

ANNUAL REPORT 2021

For year ending
31 December 2020

**Nineteen brave and bright
activists from across the
world participated in our
first fully virtual flagship
Human Rights Defender
Advocacy Programme.**



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PAPER

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Message from Chairperson & Director

Dear friends

Asked to describe 2020 in a word, global readers of the Guardian newspaper gave responses ranging from 'shit', 'crap' and numerous other expletives, to 'exhausting', to 'enlightening'. It's difficult to encapsulate such a complex year in a word, but 'interconnected' is one which might be added to the mix.

Interconnected because it demonstrated the relationship between all human rights of all people, with violations of the right of access to information and journalistic freedom in one country contributing to or accelerating the violation of people's rights across the world.

Interconnected because it highlighted the linkages between climate change, pandemics and inequalities, with environmental destruction increasing the passage of pathogens from animals to humans, and pandemics such as COVID-19 disproportionately impacting the disadvantaged and vulnerable.

Interconnected because we saw how action or inaction at the local level can produce global consequences, and how coordination and cooperation through a multilateral system that enables and safeguards civil society participation are essential to promote and protect human rights on the ground.

Interconnected because even while living and working in isolation, we innovated and adapted new ways to convene, collaborate and connect.

And interconnected because we saw that without human rights defenders there are no human rights. They work for racial justice. For environmental justice. For gender justice. For economic justice. For social justice. Their perspectives, experience and expertise are essential to identify problems and ensure sustainable, community-owned and community-led solutions. They are truly humanity's essential workers.

ISHR is proud to have remained deeply connected with defenders throughout 2020 and to have supported, protected and amplified their work at the national, regional and international levels. Together we can aspire and strive to a 2021 and years ahead where our universal vocabulary is populated not with words like 'broken' or 'disastrous', but with shared values such as freedom, equality, dignity and justice.

In solidarity with defenders, and with you.

 **International Service
for Human Rights**



Phil Lynch
Executive Director



Vrinda Grover
Chair of the ISHR Board



ISHR STRATEGY

A VISION FOR HUMANITY, AN AGENDÁ FOR CHANGE



Illustration adapted
from *We Are Not
Free Until Everyone
Is Free* by Anina
Takeff. See page 40
for more ➔

Human rights defenders are people who, whether individually or in association with others, promote and protect the human rights of others. They are people who act with humanity, serve humanity and bring out the best in humanity.

During 2020, ISHR developed a new five-year Strategic Framework setting out the ways in which we will support and act in solidarity with defenders and, in so doing, contribute to a world that is fair, just, sustainable and peaceful, in which all people enjoy freedom, dignity and equality, in communities that are diverse and inclusive.

Our new strategy was developed in a context characterised by uncertainty and change. This includes a worsening climate emergency, a global pandemic and associated financial crisis, deepening inequalities, worsening authoritarianism and populism, and the erosion of multilateralism.

It is also a context, however, characterised by increased human rights awareness and action at the local, national, regional and international levels. Human rights defenders are mobilising around issues such as environmental justice, racial justice, gender equality, freedom of expression and association, access to information, democratic representation and participation.

On many of these issues, we are at an inflection point; a point at which the work of human rights defenders is perhaps more imperiled but more important than ever.

Percentage of recommendations made by ISHR:



Adopted by the UN treaty body to which they were directed.



Taken up by States in the Universal Periodic Review, with each ISHR recommendation made by an average of 6 States.



@ISHRGlobal

The 'Mayan Train' #TrenMaya, a touristic train cutting across rich environmental & cultural diversity in Eastern #Mexico may sound like a fancy project. But what the shiny brochure doesn't show are terrible consequences for the communities & the environment.

Human rights defenders: values and risks

Environmental activists and Indigenous peoples, whose knowledge is vital to live more responsibly and sustainably, are killed and displaced for their work to prevent and denounce exploitation of their lands and to protect precious forests and oceans.

Citizens mobilising online and offline to call for democratic freedoms and protest against authoritarianism are surveilled, harassed and criminalised under abusive counter-terrorism laws.

Social movements taking to the streets to demand racial justice are met with disproportionate force from police and armed security forces.

Women’s rights activists are detained and tortured in retaliation for their work to challenge patriarchy and demand an end to discrimination and violence.

At-risk migrant activists and humanitarian workers are criminalised and prosecuted as threats to national security.

The freedom, safety and work of these and many other human rights defenders is vital to build a better future for all.

For all of these defenders, international and regional human rights laws and mechanisms have the potential to protect and amplify their work and impact on the ground. Indeed, for many defenders working in restrictive national contexts, regional and international mechanisms may be the only platforms available. For these mechanisms to be effective, however, they need to be credible, accessible and responsive to defenders, providing them with a safe and influential platform from which to demand justice, push for accountability, and contribute to positive change.

Our theory of change



Our theory of change is founded on the fact that the work of defenders is essential to the promotion, protection and realisation of all human rights for all people. Based on extensive consultation, research and evidence, we theorise that:

If

defenders can work safely at the national, regional and international levels,

And if

defenders have the capacity, connections and support to organise and engage with international and regional mechanisms,

And if

these mechanisms are accessible and responsive to defenders, and effective in promoting human rights and accountability for violations and abuses

Then,

defenders will be able to work more effectively, collaboratively and influentially at the national, regional and international levels to ensure that all people enjoy all human rights.



Our goals for change



Following this pathway, over the next five years we will work to ensure that:

Human rights defenders are equipped, connected, supported and influential.

We will provide defenders with tools, trainings and networks to be more effective and influential in promoting, protecting and contributing to the realisation of human rights.

States, businesses and other non-State actors respect and protect human rights defenders.

We will monitor, mobilise, advocate and litigate to ensure that States and businesses consult, respect and protect defenders.

Human rights laws and mechanisms are accessible, responsive and effective.

We will conduct research, provide advice, and undertake advocacy and litigation to ensure that international and regional human rights laws and mechanisms are accessible to defenders, responsive to their demands, and effective in promoting rights and accountability.

A values driven organisation



The challenges of 2020 reinforced the importance of a commitment to values, providing clarity and direction in a context of profound uncertainty. These values find expression in ISHR's new Strategic Framework, guiding our work and how we do it.

We are principled and passionate about human rights.

We are deeply connected and act in collaboration and solidarity with human rights defenders.

We develop and work in partnerships and coalitions that are long-term, committed, respectful and empowering.

We seek to learn and expand our human rights knowledge and share our human rights expertise.

And we promote equality, inclusivity, diversity, transparency and accountability, both internally and externally.

Discover more

We are energised by ISHR's new strategy, inspired by the defenders we serve, and committed to working with our partners to achieve our shared vision. To learn more and to support this vision, see www.ishr.ch/strategy.



ISHR & COVID-19 WHAT WE LEARNED & HOW WE ADAPTED

Illustration adapted
from *Take a Knee*
by Elsa Martino.
See page 40 for
more →

The COVID-19 pandemic profoundly affected human rights defenders. It exposed and deepened existing discrimination, oppression, violence and human rights violations. There have been increased threats and attacks against human rights defenders, including physical attacks and killings, online harassment, stigmatisation and defamation. Beyond this, governments have used COVID-19 as a pretext for further restricting fundamental rights, including through the enactment of legislation; while human rights defenders have lost their livelihoods, access to health services and had their participation in pandemic responses limited. The pandemic also significantly disrupted the operation of human rights mechanisms and NGOs. This necessitated large-scale adaptation and innovation in ISHR's work to support defenders, including to strengthen laws and systems and specifically respond to restrictive legislation.

What we learned

The pandemic presented – and continues to present – huge challenges and opportunities for human rights. As an organisation committed to reflection, evaluation and learning, ISHR realised how 2020 emphasised and reinforced things we assumed:

All human rights of all people are indispensable and interconnected.

The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated that the failure of one State to respect freedom of expression and ensure access to information for its citizens, to listen to and protect whistleblowers, or to provide non-discriminatory access to high quality public health care can lead to catastrophic violations of the right to life in other States, as well as major restrictions on the rights to privacy and to freedom of expression, association and assembly.

Human rights defenders are essential workers.

The work of all human rights defenders on all human rights is essential; from whistleblowers who first exposed the virus, to health workers servicing vulnerable groups like refugees and asylum seekers, to advocates and journalists working to ensure that emergency measures are proportionate and that governments are held accountable: in many instances, human rights defenders needed to step up to fill gaps and provide direct services to communities. COVID-19 has firmly established that human rights defenders are essential workers, can identify and help solve problems, and must be given a seat at the table. **+** This insight is reflected in the new narratives that we are developing and

testing to build understanding and better recognition, protection and support for defenders.

Authoritarian and populist governments use crises – whether pandemics or threats of terrorism – to enact restrictive, repressive and intrusive laws and policies.

In many countries the pandemic has been used as a subterfuge to shut down civil society, to silence dissent, to weaken democratic and accountability mechanisms, and to accrue unchecked executive power. The work of human rights defenders and experts as watchdogs and problem solvers has become even more important to ensure measures enacted are reasonable, necessary, proportionate and time-bound. The work of international NGOs like ISHR needed to prioritise maintaining close contacts with the defenders on the ground to provide speedy assistance and call out in their name when they could not. **+** Reflecting this learning, ISHR's new strategy prioritises support to defenders working on

issues of transparency and the rule of law, as well as efforts to ensure international accountability for the criminalisation and repression of defenders. We will also work to ensure that States and businesses consult, respect and protect defenders at the national, regional and international levels.

Acknowledging the discriminatory impact the pandemic has had, as a human rights movement, we must strengthen our focus on inequalities and on economic, social, cultural and environmental rights.

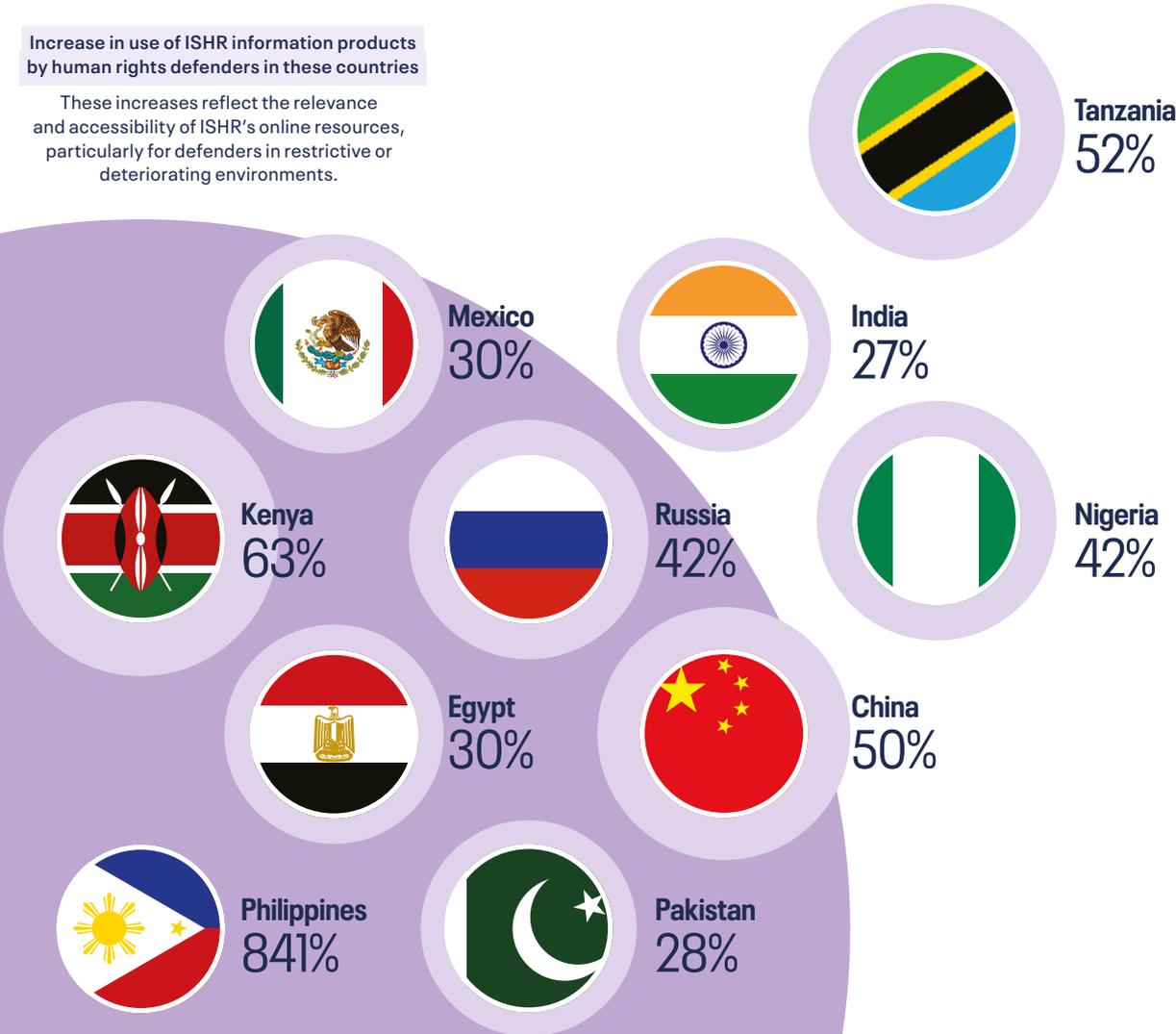
It is clear from the crisis that non-discriminatory access to high quality public health, housing, education, food, water, sanitation and social protection is indispensable to the realisation of fundamental civil and political rights, including the rights to life, freedom of association and assembly, and freedom of movement. It is also clear that business as usual is not possible or desirable. Building back better must include - and States must provide and promote - investing in adequate and accessible public services, protecting the environment and safeguarding biodiversity, eliminating vast and frequently unnecessary travel, better valuing essential workers such as teachers, nurses

and sanitation workers, and producing and consuming more locally and sustainably. The human rights movement - and States - must also do more to protect those people and communities facing marginalisation and discrimination, to reduce inequalities, and to redistribute economic and political power.

⊕ Reflecting these learnings, ISHR's new strategy prioritises support to defenders working on issues of equality and non-discrimination, as well as on issues of environmental justice and sustainability. We will ensure that these defenders have the tools and capacities necessary to do their work, and the solidarity and networks necessary to support and protect them.

Increase in use of ISHR information products by human rights defenders in these countries

These increases reflect the relevance and accessibility of ISHR's online resources, particularly for defenders in restrictive or deteriorating environments.





Now, more than ever, we need multilateralism, the UN and an international order founded on respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law.

No country can combat the virus on its own, but every country acting unilaterally and without fully respecting human rights has worsened the virus' impact. This has been a painful lesson in 2020, but one that we now have the chance to apply to the future - whether in public health, or any other arena where principled cooperation among States is a cornerstone for public good. The World Health Organisation, and indeed any of the full range of UN bodies and agencies, may be imperfect, but it is only through States working with and investing in such spaces- motivated by a principled commitment to human rights, peace, security and sustainable development rather than by narrow and myopic self-interest and political agendas - that we can build a better world. Additionally, the safe and meaningful participation of human rights defenders and other civil society actors in these bodies and processes is essential to ensure that they are relevant and responsive to priorities and needs on the ground. ➕ Reflecting these learnings, ISHR's new strategy commits to ensure that international and regional human rights laws and mechanisms are accessible to defenders, responsive to their demands, and effective in promoting rights and accountability.

How we adapted

The coronavirus pandemic required significant adaptation of the ways we worked and how we supported human rights defenders throughout 2020. These adaptations were underpinned by a commitment to core values that provided clarity and direction in a continually changing environment. Those values include solidarity, creativity, wellbeing and hope.

Solidarity

Even while physical distancing measures were implemented across the world and mask use became widespread, the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the extent to which we are all connected and share the same humanity. At ISHR this means solidarity with colleagues, such as through check-ins, sharing workloads, and providing compassion and support. It also means solidarity with human rights defenders, with ISHR programme staff regularly reaching out to national and regional-level partners to discuss their wellbeing, situation, priorities and needs. In addition to showing solidarity, at ISHR we greatly appreciate receiving solidarity and the enhanced cooperation, coordination and information sharing from many people and organisations within the human rights movement as well as from our donors.

Creativity

This crisis has highlighted the importance of creativity, of being dynamic and flexible, and planning for uncertainty. It has demonstrated the limitations of tightly earmarked funds with short timelines or donor restrictions on building organisational reserves. From the outset, ISHR was determined to use the crisis as an opportunity to innovate and to test new ways of working.

In 2019, thanks to the support of several donors – including the United Kingdom, Canada, Switzerland, Norway, Finland and the Netherlands – we launched the [ISHR Academy](#). The Academy is an interactive, online platform to build the capacity and skills of human rights defenders to leverage the UN human rights system and contribute to change on the ground. In 2020, with a significantly increased demand for online training and strategic advocacy support, we rapidly developed one new module on UN treaty bodies for the Academy, as well as Spanish translations to significantly enhance access for defenders from Latin America. In the hope of additional resources we have a number of new modules, functionalities and language options in the planning which will significantly enhance the accessibility of the platform and its capabilities in terms of providing human rights defenders with coaching, collaboration as well as strategy and network building.

With widespread restrictions on international travel and in-person meetings, in 2020 we also conducted our first ever fully virtual Human Rights Defender Advocacy Programme (HRDAP) – providing training, strategic advice and advocacy support to 19 defenders over a 12-week period. In the words of one defender:

'My experience with HRDAP during the pandemic was fruitful and rewarding. I think that besides the excellent content of training it taught me how we have to improvise when the environment is not in our favour. The ISHR team led by example on how we get human rights work done during challenging times.'



Our annual Human Rights Council Pledging Event (co-hosted with Amnesty International) was held fully online in 2020.



FROM TOP: Defenders attending a workshop in Cameroon; Mary Lawlor, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; image from the ISHR Academy e-learning platform.

Restrictions on travel and gatherings also presented major challenges to the participation of defenders in meetings and sessions of international and regional human rights bodies. With crises, however, come some opportunities, and ISHR advocated extensively and successfully to enable national-level defenders to participate in and address bodies such as the UN Human Rights Council and the African Commission on Human & Peoples' Rights by video. In fact, in 2020, ISHR accredited and supported more national-level human rights defenders than ever before to address the Human Rights Council. Effective virtual participation is also critical for defenders who lack the resources to travel to Geneva or New York, as well as those for whom travel may be restricted or banned by repressive governments.

Wellbeing

ISHR is committed to the holistic security and wellbeing – including the physical, emotional, digital and financial health and security – of our staff and partners. The ISHR Wellbeing Policy, developed by all staff through a highly consultative process in 2019, provided invaluable guidance throughout the year. Its implementation was supported by the Working Group on Wellbeing, which is mandated to promote organisational, collective and individual wellbeing and holistic security at ISHR.

The vast majority of staff were required to work remotely for most of 2020, and we put in place a number of measures to ensure that staff remained connected and supported and could work securely and collaboratively. This included a weekly staff meeting, as well as a weekly Senior Management Team meeting. We set up a virtual kitchen where staff could gather to share coffee each morning and afternoon, a virtual library where staff could work quietly together at other times, and convened regular wellbeing sessions to share experiences and good practices. ISHR made clear to staff that their wellbeing, together with that of families and loved ones, should be treated as paramount.



Wellbeing also requires protection from discrimination, respect for diversity and a sense of inclusion. When Black Lives Matter protests erupted across the world following the murder of George Floyd by the police, we expressed solidarity with peaceful protestors calling for change and with the human rights defenders and journalists working on the frontlines to document violations and defend rights. We also made a pledge – a pledge to work within ISHR and with our colleagues in human rights movements to address issues of racism and systemic discrimination, and to support human rights defenders, including those working on police brutality, in their demands for justice. As an aspect of this pledge, we established a Working Group on Non-Discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion. This group, which reports both to the Director and directly to the ISHR Board, is mandated to monitor and make recommendations on ways in which we can better address structural and systemic discrimination, as well as better promote diversity and inclusion, both within ISHR and through our programmes.

Hope

The final value motivating ISHR during 2020 is that of hope, which we drew from many places.

We took hope from the doctors, health care professionals and sanitation workers who bravely and determinedly provided vital care and support. We took hope from the human rights defenders resolute in their commitment to address inequalities and build back better. We took hope from the solidarity, resilience, creativity and humour that was shown and shared by people across the world as we realised that we are all in this together.

And we took hope from and celebrated some of the human rights successes and wins we achieved. ●



@ISHR Global

The Human Rights Council #HRC43 adopted a resolution tasking @mbachelet and other independent human rights experts to investigate & report on systemic racism and police violence globally, specifically including the killing of #GeorgeFloyd & others #BLM

ISHR IMPACT WHAT WE ACHIEVED IN 2020

Illustration adapted
from *A Global Citizen
Believes In My
Power* by Maryam
Khaleghi-Yazdi. See
page 40 for more →

Throughout 2020 we supported defenders, strengthened laws and systems for their protection, and contributed to a safe and enabling environment for them at the national, regional and international levels.

Supporting human rights defenders

OUR 2020 GOAL:

Human rights defenders are more free and safe, better networked and trained, and more strategic and influential advocates at the national, regional and international levels.

WHAT WE ACHIEVED:

Through our human rights defender support programme – which includes practical and expert training, advice and advocacy support, facilitating access to high-level policy and decision-makers, and civil society strategy building and coordination – we:

- helped defenders become more influential, equipping them to better use international and regional human rights mechanisms to achieve change on the ground
- provided defenders with solidarity and stronger networks of influence, protection and support
- contributed to defenders’ resilience, wellbeing and the sustainability of their work

We provided defenders with knowledge, networks and resources to amplify their impact

Global travel restrictions necessitated significant adaptation of all our training programmes, for example a training workshop for Namibian LGBTI defenders, for women rights defenders in Turkey, as well as our renowned **Human Rights Defender Advocacy Programme (HRDAP)**. HRDAP, which normally involves a two-week residential component in Geneva, was instead conducted fully virtually, providing training, strategic advice and advocacy support to 19 defenders (10 women, 8 men and one non-binary defender) over a 12-week period.

Attending from countries including Belize, Botswana, Brazil, Costa Rica, Egypt, Hungary, India, Liberia, Mexico, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Ukraine and Zimbabwe, 100% of participants reported



that they were satisfied with the programme, with over 70% saying they were ‘very satisfied’. Working on issues including women’s rights, LGBTI rights, migrant and refugee rights, business and human rights, and the defense and protection of human rights in restrictive contexts, the defenders undertook a highly interactive distance learning course, received one-on-one coaching and advocacy support, and met with a range of UN human rights experts and diplomats. As a result of the programme:

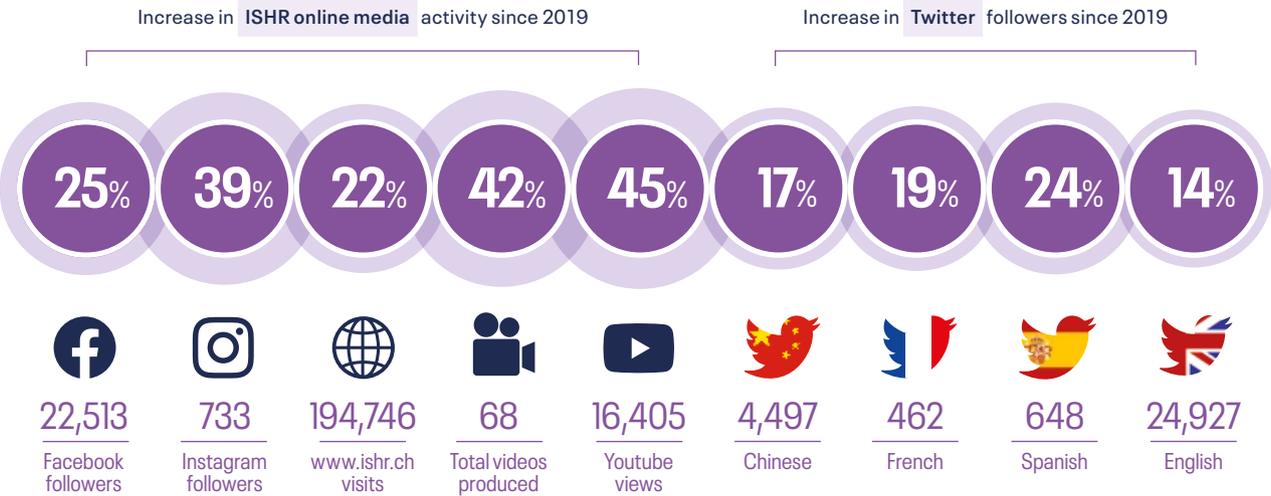
- **89%** of defenders reported that they developed a wider community and network of support, including with UN human rights experts and other defenders
- **100%** said that they were better equipped to engage effectively with the UN human rights system
- **100%** indicated that they were better equipped to achieve national level human rights change



@vploton | Vincent Ploton

👉 am inspired by the committed human rights heroes like @lucianader & many others who have joined the #HRDAP alumni community. Good news is you could be next!! 📩 Apply now for #HRDAP21 📩

As one defender put it, 'HRDAP did not just give valuable information about the mechanisms. It also provided the opportunity to connect with other human rights defenders, develop a Theory of Change, design advocacy objectives, and create and implement our own advocacy plan, with the support of great mentors and advice'.



Daniella Solano Morales

(she/her) joined HRDAP from Costa Rica, where she defends and promotes the rights of intersex and transgender people. After completing HRDAP, her main goal is to advocate for the adoption of protocols for intersex children in hospitals and in the public system to protect them from discrimination and invasive surgery without consent. With the strategic advice and support of ISHR, Daniella is planning a comprehensive strategy for national-level change – leveraging international processes like Costa Rica’s Universal Periodic Review and treaty body reviews, as well as UN agencies in Costa Rica – to increase the visibility and protection of intersex people in the country.



We ensured human rights defenders had a seat and a powerful voice at the UN Human Rights Council

ISHR is deeply committed to putting human rights defenders at the heart of the international human rights system – ensuring that they have a seat and their own voice at key policy and decision-making tables. In 2020:

- We were proud to collaborate with the American Civil Liberties Union, the US Human Rights Network and the families and representatives of Black people killed by police to secure an urgent debate at the UN Human Rights Council on **systemic racism and police violence**, and to centre and elevate the voices and experiences of victims and their families in that debate. Informed by this powerful testimony, the Council adopted a landmark resolution tasking the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to investigate and report on systemic racism and police violence globally, specifically including the killing of George Floyd and related incidents. ISHR is now supporting and advising anti-racism defenders from all regions to contribute to and shape that report, as well as amplifying their calls for an independent commission of inquiry on the issues.
- As part of the **Women Human Rights Defenders Advocacy Week**, we worked with civil society partners to support a group of women defenders from El Salvador, Nicaragua, Colombia, Chile, Namibia, Kenya, Sudan, Indonesia, Philippines, Armenia and France to attend and address the Human Rights Council, as well as engage with UN human rights experts, on the role and protection of women defenders in conflict and post-conflict situations. Together with partners, we also launched a new manual by and for women activists and human rights defenders. The manual, entitled *'Our rights, our safety: Resources for WHRDs'*, builds on the experiences of women activists to help develop collective strategies and practices to keep women safer and stronger as they defend human rights.
- We worked with family members, civil society partners, UN experts and States to increase pressure on **Saudi Arabia** for the immediate and unconditional release of detained women human rights defenders, such as Loujain AlHathloul. This campaign contributed to Denmark delivering a cross-regional statement on behalf of 33 governments regarding the human rights situation in Saudi Arabia, as well as the defeat of Saudi Arabia's bid to be elected as a member of the UN Human Rights Council. Given Saudi Arabia's concern with its international reputation – evidenced by its hosting of major events to 'sportswash' its dirty human rights record and paradoxically demonstrated by the extent to which it silences and punishes activists such as Loujain – it is critical that international attention and scrutiny is sustained in 2021. Together with partners, ISHR will push for the UN Human Rights Council to establish an independent monitoring mechanism on the country and continue to advocate until Loujain and all other arbitrarily detained defenders are safe and unconditionally free.

- We supported Venezuelan human rights defenders to push for the renewal and strengthening of the mandate of a UN Fact Finding Mission on **Venezuela** and to engage directly with members of that Mission, providing the experts with frontline insights on the human rights situation and challenges on the ground.
- We provided training, advice and advocacy support to over 30 human rights defenders working in or in relation to **China**. Together with partners, ISHR also pushed for a groundbreaking statement on China by the Special Procedures in June 2020 and, together with Human Rights Watch, built a coalition of over 350 NGOs pushing for the establishment of an independent international accountability mechanism for gross abuses in China, particularly in Hong Kong and the Uyghur region.

We scaled up online training and strategic advocacy support for defenders in rural areas or at risk of reprisal

With a significantly increased demand for online training and strategic advocacy support, we rapidly scaled up the ISHR Academy, adding a new module and language functionalities. The Academy is an interactive, online platform to build the capacity and skills of human rights defenders to leverage the UN human rights system and contribute to national level change. During 2020, the Academy received over 4,500 visits from defenders in 133 countries from all regions of the world, and almost 800 resources were downloaded. Even beyond the pandemic, the Academy will remain a vital tool for defenders, particularly those from rural or remote areas, those who are subject to travel bans, or for whom travel to Geneva or New York may expose them to risk of reprisal.

“The immediate and unconditional release of women’s rights activists and human rights defenders would be a litmus test of the Saudi government’s political will to improve the human rights situation in the country.”

SALMA EL HOSSEINY, ISHR PROGRAMME MANAGER QUOTED IN DEUTSCHE WELLE AND BY REUTERS, 15 SEPTEMBER 2020



Strengthening standards and systems for defenders' protection

OUR 2020 GOAL:

International and regional mechanisms are more accessible, effective and protective for human rights defenders. These mechanisms develop standards and make recommendations which respond to and positively influence the operating environment for defenders on the ground. When defenders are subject to restrictions or attacks at the national level, international and regional mechanisms are engaged and respond. In addition, multinational business enterprises and associations recognise the value, and act to protect, human rights defenders and civic space and freedoms.

WHAT WE ACHIEVED:

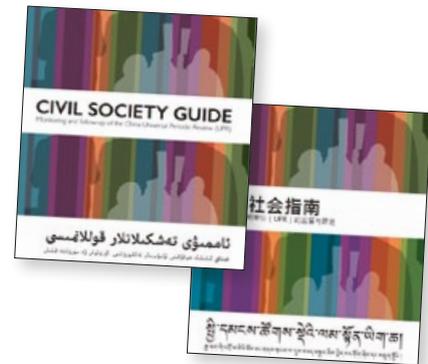
Our policy research and advocacy, our authoritative papers and briefs, our strategic legal advocacy, and our access and influence with high-level decision-makers within the UN, regional bodies, governments and business enterprises, helped make those systems and bodies more accessible, responsive, effective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

We strengthened the UN's commitment and accountability regarding the participation and protection of civil society actors

The realisation of human rights is essential to achieving the UN's other purposes of peace, security and sustainable development. Following sustained advocacy by ISHR and others, the fact that the protection of human rights defenders should therefore be a paramount priority for all UN agencies was finally reflected in a major 'Call to Action for Human Rights' launched by the UN Secretary-General in February 2020. The Call to Action contains a number of important commitments advocated by ISHR, including that the UN strengthen its engagement with and protection of human rights defenders and develop a UN-wide strategy on the participation and protection of civil society at the national and international levels.

Together with a group of international and regional NGOs, ISHR was pleased to meet with the Secretary-General immediately after the launch of the Call to Action to discuss its implementation, including with respect to responsibility, accountability and resourcing.

Following this meeting and further inputs from ISHR – and informed by worldwide consultations with national-level civil society actors supported by ISHR and CIVICUS – the UN Secretary-General subsequently issued a major Guidance Note to operationalise the civil society commitments set out in the Call to Action in October 2020. The policy – which binds all UN bodies, agencies and processes under the Secretary-General's authority – recognises that all such actors have a role and responsibility in supporting civil society participation, protecting



ISHR has developed a hands-on, multilingual guide to Universal Periodic Review monitoring and follow-up for civil society groups.

defenders from threats and attacks, and promoting an enabling environment for their work at the national and international levels. Concretely, the Guidance Note recommends a range of actions that UN entities should take, requiring them to:

- Support meaningful, diverse and inclusive civil society participation in policy and decision-making processes at the national and international levels
- Protect civil society actors that are threatened or at risk, with a heightened responsibility to protect people against intimidation and reprisals associated with their engagement with the UN
- Promote a safe and enabling environment for civil society actors at the national and international levels

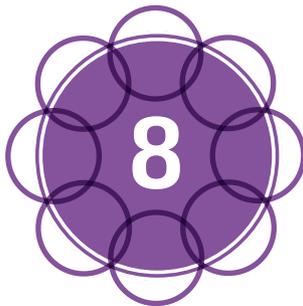
ISHR will continue to monitor and push for effective implementation of the Call to Action and Guidance Note, and to call on the Secretary-General, the High Commissioner and other senior UN officials to speak out more strongly and consistently when defenders are systematically repressed in States including China, Egypt, India, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela, among others.



'An unprecedented year': Shaping the international human rights system response to COVID-19

Restrictions on travel and gatherings associated with COVID-19 presented significant challenges to the workings of international and regional human rights bodies, precisely at a time when their monitoring and accountability functions were needed to promote the human rights compatibility and proportionality of pandemic responses. Working with and through coalitions such as HRCnet and TB-net, ISHR advocated to ensure that the UN Human Rights Council and treaty bodies, as well as the African Commission on Human & Peoples' Rights, continued to function and adapt. Among other initiatives, this included:

- Collaborating with NGO partners through **HRCnet** to secure the right to remote participation and the delivery of video statements and testimony by national-level defenders at the Human Rights Council
- Working with the **African Commission on Human & Peoples' Rights** to conduct its first ever virtual session and State reviews, and to develop and adopt a landmark resolution on a human rights-based approach to COVID-19 in Africa
- Contributing to the **UN Security Council's** first ever dedicated discussion on intimidation and reprisals against women human rights defenders and peacebuilders
- Conducting extensive research and publishing a major new report on how to better document and ensure **accountability for acts of intimidation** against defenders which have the purpose or effect of deterring engagement with the UN
- Drawing the attention of the UN Human Rights Council to the situation of **LGBTI persons** and those who defend their rights in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, and urging States to ensure that this public health emergency will neither exacerbate existing misconceptions, prejudices, inequalities or structural barriers, nor lead to increased violence and discrimination against LGBTI persons.
- Collaborating with a coalition of over 500 NGOs from all regions of the world to ensure the continuation of the vital monitoring work undertaken by **UN treaty bodies**, as well as securing the commitment on the part of treaty bodies to fixed and regular reviews of States, thereby enhancing access for civil society and accountability for States
- Successfully pushing for and addressing the first ever formal meeting between civil society and the **Third Committee** of the UN General Assembly, thereby ensuring that human rights defenders had a seat at the key international table for human rights policy making in New York
- Informing and disseminating expert guidance by the UN's independent human rights experts to States on the human rights dimensions of – and the imperative of a human rights-based response to – the coronavirus pandemic.



Number of ISHR submissions to periodic reviews of States by Treaty Bodies



Number of ISHR recommendations taken up by States in the Universal Periodic Review

“La diplomatie publique et la diplomatie plus discrète sont toutes les deux vitales et non exclusives. Malheureusement, M. Guterres n’a pas toujours été cohérent lorsqu’il s’agit d’affronter des Etats puissants ou politiquement influents.”

Freely translated from the French:

“Public diplomacy and a more quiet diplomacy are both vital and not mutually exclusive. Unfortunately, Mr. Guterres has not always been consistent when it comes to confronting powerful or politically influential States.”

PHIL LYNCH, ISHR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR QUOTED IN *LE MONDE*, 25 FEBRUARY 2020



We promoted accountability among Human Rights Council members and candidates

In October 2020, 15 new members were elected to the UN Human Rights Council in New York. With a view to ensuring General Assembly members had objective, comparable information on candidates, ISHR published 'scorecards' on each candidate State, assessing their compliance with Human Rights Council membership standards.

Regrettably, most regional groups put forward the same number of candidates as vacancies, meaning there were only 16 candidates for 15 seats, with competition only among the Asia Pacific group. Very positively, however, **Saudi Arabia** was defeated while **China**, although elected, suffered a massive slump in support of over 20% compared with last time it stood as a candidate. These outcomes followed extensive advocacy by ISHR and partners regarding the widespread repression and arbitrary detention of women human rights defenders in Saudi Arabia, and ongoing impunity for systematic violations of human rights of activists and ethnic minorities, in particular Uyghurs, in the People's Republic of China. With membership of the Council comes responsibility, as well as an opportunity for advocates and supportive States to subject repressive States to heightened scrutiny and accountability. So, although disappointed by China's election, throughout its term ISHR will intensify our support to defenders from the country to enable them to push for greater international accountability, just as we have done over the last few years in partnership with defenders from **Venezuela**.

“ The first statement in four years on China – with more than twice the countries supporting – is an urgently-needed response to the voice of victims, and to the need for the High Commissioner to take decisive action to monitor China's attacks on Uyghurs and to stop erosion of rights in Hong Kong.”

SARAH BROOKS, ISHR PROGRAMME DIRECTOR,
QUOTED IN *NEW YORK TIMES*, 30 JUNE 2020

We strengthened inclusion of human rights defenders in the context of business and human rights

Responsible business and investors have a vital interest and role in protecting and supporting human rights defenders. To build on our 2018 joint report 'Shared Space Under Pressure: Business Support for Civic Freedoms and Human Rights Defenders', ISHR and the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre (BHRRC) collaborated with the Investor Alliance for Human Rights on a new report entitled 'Safeguarding Defenders: Practical Guidance for Investors'. The new report makes clear that it is in the best interests of businesses and investors to act to safeguard defenders, including trade union leaders, indigenous communities and their leaders, land and environment defenders. It provides practical guidance, good practice examples and checklists to help companies and investors support defenders. With the BHRRC and The B Team, ISHR continued to work with a network of businesses to connect and discuss – among themselves, and with defenders – how they can respond to challenges to civic freedoms in **Brazil, Hong Kong, Saudi Arabia**, and the **US**. At the same time, human rights defenders engaged in business and human rights continued to seek out ISHR support to use international advocacy and advance their goals. ISHR provided training to a half-dozen civil society groups in **Liberia** and **Peru**, and actively contributed to the work of the Coalition to End Forced Uyghur Labour (focused on violations against the Muslim-minority population in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, China).

Promoting national implementation and partnering for change on the ground

OUR 2020 GOAL:

States enact and effectively implement specific laws and mechanisms to recognise and protect defenders, as well as review and repeal laws which restrict or criminalise them. There is an increase in public and political understanding and support for defenders' vital work.

WHAT WE ACHIEVED:

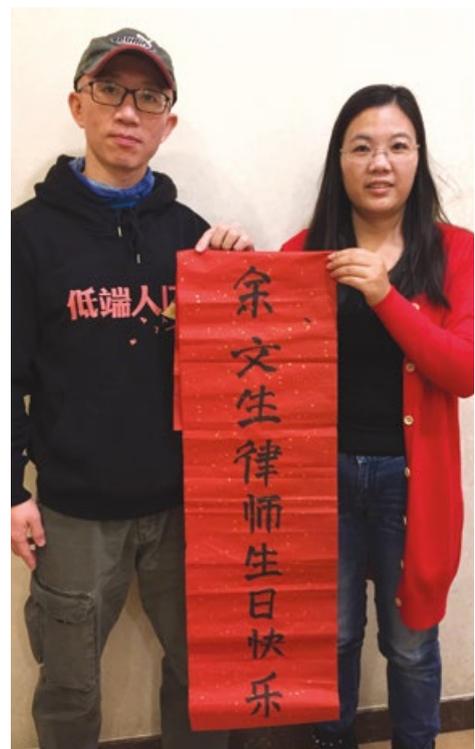
We worked with local partners to advocate for national implementation of international and regional human rights standards on the protection of defenders and an enabling environment for their work. Our deep partnerships with grassroots human rights defenders, and our reputation and track record of cooperation with governments and human rights institutions, uniquely positioned us to advise on and support national-level implementation. Through our values- and hope-based communications and narratives, we positively influenced public and political attitudes, behaviours, laws and policies in relation to defenders and countered stigmatisation and smears against them.



Percentage of ISHR Board members who are women

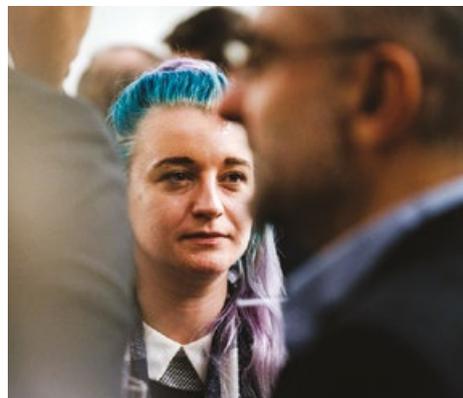


Percentage of ISHR Senior Management Team who are women



We supported processes to strengthen the promotion and protection of human rights defenders in national laws, policies and mechanisms

Legal recognition and protection of human rights defenders are key elements contributing to their protection and a safe and enabling environment for their work. Throughout 2020, ISHR continued to work with national partners in 18 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America to support the development and promote the effective implementation of laws, policies and mechanisms that promote and protect the rights of human rights defenders. We also worked with national partners on campaigns that challenge or seek to amend laws which restrict the rights of human rights defenders, in a pandemic context where legislative restrictions have only grown. The nature of this support ranged from working with national partners to secure recommendations from UN and regional human rights bodies to develop defender laws in **Guinea** and **Cameroon**, to providing technical advice to national partners on a draft law under consideration in parliament in **Mongolia**, to supporting national defenders in campaigns against the Anti-Terrorism Law in the **Philippines**, to convening workshops and co-designing strategies to ensure effective implementation of the national defender laws already enacted in **Cote d'Ivoire** and **Mali**.



We protected defenders from criminalisation and restriction

In addition to promoting the legal protection of defenders, ISHR also works to resist, amend and repeal laws that criminalise and restrict them, both through legislative advocacy and through strategic litigation and interventions at the national, regional and international levels. In 2020, this included filing a complaint with the UN Committee against Torture regarding the disbarment of human rights lawyers in **Burundi**, preparing a legal brief to the European Court of Justice regarding the criminalisation of migrant rights defenders in **Hungary**, submitting an amicus brief with the Inter-American Court of Human Rights regarding the transfemicide of LGBTI rights defender Vicki Hernandez, and filing an amicus with the Superior Tribunal of **Colombia** regarding violations against ten human rights defenders, social leaders and peacebuilders. We are indebted to the pro bono lawyers who substantially assist ISHR in this work.

While awaiting decisions in each of these landmark cases, we were delighted to receive the decision of the Guatemalan Criminal Court acquitting indigenous human rights defender Daniel Pascual in a criminal case that sought to silence him. ISHR had submitted a third party intervention in this matter urging the courts to consider Pascual's case within the context of both the widespread criminalisation of defenders in **Guatemala** and the State's obligation to protect defenders in accordance with relevant international and regional law, including the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. This intervention was reflected and vindicated in the Criminal Court's decision to recognise that Pascual had not committed any crime, but had simply exercised his right to freedom of speech under international human rights law.



We strengthened the recognition and protection of the rights of LGBTI persons at the international, regional and national levels

The legal recognition and protection of the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex persons is one of the most significant advances in international human rights over the last two decades. Standards such as [the Yogyakarta Principles and the Yogyakarta Principles + 10](#), and mechanisms such as the UN's Independent Expert on violence and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, provide authoritative guidance as to the recognition and protection of LGBTI rights in law, policy and practice.

The extent to which these international standards and mechanisms are now concretely influencing judgments, laws and policies at the national level is a powerful example of how international law and advocacy can positively change the lives of people on the ground.

Thanks to the dedication and action of civil society across the globe, the Yogyakarta Principles and the Yogyakarta Principles + 10 (the development of which were facilitated and led by ISHR and key civil society partners) have over the past four years alone been relied upon or contributed to:

- Enabling the registration of LGBTI organisations in **Botswana**
- Successfully challenging the criminalisation of homosexuality in **India**
- Enabling transgender persons to change their gender on their birth certificate while married in **Australia**
- Supporting a bill before parliament on the protection of intersex persons in **Argentina** ●

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS HUMANITY'S ESSENTIAL WORKERS

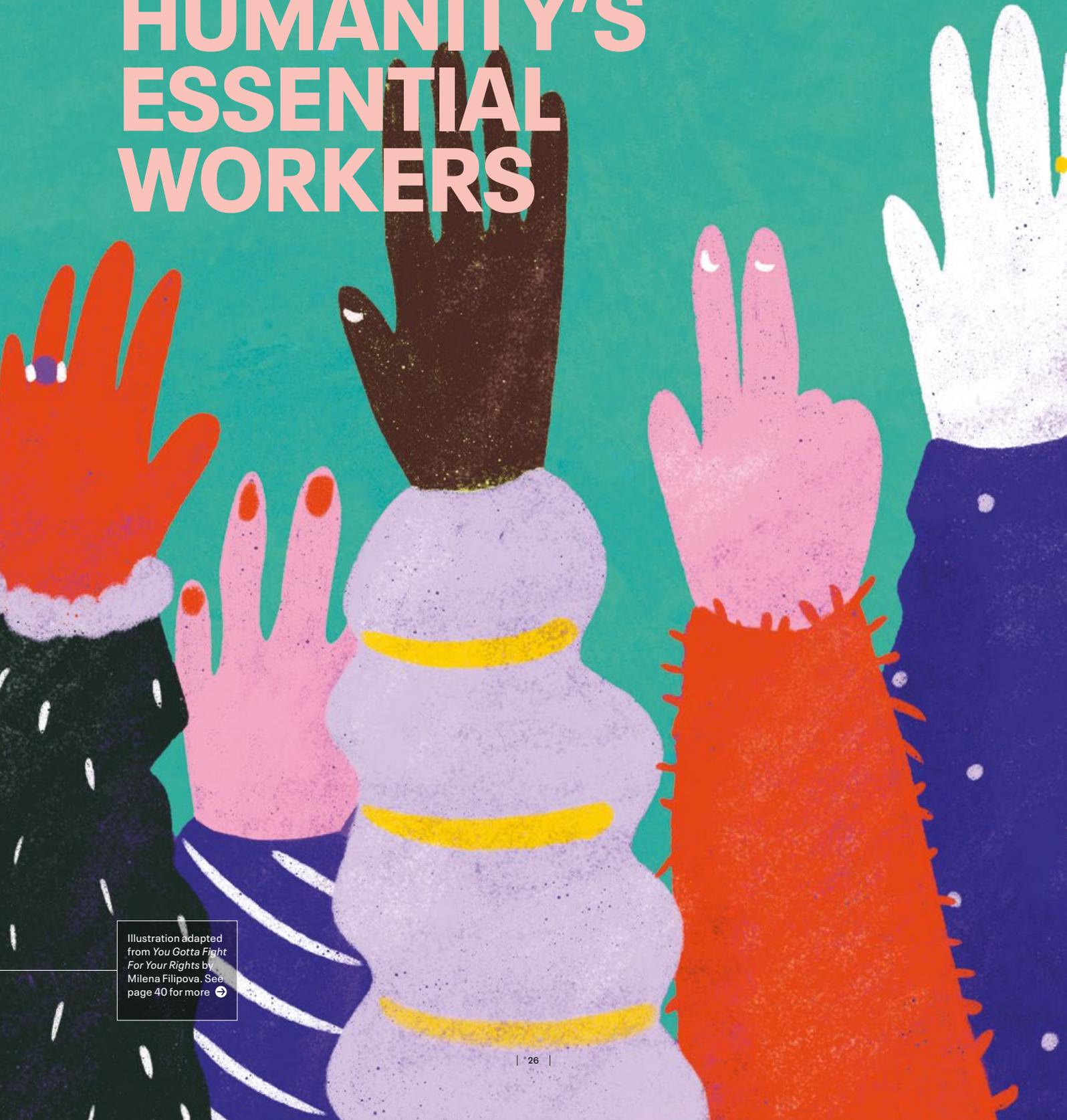


Illustration adapted from *You Gotta Fight For Your Rights* by Milena Filipova. See page 40 for more ➔

No matter who we are or where we live, our lives are better when we treat each other fairly and with respect. That's what human rights are all about – making sure that values like freedom, equality and solidarity are at the heart of our decisions and are reflected in our behaviours and laws around the world.

Unfortunately, sometimes laws passed by governments are repressive or don't sufficiently protect us, in particular the most vulnerable among us. And companies may act in ways that put their profit first, at the expense of human rights. Often, it takes people and communities to hold powerful politicians and corporations to account and make sure that everyone can benefit from the human rights and freedoms that we are all meant to share.

Human rights defenders are the people that work to make this happen

These are the people that speak out and mobilise against injustices like racism, sexism or the climate crisis and who work with communities to find solutions and advocate for better ways of doing things – to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and make sure that no one is left behind.

Here at ISHR we are constantly inspired by the brave people taking action to defend human rights and want to share some of their stories with you.

How do human rights defenders ensure dignity and justice for all in times of pandemic and crisis?



Their work on access to information and freedom of expression is essential to ensure that people are informed and governments are more responsive and accountable.



Their work on economic, social and cultural rights is essential to ensure access to health care, housing, education and social protections that are more necessary than ever.



Their work on civil and political rights is essential to ensure that measures in response to the pandemic are reasonable, necessary and proportionate and that governments are held accountable.



Their work to promote and safeguard the rights of people or groups who experience marginalisation or discrimination is essential to protect those in our community who are most vulnerable to disease and its impacts.



Their work to protect the environment and biodiversity is essential to minimise the future risk of pathogens crossing from animals to humans.



Their perspectives, experience and expertise are essential to identify problems and ensure sustainable, community-owned and community-led solutions.

Alicia A. Wallace of the Bahamas

is a queer Black feminist, gender expert and researcher. She is the Director of Equality Bahamas which promotes women's and LGBTQ+ rights through public education, community programming and advocacy, including international advocacy at the UN. ISHR has worked with Alicia to promote accountability for reprisals against her.



Channeling hope and rage into sustained human rights action

The year is 2050. What does the world look like, particularly for women, Black people, LGBTI people?

We are making strides toward equality and we are centered in all decision-making processes. We are protected and respected. It is a norm for us to be in positions of leadership. Diversity is expected. We are as safe at night as anyone is during the day. We have access to education, healthcare, food, and housing. All of our needs are met. Redistribution of wealth is in progress. Our survival is not dependent on propping up the capitalist system. We are defining justice for ourselves. We recognise ourselves as the source of our own healing.

How did your work as a defender help achieve this vision?

My work provoked conversation. It made information – from academic theory to changemaking methodologies – accessible to everyone. I created spaces where people are comfortable to question, critique, challenge, learn, share, and create. I developed tools for all of us to be

able to think outside of the reality we used to know. We knew we were not bound to it because I put significant emphasis on imagination and future-making. I found a way to fight the injustice we faced and facilitated collaborative visioning, imagining, and creating. We channeled our rage, weaponised hope, and we came together to co-create the futures. I helped to create tools and systems to enable that practice.

Was there a defining moment in your life that motivated you to defend human rights?

I am a queer Black woman. I have student loan debt. I am unwaged. I am a survivor of violence. I've experienced rape and death threats for the past six years. Most of it has been online. My life is a collection of moments that make it necessary for me to defend and promote human rights if I am to survive and leave the world better than I met it. Perhaps what prompts me to action is recognition of another important fact—I have privilege. It is important for me to use what I have to help us all get what we ought to have had a long time ago. For me, the defining moment happens over and over again, when I feel rage threatens to control my body, and I remember to be hopeful. Not because it feels good or because I am waiting for something to happen on its own, but because I believe in my own power and the magic we create when queer people, Black people, women come together to channel our rage, righteous and raw, into sustained action.





What could be done for you to be able to work safely and effectively?

Institutions and people in positions of power need to rebuke violence, harassment and threats. The State needs to enact legislation against hate crimes and hate speech. It needs to publicly state its support for human rights defenders, make it clear that the relationship between itself and advocates is complementary, not adversarial, and assert that it will protect us. The United Nations and other human rights bodies need to take responsibility for the safety and security of the human rights defenders they depend on to monitor and evaluate State action. These organisations need to raise the bar, calling States to higher standards. They have to make it clear to States and the general public that the safety and security of human rights defenders are matters of priority before we are detained, disappeared, or murdered.



“I believe in my own power and the magic we create when queer people, Black people, women come together to channel our rage, righteous and raw, into sustained action.”

ALICIA A. WALLACE, HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER FROM THE BAHAMAS

Leon Dulce of the Philippines

is the National Coordinator for Kalikasan People's Network for the Environment, an organisation that prevents environmental exploitation and protects marginalised communities from harm. He is an alumni of ISHR's Human Rights Defender Advocacy Programme.



Using the UN to protect the lives of people and the environment

I am Leon Dulce, a 31 year-old environmental defender from the Philippines. Being an environmental defender has shaped my worldview to live with simplicity, tap your inner humanity, and be conscientious in your work, knowing the lives of people and our planet itself are at stake.

What is the human rights problem you are addressing?

We are campaigning with local indigenous Tawali communities to close down the 10,266-hectare Didipio gold-copper mine of Australian-Canadian corporation Oceanagold. This mining project has figured in a long history of civil-political and socio-economic rights violations against the indigenous communities in the remote mountain villages of Kasibu Municipality.

Why did you engage with the UN human rights system to help you solve it?

We decided to engage with the UN Special Procedures hoping that a communication from the UN's independent human rights experts would increase pressure on the Duterte government to take action, even in spite of its bristling stance against the UN.

We reasoned that if the Special Rapporteurs spoke out or responded with a country visit, whether formal or academic, it would create high-profile attention for the Tawali people's struggles against Oceanagold. It would be a show of solidarity that would raise the morale of defenders on the ground.

What happened at the UN?

On 13 February 2019, nine Special Procedures mandate holders sent a joint communication to the Duterte government echoing and amplifying the human rights concerns we raised.

Later, on 30 April 2020, Special Rapporteurs intervened again, urging the Duterte government to respect indigenous people's rights in response to an earlier violent dispersal of the Tawali protesters' ongoing barricade against the mine.

What was the impact on the ground?

We believe the intervention from the UN experts was a significant factor in making the Duterte government think twice before railroading the then impending renewal of Oceanagold's contract agreement. The UN communication helped create the momentum that led to the provincial government issuing a restraining order against the Oceanagold mine, and inspired the community organisations to launch a people's barricade enforcing this restraint through direct action.

“Human rights defenders are ordinary people doing extraordinary things to make all of our lives better.”

MARY LAWLOR, UN SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON THE SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Do you have any tips for other defenders using this mechanism?

Crucial to our success in engaging the UN Special Procedures was how we strategically located it within an interplay of various advocacy tactics. The UN intervention fed into the direct action of organised communities of defenders, and helped galvanise a broad support network from churches, local governments and civil society.

The intervention was also leveraged in a public communications and lobbying strategy that exposed the national government’s collaboration with irresponsible big businesses, discouraged their usual ‘rubber-stamping’ for these mining corporations, and deterred full-on reprisals against the defenders.

What about any asks for States?

We hope the international community joins us in urging the United Nations to conduct an independent investigation into the human rights situation in the Philippines. We hope the engagement from Special Procedures to date will lead to greater action from UN experts and member States to hold the Duterte regime to account. ●



Number of people

accessing information and support through the ISHR Academy

4,517

350

Number of human rights defenders

to whom ISHR provided training or advocacy support

Board

During 2020 Board members **Maryam Al Khawaja** and **Pierre Avanzo** retired following the conclusion of their second and final terms of office. We thank them for their outstanding service to ISHR and to the human rights defenders we support over their six years as Board members.

During 2020, staff members **Helen Nolan**, **Espérance Kana** and **Michael Ineichen** left ISHR after periods of extended service. After almost 14 years with ISHR, starting as an intern and departing as a Programme Director, Michael left to join Amnesty International Switzerland. We thank Michael for his deep commitment to human rights defenders, his remarkable contribution to laws and mechanisms for their protection, and his strategic leadership role in the development of ISHR.

Our team



Vrinda Grover
Chair
India

Lawyer and human rights defender advocating and litigating landmark cases on women's rights, police accountability, freedom of the press and sexual minorities in India; Member of South Asians for Human Rights (SAHR) and Working Group on Human Rights in India and the UN (WGHR).



Katarina Bervar Sternad
Vice-Chair
Slovenia

Director of PIC (Legal Information Centre for NGOs) in Slovenia, focusing mainly on migrant rights and women's rights, as well as Coordinator of the Coalition for ESC Rights.



Jean-Claude Ern 
Treasurer
Switzerland

Equity Partner at Banque Pictet and CEO of the Swiss Wealth Management market; Lawyer admitted to the Geneva Bar.



Erik Mose
Member
Norway

Retired judge of the Supreme Court of Norway; former judge of the European Court of Human Rights and former President of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.



Elizabeth Broderick
Member
Australia

Chair of UN Working Group on Discrimination against Women and Girls; Adjunct Professor at The University of Sydney; former Australian Sex Discrimination Commissioner.



Alice Mogwe
Member
Botswana

Director of Ditshwanelo (the Botswana Centre for Human Rights), President of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), former Chairperson of the Southern Africa Trust.



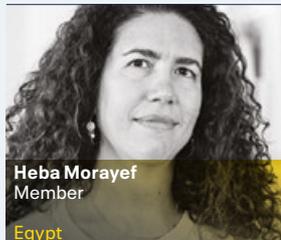
Andrew Park
Member
United States

Human rights expert; former International Program Director at the Williams Institute and Wellspring Advisors and former coordinator of the International Human Rights Funders Group.



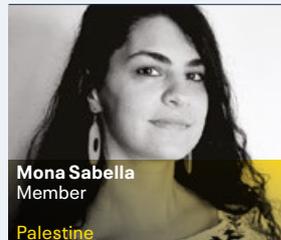
Mirosław Wyrzykowski
Member
Poland

Chair of the Human Rights Department, Faculty of Law and Administration, University of Warsaw; former judge of the Constitutional Tribunal of Poland.



Heba Morayef
Member
Egypt

MENA Regional Director with Amnesty International; former Egypt Director at Human Rights Watch and Associate Director of the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights.



Mona Sabella
Member
Palestine

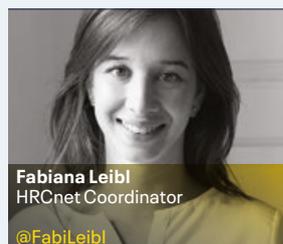
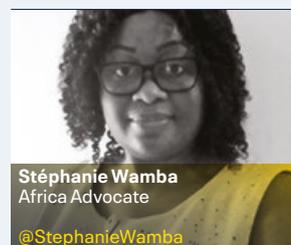
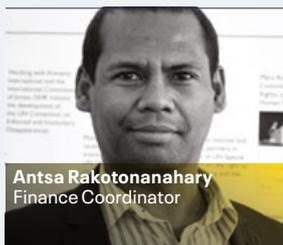
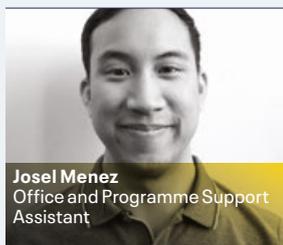
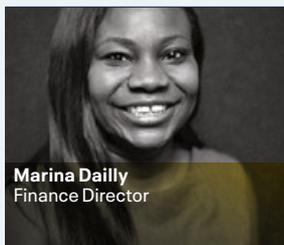
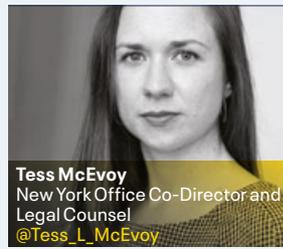
Human rights defender coordinating global efforts to stop corporate capture and ensure corporate accountability at ESCR-Net; former International Advocacy Officer with the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies.



Luc a Nader
Member
Brazil

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

Staff



Fellows and interns
Alexandra Andre, Heidia Bouaffif, Julie Dekimpe, Thibaut Lamunière, Sofia Mikton, Zamzam Mohammed, Grace Waiswa Nsaawa, Winston Churchill Ruhayana, Nadia Ruminy, Marina Wilbraham
• The names of some Human Rights Defender Fellows have been omitted for personal security reasons

Our supporters

Thank you

The generous contributions of our donors sustain our work to support human rights defenders, strengthen human rights systems and achieve human rights change. They provide hope and make change happen!

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

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International law firms

During 2020, ISHR worked with some of the world's leading law firms on a pro bono basis, enabling us to leverage substantial legal expertise and resources.

Akin Gump

Allens

Ashurst

DLA Piper

Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer

Robert Kirkness, Thorndon Chambers

Morrison & Foerster (UK) LLP

Orrick

Shearman & Sterling

White & Case

Winston & Strawn

We also collaborated with and received financial support from:

Civicus

Freedom House

Helsinki Human Rights Committee

IUCN

Milieudefensie

www.ishr.ch/donate



Good governance, evaluations and learnings



ISHR is deeply committed to principles of good governance, transparency and accountability.

In 2020, ISHR's finances and financial management and reporting systems were independently audited by Beau HLB.

There were no reported or investigated breaches of ISHR's Code of Conduct or Anti-Discrimination and Equal Opportunity Policy in 2020.

The ISHR Board met on four occasions during 2020, with an average attendance of 75% per meeting, addressing issues including the external environment, governance, strategy, policy, risk, holistic security, outcomes and impacts, evaluations and learnings, and human and financial resource management.

ISHR is also deeply committed to monitoring, evaluation and learning.

In 2020, the Finland Ministry of Foreign Affairs published an independent evaluation of nine international NGOs, including ISHR. The report describes ISHR as *'the 'go-to' organisation when civil society is engaging with the UN human rights system'*, as having collaboration and coalition building *'as part of our DNA'*, and as *'an effective and influential organisation which is strengthening the work of human rights defenders by providing training, capacity-building, collaborative advocacy initiatives and access to international and regional mechanisms and policymakers.'*

In terms of measuring results, the Finland report states that *'ISHR's reporting in progress reports and annual reports is very accessible and combines 'looking back' accountability and results with 'looking forward' (new/amended goals) in a manner which may be inspirational for other organisations'*. It further states that *'The*

reporting from ISHR is thorough and precise with clear performance indicators and means of verification given, qualitative or quantitative. There seems to be a sound culture for learning and evaluation practices.'

We consider that holistic security and a focus on wellbeing are paramount to the safety and sustainability of defenders and their work, as well as that of ISHR staff.

Throughout 2020, ISHR strengthened its approach on these vital issues, mandating an internal Working Group on Digital Security, adopting a revised policy on Holistic Security, implementing our organisational Wellbeing Policy, and convening regular sessions on wellbeing, digital security, resilience and sustainability.

ISHR is committed to addressing all forms of discrimination and promoting diversity and inclusion, both internally and through our programmatic support to women human rights defenders, defenders of LGBTI rights, and anti-racism defenders, among others.

In 2020, ISHR established a Working Group on Non-Discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion. This group, which reports both to the Director and directly to the ISHR Board, is mandated to monitor and make recommendations on ways in which we can better address structural and systemic discrimination, as well as better promote diversity and inclusion, both within ISHR and through our programmes. Among other things, the Working Group convened a session for all staff on understanding and addressing racism facilitated by Pamela Ohene-Nyako, and provided guidance to staff and Board on the importance and use of gender and gender-inclusive pronouns.

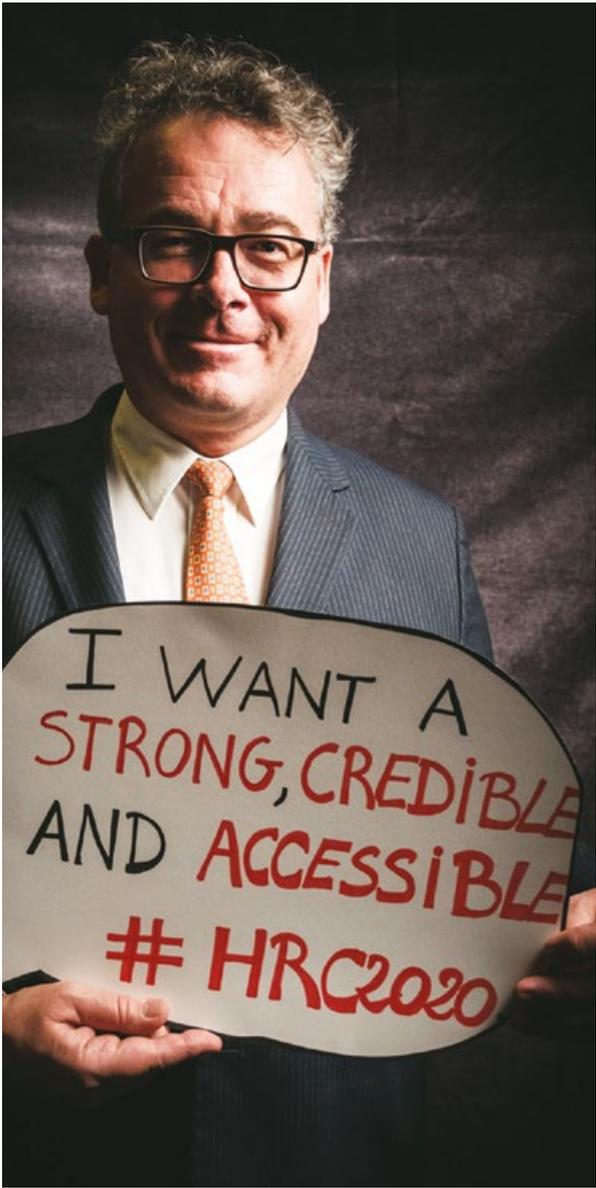
Working together with affected people and communities, and in partnership with the American Civil Liberties Union, the US Human Rights Network and other NGOs, ISHR played an instrumental role in pushing for the UN Human Rights Council to convene an urgent debate on systemic racism and police violence and to centre and elevate the voices, experiences and expertise of Black people and people of African descent in these discussions.

Of ISHR’s Board members, 7 of 11 are women (including the Chair and Vice Chair), while of ISHR’s Senior Management Team, 4 of 6 are women. ISHR’s Executive Director is a member of the International Gender Champions initiative.

We are committed to climate justice and to a healthy and sustainable environment. We stand with and support environmental human rights defenders. ISHR also recognises that it has a responsibility to the environment beyond legal and regulatory requirements.

Consistent with this recognition, in 2020 we adopted an Environmental Policy, setting out our commitment to promoting biodiversity and a healthy and sustainable environment, reducing our environmental impact, and continually improving our environmental performance as an integral part of our strategy and operating methods. The policy also provides guidance and sets out measures so that ISHR can achieve carbon neutrality by 2030.

ISHR’s new Strategic Framework 2021-25 identifies defenders working on issues of environmental justice and sustainability as a priority group for support. ●



The late Ambassador Peter Matt of Liechtenstein, a great friend and supporter of ISHR, human rights, multilateralism and the rule of law.

Financial statements

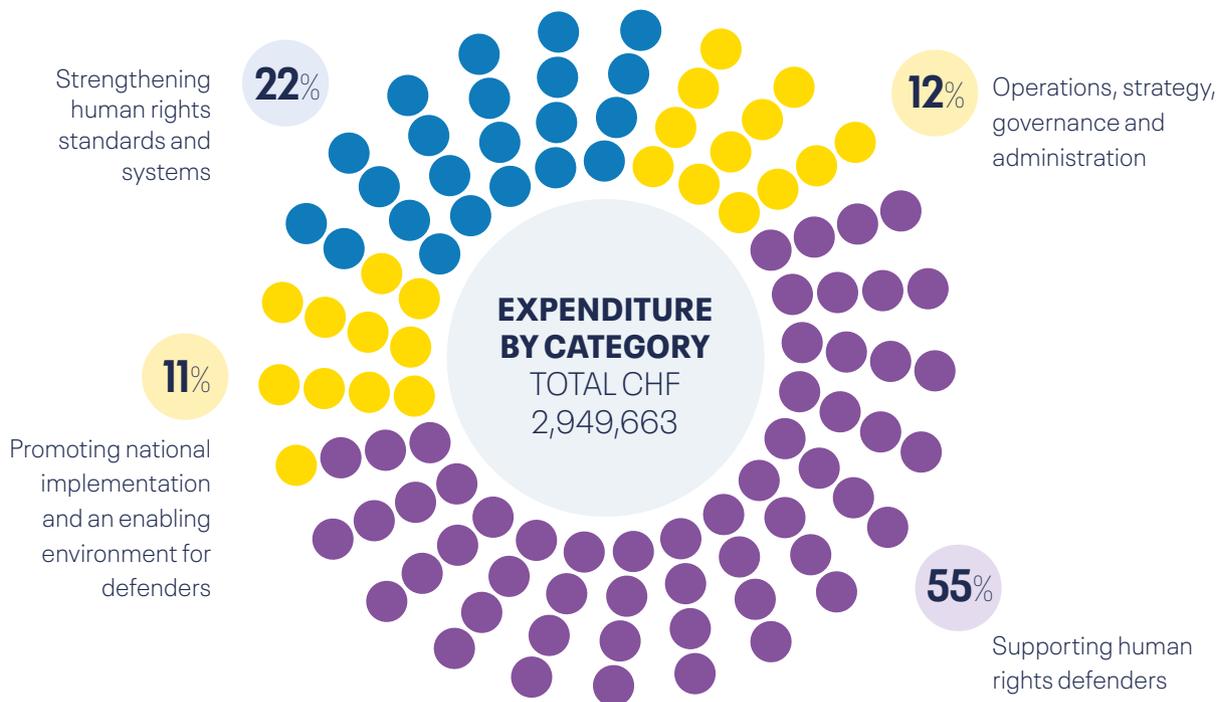
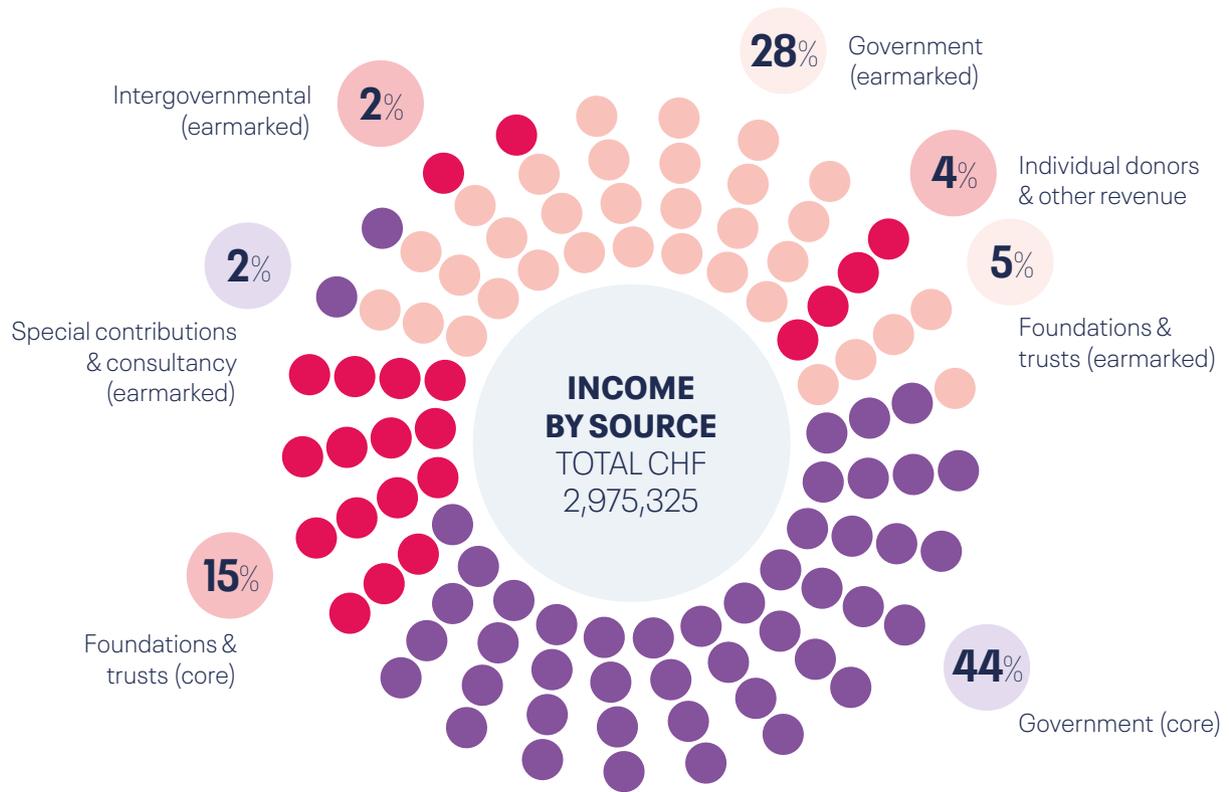
Profit and Loss Statement for year ending 31 December 2020

	2020 CHF	2019 CHF
Income		
REVENUES - CORE		
Governmental agencies	1,292,192	1,207,312
Foundations & trusts	449,690	293,000
Individual donors*	30,932	38,659
Other revenue	80,777	89,521
Total core grants	1,853,591	1,628,492
REVENUES - EARMARKED		
Governmental agencies	845,054	1,011,809
Foundations & trusts	139,013	282,413
Intergovernmental agencies	69,426	101,320
Special contributions & consultancy	68,241	69,874
Total earmarked grants	1,121,734	1,465,416
Total income	2,975,325	3,093,908
Costs		
Personnel Cost	1,846,629	1,798,066
GENERAL EXPENDITURES		
Missions/travel/accommodation	147,328	408,215
Publications, translations, outreach	194,257	152,563
Office rentals/operating cost	274,891	291,519
Financial charges/audit fees	48,688	23,793
Governance & strategy	335	41,176
New York costs	309,554	199,948
Support for mandate of Special Rapporteur	127,980	235,778
Total costs	2,949,663	3,151,058
Income (excess) for year	25,663	(57,151)

Balance Sheet ending 31 December 2020

	2020 CHF	2019 CHF
Assets		
CURRENT ASSETS		
Petty cash	294	339
Bank accounts & special bank accounts	1,151,730	351,007
Sub-total	1,152,024	351,346
Debtors	39,552	125,703
Withholding tax	-	-
DEFERRED & ACCRUED ASSETS		
Deferred expenses	-	-
Grant receivable gvt & inter-gov	734,292	1,222,854
Grant receivable non-gvt	302,619	310,852
Total deferred & accrued assets	1,036,911	1,533,706
Total assets	2,228,487	2,010,755
Liabilities & Reserves		
Current liabilities	86,642	51,782
Provisions	-	1,873
Sub-total	86,642	53,654
Deferred grants	1,547,593	1,388,512
Total liabilities	1,634,235	1,442,167
RESERVES		
Reserve funds	568,589	625,739
Excess income (charges) for the year	25,663	(57,151)
Total reserves	594,252	568,588
Total liabilities and reserves	2,228,487	2,010,755

* Donations totaling USD 50,000 made in the US are not included in this amount, being instead reflected in the accounts of US Friends of ISHR



Human rights artists

"The future of human rights must be hopeful. When we only show the abuses, people start to believe that we live in a world of crisis with no alternative. We believe that the image of human rights needs to be reimagined so we can bring more people on board".

This is the mission of Reimagining Human Rights, an amazing project by [Fine Acts](#), in partnership with [hope-based comms](#). Together, they are building the largest collection of free, evergreen, hopeful visual content around human rights, for activists and nonprofits around the world to use in their campaigns.

The artworks were adapted from the original rendering created by the artists shown below, for use within our annual report and are licenced under [Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International](#).



Rozalina Burkova
Bulgaria/Spain



COVER/CONTENTS:
Rozalina Burkova is a visual artist, illustrator and

animation director. Born in 1989 in Stara Zagora, Bulgaria, she currently resides in Barcelona, Spain. She has a BA in Fashion Design from Central Saint Martins, UAL, London. Her clients include Gucci, Tate Modern, Liberty's, Human Rights Watch, Polyvinyl Records, Subpop Records, Zagorka, Ritual Gatherings, Fine Acts, Masters of Scale, Galantis, Items Design, Frea Vintage, and more

Original artwork;
<https://thegreats.co/artworks/open-minds-series-23>



Anina Takeff
Germany/Bulgaria



PAGE 4:
Anina Takeff is a German-Bulgarian illustrator and graphic

designer based in Berlin and Sofia. She likes experimenting with shapes and colors, putting a spin on the everyday challenges of the modern world and portraying strong and brave women. Her work is often influenced by her love of jazz, novels, architecture and exploring new places.

Original artwork;
<https://thegreats.co/artworks/we-are-not-free-until-everyone-is-free>



Elsa Martino
France



PAGE 8:
Elsa Martino is a young illustrator based in Paris. Her

illustrations are very influenced by the visual universe of the 80s and 90s, it's often in the magazines of these periods that she draws her inspiration from. The exaggeration, the postures, the framing, the staging, are what attracts her. In her work, she doesn't really care about details but rather curves and attitudes.

Original artwork;
<https://thegreats.co/artworks/take-a-knee>



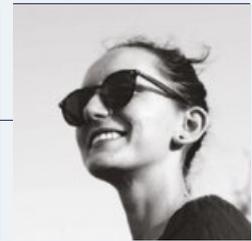
Maryam Khaleghi-Yazdi
Iran/United States



PAGE 14:
Maryam is an Iranian multimedia artist and professor based

in Minnesota. The area of her work covers different realms like illustration, graphic design and animation. Maryam has exposed her art to different national and international exhibitions in various countries like Iran, U.S.A., Germany, South Korea, Japan, Italy, U.K., Switzerland, Mexico, etc. She has won several prizes like the Silver prize of A'Design Award in Italy, the merit award of HOW International Design Awards in the U.S.A., the first prize of International Triennial of Ecological Posters in Ukraine and the second award of International Poster Design Competition Post-it Awards in Russia.

Original artwork;
<https://thegreats.co/artworks/a-global-citizen-believes-in-my-power>



Milena Filipova
Bulgaria



PAGE 26:
Milena is yet another corporate burnout survivor in her

30's. Deciding to become a part-time and stress-free illustrator less than 2 years ago, she thinks that this is the best decision she has ever made. She likes witty and colorful works that are not overly dramatic, and to experiment with styles. Each project is like a little journey for her. She doesn't consider herself to be a serious illustrator and strongly believes that taking breaks from drawing is actually a good thing, as you get to be so much more inspired afterwards.

Original artwork;
<https://thegreats.co/artworks/you-gotta-fight-for-your-rights>



This Annual Report is dedicated to the late Ambassador Peter Matt, Permanent Representative of Liechtenstein to the UN in Geneva, who passed away suddenly on 8 March 2021. Peter was a great friend of ISHR, both as a diplomat dedicated to human rights, justice, equality and accountability, and as a generous private donor. We will remember him as someone who was always warm, accessible, thoughtful and generous. He was a person of the utmost integrity and principle, representing the best values in his country and in humanity.

Rest in power, Peter.



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ANNUAL REPORT 2021

For year ending
31 December 2020

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our website: www.ishr.ch

Or contact us:
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