

*Supporting Defenders | Strengthening Systems | Achieving Impact*



ISHR

INTERNATIONAL SERVICE  
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

## Annual Report 2017

FOR YEAR ENDING 31 DECEMBER 2016





ISHR's 2016 participants in the Human Rights Defender Advocacy Programme (HRDAP)



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# Message from Chairperson and Director

## *Supporting defenders in tumultuous times*

Dear friends,

Human rights defenders – those brave people who stand up for the rights and freedoms of others – are our best hope for a fair and just world. Their work contributes to good government, sustainable development and the rule of law. It exposes corruption, empowers the marginalised, and provides justice to victims. It is an antidote to political and religious extremism, and to the rising tide of intolerance and illiberalism. Their work is also imperiled – frequently threatened by the powerful, privileged or prejudiced individuals and institutions they challenge.

2016 was an especially tough year for defenders. They faced what the UN Special Rapporteur has described as ‘unprecedented attack’; from defamation, to detention, and even to death.

2016 was also a challenging year for ISHR, but through a combination of powerful partnerships and strategic advocacy we managed to defy the trend and contribute to some significant positive developments.

- The appointment of high-level UN officials to combat reprisals and counter homophobic and transphobic violence and discrimination.
- The development of an influential Model National Law on Human Rights Defenders.
- The adoption of the first ever corporate policy on human rights defenders by a multinational company.
- The mobilisation of high-ranking officials and experts to speak out and intervene in relation to attacks on human rights defenders in States including China, Egypt and Bahrain.
- The development of groundbreaking international jurisprudence on the legal obligation of States to protect defenders of economic, social and cultural rights.
- And the provision of intensive training and advocacy support to more than 200 defenders in Geneva and the field, like Natasha Latiff who works to defend women’s rights in Afghanistan, or Ivette Gonzalez who works to promote corporate accountability and sustainable development in Mexico.

Thanks for supporting ISHR and making this change!





Despite these wins, however, the years ahead will likely be tumultuous for human rights defenders. It is in this context that we have developed a bold new Strategic Framework for 2017-2020.

Informed by face-to-face consultations with more than 700 defenders and experts, and building on over 30 years of ISHR experience and success, the Strategy will ensure that we provide defenders with the capacity, protection, partnerships and impact that they desperately need.

It is an ambitious strategy. It commits to continuing what ISHR does best – providing training and advocacy support to defenders and lobbying for better laws and mechanisms for their protection – while also committing to expand our reach, strengthen our partnerships, and deepen our impact on the ground.

We'll expand our reach both online and offline, providing defenders for whom it is too risky or costly to come to Geneva with access to a sophisticated digital training and advocacy platform, and establishing an intensive Fellowship programme for defenders at risk. We'll also secure civil society access to officials at the highest political levels, including the UN Secretary General, the High Commissioner, Ministers and Ambassadors.

We'll strengthen our partnerships, continuing to collaborate deeply with civil society actors and building alliances with progressive business enterprises. We're already exploring new venues to advance the protection of human rights defenders – like the World Economic Forum – while retaining our commitment to provide expert support to defenders to engage with the UN, African and Inter-American human rights systems.

And we'll deepen our impact on the ground. We'll partner with civil society to push for human rights defender laws and protection mechanisms and with

governments to establish a Global Network of Human Rights Defender Focal Points. We'll second our staff to national organisations to build local capacity while simultaneously ensuring that ISHR's work remains closely informed by the situation and protection needs of defenders. We'll also leverage pro bono support from the world's leading law firms, helping defenders pursue accountability and enabling ISHR to conduct strategic litigation to push for defenders' effective recognition and protection in national law.

There is a strong emphasis throughout the strategy on collaboration. In the face of such complex and powerful challenges, strategic alliances between State, non-governmental and private actors with a shared interest in upholding human rights and the rule of law have never been more important.

Thank you for standing with us in 2016. We look forward to partnering with you in the implementation of our new Strategic Framework and the achievement of our shared human rights agenda in 2017 and beyond.

Yours sincerely



**Philip Lynch**  
Executive Director



**Lucia Nader**  
Chair of the ISHR Board



# Our vision, mission, values and theory of change

## OUR VISION

Our vision is the effective implementation of all international and regional human rights instruments in all nations and for all peoples.

## OUR MISSION

We realise this vision through our mission to support human rights defenders and ensure a safe and enabling environment for their work at the international, regional and national levels.

## THEORY OF CHANGE

Our mission – supported by over 30 years of research, experience and a proven track record of impact – is founded on the understanding that human rights defenders are essential agents of human rights change and can use international and regional human rights standards and systems as powerful levers for progress.

Human rights defenders

the essential agents

+

International and regional human rights laws and systems

the powerful levers

=

National level change

*'Human rights defenders are the heroes of our time. These organisations and individuals inject the life blood into human rights: they are the promoters of change, the people who ring the alarm about abuse, poor legislation and creeping authoritarianism.... In these brave efforts they frequently resort to the international community and its human rights mechanisms for support.'*

NAVI PILLAY, ISHR BOARD MEMBER AND FORMER UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

## OUR GOALS

We pursue our mission by achieving three complementary goals:

### GOAL 1:

We support human rights defenders to use international and regional human rights standards and systems

### GOAL 2:

We strengthen international and regional standards and systems to make them more accessible, effective and protective for human rights defenders and victims

### GOAL 3:

We work with local partners to advocate for national implementation of international and regional human rights standards on the protection of human rights defenders and an enabling environment for their work

## OUR TACTICS

We achieve these goals through five key tactics:

- Training, capacity building and fellowships
- Research and policy advocacy
- Legal advocacy and strategic interventions
- Technical advice and implementation support
- Coalition building and coordination

## OUR VALUES

We are:

- principled
- passionate
- expert
- collaborative
- connected

# Our record of impact

*2016 at a glance*

2016 was a tough year for human rights and their defenders. But through a combination of powerful partnerships and influential advocacy we managed to defy the trend and contribute to significant human rights change.

## EMPOWERING HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

We provide defenders with practical and expert training, advice and advocacy support, enabling them to use international and regional human rights mechanisms to achieve change on the ground. We play a unique role coordinating NGO strategy and action at the UN in Geneva and New York, and securing and facilitating civil society access to officials at the highest political levels. We also build alliances with progressive business enterprises to support and protect defenders. This includes facilitating the provision of free legal advice to defenders from some of the world's leading law firms, and encouraging influential companies to speak out and act in relation to attacks on defenders and civil society space.

### IN 2016 WE:

- Delivered training and advocacy support to over 200 human rights defenders in Geneva and in the field, equipping them to be even more strategic and powerful agents for change
- Facilitated face-to-face meetings between human rights defenders and high-level officials, including the UN Secretary-General, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the UN Assistant

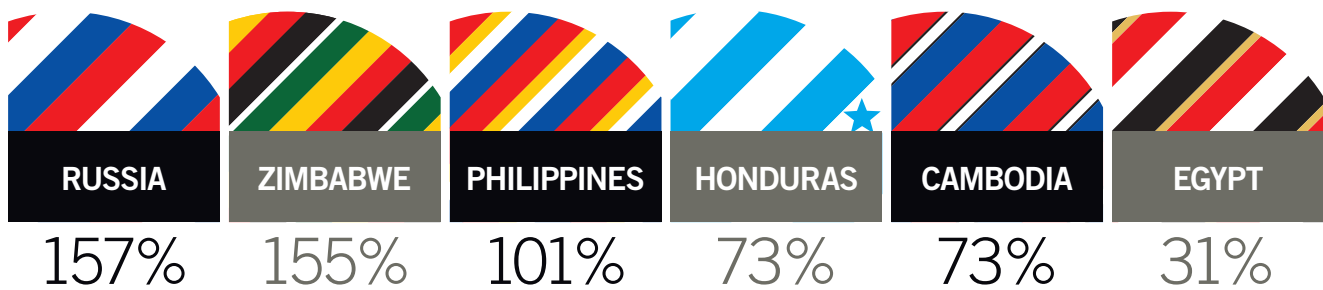
Secretary-General for Human Rights and the African Commission's Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, among many others

- Established a Fellowship programme for human rights defenders working in highly restrictive environments, and provided intensive training, professional development and advocacy opportunities to defenders from Belarus, China, Venezuela and Zimbabwe
- Provided the family members of disappeared or arbitrarily detained defenders with the opportunity to testify about both the systemic and personal impacts of those gross violations at the world's peak human rights body, the UN Human Rights Council
- Mobilised high-ranking government officials and human rights experts to speak out and intervene in relation to attacks on defenders in States including Egypt and Bahrain
- Exposed attacks, restrictions and reprisals against human rights defenders in global news outlets, including the New York Times and The Guardian
- Worked with States to secure the first ever joint statement by governments at the UN Human Rights Council regarding the deteriorating human rights situation in China and the arbitrary arrest and enforced disappearance of defenders
- Advised and supported civil society organisations to obtain accreditation and the right to participate in meetings of the UN and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights
- Collaborated with the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre to establish a powerful network of influential multinational businesses committed to acting to protect human rights defenders and resist incursions on fundamental freedoms and civic space



Increase in use of ISHR information products by human rights defenders from:

(vs 2015)



## STRENGTHENING STANDARDS AND SYSTEMS FOR THE PROTECTION OF DEFENDERS

We strengthen international and regional standards on the protection of defenders. Our policy research and advocacy, our authoritative papers and briefs, our strategic legal advocacy, and our access to high-level decision-makers and diplomats within the UN and regional systems, help make those systems, and the resolutions and recommendations they produce, more effective and protective for defenders and the victims they represent.

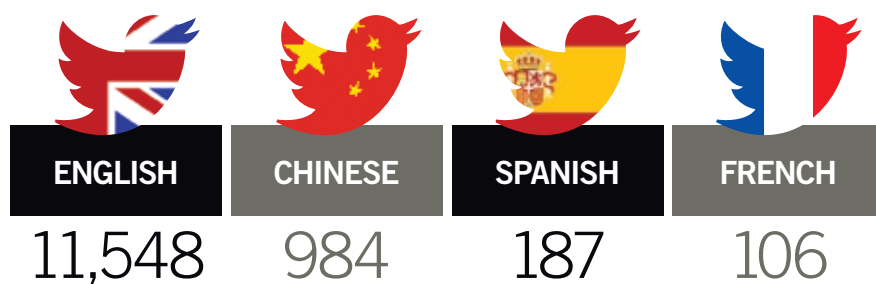
### IN 2016 WE:

- Secured the appointment of a high-level UN official to combat acts of intimidation and reprisals against those who cooperate with the UN and pursue accountability for such acts
- Coordinated and collaborated with over 800 civil society partners to ensure the appointment and resourcing of a new UN Independent Expert on the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons
- Significantly influenced the development and adoption of the first ever corporate policy on human rights defenders by a multinational company, adidas
- Lobbied and advocated successfully for the adoption of groundbreaking new standards on the protection of defenders of economic, social and cultural rights by both the UN Human Rights Council and the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- Spearheaded the development and adoption of the first ever resolution on the situation and protection



- of women human rights defenders at the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights
- Led a major civil society coalition to develop a comprehensive blueprint to strengthen the Human Rights Council and make it more accessible, effective and protective, with Ireland leading a cross-regional group of 32 States in pledging to implement a key ISHR proposal to strengthen the Council's preventative capacity and response to urgent situations of concern
- Defeated attempts at the General Assembly to stifle debate on country situations following an ISHR-coordinated NGO campaign to safeguard freedom of expression and prevent censorship at the UN
- Mobilised a coalition of more than 230 civil society organisations from almost 50 countries to advocate for reform of UN processes for NGO accreditation; delivered an unprecedented joint statement to the UN Committee on NGOs in this regard
- Filed groundbreaking legal proceedings asking the UN Human Rights Committee to rule that the Maldives violated international law by restricting defenders from submitting information to the UN
- Convened high-level events in Geneva and New York to enable States seeking membership of the Human Rights Council to present their candidacies and be scrutinised on their pledges by other States, journalists and civil society, with a majority of candidate States participating in this important exercise in transparency and accountability

## Twitter followers



## ADVOCATING FOR IMPLEMENTATION


We work 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 position us to advise on and support national implementation.

### IN 2016 WE:

- Spearheaded the development of an influential Model National Law on Human Rights Defenders, endorsed by 28 of the world's leading human rights lawyers and experts and already used as a template to guide the development of defender laws in a host of countries
- Advised and supported civil society partners and governments in a range of countries on the legal recognition and protection of defenders, including Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Niger and Sierra Leone
- Collaborated with over a dozen national human rights organisations to prepare a practical handbook of strategies and tactics on how to safeguard civil society space and democratic freedoms
- With extensive pro bono support from leading global law firm Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer, developed authoritative legal guidance for government officials and civil society in Côte d'Ivoire as to the steps and measures required to give effect to legislative provisions on the protection of women human rights defenders
- Partnered with the International Corporate Accountability Roundtable to publish comprehensive guidance for States on how to protect civil society through National Action Plans on Business and Human Rights
- Worked with civil society partners in States including Angola, Guatemala, Honduras, Kazakhstan and the Philippines to obtain concrete recommendations from UN Treaty Bodies on the protection of human rights defenders; these recommendations are now being used to push for legislative and policy change at the national level
- Published a practical guide for civil society on strategies to ensure effective national implementation of a landmark UN General Assembly resolution on the protection of women human rights defenders





A photograph of three people in a meeting. In the foreground, a woman wearing a black hijab and a dark blue blazer is looking towards the right. Behind her, a man with glasses and a beard, wearing a dark suit and a pink shirt, is also looking to the right. In the background, a woman with dark hair, wearing a dark blazer and a patterned scarf, is looking towards the camera. The background is a warm, brown wall.

*'The struggle for human rights is at the heart a struggle to expand the horizons of the possible, to bring out the best of our selves and to unleash the best of our societies. Human rights inspire. Human rights transform. Human rights drive progress and change the course of history. I am determined to raise the profile of human rights and to speak out whenever necessary. And I will do my utmost to defend the defenders.'*

ANTÓNIO GUTERRES, SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Visitors to [www.ishr.ch](http://www.ishr.ch)

159,498

(up 21% on 2015)

Facebook followers

9,998





# Agents of change

Empowering defenders  
to achieve impact

## WHAT'S AT STAKE

- The work of human rights defenders is indispensable to the promotion and protection of human rights, the rule of law, good governance, and sustainable and inclusive development.
- Despite this, the operating environment for defenders in many jurisdictions is dangerous and deteriorating. Attacks, restrictions and reprisals against defenders, perpetrated by both State and non-State actors with frequent impunity, persist in countries in all regions of the world.
- As civil society space closes and risks rise at the national level, many defenders are turning to international and regional human rights mechanisms to expose violations, promote accountability and build pressure for change on the ground.
- International and regional mechanisms can also provide defenders and victims with a powerful platform to tell their story and to exercise the right to freedom of expression and dissent denied at home.
- International and regional human rights mechanisms can be difficult to access and complex to navigate. Defenders can also face acts of intimidation or reprisal – from defamation, to disappearance and even to death – to prevent or punish them for using such platforms to tell their story.

*‘The experience was inspiring, critical, practical and dynamic  
– really one of the best trainings I have been to.’*

2016 HRDAP PARTICIPANT

*'I'm really grateful for the opportunity to participate in the great training. It expanded my knowledge of the mechanisms, how work should be approached at the international level, and provided networking and collaboration opportunities for the future.'*

2016 HRDAP PARTICIPANT

**100% 96% 56%**

**'SATISFIED' or 'VERY SATISFIED'**  
with ISHR's training and advocacy support

**at least PARTIALLY**  
achieved their key advocacy and learning objectives

**FULLY ACHIEVED**  
their key advocacy and learning objectives

## IN FOCUS

### HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER ADVOCACY PROGRAMME

■ In 2016, ISHR provided expert training and advocacy support to over 200 human rights defenders in Geneva, New York and in the field, empowering and equipping them to be more strategic and effective in using international and regional human rights mechanisms to expose injustice and push for change.

ISHR's Human Rights Defender Advocacy Programme (HRDAP), an intensive two and a half week course, is a centrepiece of these efforts. Combining training, advocacy support, meetings with high-level diplomats and UN officials, and even the opportunity to testify at the UN Human Rights Council, the 2016 HRDAP was attended by 18 defenders carefully selected from a pool of over 200 applicants. With a focus on defenders most at risk, participants worked predominantly in the fields of women's rights, LGBTI rights, land and environment rights, and corporate accountability. They came from countries including Brazil, Burundi, Honduras, India, Kenya, Mexico, Namibia, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines and Zimbabwe.

More than just a training programme, HRDAP provides grassroots defenders with the opportunity to work with ISHR's expert staff to identify, pursue and achieve key advocacy objectives. It also provides an outstanding networking opportunity, enabling defenders from diverse countries working on diverse issues to jointly strategise and to form networks of enduring solidarity and support.

Crucially, we know the programme works. In 2016, 100 per cent of participants reported that they were satisfied or very satisfied with HRDAP, while over 90 per cent reported fully or substantially achieving their key advocacy and learning objectives.

We also know that the programme helps enable and empower defenders to influence decision makers and achieve systemic reform at the international and national levels. In 2016, the programme enabled

- corporate accountability activist Alexandra Montgomery to provide first hand testimony to state representatives and experts about the violence faced by land rights defenders in Brazil
- Tehmina Zafar to sound the alarm in the UN Human Rights Council about proposed laws which could dramatically restrict the operation and independence of NGOs in Pakistan
- Karen Mejía to inform a UN expert body about the need to defend women's rights activists and decriminalise abortion in Honduras.
- several participants to contribute substantially to the historic campaign to appoint the first ever UN expert on LGBTI rights

Other participants from recent years have helped to secure the legal recognition of women human rights defenders in Côte d'Ivoire, advance legal protection of the rights of LGBTI persons in Australia, establish high-level UN positions to combat reprisals and tackle discrimination, and strengthen international law for those working to promote economic, social and cultural rights.

During the programme, the participants interacted with at least:

**SPECIAL PROCEDURES MANDATE HOLDERS**

+ attended Annual SP Meeting

**MISSION DIPLOMATS**

**NGO STAFF MEMBERS**

**OHCHR STAFF**

+ other UN Staff Members



## IN FOCUS

### GIVING A VOICE TO VICTIMS AND THEIR REPRESENTATIVES AT THE UN

**'It is important that the UN listen to the voices of those of us who are being attacked and killed for defending human rights.'**

Francisco Javier, member of the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH), where at least 33 human rights defenders were killed in 2016



■ The provision of first-hand evidence and testimony to the UN by victims, survivors and their representatives is invaluable. Such evidence can help expose violations, identify perpetrators, move the hearts and minds of powerful decision-makers, and empower those who are able to tell their stories from the elevated platform of bodies such as the Human

Rights Council. In some cases, giving testimony at the UN can also provide defenders with a form of protective publicity. 'As human rights defenders, the role of international human rights organisations and mechanisms is fundamental for us. This is what has helped keep many defenders alive,' says Donald Hernández, a lawyer from Honduras, who works for the rights of indigenous peoples in a country where corporate interests frequently trump respect for human rights and defenders face fearsome risks.

In 2016, ISHR supported a diverse range of defenders, together with the family members and associates of defenders who have been arbitrarily detained or disappeared, to deliver powerful personal statements at the Human Rights Council in Geneva.

One of these was Angela Gui, daughter of disappeared Hong Kong bookseller and free expression advocate Gui Minhai. Addressing the Council as a representative of ISHR on 19 September 2016, Angela told delegates how her father was abducted from Thailand and taken into Chinese custody in October 2015. 'He paid with his freedom for his work as a publisher, and defender of free expression,' she said. In the intervening year, Angela has been denied regular contact with her father, last seeing him in January 2016 when he was paraded on Chinese state-owned television and forced to make a confession. 'My father's case is emblematic of a broader crackdown on dissent and human rights defenders. I am here to ask the Council to make sure that my father's case, and the situation of the growing number of unlawfully detained dissidents in China, stays a priority in its work,' Angela said.

Renowned Chinese human rights lawyer Gao Zhisheng is one of those dissidents. In 2016, ISHR supported his daughter, Grace Geng, to travel to Geneva to discuss his case with UN experts and high-ranking diplomatic officials and to mobilise them to take action.

Activism by family members like Angela and Grace, or the spouses of detained Chinese lawyers, complements the bravery of grassroots defenders in the country and makes these family members human rights defenders themselves. This groundswell, combined with diplomatic briefings and strategic advocacy by organisations such as ISHR, led to a group of 12 influential States delivering the first ever joint statement at the Human Rights Council on the deteriorating human rights situation in China.

'We are concerned about China's deteriorating human rights record, notably the arrests and ongoing detention of rights activists, civil society leaders, and lawyers,' the statement said. 'We call upon China to uphold its laws and its international commitments, and we support the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights' call to release all rights activists, civil society leaders, and lawyers detained for peacefully exercising their freedom of expression or for lawfully practicing their profession.'



*'During HRDAP, I met very brave defenders with whom I developed professional relationships. Sharing experience and expertise can strengthen our work in pursuit of respect for human rights.'*

IVETTE GONZALEZ, STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT  
ASSOCIATE FOR PODER, MEXICO



## FROM DAUGHTER TO DEFENDER

GRACE GENG, DAUGHTER OF  
RENOWNED CHINESE HUMAN RIGHTS  
LAWYER GAO ZHISHENG



In the early 1990s, an initiative led by Deng Xiaoping had a goal to train 150,000 new lawyers to help China modernise. My father was one of them.

■ He worked on many cases, but over time he found that the people coming to him for help often faced similar problems. He developed a reputation for being willing to represent dissidents and members of China's religious minorities.

Gradually, he became known as a 'rights defence' lawyer. This is dangerous work in China.

Despite being named 'one of the country's 10 best lawyers' by China's Ministry of Justice in 2001, my father's willingness to speak out against injustice soon upset the authorities. Eventually they arrested him.

In prison he was beaten and tortured with electricity. He was left naked, starved and urinated on.

He was locked in solitary confinement for three years. Three years without any personal contact. When he got out, he had almost lost the ability to walk and talk.

It wasn't just my father who felt the wrath of the Chinese authorities.

When he was imprisoned for the last time, I had just started high school. It was a horrible time for me and my mother.

Undercover police officers followed me to school. They beat me. They told the other students that my father was a traitor and they were not to speak to me.

This was an extremely hard time for me and I tried taking my own life on more than one occasion.

Thankfully my mother decided we couldn't continue to live like that. We fled, first to Thailand and then on to America.

In 2014, my father was released from prison, but his situation is still dire. He is effectively under house arrest in his small village – under constant supervision and unable to be in touch with his old colleagues, or to continue his work.

The mistreatment at the hands of the Chinese Government has taken its toll on my father. Being held in horrible conditions and fed only a piece of cabbage and bread each day had a terrible impact on his health. His teeth are all falling out, as is his hair. He needs to see a doctor and a dentist, but they won't allow it.

For two years we've pleaded with the Government to let him see a doctor; this is a basic human right. But for two years we've been told by the authorities, 'We are working on it'. How long does the Government need to work on it? How long does it take to let him visit a doctor?

I believe the Chinese Government is still afraid of my father because truth is power. They don't want him in a position where he can speak to other people about his ideas.

I'm proud to say that his ordeal has not broken his spirit. My father continues to write and the English version of his latest book will be published in America in early 2017.

The book has three parts; it looks at his life, his time in prison and then importantly it looks forward and discusses his strong faith and his vision for how China will change and how it could be better.

As for me, I'm focusing on two things; my study and trying to raise awareness of my father's situation.

The first semester of my senior year of college has just began, and I've returned from Geneva where I visited the International Service for Human Rights so that I could meet with various United Nations officials.

I'm glad to have the chance to live and study in America, but obviously I can't just leave my father to such a horrible fate. And so, I find myself in a position of picking up the mantle and becoming a human rights defender like my father.

I want to urge the Human Rights Council to do all it can to encourage the Government of China to do the right thing and let my father receive professional, independent medical treatment.

As I said, truth is power, and I will continue to say it.



# Model Law

Groundbreaking new tool  
to protect defenders

## WHAT'S AT STAKE

- International human rights experts and grassroots activists alike have identified that the specific recognition of human rights defenders in national law is a crucial element contributing to their protection and a safe and enabling environment for their work on the ground.
- In recent years, a wide range of UN and regional experts and mechanisms have called on States to implement laws and establish mechanisms that explicitly guarantee the rights reaffirmed in the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. They have also called on States to review and amend laws and policies which restrict, stigmatise or criminalise the work of defenders.
- Despite this, only a few States have incorporated the rights reaffirmed in the Declaration comprehensively into national law, while many States continue to implement legislation restricting the exercise of fundamental rights and freedoms.

*'The effort undertaken by ISHR over the past years to elaborate this Model Law will contribute to advancing the right to protect human rights worldwide and to do it without fear.'*

MAURICIO ANGEL, HEAD OF POLICY,  
RESEARCH AND TRAINING WITH  
PROTECTION INTERNATIONAL



## IN FOCUS

### MODEL NATIONAL LAW FOR THE RECOGNITION AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

■ Developed in consultation with over 500 defenders from every region, and settled and adopted by 28 of the world's leading human rights experts and jurists, ISHR's Model National Law was launched in 2016 and provides authoritative guidance to States on how to implement the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders at the national level. It also provides an influential new tool for civil society to promote, evaluate and report on implementation.

#### A POWERFUL AND IMPORTANT NEW TOOL

'The Model Law will be a powerful and important new tool in the hands of both human rights defenders and governments,' says UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, Michel Forst, one of the experts endorsing the Law.

Fellow expert, Kamala Chandrakirana of the UN Working Group on Discrimination against Women in Law and in Practice, says, 'The Model Law will trigger and open the space for discussion as to how to effectively protect human rights defenders.'

'We urge all States to legislate and implement this Model Law,' adds Guadalupe Marengo, Head of the Global Human Rights Defenders Team with Amnesty International.





## HIGH COMMISSIONER SAYS LEGAL RECOGNITION OF DEFENDERS AN INDISPENSABLE ELEMENT OF THEIR PROTECTION

The launch of the Model Law coincided with the launch of a June 2016 report by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on the key elements of a safe and enabling environment for defenders and other civil society actors. Foremost among the elements identified in the report is ensuring a 'supportive legal framework and effective access to justice'.

In the report, the High Commissioner concludes that the legal recognition of the rights to freedom of opinion, expression, peaceful assembly, association and participation in public affairs is essential to the protection, exercise and realisation of all other human rights. Accordingly, the High Commissioner says, States should enact specific laws on the protection of human rights defenders, 'review and repeal or amend all legal provisions that impede the free and independent work of civil society actors' and 'ensure that all legislation affecting their ability to work complies with relevant international human rights laws and standards and with the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders'.

## MODEL LAW COMPREHENSIVE BUT ADAPTABLE; WILL ASSIST STATES TO COMPLY WITH INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS

The Model Law is already being used by both civil society actors and government officials in a range of States to implement these important recommendations. Containing detailed and precise legal provisions, each of which is accompanied by a practical commentary, the Model Law is drafted in such a way as to be adaptable to different national legal contexts, systems and traditions.

ISHR is working intensively with national and regional partners towards the enactment and effective implementation of the Model Law in a number of jurisdictions.



**@Rumbi\_Masango**

'Government of #BurkinaFaso welcomes @ISHRglobal Model Law and says it is being used by state to draft HRD law #ACHPR59'

*'The Model Law on the Recognition and Protection of Human Rights Defenders is comprehensive and substantive. I am confident that it will provide a valuable tool for human rights defenders in their domestic jurisdictions.'*

LEADING INDIAN  
HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYER  
VRINDA GROVER



**@cvoule**

'Representatives of civil society and national human rights institution must be part of protection committee monitoring the implementation of Cote d'Ivoire HRD law #ACHPR59'



## BURKINA FASO

Throughout 2016 ISHR worked closely with our partner in Burkina Faso, the Ligue pour la Défense de la Justice et de la Liberté (LIDEJEL), together with experts including the African Commission Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, Reine Alapini-Gansou, to provide extensive expert inputs on a proposed national law on the protection of human rights defenders. Aided by former ISHR trainee and government minister Julie Nigna-Somda, those inputs are now being incorporated in a revised draft produced by the Ministry of Justice for consideration and adoption by the Council of Ministers.

## CÔTE D'IVOIRE

In June 2014, Côte d'Ivoire became the first State in Africa to enact a specific national law on human rights defenders. The law has already been credited by key partners – including local civil society and diplomatic missions in the country – with a significant decline in attacks against defenders and stronger public and political support for their work. Challenges remain, however. Having worked at the national, regional and international levels with our partners, the Coalition Ivoirienne des Défenseurs des droits humains (CIDDH) and the West Africa Human Rights Defenders Network (WAHRDN), to secure the legislation,

*'Sierra Leone has the opportunity to be a leader in the protection of human rights defenders in Africa and across the Anglophone world. Legislative action at the national level would build on the country's leadership at the international level, where it partners with countries such as Ireland and Tunisia to lead an important UN resolution on the protection of civil society space.'*

ISHR DIRECTOR PHIL LYNCH IN AN INTERVIEW WITH EYV TELEVISION IN SIERRA LEONE

ISHR is now working to ensure that it is effectively implemented. This has included providing expert legal advice to government on the specific steps and measures to support women human rights defenders, together with intensive work with the national human rights institution towards the establishment of an adequately resourced and mandated protection mechanism.

## MALI

Following a period of intensive consultation and drafting, culminating in a two-day workshop co-hosted by ISHR and the Coalition Malienne des Défenseurs des Droits Humains (COMADDH) in Bamako, civil society organisations finalised and presented a National Law on Human Rights Defenders to the government of Mali. Accepting the draft law on behalf of government, Mali's Minister of Justice and Human Rights, Mrs Aminata Malle Sango, said 'a Human Rights Defender Law would contribute to improving the overall environment in which defenders operate in Mali'. Significantly, the Minister pledged to bring the draft law to the country's National Assembly for debate and enactment, a commitment hailed by COMADDH Chair Mahamar El Moctar as 'an important day for Malian defenders and a significant

first step towards the legal recognition and protection of our rights'. On 4 January 2017, the draft law was officially adopted by Mali's Cabinet of Ministers, clearing the way for enactment by the National Assembly this year.

## NIGER

It is vital to the relevance, legitimacy and effectiveness of any national law on human rights defenders that it be closely informed by the situation, priorities and protection needs of defenders on the ground. Extensive civil society consultations conducted in September 2016 by ISHR together with our local partner, Collectif des Organisations de Défense des Droits de l'Homme et de la Démocratie (CODOHD), will assist to ensure that this is the case in Niger. With ISHR playing an expert advisory role, local civil society is now finalising a draft law for presentation to government.

## SIERRA LEONE

ISHR's work in Sierra Leone demonstrates the ways in which UN engagement and advocacy can contribute to national level change, particularly when it is undertaken in a coalition which combines international expertise with local know how, as is the case in the partnership between ISHR and Sierra Leone Human

Rights Defenders Network (HRDN-SL). Building on our work together in 2015 to secure UN recommendations through the Universal Periodic Review process that Sierra Leone develop and implement a human rights defender law, in 2016 ISHR partnered with HRDN-SL for a series of activities at the national level. A two-day consultation jointly hosted by the organisations in Freetown resulted in the establishment of a broad-based national civil society coalition committed to drafting and pushing for the adoption of a national law. During the same mission, meetings with the Minister for Justice, parliamentarians and the national human rights commission, together with interviews and appearances on radio and television, helped build the political case and public support for defenders and a law for their protection.

## OTHER JURISDICTIONS

ISHR also engaged in consultations and strategic discussions with civil society partners in States including Guatemala, Guinea, the Philippines, Togo, Tunisia and Uganda with a view to pushing for the development, enactment and effective implementation of human rights defender laws in those jurisdictions.





# Strange bedfellows?

## The role of business in protecting civil society space

### WHAT'S AT STAKE

- Human rights defenders and other civil society actors play a vital role in promoting and contributing to good governance, sustainable development and the rule of law. This is recognised in Sustainable Development Goal 16 and its associated indicators.
- In many cases, this work involves defenders exposing corruption, protesting environmental degradation, and demanding that the benefits of development are shared by all, including the most poor and disadvantaged.
- In an increasing number of jurisdictions, this work also involves defenders being subject to restrictions and attacks, with recent research demonstrating that those working on land and environment rights and in the field of business and human rights are most at risk of being killed. The assassinations of indigenous and environmental rights activists Berta Cáceres in Honduras and Isidro Baldenegro in Mexico are recent tragic examples of the global crackdown on human rights defenders and civic freedoms.
- While some businesses are playing a role, whether direct or indirect, in perpetrating these attacks or subjecting defenders to various forms of judicial harassment, other progressive businesses are recognising the shared values and interest of business and civil society in open democracies.





## IN FOCUS

# ENGAGING NEW AND INFLUENTIAL ALLIES TO END THE GLOBAL CRACKDOWN ON HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

■ Progressive business enterprises are increasingly recognising the shared values and interest of business and civil society in an open, enabling operating environment. This is an environment characterised by respect for the rights to freedom of expression, association, assembly, access to information, public participation, non-discrimination and the rule of law. It is in such open environments that innovation, productivity and development thrive.

Progressive business enterprises are also recognising the significant costs associated with the global crackdown on human rights defenders and civic freedoms, with the World Economic Forum's most recent Global Risks Report identifying the 'fraying of the rule of law and declining civic freedoms' as a key business risk'.

ISHR research is relied on extensively in this important report, reflecting our influence in mainstreaming the situation and protection of defenders on the business and human rights agenda at the international and national levels.

Over the last three years this has included convening high-level discussions at the UN Forum on Business and Human Rights and encouraging UN experts to strengthen their focus on business and human rights defenders. It has also included providing technical support to States to include provisions on defenders in their National Action Plans, and pushing successfully for a leading corporate human rights benchmark to include an indicator on a company's policy commitments concerning defenders.



@IneichenM

'Major global risk: restrictions on civic space undermine business and threaten sustainable development, says @wef #WEF'



*'Failures to prevent and respond to the human rights impacts of their work have thrust many global businesses into an unwanted spotlight.'*

*'They didn't need to find themselves there. Reputational damage and operational risks for a company are expensive.'*

*'Because human rights defenders—such as lawyers, trade unionists, community leaders, or NGO workers—use public advocacy as a key tool for change, businesses often make the mistake of seeing them as additional drivers of cost.'*

*'However, business should see human rights defenders as priceless allies. They are the canaries in the coalmines, pointing to when governance failures become real financial, legal, and reputational risks to business. The leadership, leverage and solidarity shown by companies who see support to civic freedoms and human right defenders as part of core business will pay long-term dividends.'*

ISHR'S SARAH BROOKS  
WRITING FOR OPEN  
DEMOCRACY, AN INDEPENDENT  
GLOBAL MEDIA PLATFORM



*'Business cannot thrive in failing societies, where tension spikes and communities bristle with grievances and mutual contempt. Strong civil societies, due process, equality and justice: these are what enable real economic empowerment.'*

UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS ZEID RA'AD AL HUSSEIN

ISHR intensified and built on this work in 2016. Recognising that business enterprises and business leaders exercise significant influence in shaping laws, policies and opinions – not just in areas of corporate and economic policy but also on social issues such as LGBTI rights – ISHR partnered with the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre to build a network of businesses committed to exercising their influence to address the restrictions and risks faced by defenders. Comprising leading multinational corporations from diverse sectors, the Business Network has the potential to be a powerful catalyst of and contributor to change. Already one member, adidas, has adopted an official corporate policy on human rights defenders, sending a strong message through its supply chains and the States in which it operates. Another member, Microsoft, has used its convening capacity to pull other corporations into the growing Network. Still other members, like Tiffany & Co, have taken the bold step of speaking out in relation to the harassment of particular human rights defenders, providing them with an additional degree of publicity and protection.

The continuance and worsening of the global crackdown on civil society and civic freedoms demonstrate that business as usual is not enough. Over the coming years ISHR will continue to work with the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre and key corporate allies to drive a powerful business response that reaps a significant return on investment for human rights.

PHOTO: JEAN-MARC FERRE







# Reprisals

Ending attacks against those who cooperate with the UN

## WHAT'S AT STAKE

- The UN relies on human rights defenders and other civil society actors to provide vital information, testimony and reports.
- In turn, many defenders rely on and use the UN human rights mechanisms to expose violations, promote accountability and build pressure for change on the ground.
- An increasing number of defenders face threats or acts of intimidation or reprisal to deter, prevent or retaliate against their engagement with the UN.
- Reprisals take many forms, including travel bans, asset freezes, defamation, surveillance, arbitrary detention, ill-treatment and torture, death threats and judicial harassment.
- Increasingly, acts of reprisal target not only defenders but also their organisations, associates, families and communities. In several cases defenders have been tarnished as 'terrorists' or 'traitors', contributing to perceptions that engagement with the UN is an act of betrayal. In some cases reprisals have led to individuals fleeing their country, in others, to death.
- Reprisals against human rights defenders in retaliation for their engagement with the UN systems constitute an attack not only on the individual, but also on the rights they defend, on the rule of law, and on the international human rights system itself.





## THE RISKS

### REPRISALS AGAINST THOSE WHO ENGAGE WITH THE UN

#### TRAVEL BANS AND ASSET FREEZES

■ The use of travel bans and passport confiscations against human rights defenders is becoming more widespread. In Bahrain, for example, leading activists such as Nabeel Rajaab, Hussain Radhi and Maytham Al-Salman have all been banned from leaving the country in order to prevent them from testifying at the UN. In Egypt, many leading defenders and organisations have had their assets frozen or been deregistered in retaliation for their human rights work, including at the international level.

#### ARBITRARY DETENTION

Human rights defenders are frequently subject to both short- and long-term detention in reprisal for their engagement with the UN. In August 2016, for example, following a meeting with a UN expert, Honduran human rights defender and ISHR trainee Karen Mejía and her colleague Gabriela Díaz were detained for questioning without charge and without access to a lawyer.

#### FORCED INTO EXILE

In June 2016, just after her release from arbitrary detention, human rights defender Zainab Al-Khawaja and her two children were forced to leave Bahrain, where she is a citizen, following threats that if she remained in the country she would face further imprisonment and separation from her children. Zainab was detained merely for exercising her right to freedom of expression and association, including through engagement with the UN.

#### JUDICIAL HARASSMENT

Judicial harassment, including through the use and abuse of laws relating to national security and counter-terrorism, has been used in a wide range of cases to prevent or punish engagement with the UN. In the Maldives, for example, members of the independent national human rights commission were charged with treason for submitting a critical report on the country to the Universal Periodic Review. In Thailand, human rights lawyer Sirikan Charoensiri was issued with a vexatious summons for sedition shortly after returning from the 33rd session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva. And in Somalia, the Secretary General of the National Union of Journalists, Omar Faruk Osman, was threatened with prosecution for 'harming relations between the government and international organisations' after he submitted a complaint about violations of freedom of association in Somalia to the International Labor Organization.

#### ILL-TREATMENT AND DEATH

More than three years on from her disappearance, arbitrary detention, ill-treatment, and ultimate death in custody, there has been no adequate or independent investigation into the fatal reprisals against Chinese human rights lawyer Cao Shunli in connection with her engagement with the Universal Periodic Review. Cao Shunli's case is emblematic of the overwhelming majority of cases of intimidation and reprisal in which there is no accountability for the perpetrator and no justice for the victim or their family. According to the UN Secretary-General, the high incidence of impunity has the effect of licensing further and worsening acts of reprisal.

#### ONLINE HARASSMENT AND THREATS

Increasingly, defenders are subject to a range of digital threats, from phishing and hacking to cyber harassment and even death threats. At the 32nd session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, a State representative from Russia made a serious online threat against Florian Irminger of the Human Rights House Foundation in retaliation for his Council advocacy. The Human Rights House Foundation is known globally for its work to support and protect defenders at risk, including in Russia. 'This serious threat targeted not only me as an individual, but also amounted to an attack on my organisation and a veiled threat against all human rights defenders working in or in relation to Russia,' Mr Irminger said.





## ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE

When detention is at an unknown location, or detainees are denied adequate access to legal counsel on spurious ‘national security’ grounds, defenders are at increased risk of torture and ill-treatment. Lawyer Jiang Tianyong has been held incommunicado by Chinese authorities since 21 November 2016, with UN experts raising concern that his disappearance and detention is, in part, a reprisal for his efforts to meet with UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty Philip Alston during his August 2016 visit to China.



## THE RESPONSE

### PRINCIPLED, PERSISTENT ADVOCACY DELIVERS RESULTS!

*‘An online threat of violence made by a State representative, albeit one hiding behind the cowardice of anonymity, is a threat not only against the targeted individual, but the very integrity of this important institution. We encourage the Russian delegation to publicly report to the Council on the steps they have taken to ensure accountability for the perpetrator, justice for the victim, and to guarantee non-repetition.’*

ISHR DIRECTOR PHIL LYNCH IN A  
STATEMENT TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS  
COUNCIL ON 14 JUNE 2016 IN RELATION TO  
ONLINE THREATS AGAINST HUMAN RIGHTS  
DEFENDER FLORIAN IRMINGER

■ In each of the emblematic cases mentioned opposite, ISHR has undertaken advocacy to pursue accountability for the perpetrator and justice and safety for the victim – from a groundbreaking complaint to the Human Rights Committee in the case of the Maldives, to media advocacy in the case of the Honduran defenders, to raising the case of Cao Shunli in person with the UN Secretary General.

The widespread and systemic nature of reprisals, however, requires a high-level systemic response. After more than three years of concerted ISHR advocacy, this response was finally forthcoming in October 2016 when then Secretary General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon, announced that Assistant Secretary General, Andrew Gilmour, would be given a special mandate to receive, consider and respond to allegations of intimidation and reprisals against human rights defenders and other civil society actors engaging with the UN.

‘These courageous individuals are often our only eyes and ears in extremely tough environments – and we owe them our best possible support,’ the Secretary-General said in announcing the high-level mandate.

ISHR’s legal counsel, Madeleine Sinclair, whose principled and persistent advocacy with States and UN experts and officials over three years was a significant factor contributing to the announcement, said, ‘This is an extremely welcome development. The ability of people or organisations to provide evidence or submit information or complaints to the UN is not a privilege. It is a fundamental right enshrined in the UN

*'I have decided, in consultation with the High Commissioner for Human Rights, to designate my new Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, Mr Andrew Gilmour, to lead our efforts within the UN system to put a stop to all intimidation and reprisals against those cooperating with the United Nations on human rights.'*

UN SECRETARY GENERAL BAN KI-MOON, SPEAKING IN GENEVA ON 3 OCTOBER 2016



@MaryamAlKhawaja

'Rare good news: Ban Ki-moon appoints high-ranking official to combat #reprisals against human rights defenders!'

Declaration on Human Rights Defenders and it must be protected'.

Omar Faruk Osman, Secretary General of the National Union of Somali Journalists whose experience of judicial harassment is outlined above, said the appointment of a high-level official with a commitment to combating reprisals will increase the political

risk and cost of perpetrating reprisals. 'I know from first-hand experience that when senior officials such as UN Special Rapporteurs speak out against the harassment of a defender, a country will think twice about continuing such harassment,' he said.

ISHR is now working closely with the Assistant Secretary General, together with his staff at the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, to ensure that the mandate is accessible to human rights defenders and effective in providing them with a measure of protection and a means to justice. In the words of Maryam Alkhawaja, ISHR Board member and the sister of Zainab Alkhawaja whose case is discussed above, 'It is imperative that the UN acts early and acts effectively in response to reprisals against defenders, ensuring that people who have already put themselves, and at times their families, at risk to cooperate with the UN can continue to do so. Reporting to the UN should never come at the price of personal freedoms.'







# Defending diversity

The struggle for LGBTI dignity and rights

## WHAT'S AT STAKE

- Violence and discrimination against gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans and intersex persons and their organisations remain widespread around the world, as does the criminalisation of advocacy for LGBTI rights.
- Over 70 countries continue to criminalise homosexuality, contributing to an environment in which violence and discrimination against those who advocate for LGBTI rights is tolerated, licensed or even condoned.
- Human rights defenders have been assaulted, arbitrarily detained and killed for their work to promote and protect the rights of LGBTI persons; the brutal assault of Nick Carter in Ukraine, arson attacks against LGBT rights NGO Labrys in the Kyrgyz Republic, the denial of registration to LGBT rights groups in Zambia, and the assassination of LGBT rights activists in Honduras are just some among many cases.
- A recognition that the systemic nature of violations and abuses against LGBTI rights defenders requires a systemic response led to an historic push to mandate a high-level UN expert to protect LGBTI persons from violence and discrimination; a push which was met in turn by an unprecedented but ultimately unsuccessful campaign to deny the universality of rights.

*'A particularly at risk group is defenders of the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons. Discrimination and attacks against them are increasing at an alarming rate, partly as a result of the rise of religious fundamentalism around the world'.*

MICHEL FORST, UN SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON  
HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS



## IN FOCUS

### PROGRESS IN THE STRUGGLE FOR EQUALITY, NO MATTER WHO YOU ARE OR WHO YOU LOVE



■ In 2011, when the Human Rights Council tentatively adopted the first ever UN resolution condemning violence and discrimination against LGBTI persons, few would have dared hope that just five years later the UN Secretary General would spearhead a global campaign known as ‘Free and Equal’, while the Council itself would recognise the systemic nature of the problem and deliver a systemic response.

This hope was realised when former ISHR Board member Vitit Muntarbhorn was appointed as the first ever UN expert on sexual orientation and gender identity in June 2016.

*‘The callous mass murder of 49 people in a gay bar in Orlando on the eve of the vote at the Human Rights Council in Geneva, coming just weeks after a leading LGBTI rights defender was hacked to death in Bangladesh, tragically demonstrated that no country is immune from violence targeting LGBTI persons and that all countries could benefit from the establishment of a mandate.’*

POOJA PATEL, ISHR’S HEAD OF  
LGBTI RIGHTS ADVOCACY



#### SO HOW DID IT HAPPEN?

Like most human rights struggles, the campaign to mandate a high-level UN expert to protect LGBTI rights faced concerted opposition from those whose prejudice, power and privilege such a

position challenges. These negative forces marshalled to propose hostile amendments and call a series of votes against the resolution establishing a UN Independent Expert. The first attacks came at the Human Rights Council in June. Unsuccessful there, negative forces regrouped to mount a campaign to discontinue the mandate at the Third Committee and the Plenary of the UN General Assembly in November and December. Defeated again, a last ditch attempt was made on the eve of the new year to starve the mandate of resources through the General Assembly’s Fifth Committee.

That the resolution was adopted, the mandate established and the resources allocated is a testament to the power of a positive vision, the principled leadership of a group of progressive Latin American States, and careful documentation of LGBTI rights violations by Special Rapporteurs and the UN High Commissioner



**@Pooja\_ISHR**  
‘Resolute action required to stop violence and discrimination not only against #LGBTI community but also HRDs working with them’  
#ILGA2016BKK’

for Human Rights. The victory owes most, however, to the bravery and tenacity of LGBTI rights activists worldwide and the unprecedented mobilisation of more than 870 grassroots non-governmental organisations from 157 countries from every region of the world. ISHR and our close partners OutRight Action International, ILGA and

ARC International played key roles in this mobilisation and coordination of the landmark campaign in Geneva and New York. It was our privilege to stand with and support LGBTI rights defenders in this way.

Of course, the mere appointment of an expert is not a panacea to violence and discrimination, but as ISHR’s Pooja Patel told Associated Press immediately after the successful vote, ‘The UN expert will be able to identify violence and structural discrimination and work with LGBTI people and governments around the world to develop strategies and legal standards to help ensure that all people can enjoy their fundamental human rights, no matter who they are or who they love’.





*'ISHR is a strong, smart, respectful, respected and valued partner of ours and LGBTI folk the world over. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.'*

ANDRÉ DU PLESSIS, UN PROGRAMME AND ADVOCACY MANAGER, THE INTERNATIONAL LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANS AND INTERSEX ASSOCIATION (ILGA)

## IN MEMORIAM

### JACOBUS WITBOOI – A THOUGHTFUL, PASSIONATE AND DEDICATED HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER

■ The ISHR team was deeply saddened by the death of Jacobus Witbooi from malaria in November 2016. He was an outstanding participant in ISHR's Human Rights Defender Advocacy Programme and a key contributor to the successful campaign for the appointment of a UN expert on LGBTI rights.

Jacobus was a human rights defender from Namibia who proudly defended and promoted the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex people.

Jacobus' passion for human rights developed early. At school he campaigned for education on safe sex, and pushed for better sexual health information and advice for the student population. He remembers coming out at a time in Namibia when it was unsafe, denied and denounced by all corners of the community. 'I didn't feel welcome in my own country, and was told I should leave,' he told ISHR.

Later in life, Jacobus' human rights advocacy took him to Pan Africa ILGA, a membership-based network for activists working to advance sexual orientation and gender identity and expression rights. There he supported grassroots LGBTI defenders continent-wide, helping develop their skills and confidence to engage with the UN human rights mechanisms and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights to push for change on the ground.

We last saw Jacobus when he participated in our Human Rights Defenders Advocacy Programme in June in Geneva, where he brought all his great warmth, intelligence, energy and style. We know the other HRDAP 2016 participants are devastated by

*'All too often, the people who seek to defend or advance LGBT rights are thrust into the firing line. Addressing the violent repression against LGBT defenders conducting their human rights work is central to addressing violence and discrimination against LGBT people across the world.'*

THE LATE JACOBUS WITBOOI, HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER AND HRDAP 2016 PARTICIPANT



[@Helen\\_ISHR](#)

'Our hearts are heavy today as we think of Jacobus Witbooi and @PanAfricanLGA. We have all lost a wonderful friend, colleague and defender.' – 25 November 2016

Jacobus' death and share in our condolences.

During his time in Geneva, Jacobus was heavily involved in advocating and lobbying for a strong resolution on sexual orientation and gender identity during the 32nd session of the Human Rights Council. Like us all, he was delighted that his

first hands-on experience of advocacy at the Council helped to secure an historic win: the creation of the UN's first independent expert dedicated to addressing violence and discrimination against LGBTI persons and defenders.

This last victory was one of many, and should have been one of many more yet to come.

Jacobus, we miss you.

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



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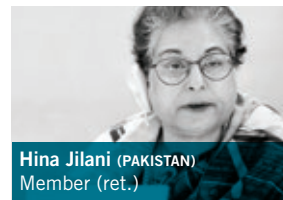
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**Rumbidzai Masango**  
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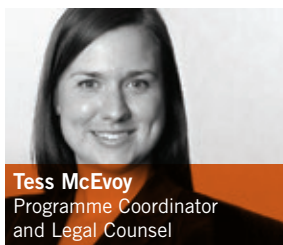
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New York Office Director  
and Legal Counsel



**Tom Clarke**  
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Programme Coordinator  
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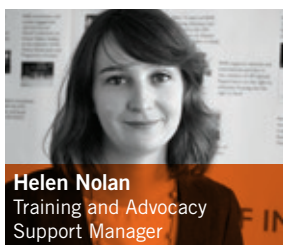
**Fabiana Pardi**  
Human Rights Law Fellow  
(New York)



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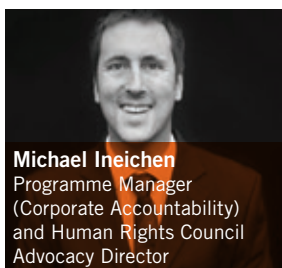
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**Pooja Patel**  
Programme Manager  
(Women's Rights and  
LGBTI Rights)



## INTERNS

Tania Morris Diaz  
Amanda Lilliefeldt  
Sam Dipnall  
Tamara Kloos  
Vinay Prakash  
Raman Tkachou  
Chalwyn Caulker  
Anamta Afsar  
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Vera Piovesan  
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We also thank Chris Duckett, Ben Leather and Olivia Starrenburg, who left ISHR in 2016 after extended periods of outstanding service. Our thanks further go to our team of talented interns for their essential contributions to the work of ISHR in 2016.

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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 US under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, your gift to ISHR may be tax deductible.

**Please support human rights defenders and invest in ISHR.**



[@AngelaMudukuti](https://twitter.com/AngelaMudukuti)

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Professor Hilary Charlesworth, Jill Donnelly, Christopher Duckett, Hon Elizabeth Evatt AC, Professor Hurst Hannum, Gregor Henneka, Emily Howie, Barbara Ineichen, Michael and Sarah Ineichen, Professor Sarah Joseph, Yakushiji Kimio, David and Judith Lynch, Paul McEvoy, Egbert Myjer, Juliette and Vincent Ploton, Professor Michael H Posner, Julie de Rivero, Johannes Frank Rudolf Ruehl, Edward Santow, Benjamin Schokman, John Shawley, Lauri Tanner

### UP TO \$100

Rachel Ball, Ashley Bleeker, Anna Brown, Tom Clarke, Antony Crockett, Christine Do Phan, Lynette Garrick, Catherine Godin, Priya Gopalan, Toni Hynes, Florian Irminger, Yoni Ish-Hurwitz, Rita Kaali, Essam Koshak, Hugh de Kretser, Stephen Marks, Stefan Rösch, Peter Splinter, Mona Valladares, Jean-Daniel Vigny, Friedhelm Weinberg, Simone Wüscher-Ineichen

During 2016, ISHR worked with some of the world's leading law firms and chambers on a pro bono basis, enabling us to leverage substantial legal expertise and resources.

Allens  
 Ashurst  
 DLA Piper  
 Doughty Street Chambers  
 Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer

2016  
**750,000**  
 USD

Value of pro bono work undertaken for ISHR by leading law firms and chambers.

*'As someone who has participated in and benefited immensely from ISHR's intensive training programmes, I know how effective the ISHR team is at equipping human rights defenders with the knowledge, tools and networks to combat injustice and deliver systemic change.*

*I've witnessed and worked to make rights a reality for people living in extremely vulnerable conditions. People like Mrs Kim, who was detained in a prison camp in North Korea for 30 years, or Mrs Consuelo and her daughter, Antonia, who I met crossing the border from Mexico to the US to escape violence. Through their eyes I have seen the powerful ways in which national, regional and international human rights laws and systems can contribute to concrete change. With its expertise and partners all around the world, ISHR delivers that change. I urge you to get behind ISHR with a donation which – big or small – will directly support human rights defenders.'*

LUCIA NADER, ISHR BOARD CHAIR  
 AND 2004 ISHR TRAINEE

# Financial Statements

This is an extract of ISHR's audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2016.

For a complete version, please contact Vincent Ploton at [v.ploton@ishr.ch](mailto:v.ploton@ishr.ch)

## PROFIT AND LOSS STATEMENT FOR YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2016

|                                           | 2016<br>CHF      | 2015<br>CHF      |
|-------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| <b>INCOME</b>                             |                  |                  |
| Revenue – Core                            |                  |                  |
| Governmental Agencies                     | 649 249          | 629 286          |
| Trusts and Foundations                    | 148 181          | 314 226          |
| Individual Donors                         | 46 262           | 37 152           |
| Other Revenue                             | 128 887          | 177 343          |
| <b>Total Core Grants</b>                  | <b>972 579</b>   | <b>1 158 006</b> |
| Revenue – Earmarked                       |                  |                  |
| Governmental Agencies                     | 899 546          | 870 788          |
| Trusts and Foundations                    | 373 383          | 345 336          |
| <b>Total Earmarked Grants</b>             | <b>1 272 929</b> | <b>1 216 124</b> |
| <b>TOTAL INCOME</b>                       | <b>2 245 508</b> | <b>2 374 130</b> |
| <b>COSTS</b>                              |                  |                  |
| Personnel and Related Costs               | 1 508 323        | 1 235 741        |
| Programme Costs                           | 439 592          | 572 653          |
| Operating, Administrative & Finance Costs | 396 419          | 504 606          |
| Governance and Strategy Costs             | 38 625           | 24 350           |
| <b>TOTAL COSTS</b>                        | <b>2 382 959</b> | <b>2 337 350</b> |
| <b>INCOME (DEFICIT) FOR THE YEAR</b>      | <b>(137 452)</b> | <b>36 780</b>    |

## BALANCE SHEET AT 31 DECEMBER 2016

|                                       | 2016<br>CHF    | 2015<br>CHF    |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| <b>ASSETS</b>                         |                |                |
| Cash and Cash Equivalents             | 269 612        | 537 972        |
| Debtors                               | 42 001         | 59 835         |
| Withholding Tax                       | –              | –              |
| Deferred Expenses                     | –              | –              |
| Grants Receivable – Government        | 184 524        | 51 062         |
| Grants Receivable – Non-government    | 444 113        | 17 258         |
| <b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>                   | <b>940 250</b> | <b>666 128</b> |
| <b>LIABILITIES AND RESERVES</b>       |                |                |
| Liabilities                           |                |                |
| Current Liabilities                   | 51 008         | 17 722         |
| Provisions                            | 5 000          | 5 500          |
| Deferred Grants                       | 643 249        | 264 461        |
| <b>Total Liabilities</b>              | <b>699 256</b> | <b>287 682</b> |
| Reserves                              |                |                |
| Reserve Funds                         | 378 446        | 341 666        |
| Income (Deficit) for the Year         | (137 452)      | 36 780         |
| <b>Total Reserves</b>                 | <b>240 994</b> | <b>378 446</b> |
| <b>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND RESERVES</b> | <b>940 250</b> | <b>666 128</b> |



## Income by Source

Total CHF 2,245,508

Individual donors | 2%

Government (core) | 29%

Government (earmarked) | 40%

Trusts and Foundations (core) | 6.5%

Trusts and Foundations (earmarked) | 16.5%

Other revenue | 5.5%

## Expenditure by Category

Total CHF 2,382,959

30% | Empowering human rights defenders

25% | Strengthening human rights standards and systems

27% | Supporting national implementation

2% | Strategy and governance

16% | Operations, administration,  
finance and fundraising

# What's next?

*An ambitious strategy for transformative change*

In these challenging times, human rights defenders need a principled and collaborative organisation to stand with them. An organisation that is strong and solid but that is also dynamic and innovative, capable of responding to new and evolving opportunities and threats.

ISHR's Strategic Framework for 2017-2020 will ensure that we are just such an organisation, helping to build defenders' capacity, strengthen their protection, and amplify their impact.

Informed by face-to-face consultations with more than 700 activists and advocates from around the world, the strategy builds on over 30 years of ISHR experience in empowering defenders to use international and regional human rights systems to achieve national-level change. It is a bold and ambitious strategy, aiming for transformative change. Here's a selection of just some of the results we expect to deliver by 2020 with your strong support.



## EMPOWERING HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Our work will focus on defenders who are most at risk, including: defenders working in highly restrictive environments; women human rights defenders; LGBTI rights defenders; defenders working to ensure corporate accountability and promote sustainable development; and migrant and refugee rights defenders. We will ensure that these defenders are better networked and trained and more strategic and effective in using international and regional human rights mechanisms to push for change on the ground.

### TO ACHIEVE THIS WE WILL:

- provide defenders with access to a sophisticated digital training and tactical platform to build their capacity to use international and regional mechanisms and to develop and pursue advocacy strategies with ISHR's expert, individualised input
- coordinate NGO action at the UN in Geneva and New York, and secure civil society access to officials at the highest political levels, including the UN Secretary General, the High Commissioner, Ministers and Ambassadors
- facilitate access to pro bono legal support from the world's leading law firms, enabling defenders to submit complaints and communications to international and regional mechanisms to pursue justice and accountability for restrictions and violations against them
- continue to innovate and deliver our flagship Human Rights Defender Advocacy Programme, consistently ranked by participants as 'exceptional' and empowering a substantial majority of defenders to achieve their advocacy and learning objectives

## STRENGTHENING STANDARDS AND SYSTEMS ON THE PROTECTION OF DEFENDERS

Our work will ensure that international and regional standards are strengthened, international and regional mechanisms are more accessible and effective, and that international business enterprises are more supportive of defenders.

### TO ACHIEVE THIS WE WILL:

- advocate and litigate for strong, substantive resolutions, recommendations and decisions which enhance the recognition and protection of defenders and pay particular attention to the needs of groups of defenders which are most at risk or exposed
- drive reform of the process for NGO accreditation to the UN, ensuring that it is undertaken applying principles of transparency, non-discrimination, due process and respect for the rights to freedom of association and expression
- work closely with the UN's recently appointed high-level official on reprisals, together with reprisals focal points within other UN and regional human rights mechanisms, to ensure they adopt a robust and effective victim-oriented policy, leading to enhanced transparency, investigation, follow up and accountability in cases of reprisals
- build alliances with progressive business enterprises and engage with new mechanisms – like the World Economic Forum – to leverage the substantial resources and influence of business to advance the protection of human rights defenders

## ADVOCATING FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Our work in collaboration with local civil society partners will strengthen the recognition and protection of human rights defenders in law, policy and practice at the national level

### TO ACHIEVE THIS WE WILL:

- secure the adoption of national human rights defender laws, developed in close consultation with national civil society to ensure that they are effective in their operation
- conduct strategic advocacy and litigation to ensure that the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders is expounded and strengthened, and national law developed and interpreted in conformity with the Declaration
- spearhead the establishment of a Global Network of National Human Rights Defender Focal Points – senior-level State officials responsible for promoting implementation of the Declaration and other relevant standards at the national level and for promoting international cooperation and sharing lessons learned through a Global Network
- collaborate with civil society and government officials to develop National Action Plans on Business and Human Rights with concrete and measurable commitments to protect defenders



*‘What the UN human rights system does for victims of human rights violations is provide them with a space in which they can be heard; enabling human rights violations against marginalised people to be incorporated into the discourse of international institutions. We want to use international institutions as a platform to counter the narratives used by the Government to slander and delegitimise those who struggle for change and transformation.’*

DR ALLO AWOL, HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER FROM ETHIOPIA





## BECOME AN ISHR SUPPORTER IN 2017

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**or contact us:**

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**GENEVA OFFICE**

Rue de Varembe 1, 5th floor

P.O. Box 16

CH-1211 Geneva 20 CIC

Switzerland

**NEW YORK OFFICE**

777 UN Plaza, 6th floor

New York, NY 10017

USA

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