsibility of corporations and contractors in protecting civil society space.



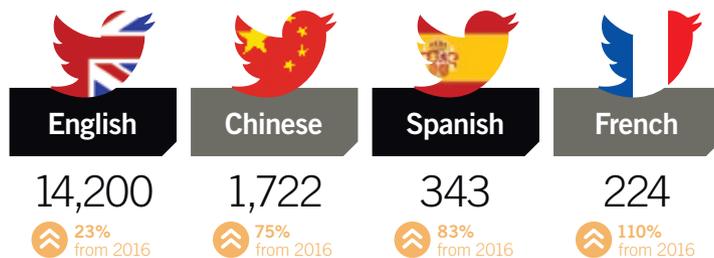
HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER PROFILES PUBLISHED

15

YOUTUBE VIEWS

5,861  40% from 2016

TWITTER FOLLOWERS



Defenders can face significant risks when they confront the corporate-state power nexus. Recognising this, we supported national-level defenders from seven countries to share their challenges, strategies and successes at the UN Forum on business and human rights, and partnered with a network in South Korea to lay the groundwork for business accountability for abuses, at home and abroad.

Following sustained advocacy, and in a major victory for fairness, transparency and civil society participation, we secured the webcasting of all sessions and decisions of the powerful committee responsible for determining whether NGOs can participate in UN meetings.

Building on our agenda-setting advocacy for at-risk defenders, we worked with civil society partners from Indonesia, Mexico and Serbia to secure cutting-edge recommendations from UN treaty bodies and the OHCHR about the obligation of States to respect and protect those people and organisations defending migrant, refugee and asylum seeker rights.

With the treaty bodies set for reform, we developed a strategy and built a broad-based coalition to ensure that they are strengthened in a way which enhances accessibility for rights holders, justice for victims, accountability for perpetrators, and implementation on the ground.

Our agenda-setting role was also evident when, in June, a group of some 50 States endorsed 11 key proposals, developed by ISHR in coordination with 20 other NGOs, on strengthening the legitimacy, accessibility and effectiveness of the UN Human Rights Council.

NEXT ON THE AGENDA:

- We will leverage the 20th anniversary of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders to strengthen the recognition and protection of human rights defenders under international and regional law, and through the development and effective implementation of corporate policies on defenders.
- We will monitor, document and advocate in relation to civil society participation at the UN, ensuring that procedures for NGO accreditation and participation apply principles of transparency, non-discrimination, due process and respect for the rights to freedom of association and expression.
- We will ensure that efforts to reform the Human Rights Council are informed by and respond to the situation, priorities and needs of human rights defenders and victims of violations, refocusing the agenda on substantive impact rather than technical efficiency.

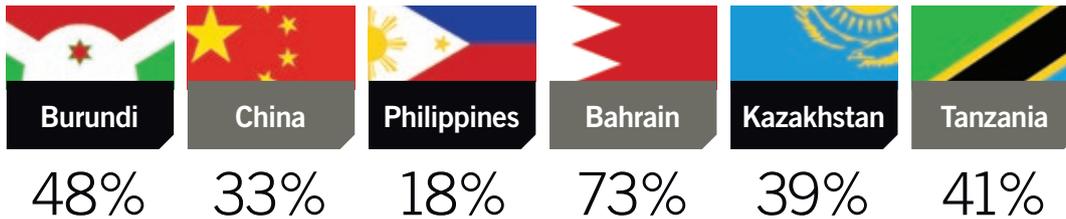
PROMOTING NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION AND PARTNERING FOR CHANGE ON THE GROUND

OUR GOAL:

States enact and effectively implement specific laws and mechanisms to recognise and protect defenders and desist from enacting, or review and repeal, laws which restrict or criminalise defenders.

INCREASE IN USE OF ISHR PRODUCTS BY HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS FROM:

(vs 2016)



HOW WE GET THERE:

We work with local partners to advocate for national implementation of international and regional human rights standards on the protection of defenders and an enabling environment for their work. Our deep partnerships with grassroots human rights defenders, and our reputation and track record of cooperation with governments and human rights institutions, uniquely position us to advise on and support national-level implementation.

WHAT WE ACHIEVED:

Following a three year campaign undertaken in partnership with the Burkina Faso Coalition of Human Rights Defenders and the West African Human Rights Defenders Network, in June we secured the adoption of a national law on the protection of defenders in Burkina Faso.

In mid-December, following sustained advocacy by ISHR with the Coalition Malienne de Défenseurs des Droits Humains, the Parliament of Mali adopted a national human rights defender protection law. These developments build on our work to adopt a Model National Law on the Protection of Human Rights Defenders in 2016, which is now being used to guide the drafting of laws in Niger and Sierra Leone. They also complement our ongoing work to secure the enactment and effective implementation of Côte d'Ivoire's groundbreaking law which, since its adoption in 2014, has been empirically associated with a decline in attacks against defenders.

Informed by over two years of research and consultations, we worked with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights to develop and launch new Guidelines on Freedom of Association and Assembly in Africa, providing authoritative guidance to

States across the continent to ensure that law, policy and practice conform with regional and international human rights standards.

Drawing on some of the skills and networks they were able to develop as participants in ISHR's strategic advocacy and capacity building activities, our alumni contributed to strengthening sexual abuse laws in Argentina, achieving marriage equality in Australia, saving a leading environmental and indigenous rights NGO in Ecuador, training over 1000 human rights activists in India, and exposing serious human rights violations by government forces in Eritrea.

With cross-jurisdictional convenings building networks and learning, we facilitated a two-day consultation with human rights defenders from six Latin American countries to exchange and develop strategies for the introduction, reform and implementation of national protection mechanisms for defenders in Brazil, Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico and Peru.

NEXT ON THE AGENDA:

- Working in close partnership with local civil society, we will secure the enactment of human rights defender protection laws in more jurisdictions and more regions. In those jurisdictions where laws have been adopted, we will ensure that they are fully and effectively implemented.
- We will ensure that national mechanisms for the protection of defenders are adapted and respond to the particular risks faced by women human rights defenders.
- Our research and advocacy will support States to fully implement their obligations under the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders and equip civil society to monitor and hold them to account when they don't.



Strengthening capacity, building resilience, creating impact

Human Rights Defender Advocacy Programme

In 2017, ISHR provided expert training and advocacy support to over 250 human rights defenders in Geneva, New York and in the field. Our field-based trainings, conducted in English, Spanish and Chinese, took place in countries including Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Mexico, the Philippines and Tanzania.

According to an independent expert evaluation of this work, ISHR's capacity building programmes:

- Equip defenders to engage effectively and leverage the UN and regional human rights systems
- Build defenders' support and protection networks
- Energise and inspire defenders, strengthening their resilience
- Make defenders more confident and influential agents for change at the national level



Juan Auz | Ecuador




@BettyBarkha
 (Fiji), FRIDA – The
 Young Feminist Fund

'The last two weeks
 were spent with some
 of the most brilliant and
 passionate human rights
 defenders, all facilitated
 by @ISHRglobal'

250

Number of human rights defenders to whom ISHR provided training or advocacy support


40%
 from 2016

■ The Human Rights Defender Advocacy Programme (HRDAP) is ISHR's flagship capacity building and advocacy support programme. Running in its current format since 2014, HRDAP has substantially strengthened the capacity, networks, resilience and effectiveness of over 70 human rights defenders from more than 40 countries. In 2017, participants in HRDAP worked on issues including women's rights, LGBTI rights, corporate accountability, and safeguarding civil society space in countries including Argentina, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Egypt, Fiji, India, Nigeria, Peru, Romania, Russia, Sierra Leone and Uganda.

HRDAP 2017 coincided with the 35th session of the Human Rights Council. This meant that as well as receiving training on the UN human rights mechanisms from a range of experts, participants were able to build networks in Geneva and around the world, lobby UN member States and UN staff, learn from each other's wealth of experience, and even deliver statements and provide testimony at the Human Rights Council itself.

Here is a selection of their many achievements and activities:

- **Adaobi Egboka of Nigeria** and **Vitaly Servetnik of Russia** personally met with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to discuss the challenges and protection needs of human rights defenders.
- **Nazeera Saeed from Bahrain** shared her insights on extra judicial violence and killings based on sexuality and gender in testimony at the Human Rights Council.
- **Paula Wachter, an Argentinian** women human rights defender, sounded the alarm at the Human Rights Council about countries using concepts of 'traditional values' and the 'traditional family' to excuse violations of human rights.
- **Amanda Bosco from Uganda** delivered a statement – prepared collaboratively with other LGBTI participants – highlighting the risks faced by LGBTI rights defenders, during the presentation of the first ever report of the Independent Expert on sexual orientation and gender identity at the Human Rights Council.
- Defenders from **Cambodia, Ecuador, Peru** and **Russia** submitted information to the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders to inform his report on business and human rights.

“The training process gives human rights defenders more confidence to engage with policy makers, both in the UN and with their own governments. Individuals who participated in the Human Rights Defender Advocacy Programme, ISHR's annual 2.5-week training programme in Geneva, stressed that the intensive training they had received had benefited them and their work in numerous ways, both tangible and intangible. Not only were they more effective in making use of the various mechanisms and special procedures within the UN to raise awareness of their concerns and advocate for better protections, but they were also inspired and energised by their time in Geneva and the networks and contacts they made while there. Many spoke of going back to their home countries with a renewed sense of purpose, as well as new strategies to use in their ongoing human rights work.

INDEPENDENT EXPERT EVALUATION OF ISHR
 (MAY 2017)

Immediately following the 2017 edition of HRDAP, 100% of participants reported that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the programme, 100% had fully or partially achieved their primary advocacy objective, and 88% said they would apply the learnings and skills significantly in their national level work. They also told us that the programme was energising and built their resilience, with one defender from Latin America saying, 'I learned a lot while in Geneva, but the real value is that I went back to my country and felt stronger and more like I was part of a bigger effort. I didn't feel so alone.'

In addition to HRDAP's short-term outcomes and impacts, the programme also creates long-term sustainable impact.

In order to better assess the long-term effects of HRDAP, ISHR recently asked participants in the 2014 and 2015 programmes to evaluate its ongoing impact on their work. In response, they highlighted how they had actively engaged in international advocacy since HRDAP. They pointed to the valuable networks they developed, including within the HRDAP group itself, and how they had been able to leverage these to further their national and regional advocacy objectives.

For ISHR, HRDAP is more than just a training and capacity building programme. It is also a programme which helps ensure that our work remains deeply connected to and informed by the situation, priorities and protection needs of defenders on the ground. We make a special effort to continue to develop our relationships with and provide support to participants well beyond completion of the programme, with many participants becoming key partners for ISHR in our work to achieve national level change.

IMPACT

STRENGTHENING DEFENDERS' NETWORKS AND LEGAL PROTECTIONS IN SIERRA LEONE

Alphonsus Gbanie, coordinator of the Human Rights Defenders Network-Sierra Leone (HRDN-SL), participated in ISHR's Human Rights Defender Advocacy Programme in 2014. Using the skills and leveraging the networks developed through HRDAP, Alphonsus and HRDN-SL are now spearheading the development of a national law for the protection of human rights defenders in the country. Alphonsus has also built on the relationship he began with the Irish Mission in Geneva, turning it into a long-standing partnership with the Irish Embassy in Sierra Leone. This has translated into financial support for HRDN-SL and into diplomatic support for advocacy initiatives.

IMPACT

RESPONDING TO THE CRACKDOWN ON LGBTI RIGHTS IN EGYPT

Over the course of 2017, a number of high-level officials, including the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, made important and timely public statements condemning the crackdown on LGBTI rights and their defenders in Egypt. Tarek Mostafa, who participated in ISHR's Human Rights Defender

“One of the most notable aspects of ISHR’s trainings is the effort to serve the needs of the alumni after the training programme has ended. Participants underscored how much they value ISHR’s ongoing support, guidance, and the sharing of relevant information about developments within the UN. As one HRDAP alumni reported, “The training was strikingly different from other training workshops I have attended. Inter-active, participatory. We worked a lot, but you were learning and doing at the same time. And ISHR doesn’t stop at the training itself. It is also very good about maintaining contact with participants after the training.” Similarly, another HRDAP alumni stated, “I have gone to workshops [by others] in the past and then never heard from the people again. But ISHR stays in dialogue with us. It is very impressive how they do it. They remember you, and send a message saying, “We saw something that might be important for your work. Let me know if we can help.” I have been very impressed with their efforts.”

INDEPENDENT EXPERT EVALUATION OF ISHR (MAY 2017)

“Coming to Geneva for the Human Rights Defender Advocacy Programme has provided me with ideas and opportunities to improve the lives of vulnerable groups and empower the impoverished. To ISHR, thank you. You have empowered me to empower others.”

VICTORIA RENNER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ASSOCIATION FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN AT RISK (SIERRA LEONE) AND PARTICIPANT IN ISHR'S 2017 HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER ADVOCACY PROGRAMME



TRAINEES REPORTED:

100% were **'satisfied'** or **'very satisfied'** with ISHR's training and advocacy support

100% **fully or substantially achieved** their key advocacy and learning objectives

88% considered that the skills and networks acquired would **strengthen their national advocacy**



Advocacy Programme in 2015, says that such statements are vital – demonstrating solidarity and increasing pressure for change. Tarek says that his work and that of his organisation, Nazra for Feminist Studies, to engage and leverage the UN for national change has become significantly more strategic and effective as a result of his participation in HRDAP.



IMPACT CAPACITATING A MOVEMENT IN INDIA

With the number of applicants for HRDAP exceeding the number of funded places by a ratio of at least 30:1, ISHR selects participants with a demonstrated commitment to using the learnings to capacitate their own networks at home. Drawing on expertise and insights developed through HRDAP, participants from Human Rights Defenders Alert in India have been able to train more than 1000 other civil society actors on how to engage most effectively and strategically with the UN to safeguard civil society space at home.



Making progress, preventing regress

Civil society at the UN
Human Rights Council
in 2017

As civil society space closes and risks rise at the national level, many defenders are turning to international and regional human rights mechanisms to expose violations, promote accountability and build pressure for change on the ground. International and regional mechanisms can also provide defenders and victims with a powerful platform to tell their story and to exercise the right to freedom of expression and dissent denied at home.



Sonia Acabal | Guatemala

■ The UN Human Rights Council in Geneva is a key mechanism for civil society, meeting three times per year in ordinary session, convening special sessions on crises and emergencies, and overseeing both the Universal Periodic Review and the work of Special Procedures (the UN’s independent human rights experts).

Throughout 2017, ISHR provided strategic advice and support for defenders to engage with and leverage the Council, while also playing a leading role in conceptualising and coordinating civil society efforts to strengthen the Council and make it more accessible, effective and protective for human rights defenders and victims of violations.



Human rights monitoring and accountability

For many civil society actors, the decision made by consensus at the 36th session of the Council in September to establish an independent investigative body on the conflict in Yemen was the highlight of 2017, albeit a decision that should have been made at least two years earlier in line with calls by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. The body – comprising eminent international and regional experts – is mandated to investigate war crimes and other violations perpetrated by all parties to the conflict, both with a view to promoting accountability and to deterring future abuses. Such crimes include the bombing of civilians, torture and enforced disappearances, the use of landmines and cluster bombs, and the denial of access to food, water and humanitarian aid, among other gross deprivations. The adoption of the resolution followed sustained advocacy by a coalition of over 60 Yemeni, regional and international NGOs, including ISHR, complemented by principled leadership by a group of States led by the Netherlands, together with Canada, Luxembourg, Belgium and Ireland. Significant in its own right, the adoption of the resolution also sent a strong message to the likes of Saudi Arabia that membership of the UN Human Rights Council is not a guarantee against scrutiny by that body and may even expose a country to heightened international attention.

While the Yemen resolution came at least two years too late, the Council did act more quickly, albeit not preventatively, in relation to gross human rights violations in Myanmar. It established a Fact Finding Mission at its 34th session in March, extended the mandate of that Mission at its 36th session in September, and then convened a special session on the situation in early December. The special session was significant, with the call for this meeting initiated by Bangladesh with strong support from other members of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation – States better known for championing principles of sovereignty and non-interference than those of accountability and justice. It remains to be seen, however, whether this is a posture particular to the ethnic and religious dynamics of the situation. To date, the government of Myanmar has refused to cooperate with the Fact Finding Mission, demonstrating the need for such mechanisms to be complemented and supported by other actors with leverage, such as States and multinational enterprises with business, trade and investment interests in the country.

**PERCENTAGE OF
RECOMMENDATIONS
MADE BY ISHR**

60%
adopted

by the UN treaty body to
which they were directed

90%
taken up

by States in the Universal
Periodic Review

With each ISHR UPR
recommendation made
by an average of 6 States

While action on Yemen and Myanmar were significant positive developments, the year was also marked by inaction on a range of other serious situations of concern, with the Council failing to address gross and systematic violations in States including China, Bahrain, Egypt, the Philippines, Turkey and Venezuela, to name just a few. This is despite the situations in those countries manifestly meeting the objective criteria for action committed to by a group of more than 50 States through joint statements led by Ireland (in 2016) and the Netherlands (in 2017). Lack of State leadership and political will – rather than any lack of information, capacity or tools – remains the greatest impediment to the Council's effectiveness.

Civil society space and participation

Countering the global trend, civil society organisations partnered both to prevent regress and achieve some progress in protecting defenders at the Council in 2017.

Against the backdrop of what the UN's independent expert has described as an 'unprecedented attack' on defenders, in March the Council adopted a Norwegian-led consensus resolution extending the mandate of the Special Rapporteur. In November, the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly similarly adopted a resolution on defenders, drafted with significant inputs from ISHR. Although the consensus masked

some fractures – with China disassociating itself from a paragraph referring to the work of defenders as 'legitimate' – the General Assembly resolution was co-sponsored by States from all regions. This included a number of African States – such as Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso and Mali – that have not been traditional co-sponsors but have all recently adopted laws on the protection of defenders, with support from ISHR.

Countering reprisals

Acts of intimidation and reprisals against human rights defenders, victims and others who seek to cooperate with the UN not only violate the rights of the individuals concerned, but amount to an assault on civil society and a rules-based international order. Seen this way, a September report by the UN Secretary-General which found evidence of 'a strategy on the part of some States to prevent the activities of individuals providing information or otherwise cooperating with the United Nations' is profoundly disturbing. The report highlighted that the incidence of reprisals is becoming 'broader', and the 'means used increasingly blunt'. It contained cases of travel bans in Saudi Arabia and Bahrain; the freezing of NGO assets in Egypt; intimidation of defenders in India and Myanmar; torture of defenders in Burundi and Egypt; arbitrary detention of defenders in the United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan





“We don’t have space to work in Egypt. We need the United Nations and the international community to support and protect civil society in Egypt. Our future depends on it.”

DOAA HASSAN, CRIMINAL JUSTICE PROGRAMME DIRECTOR AT THE EGYPTIAN COMMISSION FOR RIGHTS AND JUSTICE AND PARTICIPANT IN ISHR’S 2017 HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER ADVOCACY PROGRAMME



@ISHRglobal

‘The International Criminal Court will open an investigation into the situation in Burundi! A big step into the right direction has been taken. Next step: Suspension of Burundi from the UN Human Rights Council. #BurundiOut’

and China; and killing of defenders in Honduras, among others. Spurred by this report, together with the strategic advocacy of NGOs led by ISHR, the Council adopted a significant but contested resolution on reprisals in September – the first such resolution since 2013.

The resolution – negotiated by a core group comprising Ghana, Hungary, Ireland, Fiji and Uruguay – affirmed the right of all people to safe and unhindered access to and communication with international human rights bodies. It also mandated the Council to hold a dedicated dialogue to address acts of intimidation and reprisals and affirmed the particular responsibilities of the Council’s Members, President and Vice-Presidents to investigate and promote accountability for such acts. The holding of a dedicated dialogue within the Council will increase the visibility of acts of intimidation and reprisals, provide a platform to denounce and seek accountability for such acts, and increase the political cost for perpetrators.

Prior to the vote on the resolution, ISHR coordinated a coalition of 50 NGOs from all over the world to call on Member States to reject 19 hostile amendments led by China, Egypt, India, Russia and Venezuela (perhaps not coincidentally, each of those States has been accused by the UN Secretary-General and UN experts of perpetrating reprisals in recent years). Despite these disingenuous and bad faith efforts by a small minority of States, the ultimate adoption of a strong, substantive resolution by an overwhelming majority sends a clear message that reprisals will not be tolerated and must end.

Making the Human Rights Council more accessible, effective and protective

The world needs a legitimate and influential high-level human rights body that is accessible, effective and protective for rights holders, defenders and victims.

In 2016, on the occasion of the Council’s tenth anniversary, a group of 20 international, regional and national NGOs coordinated by ISHR collaborated to develop a series of practical recommendations to strengthen the Council. 2017 saw a number of these recommendations taken up by progressive States, partly in response to a problematic US push to reform the Council, demonstrating the potential to craft opportunities from crises. Most significantly, at the 35th session of the Council in June, the Netherlands worked in close partnership with ISHR and Human Rights Watch to devise a joint statement subsequently endorsed by almost 50 States from all regions, outlining and committing to a series of 11 measures to enhance the Council’s legitimacy and effectiveness.

Among other measures is a commitment by signatory States to strive for competitive elections to the Council and support candidates based primarily on human rights-based considerations. States that are responsible for gross and systematic human rights violations, or that refuse to cooperate fully with the UN and uphold a rules-based international order should have no place at the Council. The ongoing Council membership of Burundi, together with the recent election of the Democratic Republic of Congo, demonstrate the imperative of operationalising this commitment.

States signatory to the Dutch-led joint statement also pledged to be guided by objective and human rights-based criteria (previously elaborated in an Irish-led joint statement in 2016) in determining whether and how the Council should respond to situations of



concern. These criteria include whether the UN's human rights experts have recommended or called for action, the extent of the country's cooperation with the UN human rights system, and the situation of human rights defenders and other civil society actors in the

country. Such an approach to triggering action at the Council has been long advocated by ISHR and other NGOs and the onus is now on States to demonstrate principled leadership in applying the criteria. If a small State such as Iceland can lead a joint statement on extrajudicial killings in the Philippines, as it did at the Council's 35th session in June, then it behoves other States that profess a commitment to human rights and their defenders to show similar resolve. Civil society organisations have less and less patience for States that espouse a rhetorical commitment to thematic human rights issues – such as the protection of human rights defenders, freedom of expression or peaceful assembly – but that fail to take up those issues in concrete situations where perceived political, economic or other interests may be at stake.

Looking ahead – the role of civil society in building a Council fit for purpose

The Council approaches a critical juncture in 2018. While there is no formal review or reform process presently mandated, it is clear that the Council will have to strengthen its approach to prevention and implementation, become more streamlined and efficient in its working methods, and find ways to enhance State cooperation and adherence to membership standards if it is to be the credible and responsive human rights body the world needs.

For States that share a vision of the Council as a vital mechanism for monitoring and exposing violations, promoting accountability for perpetrators, and achieving access to remedy and justice for victims, civil society must be an indispensable partner in strengthening efforts. A reform agenda motivated primarily by a desire for efficiency or friendly dialogue, or devised exclusively by international actors and think tanks, will not be fit for purpose and will not respond to the real and pressing needs of rights holders, defenders and victims on the ground.

How we work

LIFTOUT
SECTION

ISHR | INTERNATIONAL SERVICE
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Our vision

Our vision is the effective implementation of all international and regional human rights instruments in all nations and for all peoples.

Our mission

We pursue this vision through our mission to support human rights defenders and ensure a safe and enabling environment for their work at the international, regional and national levels.

Theory of change

Our mission – supported by over 30 years of research, experience and a proven track record of impact – is founded on the understanding that human rights defenders are essential agents of human rights change and can use international and regional human rights standards and systems as powerful levers for progress.



Supporting Defenders | Strengthening Systems | Achieving Impact

“ISHR is praised by its partners and beneficiaries as a highly-influential non-governmental organisation, which often functions as a focal point or facilitator of human rights initiatives... Many interviewees spoke of ISHR as a “bridge” between those grassroots activists who are on the frontlines of the most important and often dangerous human rights struggles of our times and those international policymakers who sit in Geneva, New York, or capitals and may have little understanding of defenders’ realities and needs. Activists, international diplomats, and representatives of nongovernmental organisations stressed that ISHR can play this “bridging” or “linking” role because of its consultative and collaborative approach, as well as the trust and respect with which it is seen.

INDEPENDENT EXPERT EVALUATION OF ISHR (MAY 2017)

Human rights defenders

the essential agents



International and regional human rights laws and systems

the powerful levers



National level change



OUR goals

We pursue our mission by achieving three complementary goals:

1

We support human rights defenders to use international and regional human rights standards and systems

2

We strengthen international and regional standards and systems to make them more accessible, effective and protective for human rights defenders and victims

3

We work with local partners to advocate for national implementation of international and regional human rights standards on the protection of defenders and an enabling environment for their work

WWW.ISHR.CH



OUR tactics

We achieve these goals through five key tactics:

- Training, capacity building, fellowships and advocacy support
- Research and policy advocacy
- Legal advocacy and strategic interventions
- Technical advice and implementation support
- Coalition building and coordination

OUR priorities

We prioritise support to human rights defenders who work to:

- Promote equality and combat discrimination, in particular:
 - » women human rights defenders
 - » defenders of the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex people
 - » defenders of the rights of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers
- Promote democratic rights and good governance, in particular:
 - » defenders in highly restrictive environments
 - » defenders working to protect civil society space
- Promote economic, social and cultural rights, in particular:
 - » defenders working to ensure corporate accountability
 - » defenders working to promote sustainable development



ISHR

INTERNATIONAL SERVICE
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

OUR values

We are:

principled

passionate

expert

collaborative

connected



Our partners

ISHR never works alone. We are the secretariat for HRCnet, a coalition of 14 leading national, regional and international civil society organisations. We derive our mandate and legitimacy from, and we determine our priorities and positions in consultation with, a deep network of national and regional human rights defenders and non-governmental organisations. These are our key strategic partners.

Regional partners

AFRICA

- African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies (The Gambia)
- DefendDefenders (East and Horn of African Human Rights Defenders Network) (Uganda)
- Southern African Human Rights Defenders Network (Zimbabwe)
- West African Human Rights Defenders Network (Togo)

ASIA

- Asian Legal Resource Centre (Hong Kong, China)
- Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM ASIA) (Thailand)
- Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (India)

LATIN AMERICA

- Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales (CELS) (Argentina)
- Centre for Justice and International Law (Latin America)
- Conectas Direitos Humanos (Brazil)
- Ginebra ONG-LAC (Latin America)
- International Platform Against Impunity (Guatemala)

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

- Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (Egypt)
- Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (Egypt)
- Gulf Center for Human Rights (Middle East)

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Thematic partners

LGBTI RIGHTS

- ARC International
- ILGA World
- OutRight Action International
- Pan Africa ILGA

WOMEN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

- Association for Women's Rights in Development
- Coalition of African Lesbians
- Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights
- Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition

RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

- China Human Rights Lawyers Concern Group
- Network of Chinese Human Rights Defenders

BUSINESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

- Business & Human Rights Resource Centre
- Global Witness

National partners

- Coalition Ivoirienne des Défenseurs des Droits Humains (Côte d'Ivoire)
- Coalition Malienne des Défenseurs des Droits Humains (Mali)
- Collectif des Organisations de Défense des Droits de l'Homme et de la Démocratie (Niger)
- Colombian Commission of Jurists (Colombia)
- Comisión Mexicana de Defensa y Promoción de los Derechos Humanos (Mexico)
- Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos (Peru)
- Human Rights Law Centre (Australia)
- KTNC Watch (South Korea)
- Ligue pour la Défense de la Justice et de la Liberté (Burkina Faso)
- Ligue Tunisienne des Droits de L'homme (Tunisia)
- OT Watch (Mongolia)
- Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines (Philippines)
- Sierra Leone Human Rights Defenders Network (Sierra Leone)
- Unidad de Protección a Defensoras y Defensores de Derechos Humanos (Guatemala)



Enhancing protection

Developments in the legal recognition of defenders

2018 marks the 20th anniversary of the UN Declaration on Human Rights. The Declaration, adopted by consensus by the General Assembly in 1998 after almost 15 years of lobbying and advocacy by ISHR and other NGOs, elaborates binding international law so far as it applies to individuals, groups and associations promoting and defending human rights. Those advocating for the Declaration, together with those States that sought to weaken it, well understood that binding legal standards are a necessary, although by no means sufficient, element for the protection of defenders and a safe and enabling environment for their work.

While there remains a significant gap between the commitments made by States through the Declaration and their implementation on the ground, throughout 2017 ISHR contributed significantly to a number of positive developments in the legal recognition and protection of defenders at the international, regional and national levels.



Marthe Pédan Coulibaly | Côte d'Ivoire

IMPACT

TIMELINE OF DEVELOPMENTS TO WHICH ISHR CONTRIBUTED IN 2017



JANUARY

- Mali's Cabinet of Ministers adopts draft National Law on Human Rights Defenders
- UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention issues legal opinion holding that the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights prohibits discrimination against human rights defenders in the same way as it prohibits discrimination on grounds such as race or gender

FEBRUARY

- President of Côte d'Ivoire adopts decree to implement Loi 2014-388, the first ever national human rights defender protection law in Africa



MARCH

- UN Human Rights Council adopts Norwegian-led consensus resolution extending the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders

APRIL

- ISHR convenes high-level meeting of 45 representatives of civil society, national human rights institutions, parliaments and governments from 15 African countries for a two-day consultation on the development and implementation of national laws for the protection of defenders in Africa
- ISHR files third party intervention in support of indigenous human rights defender Daniel Pascual, calling on the Guatemalan Constitutional Court to interpret and apply national law and the constitution in conformity with the Declaration



MAY

- ISHR Director Phil Lynch addresses high-level conference of judges and jurists from Latin America and Europe on how the Declaration can be used by domestic and regional courts to interpret and apply domestic and regional law to enhance the protection of defenders

JUNE

- National Assembly of Burkina Faso adopts law on protection of defenders, following sustained advocacy and substantial inputs from ISHR and our partners, the Burkina Faso Coalition of Human Rights Defenders and the West African Human Rights Defenders Network

JULY

- ISHR submits intervention to the European Court of Human Rights against Russia, calling on the Court to explicitly rule that the rights to freedom of expression and association include the right to unhindered access and communication with international human rights bodies in line with the Declaration



AUGUST

- ISHR intervenes with UN Human Rights Committee in a case regarding attacks against LGBTI rights defender Sasha Krikerik, asking the Committee to find Russia in violation of its obligations under the Declaration
- ISHR facilitates a two-day consultation with human rights defenders from six Latin American countries to exchange and develop strategies for the introduction, reform and implementation of national protection mechanisms for defenders in Brazil, Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico and Peru

SEPTEMBER

- UN Human Rights Council adopts resolution – the first in 4 years – condemning acts of intimidation and reprisals against defenders and affirming the right to safe and unhindered access to and communication with international human rights bodies

- UN Committee on Migrant Workers makes groundbreaking recommendations to States regarding obligation to take specific measures to protect defenders of migrant, refugee and asylum seeker rights, in line with submissions by ISHR and national partners from Mexico, Korea and Indonesia

OCTOBER

- UN experts initiate development of legal and practical guidance for business on respecting and supporting human rights defenders, with inputs from ISHR

NOVEMBER

- African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights adopts Guidelines on Freedom of Association and Assembly, drafted with substantial input from ISHR and providing authoritative guidance to States to ensure that law, policy and practice conform with regional and international human rights standards

- Facilitated by ISHR and ARC International, a group of 33 eminent international legal experts release the Yogyakarta Principles Plus 10, an authoritative set of new principles on international human rights law relating to sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics, including in relation to LGBTI rights defenders
- Just two weeks after their release, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights cites the Yogyakarta Principles Plus 10 extensively and approvingly in a significant decision on gender identity and non-discrimination

DECEMBER

- UN General Assembly adopts consensus resolution on human rights defenders, drafted with significant inputs from ISHR
- Parliament of Mali adopts national law on protection of defenders, following two year advocacy campaign and provision of substantial technical assistance by ISHR and our local partner, the Coalition Malienne des Défenseurs des Droits Humains

IMPACT

ISHR'S MODEL NATIONAL LAW ON THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

■ Developed in consultation with over 500 defenders from every region, and settled and adopted by 29 of the world's leading human rights experts and jurists, ISHR's Model National Law was launched in 2016. It was used throughout 2017 to provide authoritative guidance to States on how to implement the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders at the national level and as an influential tool for civil society to promote, evaluate and report on implementation.

In 2017, ISHR commissioned a major independent evaluation of the relevance, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of its work. This is what the evaluation had to say about ISHR's Model Law.

The Model Law initiative is an important development that provides human rights defenders with a concrete tool to advocate for better protection from their governments and provides guidance for governments in the best practices for developing legal standards on the protection of defenders. There was unanimous agreement among interviewees that this process is having a direct impact on the ground, and that it is building momentum that will continue to bear fruit in the months and years ahead. The Model Law project was praised by almost all interlocutors and identified as one of ISHR's most important accomplishments during the evaluation period. For example, an international NGO partner commented, 'ISHR's initiative on the Model Law really stands out as a particularly important effort and shows that they are always thinking about how best to translate international standards into national implementation and protection. The Model Law gives human rights defenders a tool for campaigning and conducting advocacy with their national authorities. By consulting with so many defenders, they have helped build momentum for implementation of the standards in the UN Declaration on human rights defenders.'

Defenders interviewed were unanimously positive about the value of having a Model Law on Protection of human rights defenders, which they see as giving more weight to their work, helping them to carry out advocacy with their own governments, and to hold their governments to account for their obligations under international law. As one defender underscored, 'In our countries [in Central America], we need to ensure that national governments apply standards for the protection of human rights defenders properly. But it is not enough to simply hand them the international standards, which are very general and not very like our national standards. Without a model law, governments are less likely to apply the most protective standard, and many judges will not use international standards. The Model Law makes our work and approach much stronger now.' An African defender also stressed that 'ISHR has provided us with a concrete framework to use in our efforts to gain greater legal recognition and protection for our human rights work. We have learned greatly from their experience and the guidance and support they have offered us in the Model Law process.'



LESSONS LEARNED

NATIONAL LAWS ON THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

A conducive national legal framework is a necessary, although by no means sufficient, element of a safe and enabling environment for the work of human rights defenders. This requires both the absence of laws and policies which restrict or criminalise the work of defenders, together with the enactment and effective implementation of laws and policies which support and protect them.

At the national level, there are a number of jurisdictions which have taken or are taking steps to incorporate the Declaration into binding national law through the enactment of specific human rights defender laws and the establishment of specialised protection mechanisms. In some cases, these legislative efforts are drawing on the Model National Law developed by ISHR and endorsed by a panel of eminent legal experts in 2016.

Accordingly, in recent years, Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso and Mali in West Africa, as well as Honduras and Mexico in Latin America, have adopted such laws. While it is too early to make any assessment as to the efficacy of the Burkinabe or Malian laws, in Côte d'Ivoire there is an empirical association between the enactment of Loi 388-2014 and a decline in threats and attacks against defenders.

By contrast, the rise in attacks and the prevalence of impunity in Mexico and Honduras, both of which have specific human rights defender protection laws, shows manifestly that laws alone are not enough. To be effective, such laws must be developed in close consultation with civil society. Their implementation must be adequately resourced and they must enjoy high-level political support.

In addition to issues regarding implementation, there is a disturbing trend in some jurisdictions, most notably the Democratic Republic of Congo, to develop laws that are purported to be for the protection of defenders but in fact contain provisions – such as requiring that defenders be registered and submit reports – which have the purpose, or would have the effect of restricting defenders' independence and work. In that jurisdiction, ISHR's Model Law is providing both national and international civil society with a useful tool against which to assess proposals for conformity with the Declaration.



While the Model Law is 'a' model, not 'the' model, there are a number of elements which are essential for any national law. At a minimum these include ensuring that the law:

- adopts an inclusive functional and not vocational definition of defenders
- comprehensively enshrines the rights set out in the Declaration and other relevant international human rights treaties without reservation or selectivity
- does not introduce conditions or seek to impose 'responsibilities' on defenders that may impair those rights
- provides for the direct inclusion and participation of defenders in the governance and decision-making structures of any protection mechanism
- contains provisions which recognise and respond to the particular vulnerabilities and protection needs of specific groups of defenders, such as women human rights defenders
- clearly articulates the obligations of both State and non-State actors (including business enterprises), and contains provisions for the enforcement of these obligations and penalties and remedies for their contravention.

Self-evidently, a national human rights defender protection law is not a panacea for the risks and restrictions facing many defenders. ISHR's extensive research and consultations do confirm, however, that the explicit legal recognition and protection of defenders is a necessary element of establishing and maintaining a safe and enabling environment for their work. It further confirms that defenders working in diverse countries and contexts consider that ISHR's Model Law is a valuable tool contributing to the development of legislation that implements the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders effectively at the domestic level.



Achieving equality

New standards on the protection of LGBTI rights

Violence and discrimination against gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons remain widespread around the world. In 2017, targeted and systematic attacks were perpetrated against LGBTI rights defenders and organisations in places including Azerbaijan, Chechnya, Egypt and Indonesia. Clear international legal standards can contribute to preventing and promoting accountability for such acts. They can also contribute to promoting dignity and equality for LGBTI persons, such as through recently enacted laws on gender identity in Argentina, Pakistan and Peru or those establishing marriage equality in Australia, Germany and Finland.



Nazeeha Saeed | Bahrain



“The Yogyakarta Principles Plus 10 aim to address previous gaps and contribute not only to the eradication of violations, but also the reparation of the damages they cause around the world.”

MAURO CABRAL GRINSPAN (ARGENTINA),
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF GLOBAL ACTION
FOR TRANS EQUALITY (GATE)

■ In 2017, ISHR and ARC International collaborated to facilitate the elaboration of authoritative international legal principles on sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC). The Yogyakarta Principles Plus 10 (YP+10) provide a comprehensive roadmap for the development and reform of national laws, policies and practices to respect and uphold LGBTI rights.

The Yogyakarta Principles Plus 10:

- were developed following unprecedented consultation with civil society, rights holders, representatives of affected communities, and legal experts
- were adopted by a panel of 33 eminent experts following an intensive three day consultation in Geneva
- constitute an authoritative statement on international human rights law as it relates to sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics
- complement the 2007 Yogyakarta Principles, updating them to reflect international legal developments over the last decade and to fill protection gaps, particularly with respect to trans and intersex issues and rights
- provide comprehensive and practical guidance to States and non-State actors as to the legislative, administrative and other measures required to fulfil their obligations under international law



“The YP+10 will help civil society and other stakeholders hold governments accountable for fulfilling their obligations under international human rights law. In the context of violence against LBGTI persons, this accountability includes protection, support for victims, investigation of crime, and holding perpetrators to account, along with tackling structural violence.”

JULIA EHRT, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
OF TRANSGENDER EUROPE



Signatories to the Yogyakarta Principles Plus 10 include Edwin Cameron (judge of the Constitutional Court of South Africa), Victor Madrigal-Borloz (UN Independent Expert on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity), Ajit Prakash Shah (former Chief Justice of the High Court of Delhi), Sanji Mmasenono Monageng (judge of the International Criminal Court), and Maina Kiai (former UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association), among many others.

Just two weeks after their launch, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights issued a significant Advisory Opinion on gender identity and non-discrimination, citing the Yogyakarta Principles Plus 10 extensively and approvingly. The Court referred to YP+10 as a source of authoritative jurisprudence and as elaborating legally binding State obligations with respect to LGBTI rights.

“It is unacceptable that LGBTI people still face discrimination, including in health care settings, leading to detrimental impacts on the realisation of their right to health. Discrimination on the grounds of SOGIESC needs to be addressed globally, in the spirit of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, ensuring there is no-one left behind. YP+10 is a very important step in this direction.”

PROFESSOR DAINIUS PŪRAS (LITHUANIA), UN SPECIAL RAPPOREUR ON THE RIGHT TO HEALTH



 [@morgancarpenter](https://twitter.com/morgancarpenter)

‘Finally the Yogyakarta-Principles update, #YPplus10 are launched! Months in the making, and including necessary statements about legal protections from violence, ill-treatment and discrimination on grounds of sex characteristics.’



 [@victor_madrigal](https://twitter.com/victor_madrigal)

Delighted to share the issuance of Yogyakarta Principles plus 10, of which I am thankful and proud to be a signatory. Today as relevant as ever. We are free! #YPplus10 See all about the Yogyakarta Principles here: <http://www.yogyakartaprinciples.org>



Promoting transparency and accessibility

NGO participation at the UN

The NGO Committee of ECOSOC is responsible for making recommendations as to whether non-governmental organisations can participate in meetings of the UN. Accreditation is vital so that such organisations can ensure that the priorities and perspectives of grassroots human rights defenders and victims of violations are heard at the international level. For decades, the decisions of this Committee – which has been dominated by States such as China and Russia – have discriminated against and denied access to human rights organisations, particularly those working on issues such as women’s rights and minority rights. Such decisions have been taken without transparency and often without the effective participation of the NGO concerned. Following sustained advocacy by ISHR and our partners, the NGO Committee’s parent body resolved in 2017 to webcast all sessions and deliberations of the Committee, following the adoption of a resolution led by Chile, Mexico and Uruguay. ISHR continues to push to reform the membership and working methods of this Committee to promote fairness, transparency and civil society participation.



James Otto | Liberia



OPINION

WEBCASTING THE NGO COMMITTEE WILL INCREASE ACCESSIBILITY TO THE UN

By Cristián Barros Melet, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Chile to the UN in New York; Juan José Gómez Camacho, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Mexico to the UN in New York; and Elbio Rosselli, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Uruguay to the UN in New York

■ In May 2017, Chile, Mexico and Uruguay were pleased to introduce a resolution at the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) on improving the working methods of the NGO Committee by instituting webcasting of open sessions. The resolution passed with no opposition, in an important expression of support for making the United Nations more accessible and encouraging civil society participation.

Chile, Mexico and Uruguay have long supported reforms in the working methods of the NGO Committee, with webcasting the sessions as an important first step. The ECOSOC NGO Committee operates as a door to NGOs accessing and participating in the UN. It makes recommendations on granting NGOs with consultative status and such accreditation provides NGOs with means to access and participate in human rights discussions at the UN.

NGOs' participation in United Nations processes is essential. At a time when the world faces such challenges, civil society plays a vital role complementing and reinforcing the efforts made by States. Agenda 2030 – the UN's flagship global policy – will rely heavily on NGOs for its effective implementation. They will play a key role in carrying out activities on the ground, as well as monitoring and reporting on implementation of the Agenda. More broadly, through their engagement with the UN, NGOs play a key role in drawing attention and demanding responses to situations that States would rather look away from. In many cases NGOs criticise State policy and practice an important exercise in dialogue and accountability.

The NGO Committee is in a privileged position to encourage participation of NGOs. However, the Committee practice has been much criticised. For several years, Chile, Mexico and Uruguay have expressed concern about politically-motivated questioning of some NGO applicants and the multiple deferrals of applications.

Webcasting will make sessions accessible to all NGO applicants for accreditation – not only those with resources to travel to New York for open sessions of the Committee. Ensuring that public UN processes are accessible to as many people as possible is an important principle that should inform UN working methods. Whilst the Committee will make the decisions

as to recommending accreditation, civil society has the right to know how the process operates. Webcasting open sessions of the NGO Committee is key to enabling NGOs themselves to follow the process by which their access to the UN is decided. NGOs should be able to see that decisions are being made in good faith.

We hope this will encourage the participation of the most diverse group of NGOs possible. Ensuring a diversity of voices at the United Nations is part of what the participation of civil society is all about. In line with the ECOSOC resolution 1996/31 that provides its mandate, the NGO Committee is required to ensure 'participation of non-governmental organisations from all regions, particularly from developing countries'.

Over time, there were attempts made to discuss webcasting within the NGO Committee itself, but unfortunately those talks did not prosper. In introducing the webcasting resolution we were acknowledging that it was time that ECOSOC took action. In practical terms, webcasting the Committee open sessions will



“We at the United Nations rely on cooperation with civil society actors around the world. You provide indispensable on-the-ground insights and information, alert the UN system to developing situations, and push for the right action to be taken. For the work of the UN Human Rights Office – our advocacy with governments; our technical cooperation and training programmes for law enforcement, government officials, justice and security personnel, civil society and more; especially our monitoring and investigating reports of human rights violations – all this would be without foundation if we could not count on your courage, your expertise, your sense of principle, and your voices.”

ANDREW GILMOUR, UN ASSISTANT SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

simply bring its practice into line with other subsidiary bodies of ECOSOC.

We will continue to call on the NGO Committee to operate in a way that ensures the applications of NGOs are dealt with in a transparent, fair and apolitical fashion. The NGO Committee should encourage, not hinder the participation of NGOs in UN processes. Civil society has a right to expect the NGO Committee to work properly.

Membership of the NGO Committee will always be important. We would like to see more States that are committed to promoting civil society participation at the UN and safeguarding civil society space more broadly, to stand as candidates for the NGO Committee.

The United Nations benefits from participation of organisations from all regions, working across the full spectrum of relevant concerns. We believe that States must ensure that the UN NGO Committee enables this participation and we are confident that webcasting sessions is an important step in the right direction.

Our Board and Staff



Expert on human rights and civil society organisations, former Open Society Foundations Fellow and Executive Director of Conectas Human Rights in Brazil, Board member of the Fund for Global Human Rights.



Special Advisor and former Director of the Gulf Center for Human Rights and former Acting President of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights.



Director of Ditshwanelo, recognised as one of the leading human rights lawyers in Botswana, and a prominent advocate on women's rights and development.



Professor and Co-Director of NYU Center for Business and Human Rights, former US Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, and former head of Human Rights First.
RETIRED IN MAY 2017



Former President and judge of the European Court of Human Rights, President of the British Institute of Human Rights, and Honorary Professor at Nottingham Law School.



Expert member of UN Working Group on Discrimination against Women in Law and in Practice, Australian Sex Discrimination Commissioner from 2007 to 2015 and formerly a partner with international law firm Ashurst.



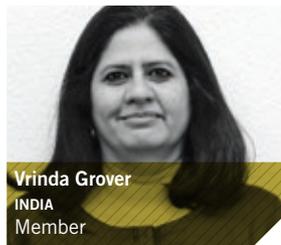
Professor of Human Rights Law, Commissioner with the International Commission of Jurists, and former judge of the European Court of Human Rights.



Expert-consultant on international human rights issues for Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs and former Minister for the Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the UN in New York and Geneva.



Management consultant and former Partner with McKinsey & Co, where he worked for 18 years across Asia, Europe and the United States.



Human rights lawyer and defender advocating and litigating landmark cases in relation to women's rights, torture and sexual minorities, Bureau member of South Asians for Human Rights.



Former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, former judge of the International Criminal Court, and former President of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.
RETIRED IN MAY 2017



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New York Office Director
& Legal Counsel

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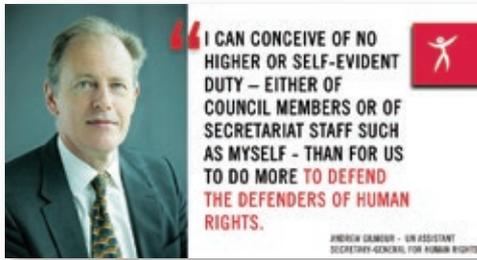
THANK YOU

The generous contributions of our financial supporters, including progressive governments, foundations and dedicated individuals, sustain and enable our work to support human rights defenders, strengthen human rights systems and achieve human rights change.

As a registered non-profit association in Switzerland, and recognised as tax exempt in the US under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, your gift to ISHR may be tax deductible. Please support human rights defenders and invest in ISHR.



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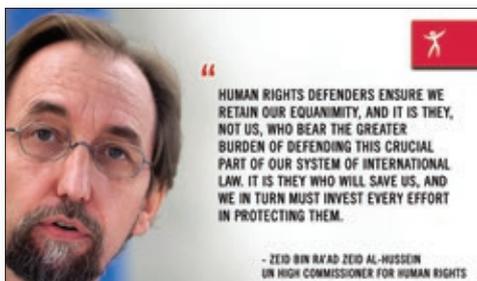
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- Wolfgang Benedek, Ashley Bleeker, Olivier de Frouville, Jill Donnelly, Christine Do Phan, Maritie Gaidon, Hurst Hannum, Robin Jones, Fabiana Pardi, Michael H Posner, Lorraine and Colin Potts



'The good folk at @ISHRglobal help human rights defenders from around the globe access & utilise the UN human rights system. They've been a great support to much of @rightsagenda's UN engagement and I'm pleased to support their end of year fundraising appeal'

International law firms

During 2017, ISHR worked with some of the world's leading law firms and chambers on a pro bono basis, enabling us to leverage substantial legal expertise and resources.

- Akin Gump
- Allens
- Ashurst
- DLA Piper
- Doughty Street Chambers
- Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer
- Shearman & Sterling
- Winston & Strawn

Financial Statements

This is an extract of ISHR's audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2017. For a complete version, please contact Marina Dailly at m.dailly@ishr.ch.



PROFIT AND LOSS STATEMENT FOR YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2017

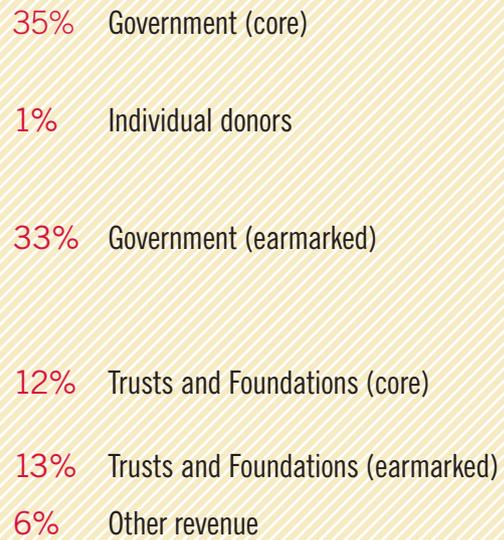
	2017 CHF	2016 CHF
Income		
REVENUE – CORE		
Governmental Agencies	928 132	649 249
Trusts & Foundations	310 436	148 181
Individual Donors	39 179	46 262
Other Revenue	159 791	128 887
Total Core Grants	1 437 539	972 579
REVENUE – EARMARKED		
Governmental Agencies	897 562	899 546
Trusts & Foundations	350 073	373 383
Total Earmarked Grants	1 247 635	1 272 929
Total Income	2 685 175	2 245 508
Costs		
Personnel & Related Costs	1 646 474	1 508 323
Programme Costs	666 525	439 592
Operating, Administrative & Finance Costs	292 939	396 419
Governance & Strategy Costs	26 243	38 625
Total Costs	2 632 181	2 382 959
Income (Deficit) For The Year	52 993	(137 452)

BALANCE SHEET AT 31 DECEMBER 2017

	2017 CHF	2016 CHF
Assets		
Cash & Cash Equivalents	597 355	269 612
Debtors	21 329	42 001
Deferred Expenses	–	–
Grants Receivable – Governmental	204 194	184 524
Grants Receivable – Non-governmental	179 988	444 113
Total Assets	1 002 866	940 250
Liabilities & Reserves		
LIABILITIES		
Current Liabilities	97 096	51 008
Provisions	8 369	5 000
Deferred Grants	603 414	643 249
Total Liabilities	708 879	699 256
RESERVES		
Reserve Funds	240 994	378 446
Income (Deficit) for the Year	52 993	(137 452)
Total Reserves	293 987	240 994
Total Liabilities and Reserves	1 002 866	940 250

Income by Source

Total CHF 2,685,175



Expenditure by Category

Total CHF 2,632,181





“Following concerted civil society advocacy and the principled leadership of some States, ECOSOC took much needed action in 2017 to increase the transparency and accountability of the UN’s NGO Committee. Further leadership and efforts are necessary however to ensure that the Committee fulfils its mandate and the UN respects and protects the rights to freedom of expression and association for NGOs.”

ELEANOR OPENSHAW, CO-DIRECTOR OF ISHR, NEW YORK OFFICE



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