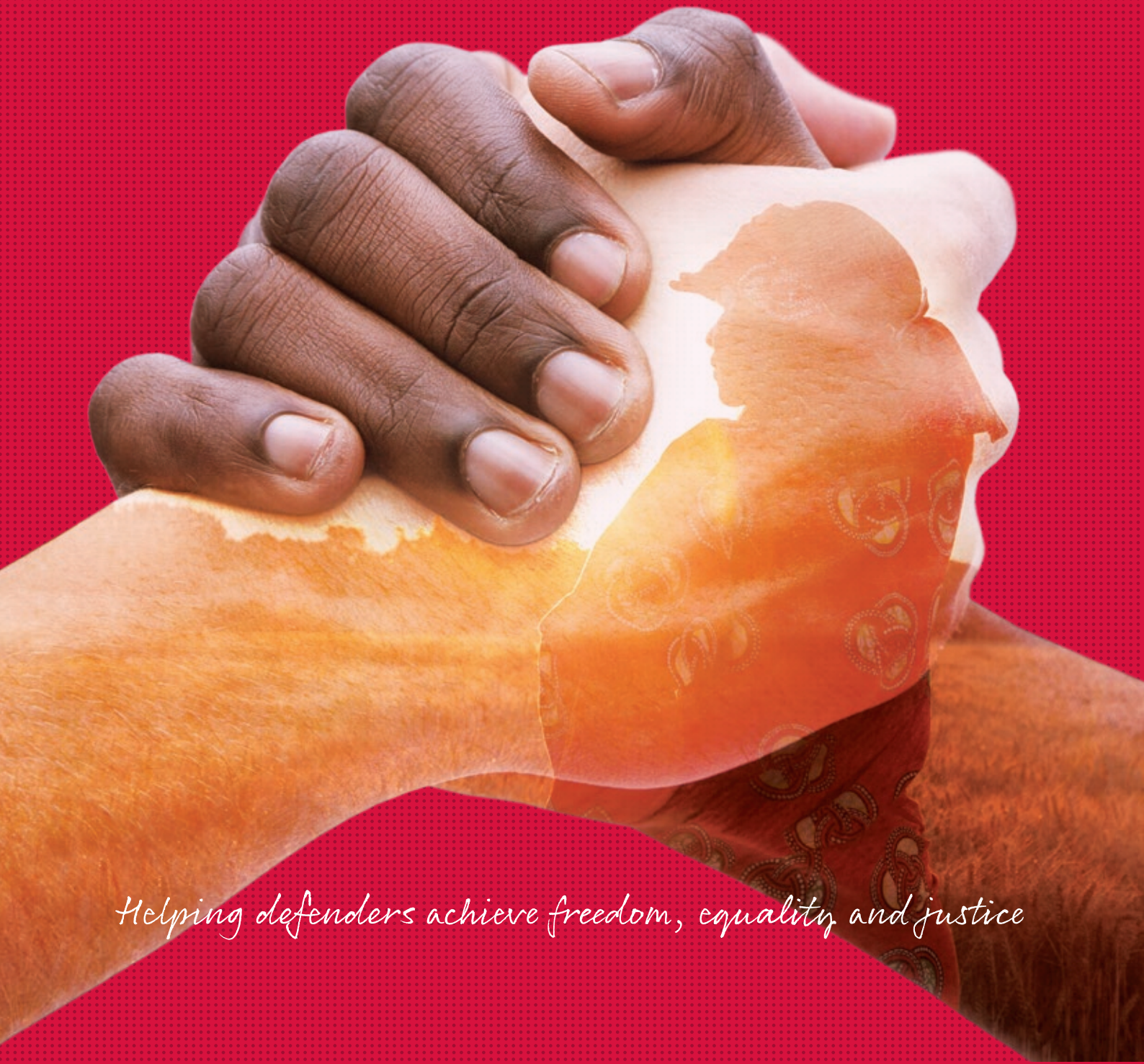


# At their . service



*Helping defenders achieve freedom, equality and justice*



Fourteen brave and  
 bright activists  
from across the  
world participated in our  
flagship Human Rights  
Defender Advocacy  
Programme in June 2018  
(pictured here with part  
of the ISHR team).

**ADDITIONAL  
PHOTOGRAPHY**

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# Contents

**2**

**Message from  
Chairperson and Director**

At their service:  
Helping defenders  
achieve freedom,  
equality and justice

**4**

**Realising our vision**  
A snapshot of impact  
in 2018

**12**

**Strengthening  
defenders' recognition  
and protection**

**18**

**Expanding defenders'  
networks and support**

**24**

**Safeguarding  
defenders' access  
and participation**

**34**

**Our Team**

**36**

**Our Supporters**  
You make  
change happen!

**38**

**Financial  
Statements**





# Message from Chairperson and Director

*At their service:  
Helping defenders  
achieve freedom,  
equality and justice*

Dear friends

Human rights defenders strive to ensure that all people can enjoy freedom, equality and justice.

They are the advocates who hold governments and bureaucrats accountable to the people they serve.

They are the activists who expose corporations which fail to operate responsibly and sustainably.

They are the dedicated individuals and groups who work so that all people – even the most marginalised and disadvantaged – are able to access adequate housing and health care, fair and just conditions of work, and a healthy environment.

They work to ensure that none of us are harassed, imprisoned or even killed because of what we say or believe, who we love, or the colour of our skin.



*Juliana Nader*



It is clear that defenders should be supported and celebrated. Instead, they are increasingly subject to stigmatisation, restriction and attack. They are attacked by the populist governments and unscrupulous corporations they hold to account, as well as by religious and other institutions whose power and prejudice they challenge.

ISHR is proud to serve defenders. We contribute to their protection when they are at risk. We expand and strengthen their networks. And we provide them with powerful platforms from which to expose violations, demand accountability, and push for justice.

We are only able to serve defenders thanks to our partners. With your solidarity and support – whether financial, political, legal or otherwise – ISHR made a significant and distinctive contribution to the capacities, recognition and protection of defenders over the last year. Here are just a few examples of our collective impact in 2018:

- we provided intensive training and strategic advocacy support to over 230 defenders from around the world, equipping them with the expertise and networks to use the international human rights system to achieve national level change.
- we strengthened national and international law and jurisprudence on the recognition and protection of defenders, including women human rights defenders and migrant rights defenders.
- we focused attention on the situation of defenders in highly restrictive environments, such as China, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, increasing political pressure for the release of arbitrarily detained defenders, extracting a political cost for attacks and reprisals against them, and highlighting cases in the international and national press.
- we met with the UN Secretary-General, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, heads of State and foreign ministers from across the world, pressing each of them to prioritise the recognition and protection of defenders.
- we worked with powerful and influential multinational corporations to secure their high-level commitment to respect and protect defenders, even defenders who oppose and protest against their activities.
- we partnered with national actors in a wide range of countries – from Guinea to Jamaica,

from Colombia to Tunisia, and from Mali to Mongolia – to secure a safe and enabling environment for defenders' vital work.

We are proud and energised by the service and support we gave to defenders in 2018, and strengthened in our indignation and resolve to work in solidarity with them to address the challenges ahead.

With your support in 2019 we will press for the release of arbitrarily detained defenders in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and China. We will advocate to end systemic reprisals

against activists in Burundi and Egypt. We will stand with those struggling against populism and rising authoritarianism, from Venezuela to Hungary, from the Philippines to Brazil. We will strengthen laws and mechanisms for the protection of women

defenders, as well as defenders of the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex people. We will resist the criminalisation of those who provide hope and humanitarian support to migrants and asylum seekers. And we will ensure that, even as democratic institutions and the rule of law are undermined at the national level, defenders are able to turn to credible and effective regional and international human rights mechanisms for justice.

The work of human rights defenders is essential to ensure that all people enjoy dignity and equality in communities that are free and inclusive. With your support in 2019 we will protect defenders and amplify their voices. We will expand their networks and mobilise coalitions to support them. And together, we will make progress towards a world which is more fair, just and peaceful.

In solidarity with defenders, and with you.

**Lucia Nader**

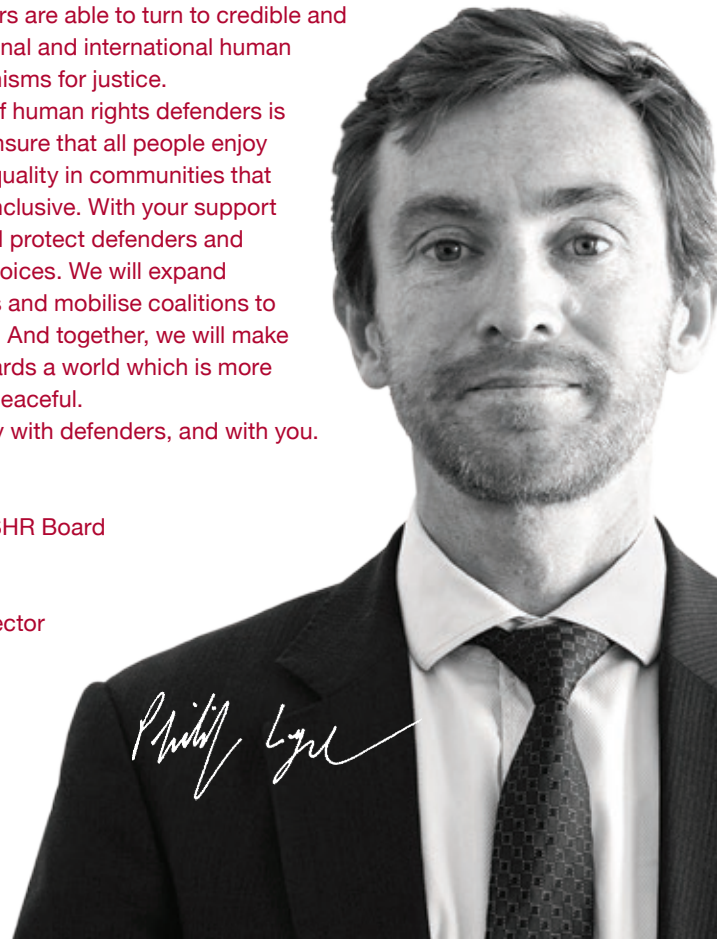
Chair of the ISHR Board

**Philip Lynch**

Executive Director

**“ We need to safeguard the lives and the work of people across the world – not only in our own societies – who are struggling to shape a world of greater equality, greater peace, greater dignity and well-being.”**

**Michelle Bachelet**, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights





# Realising our vision

*A snapshot of  
impact in 2018*

## How we work

We have a vision in which all people enjoy freedom and dignity, in communities that are just and inclusive, in a world that is peaceful and sustainable.

Our mission is to serve human rights defenders, the work of whom is essential to make this vision a reality.

### We pursue this mission by achieving three complementary goals:

#### We support ...

human rights defenders to use international and regional human rights standards and systems to expose violations, seek accountability and remedy, and promote national implementation

#### We strengthen ...

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

#### We partner ...

with local civil society to secure a safe and enabling environment for human rights defenders at the national level

### We achieve these goals through six complementary tactics:

1. Human rights defender training, capacity building, fellowships and advocacy support
2. Strategic campaigns and communications
3. Policy analysis and advocacy
4. Legal analysis, advocacy and litigation
5. Technical advice and implementation support
6. Coalition building and coordination

*We work in a way which is principled, connected and collaborative.*





---

## Supporting human rights defenders

### Our goal

Human rights defenders are more strategic and effective in using international and regional human rights mechanisms to push for change on the ground. They are better networked and more influential advocates at the national, regional and international levels.

### How we get there

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 build and resource defender coalitions and promote partnerships, collaboration and solidarity. We play a unique role coordinating NGO strategy and action at the UN in Geneva and New York, and securing civil society access to policy and decision-makers at the highest levels. Our strategic communications positively influence attitudes, behaviours, laws and policies in relation to defenders.



### What we achieved

→ Together with key partners, we convened the second World Summit on Human Rights Defenders, leading to the development of a comprehensive action plan which was subsequently presented by ISHR Board member Alice Mogwe at a high-level event at the UN General Assembly in New York. This is the first time that a representative of civil society has ever been invited to formally address a high-level plenary event at the General Assembly. The Summit also strengthened networks and strategies between defenders and human rights organisations globally.

→ Through our Human Rights Defender Advocacy Programme and Fellowships, we supported at-risk defenders from across the world to develop networks of support and influence, to build energy and resilience, and to become even more effective advocates for national-level change. 93 per cent of participants reported that they had fully or substantially accomplished their advocacy objectives through the programmes.

→ We provided strategic advice and support to defenders from countries from all regions – including Bangladesh, Bahamas, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, China, the Democratic Republic of Congo, El Salvador, Egypt, Ghana, Guinea, Indonesia, Jamaica, Mali, Mexico, Myanmar, Nepal, Palestine, Peru, the Philippines, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Tanzania, Tunisia and Venezuela – accompanying them in their advocacy and engagement with the Human Rights Council, Universal Periodic Review, Treaty Bodies and Special Procedures in Geneva. Through ISHR, defenders were supported in face-to-face meetings with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the President of the Human



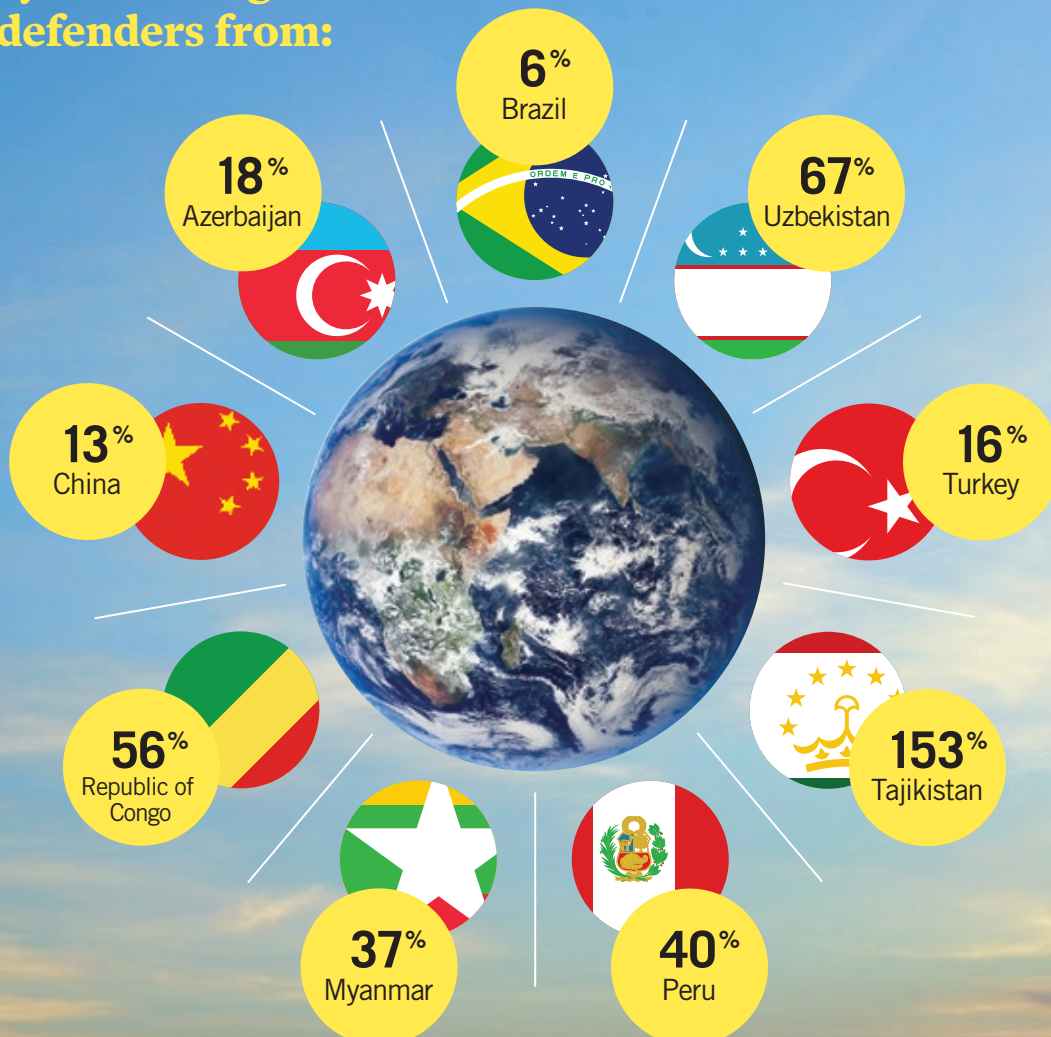
Rights Council, Ambassadors, Treaty Body members, and UN Special Rapporteurs and Independent Experts, among others.

→ It is powerful and imperative that defenders are able to tell their own stories. Reflecting this, ISHR produced a compelling series of human rights defender video profiles and supported defenders to give direct testimony and evidence at the UN in New York and Geneva and at the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights in the Gambia and Mauritania.

→ Together with regional and national partners in countries including China, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Jamaica, Mauritania, Nigeria, Tunisia and Venezuela, we undertook consultations and provided targeted training in the field, equipping grassroots defenders with international advocacy networks and tactics.

→ In partnership with the African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the Conseil National des Droits de l'Homme of Morocco, we conducted an intensive three-day training and strategy workshop in the Gambia for defenders from over 20 different African countries. Defenders were equipped to engage effectively with both the UN and African human rights systems, with a particular focus on supporting those advocating for the rights of women, children, LGBT persons and migrants.

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





→ Complementing our intensive in-person support, we provided defenders with comprehensive and practical online guidance to leverage the UN, with new and updated manuals in Arabic, Chinese, French, English, Russian and Spanish. We also provided defenders with access to the most up-to-date information and advice via social media in Chinese, English, French and Spanish.

→ We opened the door to the UN for civil society organisations from across the world by advising and assisting them to obtain accreditation through ECOSOC and the NGO Committee in New York, while also pushing for accreditation processes to be more fair,

transparent and expeditious. We also documented trends and strategies used by some States to restrict civil society participation at the UN and laid out a clear road map for more progressive States, as well as UN officials, to prevent and counter restrictions on civil society participation in UN processes.

→ As the Secretariat for HRCnet, we coordinated a network of 16 mainly regional and national NGOs to strengthen civil society access, participation and advocacy at the Human Rights Council and to promote implementation at the national level. ●

## Strengthening standards and systems for defenders' protection

### Our 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. Multinational business enterprises and associations recognise the value, and act to protect, human rights defenders and civic space and freedoms.

### How we get there

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, help make those systems and bodies more accessible, responsive, effective and protective for human rights defenders.

### What we achieved

→ We mobilised high-level actors – including the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Human Rights Council President, the UN's independent human rights experts, multinational corporations, and foreign ministers from numerous countries – to intervene to prevent or denounce attacks, restrictions and reprisals against human rights defenders in States including Bahrain, China, Egypt, Iran, Myanmar, the Philippines, Russia and Venezuela.

→ We met with the UN Secretary-General, pressing him to prioritise the recognition and protection of defenders across the UN and world and providing him with a comprehensive briefing paper and practical recommendations for action.

→ ISHR's evidence and submissions to UN bodies, such as the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, played a major role in bringing to light China's internment and 're-education' of more than a million people, including human rights defenders,

**“Firsthand information quietly reaches the UN through the work of a group called the International Service for Human Rights, which finds ways for officials and analysts to learn about rights violations directly from activists and caseworkers in Xinjiang (and elsewhere).”**

'How the World Learned China is Holding Over a Million Muslims in Internment Camps', Huffington Post, 15 August 2018

**“ The High Commissioner’s promise to increase resources to address a backlog in complaints to treaty bodies will assist to deliver justice to individuals and contribute to systemic human rights change.**

Vincent Ploton, ISHR Director of Development and Treaty Body Advocacy



#HRDAP helped me understand UN mechanisms and the various methods of engagement with it. If you’re a #HumanRights Defender or know someone who works with them, this training comes highly recommended!

@BettyBarkha  
Women human rights defender from the Pacific

**“ Given the increasing vulnerability of human rights defenders and shrinking space where they can operate safely, business has a role and a responsibility to defend and promote fundamental rights and freedoms.**

Paul Polman,  
CEO of Unilever

lawyers and members of ethnic and religious minorities.

→ Our advocacy led to the first ever dedicated debate on reprisals at the Human Rights Council, thereby increasing the political cost for States who engage in such acts. We also secured endorsement of the San José Guidelines by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, thereby strengthening protection for women human rights defenders.

→ Together with Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and a coalition of regional and national human rights organisations, we developed a comprehensive blueprint to strengthen and reform the UN Human Rights Council to make it more accessible and effective for rights holders and victims of violations across the world. Many of the recommendations in this blueprint have subsequently been adopted as official policy by allied States.

→ We coordinated with a group of leading multinational corporations who share civil society’s interest in free and open democracies including adidas, Unilever and ABN Amro – to issue a landmark joint statement affirming the business case and responsibility to respect and protect defenders, even defenders who oppose and protest against their activities.

→ We also worked with the world’s leading football association, FIFA, to develop a human rights defender policy and grievance mechanism which was used at the 2018 World Cup and which will assist to ensure that the world of sport uses its reach and influence to protect defenders and journalists.

→ Together with the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, we drafted and secured the adoption of a landmark joint statement by UN human rights treaty body members and experts. The groundbreaking statement establishes that threats, attacks and restrictions against defenders may amount to violations of the rights for which they advocate. It also affirms that discrimination on the basis of a person’s status as a human rights defender is prohibited under international law in the same way as discrimination on grounds such as race and gender.

→ Working with pro bono counsel from some of the world’s leading law firms, we filed strategic litigation on behalf of defenders with national and international courts and tribunals. We supported indigenous rights defenders regarding land rights in French Guiana. We helped women human rights defenders who had been denied visas to the United States. We assisted NGOs from Kyrgyzstan which suffered reprisals for engaging with the UN Committee on Migrant Workers. We provided support to a Sahrawi activist who was targeted for submitting a complaint to the UN. We advocated for an indigenous rights activist facing deportation from Switzerland. And we sought to protect persons threatened with retaliation for cooperating with the International Criminal Court regarding alleged war crimes by US military and intelligence services in Afghanistan.

→ With defenders of the rights of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers being subject to increasing restriction, stigmatisation and even criminalisation, we worked with the UN to develop authoritative standards and practical guidance for States to respect and protect defenders’ work.





230

**Number**

of human rights  
defenders to whom  
ISHR provided  
training or advocacy  
support

→ Following coordinated advocacy with partners, we obtained a commitment from the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to increase resources to address a backlog in individual complaints to treaty bodies, thereby enhancing access to justice for rights holders and victims.

→ Women human rights defenders face heightened and specific risks because of their gender, their identity and the fact that they frequently challenge the 4Ps: power, privilege, prejudice and patriarchy. On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, we were delighted to collaborate with the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, together with other UN human rights bodies and experts, to produce an unprecedented joint statement which recognises the invaluable work of, and unacceptable discrimination and risks faced by, women defenders. The statement provides authoritative guidance to States on the gender-specific recognition and protection of women defenders. ●





Adelaide Etong Kame, Africa advocate with ISHR, delivers a statement before the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, calling on States to end the adoption of restrictive laws.

## Promoting national implementation and partnering for change on the ground

### Our 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.

### How we get there

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-level implementation.

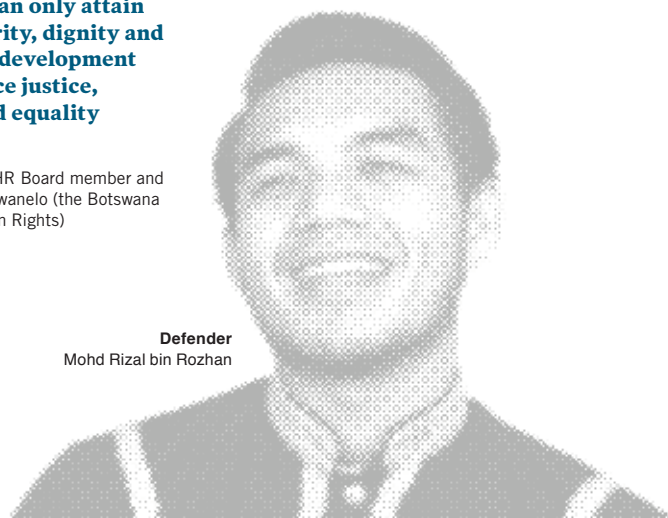
**“ Governments, companies and other powerful figures are harassing, spying on, jailing, torturing and even killing human rights defenders – just for defending the fundamental rights of their communities. These people must be respected, protected and able to live and work in an environment where it is safe to claim human rights. We can only attain peace, security, dignity and sustainable development if we advance justice, freedom and equality for all.**

Alice Mogwe, ISHR Board member and Director of Ditshwanelo (the Botswana Centre for Human Rights)

**“ Our efforts must continue so that in coming years, despite emerging challenges, more and more countries in Africa adopt national human rights defender protection laws, thereby contributing to freedom, justice and equality throughout the region.**

Adelaide Etong Kame,  
ISHR Africa Advocate

**Defender**  
Mohd Rizal bin Rozhan





## What we achieved

→ Building on our long-term work and partnerships with national actors in Burkina Faso and Mali, we advised on the establishment of national human rights institutions and human rights defender protection mechanisms to ensure a safe and enabling environment in those jurisdictions. ‘The strategic advice and support of our partners at ISHR is assisting to ensure that the human rights defender law is effectively implemented throughout the country,’ said Mahamar El Moctar, Chairperson of the Coalition Malienne des Défenseurs des Droits Humains.

→ In Guinea, we partnered with national civil society and governmental authorities to draft a national human rights defender law, based on ISHR’s Model National Law on the Recognition and Protection of Defenders. This draft will now be debated by Guinea’s parliament and we will continue to work with national civil society to ensure its full implementation.

→ Working with local partners, we secured targeted recommendations from influential UN human rights experts on the importance of developing and fully implementing human rights defender protection laws and mechanisms in States including the Republic of Congo and South Africa, among others.

→ Building on our success in securing the enactment of national human rights defender protection laws across West Africa, we partnered with national NGOs in Mongolia, Nepal and the Philippines to develop strategies and draft model human rights defender legislation for advocacy and adoption in those States.

→ In addition to pushing for the enactment of protective and enabling laws, we campaigned against the enactment of restrictive legislation, including in the Democratic Republic of the Congo where a draft law purported to be for the protection of defenders will actually restrict their work.

→ Together with the Gulf Centre for Human Rights and other partners, we launched a campaign to hold Saudi Arabia to account for the suppression of dissent, following the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi and the widespread arrest and ill-treatment of women’s rights defenders.

→ Evidencing the importance and long-term impact of international legal advocacy on the development and implementation of national and regional-level laws and policies, the Yogyakarta Principles and Yogyakarta Principles Plus 10 were approvingly cited by bodies including the Indian Supreme Court, the Inter-American Court on Human Rights, and the United Kingdom Parliament in important decisions and debates regarding the rights of LGBT persons. Similarly, UN resolutions and reports on the protection of defenders which were substantially influenced by ISHR were cited extensively by the European Court of Human Rights in its most extensive and progressive judgment on the protection of human rights defenders to date, *Aliyev v Azerbaijan*.

→ In partnership with local NGOs, we undertook missions in Colombia, Jamaica and Tunisia, and with defenders from Venezuela, to develop strategies, build capacity and prepare action plans on the national implementation of international human rights obligations.

→ The European Union, together with a number of individual States from across the Global North, have developed guidelines for diplomats, embassies and missions abroad as to how they should protect defenders at-risk. In 2018, ISHR undertook a major project to strengthen these guidelines, both in terms of coverage and implementation. We conducted consultations with defenders to ensure that such guidelines are relevant, accessible and responsive, and with States to provide advice to ensure they are fully and effectively implemented. ●





# Strengthening defenders' recognition and protection

Defender  
Romel Rubén Gonzalez Díaz

*dignity*



The legal recognition and protection of human rights defenders, together with policies and programmes which respond to the particular needs of defenders at risk, are essential elements of a safe and enabling environment for defenders and the effective realisation of human rights for all.

Strategic hope and values-based communications which influence attitudes and change behaviours are also essential to building public and political understanding and support for defenders.

## IMPACT

### Legal protection: UN experts issue landmark joint statement strengthening protection of defenders and access to remedy

In a major legal development, ISHR worked with the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders and members of all ten UN treaty bodies to issue an authoritative joint statement on the role, recognition and protection of human rights defenders on 23 May. The joint statement is groundbreaking for at least four reasons.

First, the UN experts establish that threats, attacks and restrictions against human rights defenders may amount to violations of the rights for which they advocate under the international human rights treaties. For example, the detention of a defender protesting against arbitrary evictions may not only amount to a deprivation of liberty but may constitute a violation of the right to adequate housing under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. This opens new and important avenues for complaints at the international level and also at the national level in some jurisdictions.

Second, the UN experts affirm that discrimination on the basis of a person's status as a human rights defender is prohibited under international law in the same way as discrimination on grounds such as race and gender. Again, this opens new avenues of complaint under international law, but also under national law in the

**“ Creating a safe and enabling environment, including by promoting respect and support for the activities of human rights defenders, is essential for the promotion, protection and defence of human rights. The Treaty Bodies consider any interference, intimidation, abuse, threat, violence, reprisal or undue restrictions against human rights defenders as constituting violations of States parties' obligations towards the realization of rights set out in the Treaties.**

Joint statement by a group of Chairs, Vice-Chairs and members of the United Nations human rights Treaty Bodies and the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, 23 May 2018



many jurisdictions in which equal opportunity and anti-discrimination laws prohibit discrimination on grounds such as 'political opinion' or 'other status'.

Third, the experts spell out that the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders affirms, elaborates and is underpinned by binding legal obligations. Thus, while as a General Assembly resolution, the Declaration itself is not strictly legally binding, it is now well established that each of the provisions therein have their basis in and reflect binding legal obligations.

Finally, the statement is the first to have been endorsed by members of every single treaty body together with a Special Rapporteur, both enhancing its status and also reflecting the extent to which ISHR and others have been able to elevate the protection of human rights defenders as a priority for the UN system. ○

## Migrant rights: Authoritative principles spell out States' obligations to protect defenders of the rights of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers

Authoritative new UN Principles and Guidelines on the protection of migrants in vulnerable situations provide clear and concrete guidance to States on implementation of the duty to respect, protect and support defenders working in the field of migrant rights.

The Principles and Guidelines, which were launched in April 2018, are underpinned by, and elaborate, binding international law. Principle 18 articulates the duty of States to 'respect and support the activities of human rights defenders who promote and protect the human rights of migrants'.

Consistent with ISHR advocacy and submissions, the guidelines on implementation of this fundamental principle direct States to, among other things:

- enact laws, and establish policies and programmes, to ensure a safe and enabling environment for individuals and organisations working to defend migrant rights;
- not criminalise or penalise the provision of support and assistance to migrants;
- provide specific protection to defenders who are migrants or who defend migrants in vulnerable situations, including migrant women and members of minority groups;
- protect migrant rights defenders from all forms of violence, threats, discrimination or reprisal from State and non-State actors;
- investigate and ensure accountability for any attacks against migrant rights defenders, their families or associates;
- protect any person who discloses information about migrant rights in the public interest; and
- publicly recognise the vital and legitimate work of migrant rights defenders.

In addition to Principle 18, Principle 16 on Access to Information directs States to ensure a safe and enabling environment for journalists and others who investigate and report on migrant rights and to end impunity for attacks against them. Principle 4 on Rescue and Assistance requires States to ensure that organisations and individuals who rescue or provide assistance to migrants, including at sea, are never criminalised or punished for doing so.

Speaking on a high-level panel in Geneva at an event to launch the Principles and Guidelines, ISHR Director Phil Lynch said, 'Human rights defenders and other civil society actors have a crucial role to play in protecting migrant rights. They provide essential services to migrants and can work with governments to develop and implement human rights-compatible migration policies and programmes. For their part, States have an obligation to support and not restrict human rights defenders in this vital work and to protect migrant rights defenders in the face of rising intolerance, xenophobia and illiberalism. It is also in their strategic interests to do so.'

Despite this obligation and interest, an increasing number of States – from Australia to Mexico, from Spain to Thailand, and from Hungary to the US – are imposing legal or other restrictions on the work of migrant rights defenders, and contributing to, rather than alleviating, an environment of vulnerability.

The Principles and Guidelines provide an opportunity and an imperative to chart a different course. ●



Defender  
Mariana Zaragoza



## IMPACT

### LGBT rights: Victory for trans persons and same-sex couples in Latin America

In November 2017, following a two year consultation and drafting process facilitated by ISHR and ARC International, a group of 33 eminent experts adopted the Yogyakarta Principles Plus 10, being an authoritative statement of international law as it applies to lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex persons.

Just months later, in a judgment that has positive and practical implications for the rights of trans persons and same-sex couples across the Americas, the Inter-American Court on Human Rights relied extensively on the Yogyakarta Principles Plus 10 in deciding that:

- trans persons should be allowed to legally change their name, gender marker and photo on identity documents;
- this should be done on the basis of self-determination of gender identity, without any prohibitive legal or medical pre-conditions; and
- same sex couples should enjoy all family rights without discrimination, including marriage. ○

“It’s a testament to the power of international law and advocacy to bring about change on the ground that, just a month after the publication of the Yogyakarta Principles Plus 10, they are already at the centre of a judgment of a regional human rights court. It is particularly pleasing that Costa Rica has committed to respect and implement the Court’s ruling.

Helen Nolan,  
ISHR Programme Manager

“LGBTI rights defenders are targeted by States, non-State actors, members of their own community, and even other defenders because of their identity and work. It is essential that States ensure this group of at-risk defenders is protected.

Tess McEvoy,  
ISHR Legal Counsel

## IMPACT

### Women’s rights: Recognising and protecting the ‘immeasurable contribution’ of women defenders

Leading up to the 20th anniversary of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, ISHR worked extensively with UN human rights experts to draft and issue a significant statement on the situation of women defenders. In addition to recognising the particular risks they face – both because of their gender and identity, and because their work frequently challenges power, privilege, prejudice and patriarchy – the experts provide practical policy guidance to States on the recognition and protection of women defenders. Among other steps, governments should:



Jane Tedjasputra, women human rights defender from Indonesia, at a meeting with UN experts.

**“ Women human rights defenders lead movements that have swept the globe calling for gender equality and an end to gender-based violence against women. They have flooded the streets, the airwaves, and the internet with their energy and their testimonials, bringing to light truths that are too often buried in darkness.**

**They are making immeasurable contributions to the advancement of human rights all over the world. They are raising their voices, frequently at great personal risk, to stand up for human rights and justice for all. Often these women are at the forefront of challenging social and cultural norms that limit women’s human rights. They take stands that are necessary to progress but unpopular, taking on the most powerful and providing support for the most vulnerable.**

Joint statement by UN human rights experts on International Women Human Rights Defenders Day

- publicly recognise the importance and legitimacy of the work of women human rights defenders, and make a commitment that no violence or threats against them will be tolerated;
- repeal legislation or eliminate any measure intended to penalise or obstruct the work of defenders;
- strengthen State institutions responsible for safeguarding the work of women defenders;
- investigate and punish any form of violence or threat against women defenders, including in relation to reprisals for engaging with the United Nations system, and
- ensure due diligence in protecting women human rights defenders that are threatened by non-State actors, such as business. ○



## IN FOCUS

### Pursuing a feminist agenda at the UN

When challenging harmful traditional practices and religious extremism, there are women human rights defenders on the front line.

When confronting corporate greed and environmental destruction, there are women human rights defenders on the front line.

When defying authoritarian leadership, there are women human rights defenders on the front line.

When fighting for political representation and participation, there are women human rights defenders on the front line.

When asserting the right to be safe and to live free and equal in dignity, there are women human rights defenders on the front line.

This front line remains dynamic, vibrant and energised in the face of State legislation, policies and practices aimed at curtailing civil society activities and funding. These barriers appear in combination with other measures to hinder the exercise of freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly, association and movement.

But restrictions by governments in all regions of the world only serve to strengthen, embolden and reinforce the work of women human rights defenders who challenge patriarchy and hetero-normativity.

The same is now true at the UN.

Feminists are mobilising to demand that the UN human rights inter-governmental processes better regulate State and corporate power. They stress the importance of ensuring respect, protection and an enabling environment for women human rights defenders. They push for gender-sensitive justice and remedy mechanisms. And they assert the importance of gendered human rights impact assessments of business operations.







ISHR's Pooja Patel at a solidarity exchange with human rights defenders

Women human rights defenders consistently push back against attempts by 'cultural relativists' who seek to subvert universal human rights standards. They safeguard the principles that underpin international human rights law.

Rights holders from across the world engage in UN spaces to establish their rights over their own bodies. This is particularly important for those who live and work in societies that criminalise bodily and mental autonomy and integrity.

Women human rights defenders are agents of change.

UN human rights experts have referred to these times as a 'pivotal moment' and called for a truly global movement to address violence and discrimination based on sex and gender. For this moment to be truly transformative, much more needs to be done at the UN.

First, the 'women's rights and gender equality' agenda must be one that is led and driven by the women human rights defenders at the front line. Their participation and engagement, particularly in inter-governmental processes, need to be made significantly more meaningful and sustainable.

Second, debates on violations based on sex and gender must be reflective of lived realities, particularly to understand and respond to the ways in which multiple aspects of each person's social identity and status intersect to create unique experiences of oppression and privilege.

Finally, the appointments of UN leaders and experts mandated by the UN need to better reflect gender diversity. But it cannot stop there. Their appointments need to result in strengthened commitments towards societies that are just and equitable.

For the UN, the time has come to hold a mirror to itself. ●

Pooja Patel is a Programme Director with ISHR



## WORK IN PROGRESS

### Strategic communications: Changing hearts, minds, attitudes and behaviours towards defenders

Over the last year, ISHR has begun to think deeply and critically about how to communicate about human rights defenders in ways which really engage and influence people. Put simply, how do we communicate to make people care about human rights defenders and empower them to act to promote and protect defenders?

This work in progress has included producing 14 powerful video profiles, enabling defenders to tell their stories and give their testimony in their own voices. It has involved concerted and successful efforts to place stories on defenders with agencies and in publications including the New York Times, Le Monde, Huffington Post, Reuters and Foreign Policy. And it has involved analysing the literature and evidence on how to most effectively talk and communicate about human rights.

In 2019, this work in progress will focus on developing new narratives and messages which, informed by the latest scientific evidence and research, will lead to positive changes in attitudes, behaviours, laws and policies on human rights defenders. ●

**“Effective communication about human rights defenders should be grounded in the science of what makes people care. It requires tapping into and connecting with people's feelings and values and showing them how they can make a difference. It also requires investment and prioritisation, from human rights defender funders and organisations alike. In this regard, ISHR is very much on the right track. Effective communications in this area could be game changing.”**

Ann Christiano, Director of the Center for Public Interest Communications, University of Florida



# Expanding defenders' networks and support

Defender  
Stephanie Lum

*solidarity*



With the environment for civil society deteriorating in many countries across the world, it has become vital that human rights defenders develop new networks and alliances to safeguard and support their work. Throughout 2018, ISHR worked to make the recognition and protection of defenders a priority for the UN, and an imperative for multinational business and associations.

## » SNAPSHOT

### World Economic Forum: Mounting human rights violations a major global risk

Each year, the World Economic Forum publishes an influential report on major global risks, informing the thinking, strategy and planning of heads of government and business. For the last three years, ISHR has been invited to contribute its expertise to this report. The 2019 Report, released in advance of Davos in January, includes mounting human rights violations and a diminution in respect for the international rule of law, together with closing civil society space at the national level, as among the most significant strategic threats and challenges facing the world. Vibrant civil society at the national level, supported by relevant and effective multilateral bodies at the international level, are among the essential ingredients for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable future for all. ●



## » IN FOCUS

### Shared space under pressure: Increasing business support for civic freedoms and human rights defenders

In September 2018, ISHR and the Business and Human Rights Resource Centre released an important report, *Shared Space Under Pressure*.

The report documents the global decline in civic freedoms and worsening restrictions and attacks on human rights defenders.

More hopefully, it also documents an increase in corporate activism for civic freedoms, and provides concrete guidance to companies as to the steps they can and should take to protect and support defenders.

The report sets out why declining civic freedoms should be of grave concern to business and articulates three key imperatives for business to play an active role, both individually and collectively, in supporting human rights defenders and a safe and enabling environment for their work.

The first imperative is the economic or business case imperative.

Put simply, all the evidence shows that businesses operate more profitably and sustainably in environments characterised by higher levels of equality, including both gender equality and income equality, and higher levels of respect for the rights to freedom of expression, association, assembly, access to information, public participation and due process.

These enabling rights are essential to creativity, innovation, productivity, economic participation and



**“ The time is now for responsible business to act to defend civic freedoms and protect human rights defenders. This is not just the expectation of human rights defenders, and a moral and legal imperative, but, as the guidance shows, is also in companies’ best interests.**

**Michael Ineichen,**  
ISHR Programme Director

the fulfilment of human potential, all of which benefit business.

Coincidentally, these rights are also essential to human rights defenders, the work of whom is vital to ensure that we can all live with freedom and dignity, in communities that are fair, just and sustainable.

The second reason for business to be concerned and to act is the normative imperative. More than an imperative, it is a duty.

Building on the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, norms and frameworks at the company, national, regional and international levels increasingly recognise that business associations and enterprises have more than a duty to do no harm and not interfere in the work of defenders. They have a responsibility to respect and protect that work.

There are some positive developments in this regard.

At an international level, for example, with the assistance of ISHR, FIFA has adopted a new protection policy and established a complaints mechanism for human rights defenders and journalists.

At the regional level, the recently adopted Escazú Agreement in Latin America obliges States to take all necessary legislative and other steps to recognise, protect and promote the work of environmental human rights defenders, including in the context of business operations and major development projects.

At the national level, a small but growing number of States have enacted National Action Plans which include

specific provisions on human rights defenders.

Meanwhile, Canada has set the standard in its diplomatic guidelines on defenders by linking support for Canadian companies abroad with their respect for defenders in the host country.

At the business level, companies like adidas have adopted corporate human rights defender policies, although the recently released Corporate Human Rights Benchmark shows that many more companies need to step up in this regard.

The third reason for business to support human rights defenders is the moral imperative.

Put simply, businesses should support defenders because it’s the right thing to do.

This recognition is at the core of the establishment of the Business Network for Civic Freedoms and Human Rights Defenders.

Facilitated by ISHR, together with the Business and Human Rights Resource Centre and the B-Team, the Network is a group of over 20 companies committed to increased private sector support for the protection of civic freedoms and human rights defenders.

Our vision is that business and civil society thrive when working together with governments to create positive and enabling operating environments characterised by good governance, respect for the rule of law and human rights, equality and diversity. ●





## IMPACT

### Business and human rights defenders: Landmark joint commitment to support defenders and the rule of law


10 December 2018 marked the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. Historically, it also marked the first occasion on which a group of multinational companies, working across sectors, have come together to issue a joint statement and make a joint commitment to support and protect those who make the promise of the Declaration a reality – human rights defenders.

‘The protection of civic freedoms and respect for the rule of law are vitally important for both civil society and business,’ the statement says. ‘Free, open societies enable well-functioning markets, stable financial systems and good governance. In contrast, efforts to limit civil society and civic freedoms undermine open societies, foster corruption, limit competition, critical thought and innovation.’

Crucially, the statement recognises that business enterprises, including investors, have not only an interest but also ‘a duty to respect human rights and human rights defenders’ and, in so doing ‘help respond to the challenges of our time, including rising inequality, xenophobia, discrimination, climate change, and polarisation.’

Companies signing the statement – which range across the mining, apparel, banking, finance, jewellery and footwear sectors – commit to, among other things:

- respect and not interfere with the work of civil society and human rights defenders; and
- positively contribute to situations where civic freedoms and human rights defenders are under threat.

The statement was developed through the Business Network for Civic Freedoms and Human Rights Defenders, which is facilitated by ISHR, the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre and the B-Team. 

**“ In situations where human rights defenders speak out against a particular project and are persecuted, responsible companies face a choice. Stay silent, which may be perceived as being complicit in or colluding with the abuse or victimisation of defenders, or reject actions taken against those individuals or groups and clearly signal support for their legitimate right to freely express their concerns. ”**

**Nicky Black**, Director of Environmental Stewardship and Social Progress, International Council on Mining and Metals

### ISHR social media activity in 2018

Facebook followers

12,154



12%

Instagram followers

254



137%

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

130,958



9%

YouTube views

7,896



35%

7

Human rights defender profiles published

24

Videos produced

For Twitter data, see page 25

Defender

Leydy Araceli Pech Martin

**“ FIFA’s first specific human rights defenders policy and complaints mechanism for the World Cup is an overdue but important step. If swift action follows complaints, FIFA could help raise the bar for protections at mega-sports events.**

Minky Worden, Director of Global Initiatives, Human Rights Watch

**“ The work of human rights defenders is essential for FIFA’s human rights-related efforts to succeed. This is not a mere slogan but grounded in the experience of countless concrete examples of our work over the past years. Human rights defenders bring to our attention specific human rights risks and inform the evaluation of the effectiveness of measures taken, they act as legitimate representatives of people and groups who may be affected by FIFA’s activities, or they are an additional source of scrutiny on third parties whose actions may have an adverse impact on human rights and be related to those activities.**

Federico Addiechi, Head of Sustainability & Diversity, FIFA

## Percentage of recommendations made by ISHR:

90

%

78

### 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

Narayani Devkota, women human rights defender from Nepal attended our flagship Human Rights Defender Advocacy Programme in June 2018.





**“ I can not over-emphasise the vital role that you [ISHR] and others from civil society play in the work of the United Nations on human rights.**

**Antonio Guterres,**  
UN Secretary-General



## WORK IN PROGRESS

### Making the protection of human rights defenders a priority for the UN

From its peacekeeping operations to disaster relief efforts, from its refugee protection to its aid and development programmes, the United Nations Organisation has enormous potential for human rights impact and influence. This potential will only be realised, however, if the whole organisation commits to protect and support the work of defenders – the agents of human rights progress and change.

In 2018, ISHR met privately with both the UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, in New York, and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, in Geneva. The meetings provided an opportunity to press these leaders to commit to promoting, protecting and advocating for the rights of defenders as a first-order priority, and to ensure that all UN agencies and programmes contribute to the protection of defenders and ensuring an enabling environment for their work.

It is very pleasing that a number of key UN agencies – including UN Women and UN Environment – have now adopted specific human rights defender policies, while the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General himself have made a number of speeches and public statements affirming the vital role of defenders and the illegitimacy of any restriction or reprisal against them. ●



## IMPACT

### FIFA: Giving human rights defenders a sporting chance

The world of sport, and major sporting organisations such as the International Olympic Committee and FIFA, have significant potential to impact on human rights, including through the selection of host cities for mega-sporting events, the acquisition of land and the construction of stadiums, conditions for athletes and workers, respect for rights in supply chains, and access for journalists, just to name a few.

In 2018, ISHR was pleased to support FIFA in the development and adoption of a specific policy and complaints mechanism for human rights defenders and journalists, the first of its kind adopted by a major sporting federation. Central to this support was ensuring adequate consultation with human rights defenders working on the ground and on issues such as business and human rights.

Welcoming the adoption of the policy, the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights and the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders said, ‘FIFA’s commitment is a very positive move. This needs now to be followed up by action to prevent or identify and address any such attacks on human rights defenders in the context of forthcoming tournaments.’ ●



# Safeguarding defenders' access and participation

Defender  
Linda Baumann

*inclusion*



As governments criminalise activism and jail critics, and accountability mechanisms are increasingly eroded at the national level, more and more defenders are seeking to use the international and regional human rights systems to prevent and expose violations, to push for accountability, to obtain justice and protection, and as a lever to increase pressure for national-level change. ISHR works to ensure that these mechanisms are accessible, effective and protective for rights holders, defenders and victims. Our work also safeguards defenders against any form of intimidation or reprisal.

## » IMPACT

### General Assembly: Putting human rights defenders front and centre on the world stage

Twenty years on from the adoption of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, ISHR collaborated with seven other leading human rights organisations to convene the Human Rights Defenders World Summit in Paris. Bringing together more than 150 frontline activists from around the world, participants developed a comprehensive Action Plan to protect defenders, to be urgently implemented by States, businesses, financial institutions, donors and intergovernmental institutions.

On 18 December 2018, at a high-level UN General Assembly event proposed and successfully pushed for by ISHR and key partners, ISHR Board member Alice Mogwe presented the Action Plan to the world. This marked the first time that a civil society representative was invited to address a General Assembly high-level event, a groundbreaking precedent. Speaking on behalf of all those organisations and defenders who came together for the Summit, Alice said, 'I am proud to be a human rights defender. I am proud of the efforts made by my colleagues, every single day, in communities across the globe. Human rights defenders work to make the world a fairer, more just, and more peaceful place.' 🟠



### Twitter followers in 2018



English  
**17,838**

↑  
26%



Chinese  
**2,670**

↑  
55%



Spanish  
**457**

↑  
33%



French  
**325**

↑  
45%

## Reprisals: Strengthening protection for defenders and seeking accountability for perpetrators

The right to safe and unhindered access to international and regional justice mechanisms, and to be free from any form of intimidation or reprisal for seeking justice, is both a fundamental human right and essential to the relevance and effectiveness of these mechanisms.

Throughout 2018, ISHR contributed significantly to strengthening protections against reprisals for defenders and pursuing accountability against perpetrators of such acts. Together with key partners, ISHR's work and impact included:

- securing the adoption of the San José Guidelines on intimidation and reprisals by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, thereby enhancing access and strengthening protection for women human rights defenders engaging with this important treaty body;
- securing and influencing the Human Rights Council's first ever dedicated debate on reprisals, providing a powerful platform to focus international political and media attention on reprisals against defenders such as Ibrahim Metwally of Egypt, Chinese defenders Wang Qiaoling, Li Wenzu and Cao Shunli, and Uyghur activist Dolkun Isa;
- organising the first ever meeting of all treaty body focal points on reprisals, which led to the identification of good practices which ought to be replicated by all Treaty Bodies and which will strengthen protections for rights holders, victims and witnesses; and

**“ The range and nature of reprisals is shocking, ranging from travel bans, smear campaigns and surveillance, to arbitrary detention, torture and even killings. Reprisals affect the lives of victims and their families. They are designed to dissuade civil society and others from engaging with the UN, thereby adopting a strategy that violates international human rights obligations, as well as the UN Charter itself. Without civil society engagement, the UN's effectiveness in promoting and protecting human rights is weakened. We need to challenge such tactics energetically and consistently.**

**Andrew Gilmour**, UN Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights and Senior Official on Reprisals

- filing and supporting cases regarding threats of retaliation for cooperating with the International Criminal Court in relation to alleged war crimes by US military and intelligence services in Afghanistan; for NGOs from Kyrgyzstan which suffered reprisals for engaging with the UN Committee on Migrant Workers; and for a child rights advocate subject to a travel ban by Cuba rendering her unable to leave the country, just to name a few. ○



LORENARUSS.COM



**Defender**  
Xavier Martinez





## » IN FOCUS

### **Egypt:** Responding to and preventing systemic reprisals

In 2017, for the first time ever, the UN Secretary-General identified that there are a number of States that appear to have adopted a policy or strategy of reprisals to prevent and punish human rights defenders' engagement with the international human rights system.

Egypt is one of these States.

In 2018, ISHR partnered with five other leading human rights organisations – Amnesty International, the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, the Committee for Justice, Human Rights Watch, and the Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights – to call on the United Nations to ensure an urgent and robust system-wide response to reprisals perpetrated by Egypt. This followed on from credible reports that Egyptian authorities attacked people who engaged with the UN Special Rapporteur on adequate housing during her country visit in September and October 2018.

A joint statement issued by the Special Rapporteurs on adequate housing and on human rights defenders described the attacks as 'a worrying pattern of reprisals

against individuals and communities directly related to the visit of the Special Rapporteur on the right to housing.'

Witnesses said that several people who met with the Special Rapporteur's team or provided them with information experienced reprisals. They included the demolition of several homes, the incommunicado detention of one man for two days, summons for interrogation in police stations, and a travel ban against one lawyer.

These recent reports are the latest in what has become a systematic pattern by the Egyptian authorities of attacking those who attempt to engage with or provide information on human rights violations to UN entities. Egyptian security forces also placed restrictions on the Rapporteur's movement in Egypt.

Restricting the work of a UN team after officially inviting it to visit the country and retaliating against individuals who cooperated with this team is a testament to how the Egyptian government deals with human rights: mere decorative actions to cover up unprecedented oppression of civil society.

The Special Rapporteur visited several areas in Cairo to investigate the right to adequate housing, but the authorities refused to allow her to visit Warraq Island, in Giza, where residents are at risk of forced eviction. In Manshiyet Naser, an area in Western Cairo known



ISHR

INTERNATIONAL  
FOR HUMAN

Wishing farewell to former UN High  
Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Raad  
Al Hussein (pictured here with ISHR Human  
Rights Council Advocate Salma El Hosseiny)



51

#

10

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

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



for unsafe housing conditions and where authorities have been carrying out forced evictions, residents and lawyers confirmed that police officers arrested one man the Special Rapporteur had met several days earlier. The police held this man incommunicado for two days, before releasing him without charge.

In addition, on 22 October, the authorities demolished several houses in the neighborhood, including at least one belonging to someone with whom the Special Rapporteur had met. These demolitions were also reported by Egyptian media, including the pro-government newspaper al-Youm7, which published photos of the demolitions.

The steps the UN has taken to challenge the Egyptian government's brutal and widespread campaign of repression are commendable. These include recent statements that strongly denounce the mass death sentences for people who participated in protests in Egypt, and a rare call by a large number of UN independent experts for the UN Human Rights Council to 'urgently respond' to the government's 'appalling' behaviour.

Instead of working on improving its human rights records and ending violations, the Egyptian government responded to the UN by denying any and all wrongdoing and by accusing the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and other UN officials of breaching UN standards and adopting the 'lies' of 'terrorist' organisations.

This is happening in the context of a whole-scale governmental repression campaign which seeks to crush civil society and independent organisations by means of intimidation, arbitrary arrests, unfair prosecutions, and travel bans, among other abusive measures. The attacks against those who engaged with the Special Rapporteur and the restrictions imposed on her team during her visit are a direct attack on the UN system itself and a flagrant example of non-cooperation with the UN human rights system.

In light of these alarming circumstances, ISHR and its partner organisations set out a blueprint for action to address these attacks:

- the Coordinating Committee of the UN Special Procedures and all UN Special Procedure mandate holders should ensure that any further visits to Egypt are accompanied by sufficient and credible action by the Egyptian government to guarantee respect for the Terms of Reference for country visits, including: (a) confidential and private contacts with witnesses and others; (b) the commitment that no reprisals will occur against those who cooperate or seek to cooperate with the UN; and (c) the assurance that reprisals that may have occurred are adequately addressed, including by carrying out credible, thorough, and independent investigations and, where appropriate, providing adequate reparations to victims. If the Egyptian authorities fail to adhere to such measures,



the Coordinating Committee should recommend suspending further UN visits to Egypt.

- the Secretary-General should ensure an independent UN investigation into allegations of reprisals committed in the context of the visit of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing. He should provide a report to relevant UN bodies, including to the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council, on these attacks and propose steps by the UN system and the Egyptian authorities to address such reprisals and ensure that they are not repeated.
- the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) should review any ongoing cooperation between the Egyptian government and the Office. The OHCHR should ensure that any further cooperation includes a clear, time-bound commitment by the Egyptian government to ensure credible, thorough, impartial, and independent investigations into allegations of reprisals and, where appropriate, provide adequate reparations for victims.
- the President of the Human Rights Council should address allegations of reprisals, including by engaging directly with the Egyptian authorities and publicly denouncing attacks.
- finally and perhaps most significantly, UN member States should initiate action at the UN Human Rights Council to address these reprisals and ensure that Egypt adheres to its responsibilities as a member of the Council, recalling that members are bound to uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights, and to fully cooperate with the Council.

It is critical for the UN and its member States to ensure an urgent and robust system-wide response to address the dire situation that civil society is facing in Egypt. Failing to do so will only encourage similar human rights violations in the future and risk undermining the accessibility and credibility of the UN experts and the wider human rights system. ●

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Salma El Hosseiny is ISHR's Human Rights Council Advocate



## IMPACT

# Human Rights Defender Advocacy Programme: Strengthening capacity, creating impact

From 11 to 22 June 2018, ISHR hosted 14 committed human rights defenders from around the globe through our Human Rights Defender Advocacy Programme (HRDAP). The unique programme equips defenders with the knowledge, skills and networks to make strategic use of the international human rights system to create change on the ground back home. In 2017, an independent evaluation of HRDAP concluded that it built defenders' support and protection networks, strengthened their capacities and resilience, and made them more influential agents for change at the national level.

Defenders participating in HRDAP in 2018 worked on a wide range of areas – migrant rights, women's rights, business and human rights, the rights of LGBTI persons and human rights defender protection – in extremely different contexts – Australia, Bahamas, Botswana, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mexico, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Philippines, Peru, Russia and Tanzania.

HRDAP 2018 coincided with the 38th session of the Human Rights Council. This meant that as well as receiving training on all the UN human rights mechanisms from a range of experts, participants were able to build networks in Geneva and around the world, bring their message to UN member States and UN staff, learn from each other's wealth of experience, and even deliver statements and provide testimony at the Council itself.

Here is a taster of their many achievements and activities while in Geneva alone:

- Luisa Rios from Peru raised her voice for environmental, land and indigenous rights defenders at a Human Rights Council event on human rights defender protection policies
- at a separate Human Rights Council event, defenders from Nepal, Indonesia and Malaysia highlighted the restrictions and threats faced by women human rights defenders, and set out an agenda for their protection
- Linda Baumann from Namibia, together with other participants, called for concrete protection measures tailored to meet the risks faced by defenders protecting the rights of LGBTI persons
- defenders engaged in dynamic discussions with the Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights as well as six UN Special Procedures: independent experts on freedom of assembly and association, extreme poverty, discrimination against women, health, business and human rights, and sexual orientation and gender identity
- Elena Levina from Russia drew the Human Rights Council's attention to online violence against women human rights defenders in a statement prepared with other participants
- defenders from Botswana, Myanmar, Peru and the Philippines worked together to sound the alarm at the Council on the situation of persons defending environmental and land rights

**HRDAP 2018 did not finish in June, however. Each of the defenders who took part has made the journey from ISHR participant to ISHR partner, and we are now working with many of them on projects to secure meaningful and sustainable change on the ground. ○**

## HRDAP in their words

Defenders participating in the 2018 Human Rights Defender Advocacy Programme had this to say about their experiences:

*"All ISHR staff were so supportive and accessible, going above and beyond to ensure that we received maximum care and the support we needed."*

*"I love the ISHR team. It's a group of unique individuals – all highly professional, very supportive, very helpful and easy-going. It was a great pleasure meeting you guys. You're doing a great job!!!"*

*"HRDAP gave me the opportunity and access to the world of international advocacy which seemed so far away and foreign before. Even more, it gave me the rare opportunity to meet and engage directly with the Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, UN officials, Special Procedure Mandate Holders, and other key international players that I could not even dream of before. Thank you very much!"*



## » IMPACT

### Human Rights Defender Advocacy Programme: By the numbers



*"One of the most fruitful programmes I ever have undertaken – very practical and even individually tailored to my case."*





A black and white portrait of Teng Biao, a Chinese human rights defender, wearing glasses and a dark jacket. The portrait is partially obscured by a red graphic element on the right side of the page.

In the lead up to a major human rights review of China, we asked *Teng Biao* – a Chinese human rights defender, former ISHR trainee and visiting scholar at New York University – to reflect on how China has rewritten its human rights narrative under Xi Jinping and why international advocacy is so important to end impunity.



## DEFENDER'S VOICE

### China: UN review is critical chance for countries to change the narrative

Almost thirty years ago, the world watched as journalists and diplomats documented a brutal massacre of students on Tiananmen Square in Beijing.

Buoyed by the ensuing international outrage and pressure, everyone assumed that China's efforts to marketise and globalise, to join the WTO and to host the Olympics, would be milestones along a path leading to a more open society. Everyone assumed that if China would just ratify UN treaties, embrace international human rights standards, and advance the rule of law, it would become more rights-respecting.

These assumptions were part of a standard narrative, but my version of the story is different.

Since 1989, I have committed my life to promoting human rights in China. For that, I was repeatedly locked up in black jails, disappeared, and in 2011 detained and subject to torture for more than two months.

Diplomats, who believed that China fit the standard narrative and would comply with the standards it had signed up to, pressed the government about my case. The Chinese authorities replied, saying I had never been detained and that China was 'a country of rule of law'.

A woman I knew well in Beijing also believed the narrative. She tried for nearly a decade to use the treaties China had signed, the commitments they had made, to advance public participation and transparency. When she got in trouble, I was her defense lawyer.

But in September 2013, this brave human rights defender – Cao Shunli – was stopped at the airport before she boarded her flight for

Geneva. Instead of helping provide information for a UN rights review of China, she ended up in incommunicado detention. Six months later, she died in Chinese custody.

A day later, the Chinese government committed publicly, in Geneva, to take action on recommendations it received during that review, known as the 'Universal Periodic Review'. Many of these recommendations were inspired by cases like mine and Cao Shunli's – with States calling on China to prevent torture, support civil society, and combat reprisals. As far as narratives go, they talked the talk.

Five years have gone by. This week, on 6 November, China will once again undergo a review of its rights record. But with the rise of Xi Jinping to power, a sweeping crackdown has made human rights rhetoric far from reality.

Chinese authorities target lawyers, religious and ethnic minorities, NGOs, and dissenting voices. They leverage big data, extensive surveillance, and the Great Firewall censorship system to create a real-life parallel to Orwell's 1984. In Xinjiang, upwards of a million Uyghur and Kazakh Muslims are arbitrarily detained, without any legal process, separated from their children and vulnerable to torture, simply because of their beliefs.

In March 2018, President Xi Jinping succeeded in amending the Chinese Constitution to remove term limits, cementing his power and, thus far, impunity for any of those violations.

What we've also learned in the last five years is that suppression of basic freedoms by the



Chinese government does not stop at China's borders.

Chinese influence has gone global – on campuses, in Confucius Institutes and student associations, and in major media outlets. Foreign citizens like Swedish publisher Gui Minhai, or Canadian businessman Xiao Jianhua, or British passport holder and bookseller Li Bo have been disappeared without ever stepping foot in China.

Human Rights Watch published a report in 2017 highlighting the lengths to which China goes to limit scrutiny of their practices and their attacks on defenders at the UN. One of those defenders is human rights lawyer Wang Quan-zhang, who was disappeared more than three years ago and who has not yet seen a courtroom, a lawyer of his choosing, or his family.

To our dismay, China has managed to become the second largest economy in the world while hovering near the bottom of international rankings for human rights and democracy. It has, in essence, re-written the narrative.

In this new narrative, international norms are negotiable, the rule of law is manipulated, human dignity is debased, democracy is abused, and justice is denied. In this new narrative, corruption and persecution are ignored, perpetrators are immune, and regimes which violate rights are united and smugly resistant to change.

This rights review is not simply an assessment of China's progress on human rights. It is a test for the credibility of the UN system. Governments – not just those from 'the West' but any who want to see an end to abuse and injustice – have a responsibility to speak truth to power where Chinese defenders cannot.

It is a test of whether the international community will stand up to China, indict its crackdown on human rights domestically, and assert a counter-narrative to 'human rights with Chinese characteristics'. Through media, through VPNs, through chat groups and encrypted text, despite the risks, Chinese rights activists are watching. ●

Sarah M Brooks, Asia advocate at ISHR, also contributed to this piece

**“ The depth of the challenges humanity faces globally means that States should welcome the expertise and commitment of civil society, not block their entry to meet narrow political interests.**

Eleanor Openshaw,  
ISHR's New York Co-Director



## WORK IN PROGRESS

### Civil society participation: Reversing the backlash

Civil society has the right to 'unhindered access to and communication with international bodies'. However, that right is not being respected, with States that fear calls for accountability and justice doing what they can to prevent civil society access to and participation in UN spaces.

In 2018, ISHR launched a major report and video, 'The Backlash Against Civil Society Access and Participation at the United Nations', documenting a broad range of obstacles faced by human rights defenders, from opaque bureaucracies and procedures to physical threats and attacks.

Importantly, the report also lays out more than 40 highly specific recommendations and actions for States, as well as UN bodies and agencies, to prevent and counter restrictions on civil society participation in UN processes.

ISHR will work throughout 2019 with key allies, including civil society partners and a cross-regional group of States, to secure implementation of these vital measures. ●



# Our Team

## Board



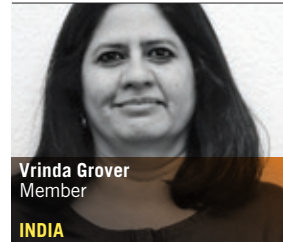
**Lucia Nader**  
Chair  
**BRAZIL**

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



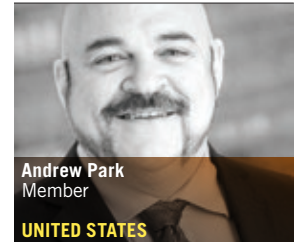
**Maryam Al-Khawaja**  
Member  
**BAHRAIN/DENMARK**

Human rights defender and Europe and Advocacy Director of Physicians for Human Rights. Former Director of the Gulf Center for Human Rights and former Acting President of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights.



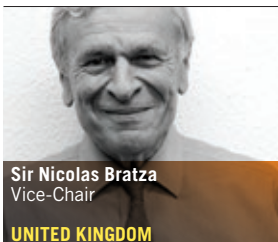
**Vrinda Grover**  
Member  
**INDIA**

Human rights lawyer and defender advocating and litigating landmark cases in relation to women's rights, torture and sexual minorities, Bureau member of South Asians for Human Rights.



**Andrew Park**  
Member  
**UNITED STATES**

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



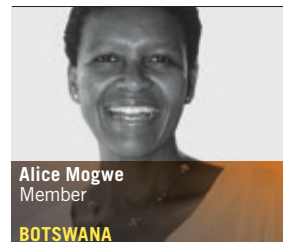
**Sir Nicolas Bratza**  
Vice-Chair  
**UNITED KINGDOM**

Former President and judge of the European Court of Human Rights, President of the British Institute of Human Rights, and Honorary Professor at Nottingham Law School.



**Elizabeth Broderick**  
Member  
**AUSTRALIA**

Expert member of UN Working Group on Discrimination against Women in Law and in Practice, Australian Sex Discrimination Commissioner from 2007 to 2015 and formerly a partner with international law firm Ashurst.



**Alice Mogwe**  
Member  
**BOTSWANA**

Director of Ditshwanelo (the Botswana Centre for Human Rights), recognised as one of the leading human rights lawyers in Africa, and a prominent advocate on women's rights and development.



**Jean-Daniel Vigny**  
Member  
**SWITZERLAND**

Expert-consultant on international human rights issues for Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs and former Minister for the Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the UN in New York and Geneva.



**Pierre Avanzo**  
Treasurer  
**FRANCE**

Management consultant and former Partner with McKinsey & Co, where he worked for 18 years across Asia, Europe and the United States.



**Jean-Claude Ern **  
Member  
Appointed November 2018  
**SWITZERLAND**

Equity Partner at Banque Pictet and CEO of the Swiss Wealth Management market, trained as a lawyer and admitted to the Geneva Bar.



**Egbert Myjer**  
Member  
**THE NETHERLANDS**

Professor of Human Rights Law, Commissioner with the International Commission of Jurists, and former judge of the European Court of Human Rights.



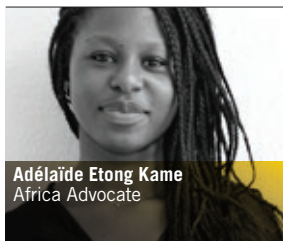
# Staff

## Interns and Fellows

Lyudmila Aleksandrova, Anwesha Andyopadhyay, Joan Maria Monclús Busquets, Raphaël Viana David, Thomas Foley, Laura Gonzalez, Daura Vera Hernandez, John Indergaard, Juli King, Katie Krahulik, Joyinola Layonu, Janice Lopez, Maria Mahdessian, Aiden McKee, Martina Napoletano, Sena Christa Nutakor, Luke Wilson, Anteia Win. The names of some Human Rights Defender Fellows have been omitted for personal security reasons.



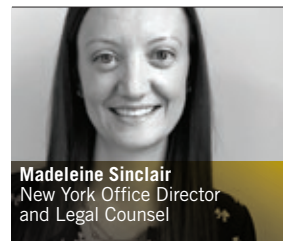
**Michael Anthony**  
HRCnet Coordinator



**Adélaïde Etong Kame**  
Africa Advocate



**Tess McEvoy**  
Programme Manager  
(LGBTI rights) and Legal  
Counsel



**Madeleine Sinclair**  
New York Office Director  
and Legal Counsel



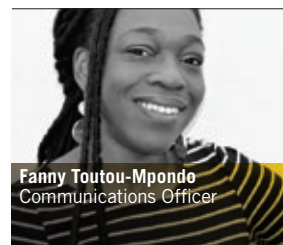
**Sarah Brooks**  
Programme Manager (Asia and  
Migrant Rights) and Brussels  
Representative



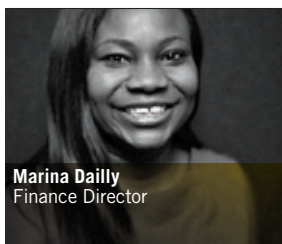
**Eva Homolkova**  
Fundraising Officer



**Helen Nolan**  
Programme Manager  
(Training and LGBTI rights)



**Fanny Toutou-Mpondo**  
Communications Officer



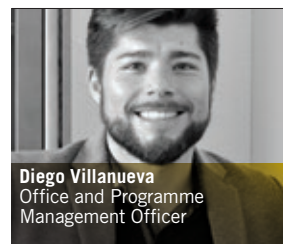
**Marina Dailly**  
Finance Director



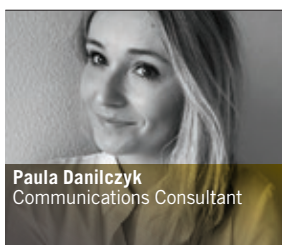
**Adela Hurtado**  
Legal Fellow



**Eleanor Openshaw**  
New York Office Director and  
Head of Regional Advocacy



**Diego Villanueva**  
Office and Programme  
Management Officer



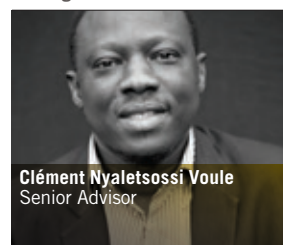
**Paula Danilczyk**  
Communications Consultant



**Michael Ineichen**  
Programme Director



**Pooja Patel**  
Programme Director



**Clément Nyaletsossi Voule**  
Senior Advisor



**Christine Do Phan**  
Communications Manager



**Espérance Kana**  
Human Resources and  
Administration Manager



**Vincent Ploton**  
Director of Development  
and Treaty Body Advocacy



**Duru Yavan**  
Human Rights Defender Fellow



**Salma El Hosseiny**  
Human Rights Council Advocate



**Philip Lynch**  
Executive Director



**Antsa Rakotonanahary**  
Finance Coordinator

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The generous contributions of our financial supporters sustain our work to support human rights defenders, strengthen human rights systems and achieve human rights change. They 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. Please support human rights defenders and invest in ISHR.

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ISHR is one of the best NGOs I worked with while in Geneva. They're doing great work with #HumanRights Defenders. Happy to support!

@IanDuddyFCO  
British Ambassador to Uruguay

**“ Thanks to the expertise and significant pro bono support we receive from leading international law firms, we are able to deliver justice for individuals and systemic change for human rights.**

Madeleine Sinclair, ISHR's New York Co-Director and Legal Counsel



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Human rights defenders work to make the world a better place. The good folk at @ISHRglobal give them a helping hand to access, navigate and utilise the UN system for their advocacy. Give to their #GiveBack fundraiser!

@TomHRLC  
 Director of Campaigns with the Human Rights Law Centre

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### Up to \$100

Christine Do Phan, Chris Duckett, Ian Duddy, Christopher Kirchgasler, William Pace, Bruce Papp, Penny Parker, Vincent and Juliette Ploton, Valentine Sébile, Jean-Daniel Vigny

## International law firms

During 2018, 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
- Ashurst
- DLA Piper
- Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer
- Monard Law
- Orrick
- Shearman & Sterling
- White & Case
- Winston & Strawn

# Financial Statements

*This is an extract of ISHR's audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2018*

For a complete version, please contact Marina Dailly at [m.dailly@ishr.ch](mailto:m.dailly@ishr.ch)

2018 CHF

2017 CHF

## Income

### Revenue – Core

Governmental Agencies	1,010,048	928 132
Trusts and Foundations	230,690	310 436
Individual Donors	35,662	39 179
Other Revenue	125,178	159 791
<b>Total Core Grants</b>	<b>1,401,578</b>	<b>1 437 539</b>

### Revenue – Earmarked

Governmental Agencies	1,598,277	897 562
Trusts and Foundations	375,702	350 073
<b>Total Earmarked Grants</b>	<b>1,973,978</b>	<b>1 247 635</b>
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>3,375,556</b>	<b>2 685 175</b>

PROFIT AND LOSS  
STATEMENT FOR  
YEAR ENDED 31  
DECEMBER 2018

## Costs

Personnel and Related Costs	1,801,946	1 646 474
Programme Costs	848,036	666 525
Operating, Administrative and Finance Costs	363,844	292 939
Governance and Strategy Costs	29,977	26 243
<b>Total Costs</b>	<b>3,043,804</b>	<b>2 632 181</b>
<b>Income (Deficit) For The Year</b>	<b>331,752</b>	<b>52 993</b>

## Assets

Cash and Cash Equivalents	833,515	597 355
Debtors	46,976	21 329
Deferred Expenses	–	–
Grants Receivable – Governmental	517,350	204 194
Grants Receivable – Non-governmental	91,116	179 988
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>1,488,957</b>	<b>1 002 866</b>

BALANCE SHEET  
AT 31 DECEMBER  
2018

## Liabilities and Reserves

### Liabilities

Current Liabilities	241,634	97 096
Provisions	6,873	8 369
Deferred Grants	614,710	603 414
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>863,217</b>	<b>708 879</b>

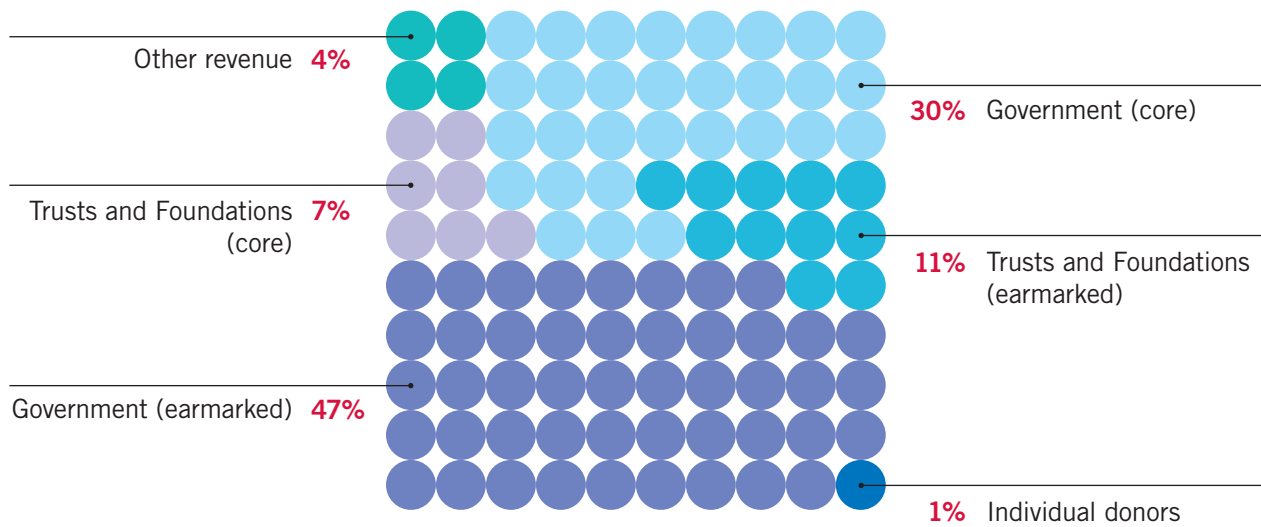
### Reserves

Reserve Funds	293,987	240 994
Income (Deficit) for the Year	331,752	52 993
<b>Total Reserves</b>	<b>625,739</b>	<b>293 987</b>
<b>Total Liabilities and Reserves</b>	<b>1,488,957</b>	<b>1 002 866</b>



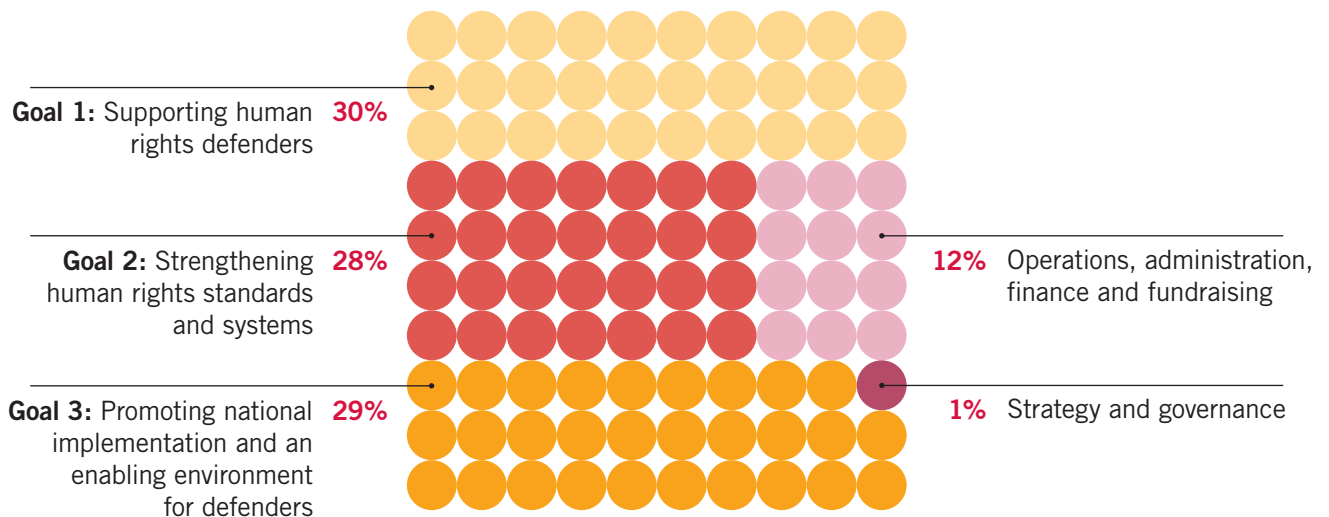
## Income by Source

Total CHF 3,375,556



## Expenditure by Category

Total CHF 3,043,804



**The work of defenders is essential to ensure that all people can enjoy freedom, dignity, equality and justice.**

ISHR's work serves to: protect defenders, amplify their voices, expand and strengthen their networks, mobilise coalitions to support them, and substantially increase their influence and impact.





Supporting causes within their local community: ISHR staff members participated in the Harmony Geneva Marathon in May 2018.

# At their. service



## ANNUAL REPORT 2019

FOR YEAR ENDING 31 DECEMBER 2018

For more information about our work, or any issues covered in this publication, please visit our website: [www.ishr.ch](http://www.ishr.ch)

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CH-1211 Geneva 20 CIC

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Defender  
Alexus D'Marco

