

[UNGA72 | Ensure LGBTI rights defenders can conduct their work without fear of intimidation or reprisal](#)

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No person should face violence or discrimination on the basis of who they are or who they love. In his first report to the General Assembly, Vitit Muntarbhorn, the Independent Expert on violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, highlights the crucial and central role of defenders.



Last Friday, Vitit Muntarbhorn, the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity presented his [first report to the General Assembly](#).

Under the theme ‘embrace diversity and energise humanity’, the report focuses on effective anti-discrimination measures, decriminalisation of gender identity and expression, and decriminalisation of consensual same-sex relations.

In presenting his report, Muntarbhorn underlined the central and critical role of civil society and human rights defenders. He also highlighted the need for more effective safeguards and action to prevent and address threats and reprisals against them.

During the Interactive Dialogue, a number of States spoke in support of the mandate and work to date, including - among others - Mexico, Israel, Albania, Belgium, Japan, and Canada.

ISHR welcomes Slovenia’s identification of the key role of civil society and human rights defenders in combatting stigmatisation faced by LGBTI people. ISHR also thanks the Netherlands for their question seeking guidance on the main obstacles faced by defenders working to promote the rights of LGBTI individuals.

Sadly, as of 31 October 2017, Vitit Muntarbhorn will stand down as Independent Expert, due to health and family reasons (as set out [in this letter](#) by the Expert).

‘It is vital that States continue to support this mandate - the new appointee - and its integral work. No person should face violence or discrimination on the basis of who they are or who they love’, said ISHR Programme Manager Pooja Patel.

'Collaboration and support are essential. We encourage the new Independent Expert and other relevant Special Procedures mandates to strengthen the UN responses to cases of violence and discrimination against LGBTI defenders', Patel added.

ISHR reiterates the calls made in a [joint civil society submission](#), and echoed in the report of the Independent Expert:

1. Review and repeal all laws and policies which, directly or indirectly, criminalise, stigmatise or discriminate against LGBTI defenders.
2. Ensure the protection of defenders working on issues of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC), against any violence, threat, retaliation, de facto or de jure discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action perpetrated by the State or non-State actors, in response to their human rights activities.
3. Remove barriers for the full recognition, registration and/or accreditation of organisations that promote and protect the human rights of persons of diverse SOGIESC.
4. Ensure organisations working on issues related to SOGIESC can seek, receive and use funding and other resources from various stakeholders.
5. Continue open and inclusive dialogue with civil society, and ensure that human rights defenders working at the national level have regular opportunities to interact directly with the mandate.

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