

## [South Africa | UN Committee calls for a safe and favourable environment for defenders](#)

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**The UN committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has asked South Africa to "take all measures necessary to protect the rights of human rights defenders" in a welcome recommendation following the review of South Africa's first report to the Committee.**



“In South Africa, human rights defenders, especially those who work to monitor the activities of the extractive industry have often been threatened and assaulted”, says Lucien Limacher, an attorney at the Legal Resources Centre (LRC), an advocacy group based in Johannesburg. “This authoritative recommendation of the Committee is particularly welcome in the current context”, he adds.

In a joint submission to the Committee, LRC, the Global Initiative on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (GI-ESCR) and ISHR outlined the dangerous situation of economic, social and cultural rights defenders in the country, and provided a range of suggestions relating to the first review of South Africa by this Committee. “We’re delighted that the Committee adopted detailed and focused recommendations on defenders in their concluding observations,” says GI-ESCR’s Geneva representative Lucy McKernan.

The UN Committee values the work of defenders and recognises the crucial role they play in its work. In a welcome statement in 2016, the Committee found that undue restrictions and abuses on ESCR defenders constitute a ‘violation of States’ obligations under the Covenant’.

“We welcome the call of the Committee that all reported cases of intimidation, harassment and violence against human rights defenders must be promptly and thoroughly investigated and the perpetrators be brought to justice,” says ISHR’s head of treaty body advocacy, Vincent Ploton. “We encourage the South African authorities to adopt an implementation plan for these recommendations, and submit the second periodic report to the Committee on time,” he concludes.