

Re: Support resolution on cooperation with the United Nations, its representatives and mechanisms in the field of human rights at the 42nd session of the UN Human Rights Council

9 September 2019

Ghana, Fiji, Hungary, Ireland and Uruguay will present a [draft resolution](#) at the 42nd session of the Human Rights Council on cooperation with the UN. The draft resolution aims to strengthen the responses by the UN and States to put an end to acts of intimidation and reprisals. **We urge your delegation to support the adoption of the draft resolution and resist efforts to undermine and weaken it.**

Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to promote and to strive for the protection and realisation of human rights at the community, national, regional and international levels, to exercise freedoms of expression, association and to communicate with intergovernmental organisations. States have an obligation to ensure the safety and security of persons seeking to engage with the United Nations, including online, to prevent reprisals by State or non-State actors and to condemn, ensure accountability, and access to an effective remedy where reprisals do occur.

The Human Rights Council [has recognised](#) that civil society facilitates the achievement of the purposes and principles of the United Nations and that unhindered access to international and regional processes are indispensable for building peaceful, prosperous and democratic societies. The UN Secretary General [has acknowledged](#) that partnership with civil society is critical to succeeding in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Civil society ensures that discussions and decisions at the UN are informed by relevant expertise and experience and realities on the ground, and that a full range of perspectives are heard. No person should face harassment, threats, intimidation or attacks for their efforts to uphold human rights and everyone must be confident when cooperating and contributing to the UN that they will not face intimidation or reprisals for doing so. The lack of accountability for victims of acts of intimidation and reprisals presents a grave threat to the credibility, integrity and legitimacy of intergovernmental bodies.

However, human rights defenders and civil society continue to face intimidation and reprisals when engaging or seeking to engage with the United Nations. The Secretary-General's most recent report reveals that intimidation and reprisals are worsening. The 2019 [report](#) further reveals that:

- Acts of intimidation and reprisals can signal systematic patterns, rather than isolated incidents;
- There is increasing self-censorship by human rights defenders and civil society who decide not to engage with the UN out of fear for their safety;
- Counter-terrorism measures, national security arguments and restrictive legislation continue to be mis-used by States to block access to the UN;
- Acts of intimidation and reprisals can take the form of sexual and gender-based violence and take place online and offline;
- Groups in vulnerable situations continue to be exposed to barriers, threats and violence related to their engagement with the UN.

Despite efforts by the UN and States to address this critical issue, more remains to be done to ensure that acts of reprisals and intimidation are addressed effectively and consistently across the UN system including through preventative and gender-responsive approaches.

The [draft resolution](#) aims to draw attention to the worsening trend of reprisals and intimidation and strengthen the responses by the UN and States. It requests the Secretary-General to ensure that the reprisals report is also presented annually to the General Assembly, which will ensure greater attention to the issue and contribute to a more coherent system-wide response across the UN. The draft resolution also encourages Presidents of the Human Rights Council to continue to address reprisals and intimidation, including by providing information on cases brought to their attention at each session of the Council. The draft resolution also calls on States to prevent occurrence of acts of intimidation and reprisals by promoting a safe and enabling environment for those who seek to or cooperate with the UN. Where reprisals and intimidation occur, the draft resolution calls on States to ensure accountability, provide effective remedies, and prevent any recurrence.

We urge your delegation to support the adoption of the draft resolution on cooperation with the United Nations, its representatives and mechanisms in the field of human rights and to resist efforts to undermine and weaken the draft resolution.

Sincerely,

1. International Service for Human Rights
2. CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation
3. World Organisation against Torture (OMCT)
4. Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)
5. Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
6. Child Rights Connect
7. MENA Rights Group
8. International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA) World
9. Peace Brigades International
10. The Center for Reproductive Rights
11. Human Rights Watch
12. International Commission of Jurists
13. Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (GI-ESCR)
14. DefendDefenders (East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project)
15. Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies
16. Human Rights House Foundation