

[HRC42 | Side with human rights defenders, side with humanity](#)

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From rescuing vulnerable people drowning at sea to rescuing a planet which is suffocating and burning, human rights defenders are working to serve humanity. By contrast, governments and businesses which smear, criminalise and kill defenders are working to the detriment of us all, ISHR Director Phil Lynch has told the UN Human Rights Council.



Responding to a [major speech](#) by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, which addressed themes including climate change and migration, ISHR Director Phil Lynch defined human rights defenders as those people, collectives and NGOs who 'act with humanity, serve humanity, and bring out the best in humanity' and those governments and corporations which criminalise and even kill them as 'enemies of humanity'.

Read the [full statement here](#).

He said:

'Madame High Commissioner, human rights defenders are people who **act with humanity**.

They are the people and NGOs rescuing migrants and refugees at sea and providing the vital humanitarian assistance that keeps them alive and gives them a chance at a better life.

Madame High Commissioner, human rights defenders are people who **serve humanity**.

They are the environmentalists and indigenous communities working to protect the world's forests and to prevent the climate catastrophe that impacts so disproportionately on those living in vulnerable areas or that are members of communities and groups which experience marginalisation and discrimination.

Madame High Commissioner, human rights defenders are people who **bring out the best in humanity**.

They are the ordinary people in places you mentioned like Hong Kong, Burundi and Tanzania who are organising and striving for societies in which people can participate in decisions and express themselves freely without risk of unrestrained violence, arbitrary detention or enforced disappearance.

Madame High Commissioner, the opposite of humanity is inhumanity.

Inhumanity is the criminalisation of migrant rights defenders by EU States such as [Hungary](#) and [Italy](#), leading to people drowning at sea or being forcibly returned to situations of danger.

Inhumanity is the greed of the politicians and major companies extracting short term profit by destroying our planet, killing environmental defenders, and smearing activists like Greta Thunberg.

Inhumanity is the systematic repression of those working for more free, just and inclusive societies, whether for women in Saudi Arabia or religious and ethnic minorities in China.

It's time to choose sides in the struggle for our future. Join us in siding with human rights defenders. Join us in siding with humanity.'

Watch the statement here:

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