



## ANNUAL REPORT 2015

Supporting human rights defenders  
Strengthening human rights systems  
Achieving human rights change

This Annual Report covers the period 1 January to 31 December 2014.

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*The NGO community attempted to hold a moment's silence for the late Chinese human rights defender, Cao Shunli, at the Human Rights Council's 25th session*

# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRPERSON AND DIRECTOR



This Annual Report is dedicated to Chinese human rights defender, lawyer and democracy activist, Cao Shunli. Abducted at Beijing airport en route to Geneva to participate in an ISHR training programme in September 2013, Cao was detained incommunicado, denied access to adequate health care, and died in custody on 14 March 2014.

Nothing will atone for Cao's death. Throughout 2014, however, her life served as an inspiration for ISHR's work to strengthen the protection of human rights defenders, to combat and ensure accountability for attacks against them, and to support them in exercising the right to advocate and seek justice at the United Nations that Cao was denied.

The spurious charges used to justify Cao's detention – 'illegal assembly', 'picking quarrels' and 'creating disturbances' – are illustrative of the use and abuse of laws to restrict and criminalise the work of defenders in many countries throughout the world. The importance of a conducive legal environment for civil society actors drove our successful advocacy to reform anti-protest laws in Australia and enact a specific law to protect human rights defenders in Côte d'Ivoire.

The abduction and detention of Cao is emblematic of the enforced disappearance and arbitrary detention of so many human rights defenders around the world. While tragically unsuccessful in securing Cao's release,

ISHR's high-level lobbying and advocacy did contribute to securing the release of human rights defenders from imprisonment in other States, including Bahrain, Niger and Sri Lanka.

The actions to prevent Cao from testifying at the UN reflect the worsening incidence and severity of reprisals against those who turn to regional and international mechanisms to seek justice and exercise the right to freedom of expression denied to them at home. Cao's case informed our strategic advocacy to strengthen mechanisms to end reprisals, including the mandating of a special rapporteur to combat reprisals in Africa.

Following Cao's death, ISHR coordinated civil society action within the Human Rights Council to honour her life and secured high-level statements from the UN Secretary-General and the US State Department, among others, condemning her death. China may have been successful in silencing Cao, but in so doing the Chinese Government paradoxically demonstrated the importance and impact of international human rights advocacy and strengthened the voices and resolve of national-level human rights defenders all over the world. Throughout 2014, ISHR was privileged to support hundreds of activists – from Afghanistan to Venezuela, and from Liberia to Thailand – to use the UN and regional mechanisms as levers for concrete human rights change.

This report, and the human rights achievements it records, is dedicated to Cao Shunli and the many human rights defenders who have died or been disappeared in connection with their vital and courageous work.

Thank you for standing with us and with them.



Philip Lynch, ISHR Director and  
Rosemary McCreery, Chair of the ISHR Board.

**Rosemary McCreery**  
Chairperson

**Philip Lynch**  
Director

# HOW DO WE ACHIEVE IMPACT?

## Our proven methodology

With a 30-year track record to show it, ISHR uses a proven methodology to support individual human rights defenders and achieve systemic human rights change.

- **Supporting human rights defenders** - the agents of change - through capacity building, strategic advocacy accompaniment and information products
- Directly engaging and **influencing key decision-makers** through strategic advocacy, media engagement and high-level lobbying



- **Strengthening human rights laws and systems** through research, analysis and advocacy
- Coordinating and **resourcing human rights networks** and coalitions

## Focusing on those who are most at risk

Our work focuses on those human rights defenders who are most marginalised, exposed or at risk, where our support can protect and strengthen them as agents of change.

In 2014, this included women human rights defenders, those working on issues of sexual orientation and gender identity, human rights defenders working to expose and secure accountability for corporate human rights abuses, and those working to promote democratic freedoms and to end impunity, particularly in countries undergoing transition.

# WHAT IMPACT DID WE ACHIEVE?

Over the last 30 years, ISHR's proven methodology of supporting human rights defenders, advocating for stronger laws and mechanisms for their protection, directly engaging and influencing key decision makers, and coordinating human rights coalitions and campaigns has led to significant human rights change.

In 2014, working in close partnership with our network of human rights defenders, diplomatic partners and financial supporters, we contributed to important progress in each of our priority areas. We have:



Advocated successfully for the **adoption of a law on the protection of human rights defenders in Côte d'Ivoire**, the first such law in Africa

Read more on our work to strengthen the legal protection of human rights defenders at pages 6-9.



Provided **intensive training and international advocacy support to women human rights defenders** from States including Afghanistan, Bangladesh, China, Iraq, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sudan and Venezuela

Read more on our support for women human rights defenders at pages 10-13.



Lobbied successfully for the **first ever resolution on the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) persons** at the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and only the second such resolution at the UN

Read more on our advocacy with LGBT human rights defenders at pages 14-17.



Put the role, situation and **protection of human rights defenders at the heart of the rapidly evolving business and human rights agenda**

Read more on our work to support corporate accountability activists at pages 18-21.



Provided **strategic advocacy support and advice to Chinese human rights defenders** in exercising their right to freedom of expression on the international stage and in exposing and seeking accountability for violations and restrictions at home

Read more on our efforts to increase the capacity and amplify the impact of human rights defenders working to promote democracy and end impunity at pages 24-27.



Secured the **appointment of a special rapporteur to end intimidation and reprisals** against human rights defenders in Africa

Read more about our advocacy to combat and promote accountability for reprisals at pages 32-35.



Assisted to **secure UN accreditation for a wide range of human rights defenders** and NGOs, enabling them to have their voices heard on the international stage

Read more about our work to safeguard civil society space and participation at the UN and beyond at pages 38-41.

# LEGAL PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS



Maryam Al-Khawaja, Co-director of the Gulf Center for Human Rights and ISHR Board member, at the launch of ISHR's new legal report 'From Restriction to Protection'. Ms Al-Khawaja shared her recent experience of arbitrary detention and ill-treatment in Bahrain.

# IMPACT 2014

- Worked with civil society partners and government officials in Côte d'Ivoire to draft and secure the enactment of a law on the protection of human rights defenders, the first such law in Africa
- Launched a major report on the legal environment for human rights defenders in over 40 jurisdictions from all regions, with 25 concrete recommendations to States as to the law reforms necessary to ensure a safe and enabling environment for defenders' work
- Conducted regional consultations on the legal situation and protection needs of human rights defenders in Asia, the Middle East and North Africa, and Eastern Europe and Central Asia
- Participated in an international civil society mission to Mexico to examine and make recommendations to improve the effectiveness of the Mexican law on the protection of human rights defenders and journalists
- Contributed to a substantial increase in the making and acceptance of Universal Periodic Review (UPR) recommendations regarding the need to strengthen laws and policies for the protection of human rights defenders and to review and repeal laws and policies which criminalise or unduly restrict their work



*Room IX at the Palais des Nations was full to capacity for the launch of ISHR's major comparative research report on the recognition and protection of human rights defenders under national law.*

**The national-level legal recognition and protection of human rights defenders is key to ensuring a safe and enabling environment for their work. Recognising this, in 2014 ISHR worked with the West African Human Rights Defenders Network and the Côte d'Ivoire Coalition of Human Rights Defenders towards the successful enactment of a 'Law on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights Defenders' in that country.**

While the enactment of specific human rights defender laws is a positive step, the impact of such laws depends on their effective implementation and adequate resourcing of the protection mechanisms they mandate. In this vein, ISHR was pleased to take part in an international civil society mission to Mexico to examine and make recommendations to improve the effectiveness of the Mexican law on the protection of human rights defenders and journalists, adopted in 2012.

An enabling environment for human rights defenders also requires the removal of legal restrictions on their work, with ISHR's landmark report, 'From restriction to protection', providing a roadmap for national level law reform in areas from penal codes to tax laws.

Our international advocacy at the Human Rights Council increases pressure on States to repeal or not proceed with the enactment of restrictive laws. Meanwhile, our reports to treaty bodies and the Universal Periodic Review in 2014 were strongly correlated with a 70 per cent increase in recommendations to States to adopt laws and policies to protect defenders and to repeal laws that hinder or criminalise their work. Over 85 per cent of recommendations proposed by ISHR in the context of the UPR were subsequently made by States, including in relation to the need to investigate and ensure accountability for threats and attacks against journalists, to facilitate peaceful protest and strictly regulate the use of force against demonstrators, to review and repeal laws and policies which criminalise or unduly restrict the activities of defenders, and to cooperate fully with international and regional human rights mechanisms.



"The existing legal framework for human rights defenders and NGOs in India is deeply problematic. What we need is domestic legislation that is based on the provisions contained in the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders."

**Henri Tiphagne**  
Executive Director of  
People's Watch India and  
Chairperson of FORUM-  
ASIA



Gwenael Plaser, Flickr Creative Commons

"Côte d'Ivoire should swiftly adopt the law on the protection of human rights defenders and ensure its immediate and effective implementation."

**Recommendation proposed  
by ISHR**  
and made by the Czech  
Republic to Côte d'Ivoire  
at the Universal Periodic  
Review of April 2014.  
Côte d'Ivoire subsequently  
adopted such a law, the  
first in Africa, in June 2014



ISHR recommendations picked up by States in the context of the Universal Periodic Review

Increase in UPR recommendations on human rights defender issues correlated with ISHR advocacy

# VISION 2015

*With your support we will:*

- Work closely with civil society partners and government officials in States including Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Honduras, Mexico and Sierra Leone to promote the enactment, enhancement and effective implementation of national human rights defender laws and protection mechanisms
- Work with grassroots activists and international legal experts to draft a model national law on the protection of defenders
- Advocate for the implementation of recommendations from our landmark report on the legal environment for human rights defenders
- Partner with leading international law firms on a pro bono basis to conduct and intervene in strategic litigation that strengthens the legal protection of defenders and challenges restrictions to their work



*ISHR's Eleanor Openshaw (right), and Angelita Baeyens of the Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights (left), during an international civil society monitoring mission to Mexico.*

*Comisión Mexicana de Defensa y Promoción de los Derechos Humanos*

# WOMEN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Ky Chung, UN Photo

# IMPACT 2014

- Provided intensive training and international advocacy support to women human rights defenders from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Iraq, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan and Sudan, among others
- Collaborated closely with the African Commission Special Rapporteur to produce a report on the role, situation and protection needs of women human rights defenders in Africa
- Undertook both systemic and specific advocacy to demand accountability for discrimination and attacks against women human rights defenders in Bahrain, Bangladesh, Egypt and Mexico
- Resourced and supported the Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition (WHRDIC), a global network of 28 member organisations that supports and protects women human rights defenders worldwide
- Secured recommendations from the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women for China to adopt specific laws and policies to protect women defenders



African Commission Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders Reine Alapini-Gansou worked closely with ISHR in the development of her important report on women human rights defenders in Africa.

**Around the world women human rights defenders face threats and risks for their work to challenge discrimination, patriarchy and entrenched male privilege. ISHR stands with them in this work, providing training and advocacy support, lobbying to ensure the role and protection needs of women defenders are reflected in international resolutions and standards, and working with women's rights activists and groups to promote the domestic implementation of these resolutions and standards.**

In 2014, ISHR was privileged to provide intensive training to women human rights defenders from all regions who work across a range of issues, including sexual and reproductive rights, violence against women, land and environmental rights, access to justice and detention conditions. We also supported and accompanied them in their advocacy on Human Rights Council resolutions on eliminating violence against women and promoting the political participation of women.

In the same period, ISHR supported the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, Reine Alapini-Gansou, to produce a major report on the situation and protection needs of women human rights defenders in Africa. Together with a landmark UN General Assembly resolution on women human rights defenders in December 2013, this report provides a roadmap on the legislative, policy, institutional and structural reforms necessary to ensure women defenders can work free from insecurity, violence and discrimination. The implementation of the General Assembly resolution and the African Commission report will be key priorities for ISHR and other partners within the WHRDIC in 2015.

In addition to promoting progress, much of ISHR's work in this area involves guarding and advocating against threats to the enjoyment of universal rights posed by selective appeals to culture, religion and 'traditional values'. In this regard, we deeply regret the passage of a regressive resolution on the 'protection of the family' at the Human Rights Council in 2014 and are pledged to reversing it and countering other similar threats in the years ahead.



"A big thank you to the ISHR team for putting together a wonderful workshop with an amazing set of human rights defenders from all over the world."

**Aliya Khan**

Pakistani women human rights defender and participant in the 2014 Human Rights Defender Advocacy Programme



"In over 15 years as a human rights defender in Mexico, I have personally suffered numerous violations of my human rights because of my gender, and numerous female colleagues have found themselves in the same situation. Because women human rights defenders face gender-specific risks, it is essential to make protection measures gender-specific and holistic. This involves not only applying a gender-specific interpretation of traditional security measures, but also addressing the root causes of insecurity for women human rights defenders and guaranteeing the conditions necessary to enable them to carry out their work."

**Alejandra Ancheita**

Director of ProDESC, participant in the 2014 ISHR training on business and human rights defenders and recipient of the 2014 Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders



"We must recognize the vital role of women who defend human rights, often at great risk to themselves and their families precisely because they are viewed as stepping outside socially prescriptive gender stereotypes. We must recognize the role of all people, women and men, who publicly call for gender equality and often, as a result, find themselves the victim of archaic and patriarchal, but powerful, threats to their reputations, their work and even their lives. These extraordinary individuals – women human rights defenders – operate in hostile environments, where arguments of cultural relativism are common and often against the background of the rise of extremist, misogynistic groups, which threaten to dismantle the gains of the past."

**Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein**

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

# VISION 2015

*With your support we will:*

- Work with members of the WHRDIC to develop strategies and undertake actions to implement a landmark 2013 international resolution on women human rights defenders at the national level
- Provide intensive training and strategic advice to women human rights defenders to support and strengthen their advocacy at the UN, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights
- Work with local partners, such as JASS Mesoamerica and the Côte d'Ivoire Human Rights Defenders Coalition, to ensure that national laws, policies and protection mechanisms for human rights defenders respond to the particular risks and threats faced by women
- Undertake extensive advocacy at the UN Human Rights Council in relation to key resolutions on promoting the political participation of women and ending violence and discrimination against women



*Women human rights defenders from 17 countries gained invaluable knowledge and experience at an advanced training and advocacy programme with ISHR in June 2014.*

# DEFENDERS OF LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER RIGHTS



Zach Lipton, Flickr Creative Commons

# IMPACT 2014

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- Our work with key partners over a number of years culminated in the adoption of the first ever resolution on the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons at the African Commission in May 2014
- Conducted international advocacy to resist the enactment or promote the repeal of anti-LGBT laws in Jamaica, Kyrgyzstan, Malawi, Nigeria, Russia and Uganda
- Cited approvingly by the Supreme Court of India in a landmark transgender rights decision in April 2014, which held that discrimination based on gender identity violates constitutionally guaranteed rights to equality, freedom of expression, privacy, autonomy and dignity
- Played a key coordination and strategic advocacy role in a successful campaign for the UN Human Rights Council to adopt its second resolution on LGBT rights, including through publication of a major report documenting LGBT violations worldwide and influencing the votes of key States in Asia and West Africa
- Provided intensive training and advocacy support to LGBT human rights defenders from Bangladesh, Botswana, Malaysia, Peru, Syria, Thailand, Venezuela, and Trinidad and Tobago, among others, equipping them to use international human rights tools to drive change in their home countries
- Supported ARC International to obtain UN accreditation and Malaysian NGO coalition, COMANGO, to be unbanned in connection with its LGBT rights advocacy

**The year was one of both significant progress and disturbing regress in the protection and realisation of LGBT rights worldwide.**

In April 2014, the Indian Supreme Court delivered a landmark judgment stipulating that transgender persons are entitled to be recognised as a 'third gender' rather than being forced to identify as male or female. In reaching its decision, the Court stated that the *Yogyakarta Principles on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity* – developed jointly by ISHR and the International Commission of Jurists almost a decade ago – should be applied as a part of Indian law. This decision has the potential to transform the lives of tens of millions in a country of almost 1.3 billion people.

Weeks later, in May, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights adopted a seminal resolution condemning violence and discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity. This was the culmination of years of documentation, lobbying and campaigning by NGOs including ISHR, the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project, the Coalition of African Lesbians, the NGO Forum, AMSHeR and many more.

Building on this momentum, in September, the UN Human Rights Council adopted its own resolution on LGBT rights. ISHR advocacy and support for civil society partners advocating at capital level in Asia and West Africa helped to positively shift the positions of States such as Viet Nam, Philippines, Burkina Faso and Sierra Leone.

Regrettably, this progress was not reflected in many States, with a number of countries, Kyrgyzstan and Uganda among them, proposing or enacting laws to outlaw advocacy and associations that promote LGBT rights or equality. In Russia, such laws have been associated with an increase in homophobic violence and discrimination. This paradoxically affirms the importance of a UN General Assembly resolution adopted in December 2014 which calls on States to protect all persons – particularly LGBT persons – from extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions and to effectively investigate and bring perpetrators of such killings to justice. ISHR worked tirelessly on this resolution in New York, helping to ensure it was adopted by a record number of votes.



"It's time for transgender people in Asia to get together and reflect upon what doing advocacy means, and what we are advocating for. Moving issues, bringing them into the right fora, that's what I am trying to do."

**Khartini Slamah**

*Malaysian transgender human rights defender working on HIV/AIDS and LGBT rights and an ISHR trainee*



"Thanks to the attention drawn by the UN to its discriminatory laws, Chile has recently approved a law against discrimination which includes sexual orientation and gender identity as a protected category."

**Rolando Jimenez Perez**

*Chilean human rights defender working with Movilh Chile*



"Equality and non-discrimination on the ground of gender identity or expression is increasing and gaining acceptance in international law and, therefore, should be applied in India as well. Due to the absence of suitable legislation protecting the rights of the members of the transgender community... international conventions, including the Yogyakarta Principles, which we have found not inconsistent with the various fundamental rights guaranteed under the Indian Constitution, must be recognised and followed."

**National Legal Services Authority v India**

*Supreme Court of India, 15 April 2014*

# VISION 2015

*With your support we will:*

- Provide intensive training and advocacy support to LGBT human rights defenders, enabling them to leverage international and regional human rights mechanisms towards concrete legal and policy change on the ground
- Monitor and advocate in relation to proposed laws that would restrict or criminalise the work of LGBT human rights defenders



*Members of the NGO community celebrate at the UN Human Rights Council's 27th session, following the adoption of the Council's second-ever resolution on LGBT rights.*

- Work with regional and local partners to promote the effective, national-level implementation of the UN and African Commission resolutions on LGBT rights
- Conduct strategic advocacy and litigation through the UN human rights system to strengthen the legal protection of LGBT rights and to promote the jurisprudential application of the Yogyakarta Principles
- Produce an advocacy video to highlight the daily experiences of LGBT human rights defenders and the importance of international standards for their protection



*ISHR advocacy was instrumental in securing the votes of key States, ensuring the resolution was adopted by a strong margin.*

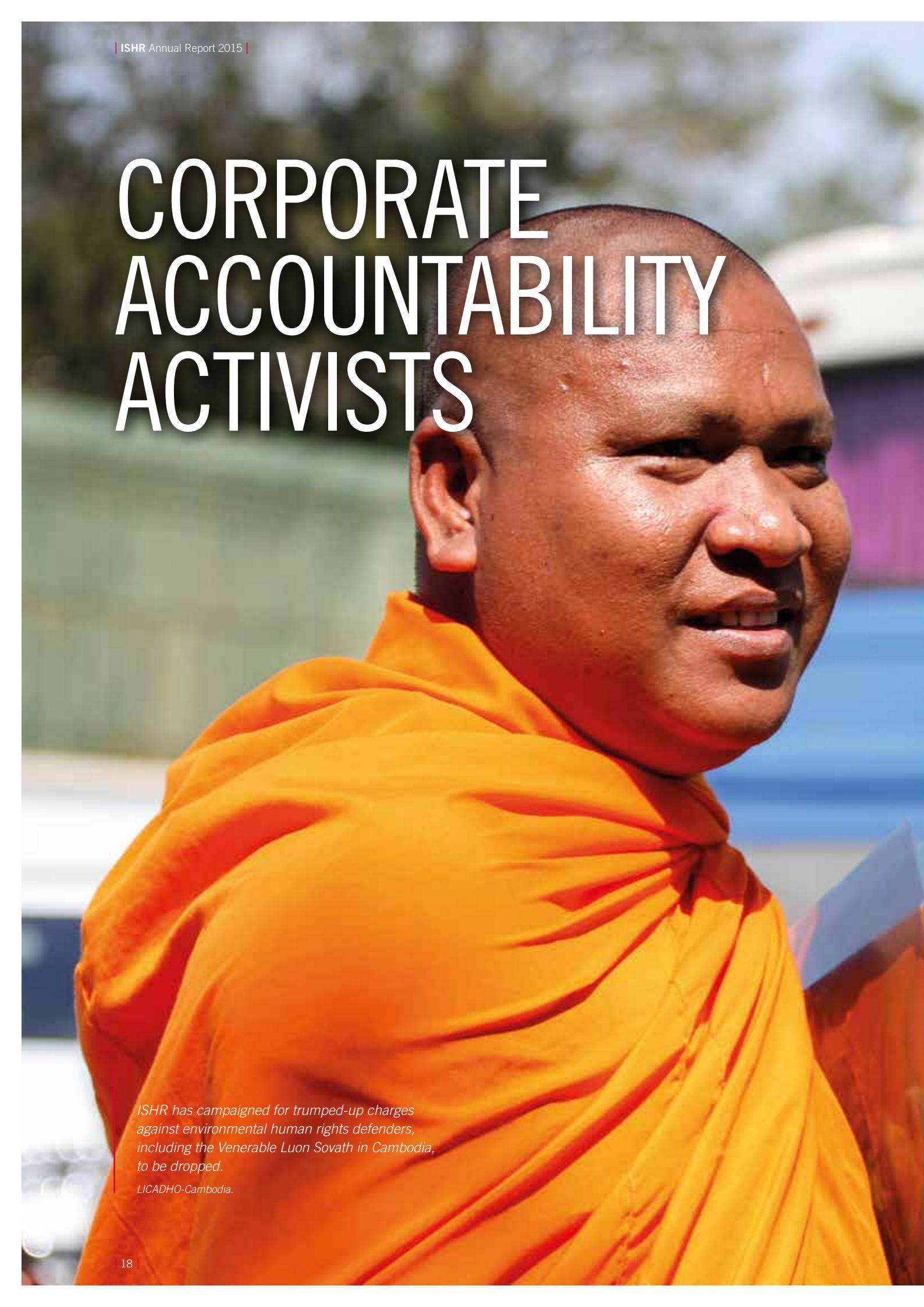


*Following sustained advocacy by ISHR and key partners over many years, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights adopted its first resolution on LGBT rights in May 2014.*



*Aliya Khan, women's rights defender, and Richie Maitland, LGBT rights defender, share advocacy strategies at ISHR's Human Rights Defenders Advocacy Programme in June 2014.*

# 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

*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.



# EXPERT ESSAY

## **SUPPORTING AND PROTECTING DEFENDERS WHO WORK ON BUSINESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS**

*By Michel Forst, UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders*

It is increasingly well documented that many human rights defenders who work to promote corporate respect for human rights, or to expose and seek accountability for human rights violations perpetrated by business, face particular risks, restrictions and attacks.

The Special Procedures of the UN Human Rights Council have played an important role in calling attention to this issue. In the last months of 2014 alone, for example, the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights expressed concern at the detention of human rights defenders and the imposition of funding and registration restrictions against non-governmental organisations working on business and human rights in Azerbaijan, while a group of Special Rapporteurs, including myself, issued a joint statement calling on the Australian state of Tasmania to withdraw a proposed law which explicitly targets those who protest against the activities of the forestry, agriculture, or mining industries.

Human rights defenders working in this context commonly face threats, harassment, intimidation, criminalisation and physical attacks. In many cases, defenders are labelled as ‘enemies of the State’, ‘anti-government’ or ‘against development’ if they oppose business and development projects. In this context, defenders working on access to land, natural resources and environmental issues, and those campaigning against illegal or forced evictions in the context of mega-projects, are at particular risk. In fact, defenders working on land and natural resource issues are among those defenders at the highest risk of being killed.

Women defenders working in such contexts are particularly vulnerable as they often work in isolated communities and have to face pressure and violence, often gender-based violence, from their own communities or vested interests. Security guards employed by oil and mining companies have allegedly threatened to kill, harassed and attacked human rights defenders during peaceful protests. There have also been cases where local authorities have allegedly colluded with the private sector, and cases in which private companies have aided and abetted the commission of violations against human rights defenders. The affected communities and those defending their rights in this context are in dire need of protection and they also need access to appropriate remedy.

In my first report to the UN General Assembly, presented in November 2014, I identified human rights defenders working on issues of business and human rights, together with those working on the related issues of land and environment rights, as among those who are most exposed to restrictions, threats and attacks.

The good news, however, is that, led by civil society, some States and the UN human rights system are beginning to respond.

In September 2013, the United Kingdom became the first State to adopt a National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights, which includes explicit commitments to protect and support human rights defenders. More States should follow suit.



In 2014, at its 26th session in June, the UN Human Rights Council adopted two resolutions on business and human rights – one led by Norway, Argentina, Ghana and Russia and the other by Ecuador and South Africa – both of which contain provisions recognising the valuable role played by civil society organisations in promoting corporate respect for human rights and exposing and seeking remedy for corporate violations. Regrettably, neither resolution responded adequately to NGO calls to recognise the worsening risks and attacks that human rights defenders who work on issues of business and human rights face, together with the obligations of States to protect and support them in this regard. Such recognition is vital if defenders are to be conferred with the protection they need and if the prevailing climate of impunity for attacks is to be addressed. The prompt and thorough investigation of attacks against human rights defenders by both State and non-State actors, together with the bringing to account of perpetrators, is a crucial element of a safe and enabling environment for their work.

Despite this modest progress, however, much remains to be done by States, corporations and the UN human rights system itself.

As alluded to in my first report to the General Assembly, I urge States to consider enacting specific laws and policies to effectively implement the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders at the national level, and for both home and host states to include concrete commitments and measures to protect defenders in National Action Plans on Business and Human Rights.

I also encourage States to take specific measures to protect human rights defenders who voice their opposition to the work of resource and extractive industries or other major development projects. Defenders have a right to participate and demand participation in decision-making processes, to exercise their rights to freedom of expression, assembly and peaceful protest, and not to be subject to such stigmatising labels as ‘anti-development’ or economic ‘saboteurs’.

Corporations also have a role to play in protecting human rights defenders and in consulting and engaging with them so as to identify, mitigate and remedy the adverse human rights impacts of their operations. Corporations must respect the right of human rights defenders and other civil society actors to protest against business activities and refrain from obstructing or interfering with their legitimate activities in this regard. This extends to ensuring that private security firms acting for or on behalf of the corporation are not involved in attacks against human rights defenders or other human rights abuses and, in the case of investors, should include due diligence to ensure they are not indirectly financing any such attacks or abuses.

For my part, as Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, I will endeavor to work closely with other mandate holders to ensure that the situation of human rights defenders working on corporate accountability issues is consistently taken up in reports, communications and on missions. I also propose to explore the possibility of a joint mission with the Working Group in this regard.

Human rights defenders have a vital role to play in promoting corporate respect for human rights abuses, corporate accountability for violations, and access to justice for victims of human rights abuses by business. States, corporations and the UN human rights mechanisms themselves can and must do more to safeguard this important but often dangerous work.

# HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS WORKING TO PROMOTE DEMOCRACY AND END IMPUNITY

Ramy Raouf, Flickr Creative Commons

# IMPACT 2014

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- Provided intensive training and strategic advocacy support to more than 70 human rights defenders and democracy activists from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Thailand and Tanzania, among others
- Worked in partnership with Chinese Human Rights Defenders to secure key recommendations on the protection of democratic rights and freedoms in China from the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
- Worked with civil society and government officials to secure the first-ever review of Liberia by the African Commission and supported human rights defenders to participate in that review
- Provided expert training and facilitated a strategic advocacy workshop for activists in Venezuela to engage with the UN, following Venezuela's withdrawal from the Inter-American Convention on Human Rights
- Advocated successfully for 46 States to raise concerns regarding the situation of human rights defenders in Bahrain at the Human Rights Council, working in partnership with organisations such as Human Rights Watch, the Gulf Center for Human Rights and the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies
- Secured strong UN Human Rights Committee recommendations regarding the need to protect defenders and ensure effective investigations and accountability for attacks against journalists in Sri Lanka
- Campaigned in relation to the disappearance or detention of defenders and democracy activists in Bahrain, Egypt, Maldives, Myanmar, Niger, Sri Lanka and Thailand, among others, assisting to secure the release of some activists from detention
- Provided expert advice, training and advocacy support to human rights defenders in Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone to achieve the implementation of recommendations made through the UPR at the national level

**UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of association and assembly and former ISHR trainee Maina Kiai wrote recently that 2014 may well be remembered as 'the year of the protest, the year of the revolution, the year of shrinking space'. Certainly it was a year in which ISHR was called upon more than ever to support and stand with human rights defenders working in States where increasing demands for democratic rights and freedoms were met by desperate regimes with worsening attacks and restrictions. ISHR's work with grassroots human rights defenders has helped shine an international spotlight on many of these situations – from Egypt to North Korea, and from Sri Lanka to Bahrain – and increase international pressure for accountability and change.**

This work is vital. As the cases of States such as Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia demonstrate, the combination of domestic civil society activism and international human rights advocacy can be powerful factors contributing to democratisation and accountability for past violations. In this regard, ISHR was proud and privileged to collaborate closely with civil society in Côte d'Ivoire to secure the enactment of Africa's first-ever law on the protection of human rights defenders, and with partners in Liberia to secure that country's review by the African Commission for the first time. We were also pleased to be strongly associated with the development of National Human Rights Action Plans by the governments of Liberia and Sierra Leone.

As Maina Kiai wrote, 'people today are more connected, more informed of their rights, and probably more emboldened to seize those rights than at any time in history. They have a vision for the world that they live in, and they want to take control of it.' ISHR's work with human rights defenders to promote democracy and accountability, and to end corruption and impunity, helps communities realise this vision.

Paul Jones, Flickr Creative Commons



"You can add to your list of achievements the substantial contributions that ISHR made to the effort to render the Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea accountable for its serious human rights violations, including crimes against humanity. The vote of the Security Council to keep this subject on its agenda is another important achievement. Thank you for all that you and your colleagues do for global human rights."

**The Hon. Michael Kirby**  
Chair of the  
UN Commission of Inquiry  
into North Korea



"It is impossible to overstate the impact and importance of ISHR's cooperation and partnership with human rights defenders, increasing our access to and understanding of regional and international human rights mechanisms, improving our capacity to engage and influence decision-makers in human rights law and policy reform, and substantially assisting us to monitor the government's implementation of its international obligations."

**Alphonsus B.M. Gbanie**  
Human Rights Defenders  
Network of Sierra Leone



87

Number of countries in relation to which ISHR  
undertook advocacy or provided advocacy support



100%

Percentage of trainees who reported they were  
'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with ISHR's training  
and advocacy support



Percentage of beneficiaries who consider they fully  
or partially achieved their advocacy objectives  
with ISHR's support

# VISION 2015

*With your support we will:*

- Build the capacity of human rights defenders working in States undergoing transition – particularly in Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa – to use international and regional mechanisms to promote democracy, accountability and the rule of law at the national level
- Work with Chinese human rights defenders to ensure effective scrutiny of China as it is reviewed by the UN Committee against Torture, and to promote implementation of recommendations and commitments made under the UPR and by CESCR and CEDAW
- Monitor and advocate for the release of human rights defenders detained in connection with the exercise of their fundamental rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly
- Work with NGO partners to promote accountability for repression and excessive use of force against peaceful protesters in States such as Bahrain and Egypt
- Continue to provide human rights defenders with timely, analytical information on key developments and advocacy opportunities at the UN and the African Commission



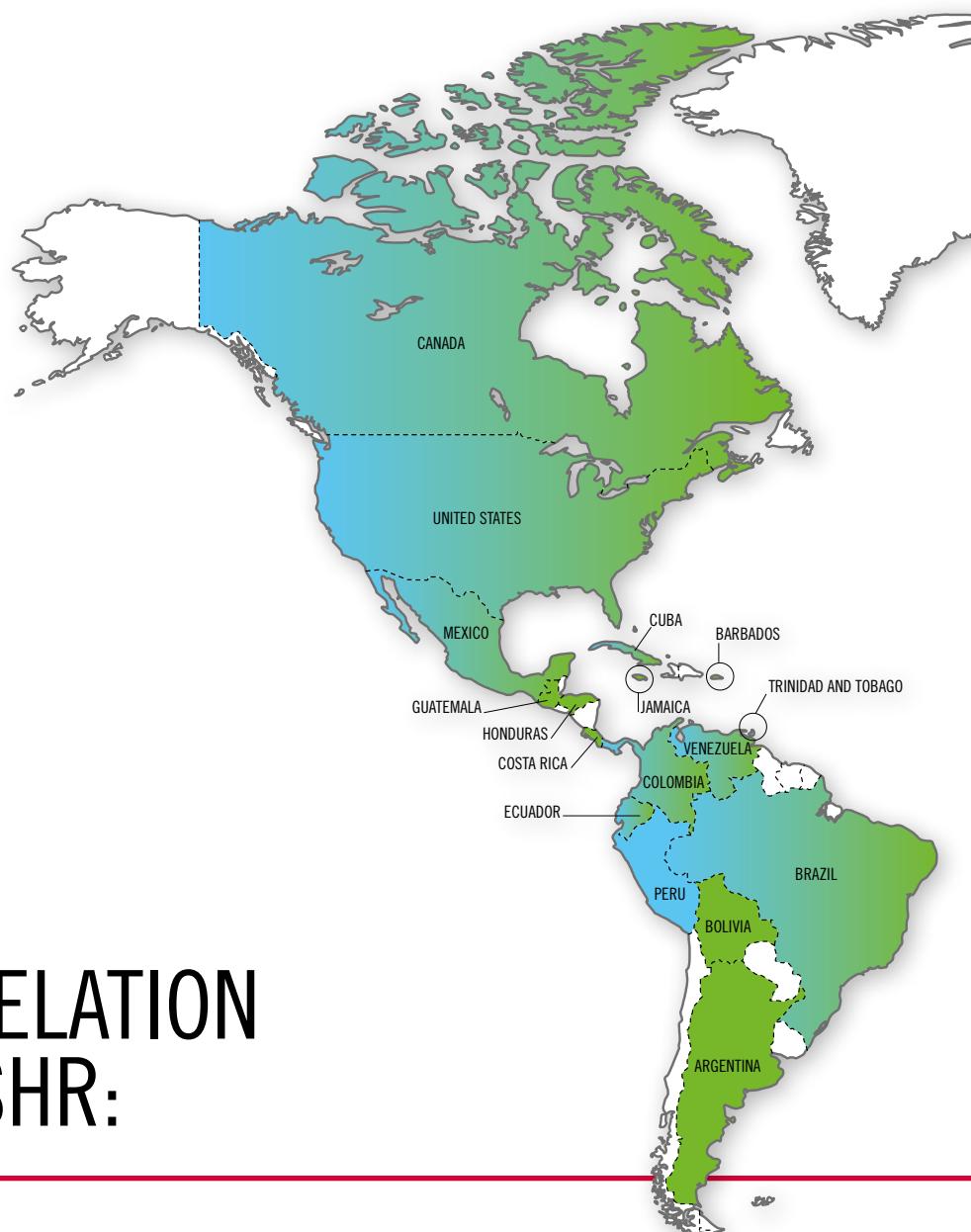
*Nicole Améline, Chairperson of CEDAW. CEDAW and CESCR made recommendations to China on the protection of democratic rights and freedoms following advocacy by ISHR and Chinese Human Rights Defenders.*

*Evan Schneider, UN Photo.*



*Liberia was finally reviewed for the first time by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights following sustained advocacy by ISHR and others.*

# OUR GLOBAL IMPACT IN 2014



## STATES IN RELATION TO WHICH ISHR:

### **undertook advocacy, convened events or published reports (76)**

Albania, Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Central African Republic, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Egypt, Gambia, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea, Honduras, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iran, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Latvia, Liberia, Libya, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives,

Mexico, Myanmar, the Netherlands, Niger, Nigeria, North Korea, Norway, Pakistan, the Philippines, Portugal, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, South Africa, South Sudan, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syria, Tanzania, Thailand, Turkey, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United States, Venezuela, Viet Nam



**had trainees and provided advocacy support (41)**

Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, Botswana, Brazil, Canada, China, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Denmark, Ecuador, Egypt, Ghana, Guinea, Iraq, Italy, Liberia, Lithuania, Malaysia, Mexico, Myanmar, the Netherlands, North Korea, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, the Philippines, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, South Africa, Sudan, Switzerland, Syria, Tanzania, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, United Kingdom, United States, Venezuela

**directly contributed to concrete developments in law or policy to strengthen protections or limit restrictions for human rights defenders or to secure their release from detention (10)**

Australia, Bahrain, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, India, Liberia, Niger, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka



# EXPERT ESSAY

## ***THE REVOLUTION MAY BE TELEVISED, BUT MOST PROTESTS AREN'T***

*By Maina Kiai, UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association and a former ISHR trainee*

2014 may well become known as the year of the protest, with the headlines dominated by stories of mass demonstrations in Hong Kong, Egypt, Ukraine, Venezuela and elsewhere. The extensive coverage of mass citizen movements is a good thing, but the tendency to focus on large events does leave part of the story untold.

Scores of smaller protests take place across the world each day. Few of them have revolutionary aims. Rather, they tend to be staged by people at the margins of society: the excluded, the disfavored, people whose voices have not been heard through more conventional means. Their aims are typically modest. They resort to protesting because they have to. The rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association are often their last recourse.

The plight of such groups is the subject of a report I presented to the UN Human Rights Council in June 2014. We have deemed them 'most at risk' of attacks and reprisals – an unfortunate label that can apply both in their daily lives and in the exercise of their assembly and association rights. These groups are persistently demonised and targeted across the world, from the global north to the south, with their assembly and association rights restricted by repressive legislation, harassment, violence and threats.

But most of their stories tend not to make headlines.

Of course, it's hard to define exactly what 'at risk' means. It's a moving target. Today it could be an obscure classification, based on religion, ethnicity, disability or sexual orientation. Tomorrow it could be broader – young or old, male or female. The next day it could be you.

The divide-and-conquer undertones behind targeting specific groups recall the final line of pastor Martin Niemöller's World War II era poem: 'Then they came for me – and there was no one left.' Indeed, somewhat paradoxically, every single person reading this article will have fallen into one of the report's at-risk groups at some point in their lives.

Were you young once? In Malaysia, people under 21 are prohibited from organising a peaceful public demonstration. Children below age 15 cannot even participate.

Have you ever lived abroad? A disturbing number of countries explicitly divest non-citizens of all assembly and association rights. This includes Myanmar, where the stateless Rohingya – who some claim have been present in the country for centuries – have seen such rights entirely eliminated under the constitution.

Even if you don't live abroad, you may be at risk if you exercise your assembly and association rights to protect your ancestral land. In Canada, for example, the government formed a special intelligence unit between 2007 and 2010 to spy on First Nations groups engaging in protest activities. A police spokesperson said in



2011 that the unit had been dismantled, but that they could not confirm whether further spying was still ongoing ‘under another name or program.’

If you happen not to be heterosexual, you face an array of targeted restrictions on assembly and association rights across the world, particularly in Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Africa. In Nigeria, for example, it is a criminal offence to register, operate, participate in or support ‘gay clubs, societies, organisations, processions or meetings’. In Russia, the law prohibits ‘propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations’ among minors, which effectively bans gay rights protests.

And if you are part of the roughly 50 per cent of the population that happens to be female, you may be singled out for particularly vicious violence, harassment and intimidation. In Egypt, peaceful female demonstrators were sexually assaulted repeatedly in Tahrir Square, largely due to the inaction of law enforcement authorities.

The rationales for targeting marginalised groups varies, but the underlying motivation invariably comes back to fear. On the government side, particularly in autocratic regimes, this typically means fear of seeing their authority undermined. But for ordinary people – and many restrictions documented in our report do have popular support – it usually comes down to fear of the unknown. Unfortunately, many governments are all too happy to leverage this fear for their own ends.

This fear is deeply misguided.

Assembly and association rights are meant as a backstop against tyranny of all forms: tyranny of the majority in democracy, tyranny of authoritarianism, tyranny of the status quo. They are about giving a voice to the disenfranchised. An individual’s status as a member of a marginalised group should never diminish these rights. If anything, there should be fewer restrictions. For those without adequate representation in parliament or the media, for example, peaceful assemblies and associations may be the only effective way to make their voices heard.

It’s time to cast aside our fear and embrace the broad social benefits that assembly and association rights embody – pluralism, tolerance and broadmindedness – even when exercised by people who don’t look like us, act like us or speak like us.

The ‘us vs them’ rhetoric is an illusion. A government that can silence one group is a government that can silence anyone.

# ENDING REPRISALS AGAINST HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

*Professor Malcolm Evans, Chair of the UN Sub-Committee on the Prevention of Torture, has worked closely with ISHR to develop a reprisals policy and establish a dedicated reprisals focal point for that treaty body.*

*Paulo Filgueiras, UN Photo*

# IMPACT 2014

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- Sustained advocacy led by ISHR and the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project culminated in landmark resolution by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights mandating a Special Rapporteur to investigate, document and promote accountability for reprisals
- Campaigned extensively to highlight and demand accountability for the fatal reprisal against Chinese human rights defender Cao Shunli, leading to public statements by the UN Secretary-General, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, seven special rapporteurs, and senior government officials in the United Kingdom, the United States, Germany and Switzerland, among others
- Commissioned and published groundbreaking legal advice from leading international law firm Freshfields on the legal obligations of the Human Rights Council President and Bureau to combat reprisals
- Worked with the government of Botswana to coordinate a joint statement on behalf of 56 States calling for a stronger, more coordinated and more systematic approach to preventing and promoting accountability for reprisals
- Published our comprehensive guide for human rights defenders on the strategic use of UN mechanisms to prevent and promote accountability for reprisals in Arabic and French
- Advocated successfully for the appointment of special rapporteurs to combat reprisals, with eight of ten UN treaty bodies now establishing a dedicated reprisals focal point
- Campaigned for investigation, accountability and justice in individual cases of reprisals in Cameroon, China, Malaysia, Maldives, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Russia and Viet Nam, among others
- Produced an advocacy video highlighting the human cost of reprisals, to mobilise stronger actions by States at the UN, watched by more than 1000 human rights defenders, diplomats and decision-makers

**For many people defending human rights can be dangerous work. From defamation to detention, from enforced disappearances to executions, reprisals against human rights defenders and others for speaking out and seeking accountability through international and regional human rights mechanisms worsened in frequency and intensity throughout 2014.**

Perhaps the most egregious case of reprisal during 2014 was that perpetrated against Chinese lawyer and human rights defender Cao Shunli. Intercepted at Beijing airport en route to Geneva to participate in an ISHR training course and advocate at the UN, Cao was detained incommunicado, denied access to adequate health care, and died in Chinese custody on 14 March 2014.

Cao's tragic death seemed to mark an inflection point for the international community in its resolve to combat reprisals, leading to unprecedented progress in the development of policies and mechanisms to address the issue, much of it led by ISHR.

Over the course of 2014, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights became the first regional human rights body to establish a dedicated reprisals focal point, eight of ten UN treaty bodies appointed rapporteurs to investigate and follow up on allegations of intimidation and reprisals, numerous treaty bodies issued recommendations regarding the protection of human rights defenders, and a group of 56 States led by Botswana renewed the call for the appointment of a high level official to protect those who seek to cooperate with the UN.

The case for more effective mechanisms to combat reprisals was further strengthened by the publication of a pioneering legal advice – commissioned by ISHR and prepared by Freshfields, together with former judges of the European Court of Human Rights Sir Nicolas Bratza and Professor Egbert Myjer – which elucidated the UN's legal obligation to prevent reprisals and promote accountability. ISHR is now working closely with the President of the Human Rights Council to secure the implementation of this advice and to follow up and end impunity in individual cases of reprisals at the international level.



"The three minutes it took me to read a statement in the Human Rights Council on the need for accountability in Sri Lanka changed my whole life. It made me a kind of a walking dead in the country. At school in Colombo my daughter was accused of coming from a traitor's family. On the radio everyday there were calls for me to be killed. State media said that my family should be stoned to death. Everyone told me it was too dangerous to come home."

#### **Sunanda Deshapriya**

*Sri Lankan human rights defender now living in exile in Geneva*



[www.ishr.ch/reprisals-video](http://www.ishr.ch/reprisals-video)

"It is difficult to overstate the importance to the effective safeguarding of fundamental rights that those complaining of a violation of those rights should have unhindered access to international institutions set up with the specific function of their promotion and protection. Those institutions, for their part, carry a heavy responsibility to ensure such access by taking effective measures to prevent such hindrance and to protect the individual and those representing him or her from acts of intimidation or reprisal for communicating or cooperating with them."

#### **Sir Nicolas Bratza**

*Former President of the European Court of Human Rights and ISHR Board member*

"China must ensure that all allegations of reprisals and abuse are promptly and thoroughly investigated, and that perpetrators are brought to justice."

#### **UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**

*Concluding Observations on China, issued May 2014*



*ISHR's Reprisals handbook, an important resource for human rights defenders who interact with regional and international human rights systems, was published in 2014 in Arabic and French.*  
[www.ishr.ch/reprisals-handbook](http://www.ishr.ch/reprisals-handbook)

# VISION 2015

*With your support we will:*

- Work closely with the African Commission's Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders and ISHR Board member Reine Alapini Gansou to investigate and promote accountability for cases of intimidation and attacks against civil society actors in Africa
- Conduct strategic litigation to strengthen jurisprudence on the right to free and unhindered access to UN and regional human rights complaints mechanisms
- Continue to monitor, investigate and pursue accountability in cases of alleged intimidation or reprisals
- Work closely with the President and Bureau of the Human Rights Council, together with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, to prevent, follow up and end impunity in cases of reprisal
- Provide technical assistance to States to implement specific national laws and policies to enshrine the right to communicate with international and regional human rights mechanisms and the duty of both State and non-State actors to prevent intimidation and reprisals



*ISHR has actively campaigned to highlight the case of the late Chinese human rights defender Cao Shunli and to demand accountability for the reprisal against her.*



*ISHR Director Phil Lynch spoke at the 2014 Internet Freedom Forum, hosted by the US Mission in Geneva, addressing the protection of the right to freedom of expression, both online and offline, of those who engage with the UN.*



*ISHR hosted a panel discussion at the UN Human Rights Council's 27th session on protecting civil society space and preventing reprisals, together with FIDH, East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project and ADC Memorial.*



# EXPERT ESSAY

## **HUMAN RIGHTS SYSTEMS MUST STRENGTHEN PROTECTIONS AGAINST REPRISALS**

*By Reine Alapini-Gansou, African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders and a member of the ISHR Board*

The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights has recently stepped up its response to reprisals and intimidation against individuals who cooperate or have cooperated with the African human rights system. In a resolution adopted at our Ordinary Session in Luanda, Angola in May 2014, the Commission designated a focal point to document, report and follow up on alleged cases of reprisal. As the Commission's Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, I am honoured that the Chair of the Commission has charged me with this task.

Human rights defenders across the continent experience a range of threats and attacks as they carry out their vital work to promote human rights, democracy, development and the rule of law. The Commission's recently adopted report on the situation of women human rights defenders has underlined the vulnerability of defenders, and the need for States to implement their obligations to enable and safeguard their work. Where individuals – whether victims of violations, defenders, or other civil society actors – approach the Commission to provide information or to seek protection and justice denied them at national level, it is utterly unacceptable that they or family members should face attack for doing so.

In September 2013, the UN Human Rights Council adopted a resolution calling on the Secretary-General to designate a focal point on reprisals within UN structures – a resolution that is yet to be implemented. Meanwhile, individuals who engage with the UN have faced attack and intimidation and continue to do so. It is evident that the UN needs to do more to effectively prevent and address reprisals and intimidation. Individuals and groups using all human rights systems should be protected from reprisals. Human rights mechanisms have a responsibility to do everything possible to contest these attacks and threats, which are, in effect, an attack against the human rights system itself.

I am very pleased that the African Commission has taken this important step to ensure we can respond more effectively to reprisals, and to support defenders and others who provide the Commission with vital information. I look forward to seeing similar initiatives emerge in other human rights systems, as we work together to protect those who courageously shine light on human rights violations and abuses worldwide.

# CENTRO DE CONVENÇÕES DE T



Following sustained advocacy by ISHR and the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project, the African Commission designated a high-level focal point to document and follow up on cases of reprisals against those that cooperate with the African human rights system. Ms Alapini-Gansou was appointed to the role in May 2014.



# SAFEGUARDING CIVIL SOCIETY SPACE AND PARTICIPATION AT THE UN AND BEYOND



In the lead up to Human Rights Council elections, ISHR worked with Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch to highlight the requirement of Council member States to uphold the highest human rights standards and fully cooperate with the body.

Jean-Marc Ferré, UN Photo.

# IMPACT 2014

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- Coordinated NGO briefings with the UN Secretary-General, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the UN Human Rights Council secretariat
- Provided accreditation and advocacy support to human rights defenders and victims of violations to address the Human Rights Council, ensuring their voices were heard by diplomats and decision-makers
- Partnered with national civil society organisations to monitor and publish briefing papers on civil society space in Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Egypt, Gambia, Guinea, Honduras, Iran, Italy, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Liberia, Libya, Maldives, Laos, Spain, Turkey, and the United States
- Worked with Amnesty International to coordinate civil society engagement with the UN treaty body strengthening process, leading to an increase in resources and meeting time for these expert bodies
- Played a vital NGO coordination and leadership role in negotiation of UN resolutions on protection of civil society space, strengthening of national human rights institutions and the situation of human rights defenders
- Significantly influenced reports and recommendations of numerous States, special rapporteurs and treaty bodies in relation to protection of civil society space. Among them was a landmark report by Maina Kiai which endorsed ISHR's position that the UN and its member States have a legal obligation to strengthen civil society participation, radically overhaul the system for NGO accreditation, and combat reprisals against those who cooperate with the UN
- Worked jointly with Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch to shine the international media spotlight on the situation of human rights defenders in States standing for election to the Human Rights Council
- Provided strategic and technical assistance to NGOs seeking UN accreditation, leading to an increase in the number of human rights NGOs with access to the UN

**The right, and indeed the responsibility, of non-governmental organisations to critique governments, expose and pursue accountability for human rights violations, and advocate for changes in law, policy and practice should be uncontroversial. Regrettably, however, it is a right that is increasingly contested. This is the case both at the international level, where States such as China and Egypt have repeatedly interrupted and sought to silence ISHR and others at the Human Rights Council, and at the national level, where ISHR's partner organisations in those countries have faced worsening legal restrictions and physical attacks.**

In 2014, ISHR again played a leadership and coordination role in advocating for, supporting and safeguarding civil society space and participation. Our work ranged from supporting victims to testify on the international stage, to working with national partners to monitor and advocate on laws and policies – from defamation laws to tax statutes – which are increasingly used to restrict civil society space and stifle dissent. We also worked intensively and successfully to advise and assist NGOs such as ARC International to obtain UN consultative status in their own right, and to develop an ambitious but imperative reform agenda for civil society participation within international institutions.

Looking ahead, ISHR will continue to play a vital leadership and coordination role in supporting civil society participation at the UN and the African Commission, while also expanding our advocacy and law reform work on an enabling environment at the national level.



"As an advocacy organisation, we need ECOSOC accreditation to enable us to be meaningfully engaged in the UN platform, especially during Commissions under ECOSOC and General Assembly sessions to advance the status of youth and advocate for the realisation of sexual and reproductive rights."

**Jean Ketterling**

*Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights*



"The importance of protecting human rights defenders and civil society space cannot be overstated, as the full enjoyment of human rights cannot be achieved unless the right to defend those rights is protected and respected. Indeed, the international human rights system can only succeed when the fruits of our discussions here in the Council and of course the recommendations of the UPR, Special Procedures and international Treaty Bodies are translated into law and practice."

**Ambassador**

**Patricia O'Brien**

*Irish Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva*



*Ambassador Steffen Kongstad, Permanent Representative of Norway to the UN. ISHR has worked closely with Norway in New York and Geneva to secure the passage of key resolutions on the protection of human rights defenders and civil society space.*

# VISION 2015

- Publish an authoritative guide for human rights defenders on the UN Committee on NGOs, the body through which all NGO applications for UN consultative status must pass
- Advise and assist NGOs to obtain this consultative status, opening the UN's doors wider to human rights defenders and victims
- Work closely with the Special Rapporteur on freedom of association and assembly to implement recommendations from his landmark report on civil society participation in international bodies such as the World Bank and the UN
- Continue to work closely with the Human Rights Council President, NGOs such as FIDH and CIVICUS, and delegations from States such as Botswana, Chile, Denmark, Ireland, Norway, Tunisia and the United States to promote and safeguard civil society space and participation at the UN
- Monitor and advocate in relation to national laws and policies to promote a safe and enabling environment for civil society organisations, including by promoting the implementation of recommendations from our major report on good practices in the legal protection of civil society space



In March 2014, ISHR, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and the International Commission of Jurists met with the UN Secretary-General to discuss the protection of human rights defenders, the prevention of reprisals, and accountability for gross violations in Syria and North Korea.



Throughout 2014, the US played a vital role assisting to secure UN consultative status for NGOs in New York and speaking up to defeat efforts to silence NGOs through repeated 'points of order' at the Human Rights Council in Geneva.

United States Mission Geneva, Flickr Creative Commons



UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navanethem Pillay was bid farewell at a civil society reception in July 2014, organised by ISHR with the support of Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Conectas, East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project, FORUM-ASIA, FIDH, and the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies.

# OUR ENDURING IMPACT OVER

**1984**

**85**

**87**

**88**

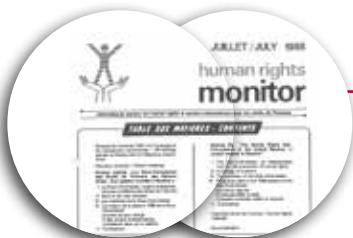


- ISHR is established in Geneva in December '84, starting with a small secretariat based in the home of Adrien-Claude Zoller
- ISHR starts advocating for a draft international declaration on human rights defenders

- The secretariat of ISHR moves to 37 rue de Vermont, Geneva
- With the UN in financial crisis, ISHR organises an alternative meeting of the UN Sub-Commission on Human Rights

- The first ISHR Geneva training course is launched
- The Human Rights Monitor is launched, connecting national-level human rights defenders with the UN
- The secretariat moves to 1 rue de Varembé, Geneva

- The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights is established and ISHR begins its engagement with the regional mechanism



**98**

**99**

**02**

**04**

- After 14 years of ISHR lobbying, advocacy and negotiation, the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders is finally adopted



- ISHR convenes an international seminar and undertakes intensive advocacy, leading to the establishment of the position of UN Special Representative on Human Rights Defenders. Hina Jilani is appointed as the first mandate holder

- ISHR opens its New York office at 777 UN Plaza, supporting human rights defenders in their engagement at UN headquarters

- ISHR leads a successful campaign for the appointment of a Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights



**10**

**12**

- ISHR launches the Human Rights Monitor Quarterly and a new Simple Guide to the UN Treaty Bodies
- ISHR's sustained advocacy on the issue of reprisals and intimidation faced by human rights defenders leads to the adoption of a landmark Human Rights Council resolution condemning and strengthening protections against reprisals

- Together with Amnesty International, ISHR launches an annual pledging event calling on candidates to the UN Human Rights Council to publicly commit to promoting and protecting human rights

# 30 YEARS



89

90

94

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- The organisation's focus broadens to encompass human rights defenders working in the regions and to following up the Geneva training course
- ISHR establishes its Human Rights Prize



05

06

07

- ISHR obtains consultative status with the UN's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)
- ISHR coordinates civil society engagement with the Second World Conference on Human Rights, leading to the adoption of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action



- A range of international and regional human rights coalitions are co-founded by ISHR, including the Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition, the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project, and the West African Human Rights Defenders Network

- HRCNet, a network of leading NGOs active at the Human Rights Council, is formed through the leadership of ISHR, Human Rights Watch and Democracy Coalition Project
- ISHR contributes to the establishment and institution building of the UN Human Rights Council



13

2014

- ISHR launches the digital, monthly Human Rights Monitor
- Working with supportive states and NGOs, ISHR advocacy leads to adoption of a historic Human Rights Council resolution calling on all States to review and amend national laws to respect and protect the work of human rights defenders
- Working with key NGO partners, ISHR leads civil society efforts to strengthen UN human rights treaty bodies and better connect their work with those on the ground

- ISHR is part of the civil society push for an international human rights chief. The post of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights is finally created in 1994

- ISHR campaigns to enable national level organisations to be granted ECOSOC consultative status, enabling them to participate in and contribute to key international human rights discussions
- Working with Amnesty International and the International Commission of Jurists, ISHR initiates the development of the UN Convention on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances



- ISHR leads and coordinates the development of the Yogyakarta Principles on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, together with ICJ



# OUR BOARD AND STAFF

## BOARD AND OFFICERS

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### Rosemary McCreery (Ireland)

Former UN Assistant-Secretary-General for Human Resources, former head of UNICEF in Russia and Belarus, and former Director of the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Cambodia.

Chair



### Chris Sidoti (Australia)

International human rights expert, former Australian Human Rights Commissioner and Australian Law Reform Commissioner, and former Executive Director of ISHR.

Vice-Chair



### Jean-Marie Fakhouri (Switzerland/Lebanon)

Former Controller and Director of Resource Management with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, and Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General in Iraq.

Treasurer  
Resigned  
22.12.14



### Pierre Avanzo (France)

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

Treasurer  
Appointed  
23.12.14



### Reine Alapini-Gansou (Benin)

Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders for the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, and former Secretary-General for Women in Law and Development in Africa.

Member



### Maryam Al-Khawaja (Bahrain/Denmark)

Co-Director of the Gulf Center for Human Rights, and former Acting President of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights

Member

**Sir Nicolas Bratza (United Kingdom)**

*Former President and judge of the European Court of Human Rights, and current President of the British Institute of Human Rights.*

Member

**Gustavo Gallon (Colombia)**

*Director of the Colombian Commission of Jurists, and UN Independent Expert on human rights in Haiti.*

Member

**Hina Jilani (Pakistan)**

*Former UN Special Representative on Human Rights Defenders, member of The Elders, and founder of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan.*

Member

**Egbert Myjer (The Netherlands)**

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

Member

**Michael Posner (United States)**

*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.*

Member

**Jean-Daniel Vigny (Switzerland)**

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

Member

# STAFF AND INTERNS

---



**Philip Lynch**  
*Executive Director*



**Sophie Charpié**  
*Office Manager and Administrator*



**Marina Daily**  
*Accountant and Finance Manager*



**Chris Duckett**  
*Manager of Development and Fundraising*



**Michelle Evans**  
*New York Manager and Advocacy Coordinator*



**Michael Ineichen**  
*Programme Manager (Corporate Accountability)  
and Head of Human Rights Council Advocacy*



**Marta Kolasińska**  
*Human Rights Advocate (on secondment from DLA Piper)*



**Ben Leather**

*Advocacy and Communications Manager*



**Eleanor Openshaw**

*Programme Manager (Reprisals) and Head of Regional Advocacy*



**Pooja Patel**

*Programme Manager (Women's Rights and LGBT Rights)  
and Head of Asian Advocacy*



**Madeleine Sinclair**

*Programme Manager (Reprisals) and Legal Counsel*



**Olivia Starrenburg**

*Communications Manager*



**Clement Nyaletsossi Voulé**

*Programme Manager (States in Transition)  
and Head of African Commission Advocacy*

*We thank our team of talented interns for their essential contribution to the work of ISHR in 2014.*

Andrea Conde, Shiza Khan, Tao Li, Camille Marquis, Rumbidzai Masango, Asena May, Marta Migliorati, Justine Nicollet, Lyaylya Safiulina, Lene Swetzer, Antsa Rakotonanahary

# OUR SUPPORTERS AND DONORS

In 2014, ISHR marked 30 years of supporting human rights defenders. To recognise the milestone, more than 140 current and former ISHR staff, board members, diplomats, UN staff and fellow non-governmental representatives joined a celebratory reception held at the Palais des Nations in Geneva.

# THANK YOU

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- The generous contributions of our 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.
- From the development of the international *Declaration on Human Rights Defenders* to the training and protection of grassroots defenders around the world, none of our impact would be possible without you.
- As a registered non-profit association in Switzerland, and recognised as tax exempt in the United States under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, your gift to ISHR may be tax deductible. We encourage you to support human rights defenders by investing in ISHR.

## GOVERNMENT DONORS

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- Ville de Genève

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- Anonymous donor
- Arcus Foundation
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"As a former ISHR trainee, I benefited first-hand from the expert training, strategic advice and advocacy support that ISHR provides. But ISHR's impact goes much further. Their research and advocacy strengthens international laws and standards, and contributes to their domestic implementation, enabling human rights defenders to work more safely and with fewer restrictions. From their pioneering work on the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders 15 years ago, to their groundbreaking project to develop national laws on the protection of defenders today, ISHR translates international expertise into practical solutions for defenders on the ground. Please join me in supporting their high impact work."

**Hassan Shire Sheikh**

*Executive Director, East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project*



"For the last 30 years ISHR has provided invaluable support to the human rights movement: providing training and capacity building, bringing news and analyses of the UN human rights system to civil society actors, even to those working in remote or risky locations, and performing a leading role in advocacy and protection of human rights defenders. I particularly commend ISHR's role in facilitating direct access to important human rights bodies, such as the Human Rights Council, for human rights defenders to come and share their human rights experiences and recommendations in person. I send my personal good wishes to everyone working at the International Service for Human Rights for their exemplary work to strengthen and support human rights defenders everywhere."

**Navi Pillay**

*Former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights*



# PRIVATE DONORS

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## \$1000+

- **Sir Nicolas Bratza**
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## \$100 - \$249

Anonymous donors, Arlette Afagbegee, Halima Ahmed, Anna Brown, Tommy Clarke, Eric Collister, John Fisher, Professor Hurst Hannum, Dietmar and Susanne Henneka, Emily Howie, Maureen Hyman, Hans Ineichen, Marta Kolasinska, Hugh de Kretser, Ben Leather, David and Judith Lynch, Marco Mona, RUESCH International LLC, Jason Pobjoy, Ben Schokman, Hassan Sheikh Ahmed Shire, Birgit Van Hout, Natverlal Patel, Edward Santow, Christian Schneider, Daniel Webb, Mehr Khan Williams

## Up to \$100

Lucy Adams, Andrew Anderson, Edmund Arrowsmith, Olivia Ball, Rachel Ball, Neil Blazevic-Hyman, Renate Bloem, Sarah Booth, Tami Brown, Adrian Collister, Miriam Collister, Gabrielle Connellan, Emily Christie, Don and Nancy Duckett, Angela Foley, John Foley, Janvier Hakizimana, Gregor Henneka, Peter Hyman, Andrea Kuhn, Mark Leather, Lucia Nader, Joanna Naples-Mitchell, Rachel Nicholson, Suzanne Rodrigues, Gerald Staberock, Caleb and Olivia Starrenburg, Jessica Verrilli

# INTERNATIONAL LAW FIRMS

During 2014, ISHR worked with a number of the world's leading law firms on a pro bono basis, enabling us to leverage substantial legal expertise and resources.

- Allens
- Debevoise & Plimpton
- **DLA Piper\***
- Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer
- Reed Smith
- Simmons & Simmons
- Winston & Strawn

\*Also provided a full-time pro-bono lawyer to work with ISHR.



Number of annual visitors to  
[www.ishr.ch](http://www.ishr.ch)



Value of pro bono work undertaken for ISHR  
by leading international law firms



Number of Human Rights Monitors published



The work represented in this report was achieved  
with a permanent staff of just 13, working in  
partnership with a network of hundreds of human  
rights defenders



# FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

- This is an extract of ISHR's audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2014.
- For a complete version, please contact Chris Duckett at [c.duckett@ishr.ch](mailto:c.duckett@ishr.ch).

## PROFIT AND LOSS STATEMENT FOR YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2014

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INCOME	2014 CHF	2013 CHF
<b>REVENUES - CORE</b>		
GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES	722 844	767 397
TRUSTS & FOUNDATIONS	262 673	183 728
INDIVIDUAL DONORS	50 819	7 476
OTHER REVENUE	134 152	79 263
<b>Total CORE GRANTS</b>	<b>1 170 488</b>	<b>1 037 864</b>
<b>REVENUES - EARMARKED</b>		
GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES	392 663	686 494
TRUSTS & FOUNDATIONS	197 517	260 183
<b>Total EARMARKED GRANTS</b>	<b>590 179</b>	<b>946 677</b>
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>1 760 667</b>	<b>1 984 541</b>
<b>CHARGES</b>		
PERSONNEL & RELATED COSTS	1 121 626	1 216 456
PROGRAMME COSTS	233 290	230 288
OPERATING, ADMINISTRATIVE & FINANCE COSTS	333 353	257 435
GOVERNANCE & STRATEGY COSTS	23 226	22 321
<b>TOTAL COSTS</b>	<b>1 711 496</b>	<b>1 726 500</b>
<b>INCOME (CHARGES) FOR THE YEAR</b>	<b>49 172</b>	<b>258 041</b>

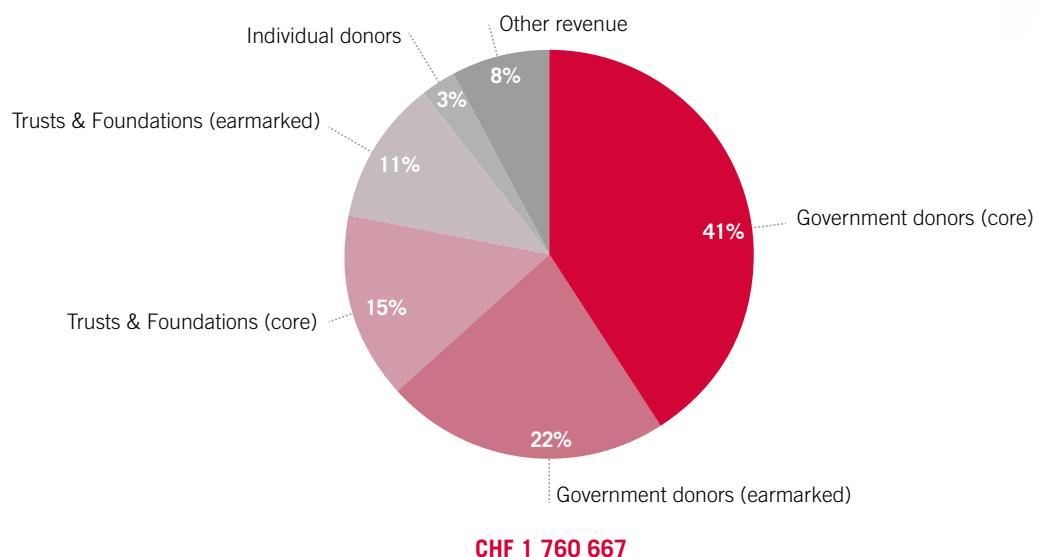
# BALANCE SHEET AT 31 DECEMBER 2014

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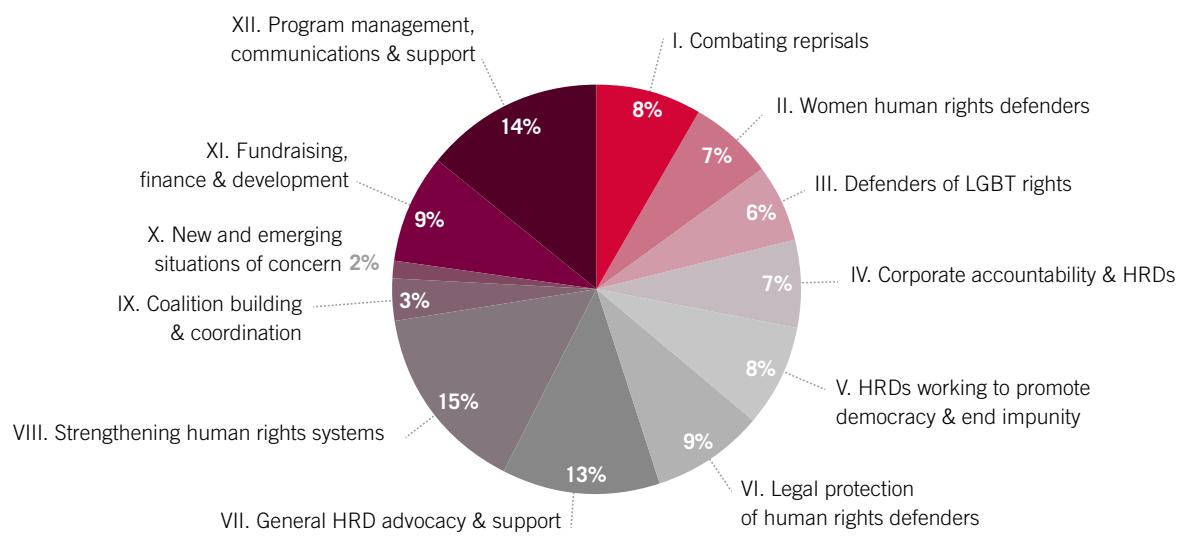
ASSETS	2014 CHF	2013 CHF
CASH & CASH EQUIVALENTS	697 278	488 983
DEBTORS	51 024	5 833
WITHHOLDING TAX	1 148	1 148
DEFERRED EXPENSES	-	103 279
GRANTS RECEIVABLE GVT	25 279	82 200
GRANTS RECEIVABLE NON-GVT	-	18 630
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>774 730</b>	<b>700 073</b>
<b>LIABILITIES &amp; RESERVES</b>		
<b>LIABILITIES</b>		
CURRENT LIABILITIES	8 412	14 810
PROVISIONS	5 500	10 654
DEFERRED GRANTS	419 153	382 115
<b>Total LIABILITIES</b>	<b>433 065</b>	<b>407 579</b>
<b>RESERVES</b>		
RESERVE FUNDS	292 494	34 453
INCOME (CHARGES) FOR THE YEAR	49 172	258 041
<b>Total RESERVES</b>	<b>341 666</b>	<b>292 494</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND RESERVES</b>	<b>774 730</b>	<b>700 073</b>

# INCOME & EXPENDITURE BY CATEGORY

## INCOME BY SOURCE



## EXPENDITURE BY CATEGORY





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or contact us:  
[information@ishr.ch](mailto:information@ishr.ch)



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