

Human Rights Council 36th session

Speaker: Helen Nolan – Check against delivery

ITEM 3 – GENERAL DEBATE

Mr President,

ISHR welcomes the Special Procedures' latest [joint communications report](#), although it provides a troubling picture of new threats and attacks against *civil society actors and human rights defenders across the globe, as well as continued intimidation of defenders and organisations whose dangerous situation has been repeatedly raised in the past by these independent experts.*

As the Human Rights Council regularly emphasises, the work and safety of human rights defenders is critical to healthy societies that respect human rights and the rule of law. It is thus essential that the Council's members act to prevent and remedy any attempts to restrict the activities of human rights defenders or to put them at risk. Yet, the report cites fresh cases of reprisals – the ultimate proof of a State's failure to create a safe and enabling environment for human rights defenders engaging with the UN.

In Egypt, Dr. *Ahmed Shawky Abdelsattar Mohamed Amasha* was abducted and tortured in detention after sharing information on cases of enforced disappearances with Special Procedures. In Uzbekistan, the day before a meeting with the ILO, *Elena Urlaeva* was arbitrarily arrested and detained in a psychiatric institution. *Two other cases of reprisals, in Thailand and Sri Lanka, are also raised.*

The report also *clearly* demonstrates the *ongoing* reluctance by States to *fully* cooperate with Special Procedures. Instead of replying to communications in a timely and substantive manner *in line with their duty to cooperate with UN*, [33 States](#) have yet to respond to at least one *communication alleging rights violations*. These include 11 Council Members, of which Brazil, Egypt, Iraq, Kenya and Qatar have failed to respond to two or more *communications*.

Mr President, we urge you to request speedy updates from these and other non-responders, including *Council members* Bangladesh, Congo, Hungary, India, Nigeria and Venezuela.

ISHR also draws attention to concrete steps the Special Procedures can take themselves to increase State cooperation, *as well as each mandate's effectiveness and impact*. We highlight [recommendations](#) crafted by ISHR and 8 other organisations during the 24th Annual Meeting of Special Procedures. *They deal with institutional issues, such as selection and appointment of mandate holders and reprisals, as well as working methods, including follow-up to communications, decisions and country visits.*

While directed at the Coordination Committee and mandate holders, the recommendations require action by UN Member States, and Council Members in particular, in order to succeed. We urge all these actors to work together and with civil society to implement these necessary reforms.