

# HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS: INSPIRING HOPE, SHAPING A FAIRER FUTURE

ANNUAL REPORT 2022 FOR YEAR ENDING 31 DECEMBER 2021



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See page 48 for full details.

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Mathew Smith (Kingkongphoto &  
[www.celebrity-photos.com](http://www.celebrity-photos.com)),  
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#### Amanda Gorman photo:

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p27: Arianne Mawaffo (top); UN  
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p32: Rosana Lezama Sanchez

p35: from top to bottom: PaWED,  
Mauricio Ochieng', Just Associ-  
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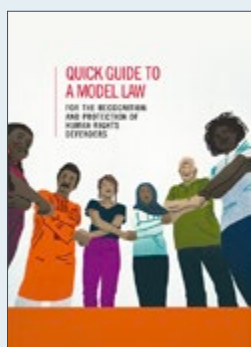
p39 bottom: CAWOPEM

p45 Romel Gonzalez Diaz

We thank all photographers  
whose work has been integral to  
the promotion of ISHR work and  
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# NEW RESOURCES

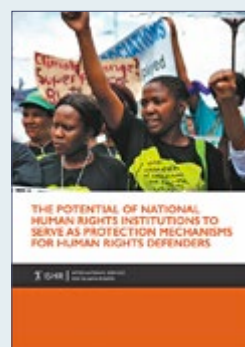
In 2021, ISHR published a number of resources supporting all people who defend, promote and protect human rights. A selection can be seen below while a complete listing is available at <https://ishr.ch/defenders-toolbox/resources/>



This **Quick Guide**, accompanying the Model Law, has been developed to communicate the sections of the Model Law, including the rights of human rights defenders and obligations of States, in an accessible manner.



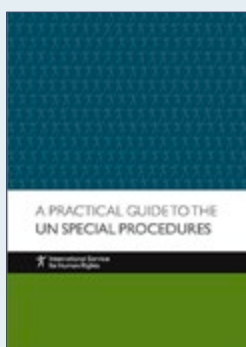
ISHR analysed 709 reprisals cases documented by the UN Secretary-General. **Our study** found that, while the appointment of a UN senior official on intimidation and reprisals led to an increase in resources and better reporting and follow up, there is still room to strengthen the UN's response.



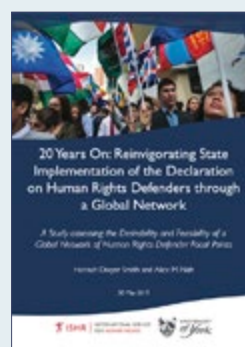
Our **latest research** explores the extent to which national human rights institutions could act as national protection mechanisms as part of the implementation of national human rights defender protection laws in selected West African countries.



Whether as community activists, NGO workers, or diplomats, most of us who support human rights are involved in putting stories out into the world. Discover our **new guide** to crafting effective human rights narratives at the UN!



**Our guide** (which was fully updated in 2021) provides an overview of the system of independent human rights experts known as the Special Procedures, and the different ways human rights defenders can make use of it to further their human rights causes.



ISHR together with the HRD Hub at the Centre for Applied Human Rights, University of York, launched a **new study** on the 'Desirability and Feasibility of a Global Network of Human Rights Defenders Focal Points'.

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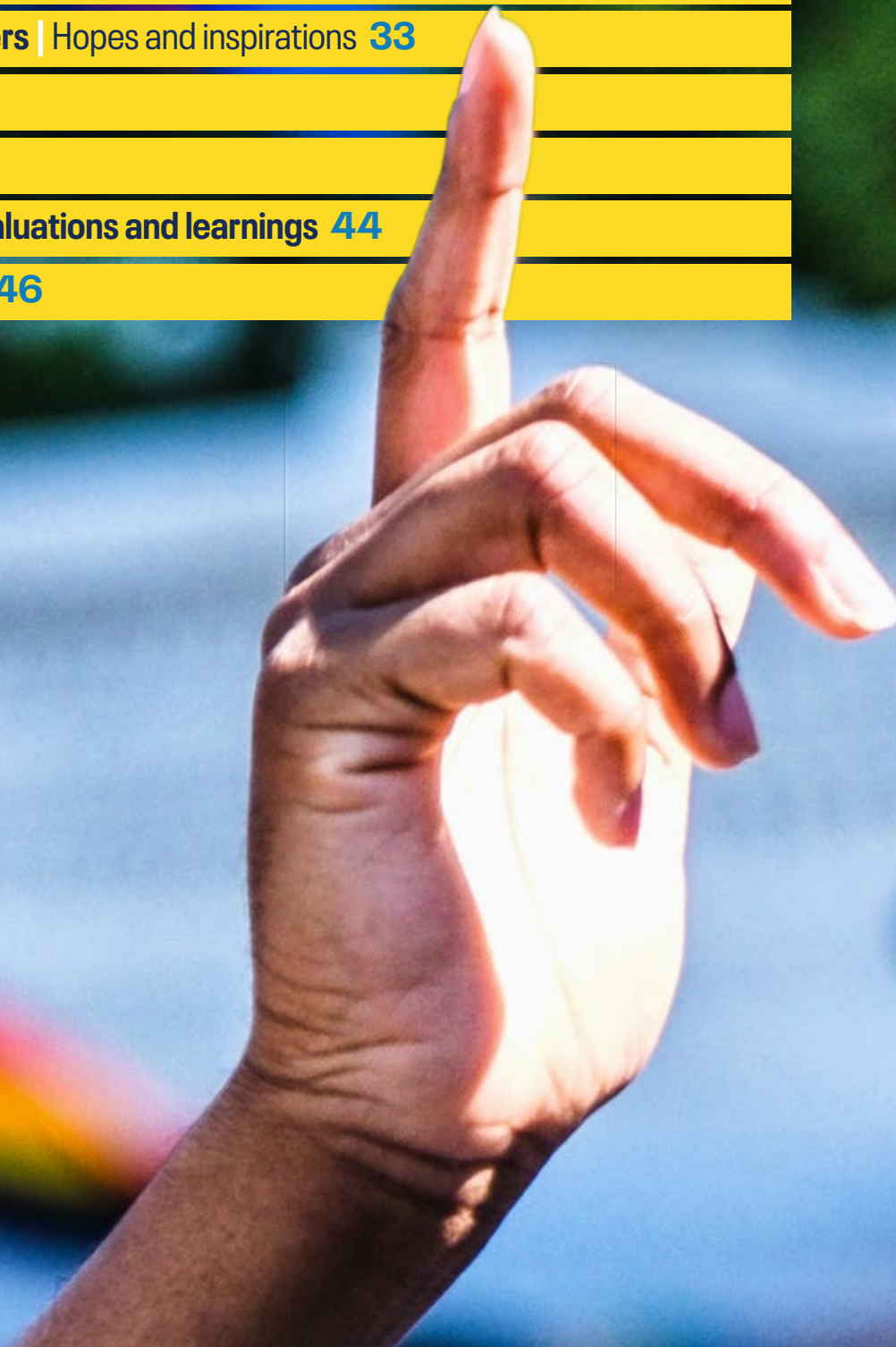
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# MESSAGE FROM CHAIRPERSON AND DIRECTOR

Dear friends

Almost 30 years ago, Black poet, scholar and woman human rights defender **Sonia Sanchez** alluded to the preamble and promise of the United Nations Charter, when she wrote:

if **we the people** work, organize, resist, come together for peace, racial, social and sexual justice  
it'll get better  
it'll get better.

Invoking the metaphor of fire, and recalling torch bearers from Queen Nzingha to Fannie Lou Hamer to Nelson Mandela, she urged us to 'catch the fire', 'be the fire' and 'pass it on'.

Three decades on, Sanchez's hope and resolve were reflected in the words of **22-year-old Youth Laureate poet Amanda Gorman** at the US presidential inauguration. Calling for solidarity and ambition following the defeat of a despotic candidate and attempted insurrection, Gorman reminded us:



There is  
**always** light,  
if only we're  
brave enough  
to see it.

If only we're  
brave enough  
to be it.

Read together, Sanchez and Gorman help us to understand that to defend human rights is an act of bravery and solidarity and, above all, an act of hope and resolve. Hope for a future in which all peoples and communities enjoy freedom, dignity, justice and peace. And resolve to work, individually and collectively, to realise that vision.

*Continued*

## It's been challenging to see Gorman's light at times over the last two years, obscured as it's been by the fog of the pandemic and continued violations against defenders in all regions.

But it's also been a period over which sparks were lit on key issues which we must now nurture and ensure fires of progress that long burn bright.

**A spark was lit** under the issue of racial justice, with the establishment of a historic expert mechanism to advance racial justice and equality in law enforcement, as well as a commission to inquire into the root causes of conflict and violence against the Palestinian people.

**A spark was lit** under the issue of sexual justice, with widespread mobilisation and calls for accountability in cases of sexual harassment and assault, as well as the release from arbitrary detention of a number of prominent women human rights defenders.

**A spark was lit** under the issue of climate justice, with the landmark recognition under international human rights law of the right to a healthy and sustainable environment, as well as the mandating of a new UN Special Rapporteur on Climate Change.

**And a spark was lit** under the issue of social justice, with an increased number and diversity of persons prepared to speak up and take action against widespread and systemic violations in States including China, Egypt, Nicaragua, Russia, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela, while in other States in Africa, Asia and Latin America progress was made in the legal recognition and protection of defenders.



**Philip Lynch**  
Executive Director

**Vrinda Grover**  
Chair of the ISHR Board



Here at ISHR we pledge to support defenders and to organise and work with them this year – and for many years ahead – to nurture and fuel these hopeful sparks for human rights and justice.

In solidarity with defenders, and with you.



# VISION AND STRATEGY SHAPING A FAIRER FUTURE WITH HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS



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

ISHR's Strategic Framework for the period 2021-2025 sets out the ways in which we support and act in solidarity with defenders and, in so doing, contribute to a world that is fair, just, sustainable and peaceful, in which all people enjoy freedom, dignity and equality, in communities that are diverse and inclusive.

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

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

representation and participation, and the redistribution of economic and political power. They are engaging with the international human rights system to address major global issues, such as systemic racism and police violence and the need for robust and effective human rights regulation of corporations, as well as to monitor and seek international accountability for widespread and systematic violations in States such as China, Egypt, Myanmar, Nicaragua, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela.

On many of these issues, we are at an inflection point; a point at which the work of human rights defenders is perhaps more imperiled but more important than ever. For many defenders, international and regional human rights laws and mechanisms have the potential to protect and amplify their work and impact on the ground. Indeed, for many defenders working in restrictive national contexts, regional and international mechanisms may be the only platforms available. For these mechanisms to be effective, however, they need to be credible, accessible and responsive to defenders, providing them with a safe and influential platform from which to demand justice, push for accountability, and contribute to positive change.





# OUR GOALS FOR CHANGE

Supported by our Theory of Change, ISHR works to ensure that:

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

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

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

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

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

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



# WHO WE SERVE AND SUPPORT

ISHR supports and acts in solidarity with human rights defenders in their work for freedom, dignity, equality, justice and other fundamental values at the international, regional and national levels. We undertake this work with and through other non-governmental organisations, networks and coalitions.

We are deeply informed by the situation, protection needs and priorities of defenders. We work with them in partnerships that are long-term, committed, respectful, empowering and which recognise and honour their knowledge and expertise.



ALERTIA - REPORT



**NUMBER OF PEOPLE ACCESSING INFORMATION AND SUPPORT THROUGH THE ISHR ACADEMY**

10,876

141% 

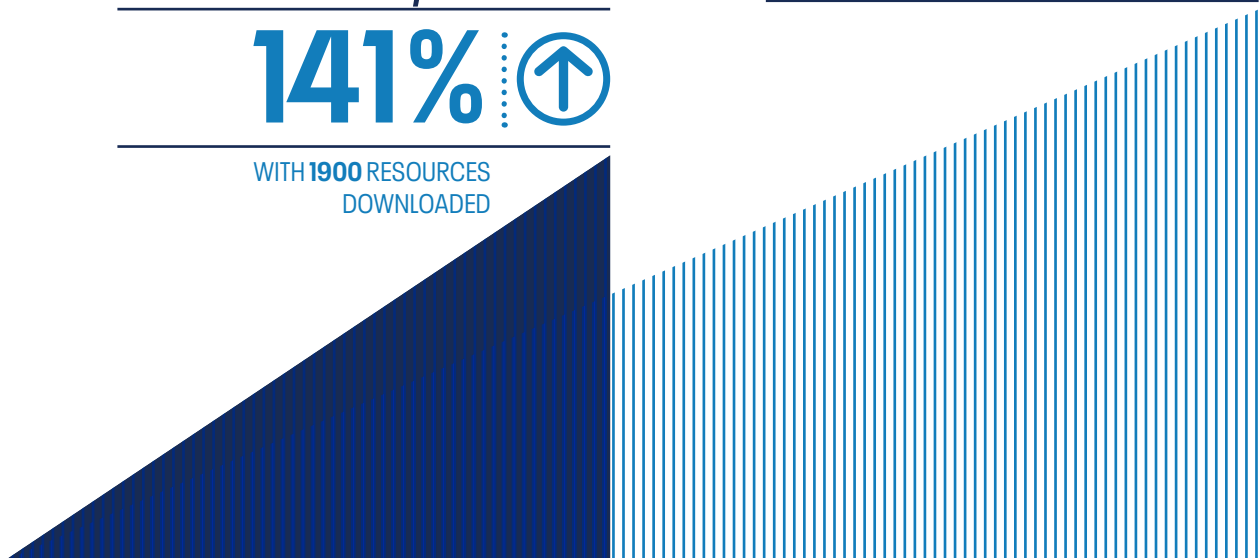
WITH 1900 RESOURCES DOWNLOADED



**NUMBER OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS TO WHOM ISHR PROVIDED TRAINING OR ADVOCACY SUPPORT**

1,019

191% 



**ISHR's programmes provide support and solidarity to human rights defenders working on the following issues, which we recognise as intersectional and interdependent:**

- **Equality, dignity and non-discrimination**

Through this programme, ISHR provides solidarity and support to women human rights defenders and defenders working on topics related to sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or sex characteristics. We also support migrant and refugee rights defenders, and anti-racism defenders, as well as other defenders working to dismantle patriarchal, racist, capitalist, colonialist and other oppressive agendas.

- **Environmental justice and sustainability**

Through this programme, ISHR provides solidarity and support to defenders working on issues of environmental justice, corporate responsibility and accountability, and sustainable and inclusive development. We also seek to ensure that businesses and other non-State actors are effectively regulated with respect to human rights and defenders, consult with and become positive advocates for defenders, take action to respect and contribute to the protection of defenders, refrain from actions that restrict or violate their rights, and are held accountable when they fail to do so.

- **International accountability**

Through this programme, we provide solidarity and support to defenders working in highly restrictive or repressive environments, and undertake lobbying, advocacy and litigation to ensure that defenders are safe and free. We work to promote both State and non-State accountability for widespread and systematic threats, attacks, restrictions and reprisals against defenders.

- **Transparency and the rule of law**

Through this programme, we provide solidarity and support to defenders working in deteriorating environments where there is a need to safeguard democratic institutions and accountability mechanisms. We also support defenders working in environments where there is an opportunity to strengthen human rights defenders protection laws and mechanisms.

**In each of our programmes we use a range of integrated tactics, developed and implemented in partnership with defenders at the national, regional and international levels. These tactics include:**

- ➔ Training, capacity building, strategic advice, advocacy support and fellowships for human rights defenders
- ➔ Legislative and policy research, advocacy and advice
- ➔ Strategic litigation and interventions
- ➔ Narrative development, campaigning and mobilisation
- ➔ Coalition and movement building and coordination, including acting as secretariat for HRCnet and as co-convenor of the Business Network on Civic Freedoms and Human Rights Defenders

# A VALUES-DRIVEN ORGANISATION

We are **principled** and **passionate** about human rights.

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

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

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

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

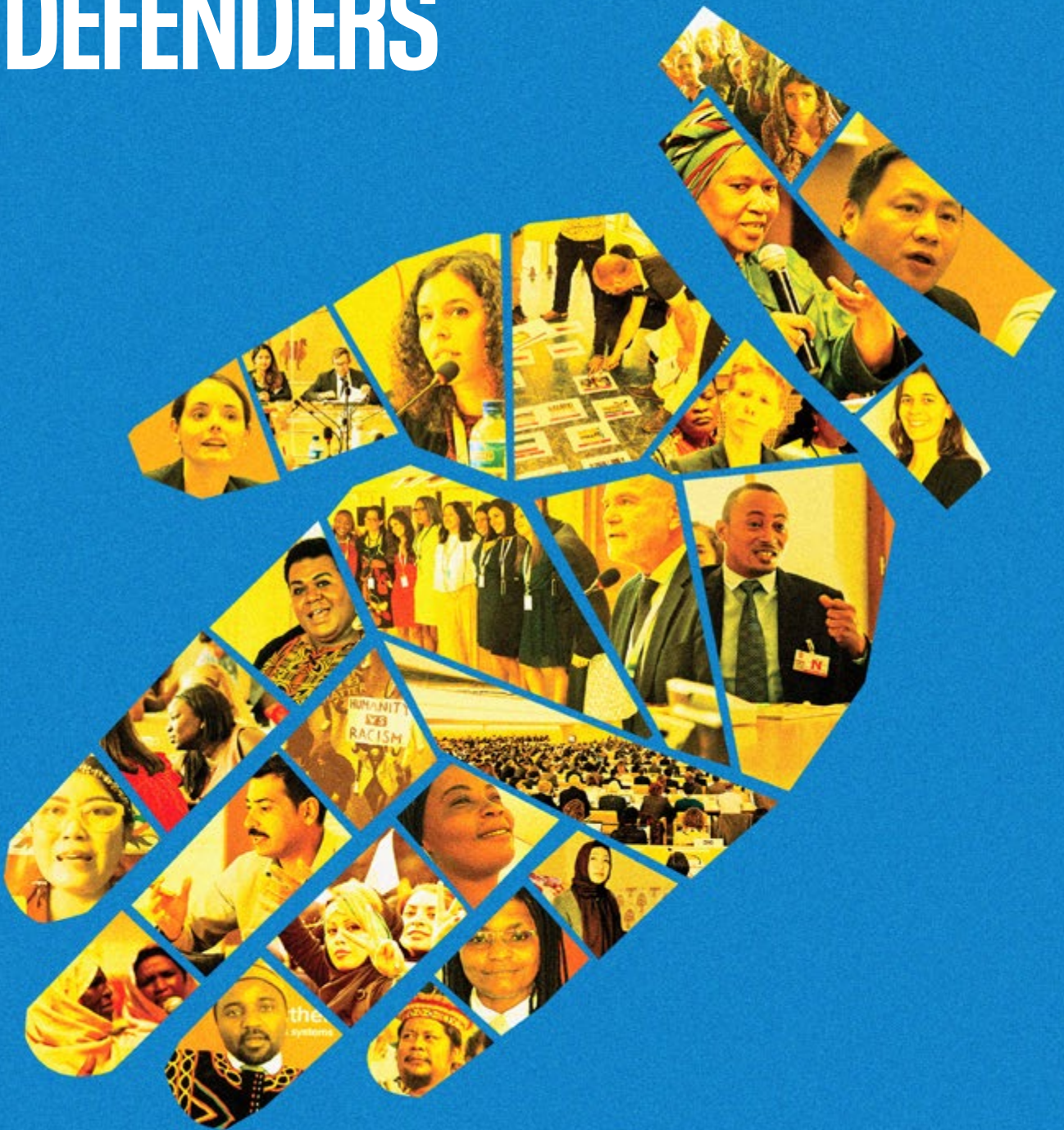
## DISCOVER MORE

We are energised by ISHR's strategy, inspired by the defenders we serve, and committed to working with our partners to achieve our shared vision. To learn more and to support this vision, see <https://ishr.ch/about-us/strategy/>

“As an activist and employee with NDWA, I have directly benefited from ISHR's training and mentorship. **ISHR has a unique way of working** with activists. They carry great consciousness of diversity, realities and the needs of their trainees. With this I mean that they take direct interest in our wellbeing, the **principles of humanity are applied at all times**, and they really create an environment that enables us all to appreciate, value and acknowledge the growth we journey collectively. The ISHR team has been the best partner organisation that NDWA worked with, as they do respect our autonomy and realities on the ground which manifested into **equal partnership**.”

LINDA BAUMANN, FEMINIST, HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST AND STRATEGIC COORDINATOR AT NAMIBIA DIVERSE WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION (NDWA)

# GOAL AND IMPACT SUPPORTING HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS





### OUR 2021 GOAL:

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

### WHAT WE ACHIEVED:

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

- **provided defenders with the tools, capacities, networks and narratives** necessary to engage and influence international, regional and national mechanisms and actors
- **provided defenders with solidarity** and stronger networks of influence, protection and support
- **helped defenders who were deprived of liberty**, subject to reprisals or other grave violations to seek justice and accountability

# SELECTED HIGHLIGHTS



Raphaël Viana  
@vdraphael

📣 Our global campaign to [#RepealRSDL](#) in China starts now! You can help us & [#StandWithDefenders](#)

Join the campaign:  
[中文活动](#)  
[En español:](#)  
[En français:](#)



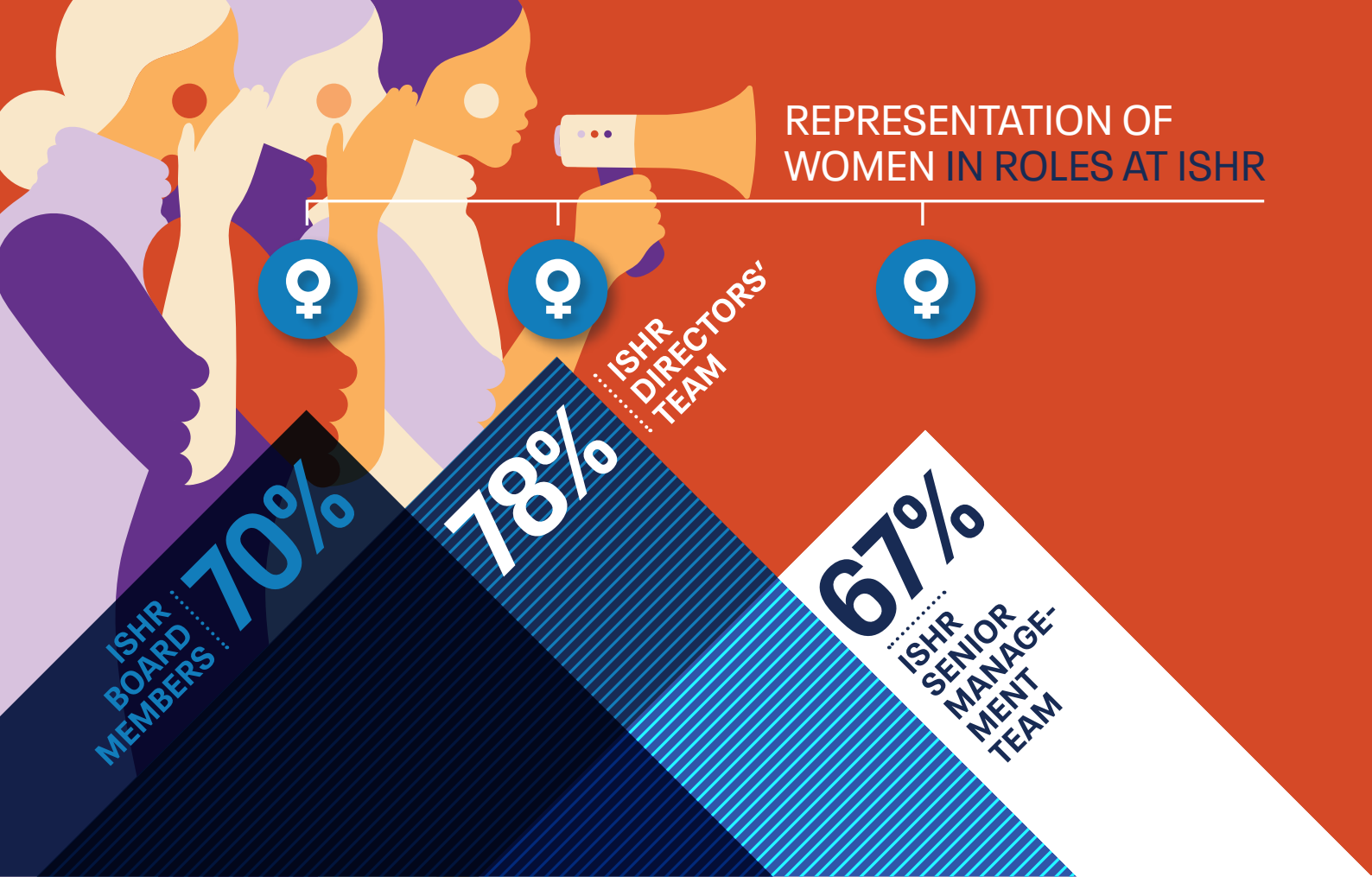
Following sustained advocacy by ISHR – together with public statements and solidarity actions by civil society partners, UN experts and senior government officials – **human rights defenders including Loujain Al-Hathloul and Nouf Abdulaziz of Saudi Arabia, and Germain Rukuki of Burundi, were released from arbitrary detention.** We will continue to advocate for their unconditional freedom and safety, as well as that of many other unjustly imprisoned human rights defenders.

With a significantly increased demand for online training and strategic advocacy support, we continued to **scale up the ISHR Academy**, adding new modules and language functionalities, as well as a dedicated platform for participants and alumni of our Human Rights Defender Advocacy Programme (HRDAP). The Academy is an interactive online platform to build the capacity and skills of defenders to leverage the UN human rights system to contribute to national level change. During 2021, the Academy received over 10,000 visits from defenders from all regions of the world, and almost 2,000 resources were downloaded. 92% of HRDAP21 participants surveyed indicated that the HRDAP Platform and ISHR Academy were ‘easy to access and easy to navigate’.



In total, **ISHR provided training and advocacy support to 1,019 human rights defenders from all regions** online and offline, an increase of 191% compared with 2020.

We worked to ensure that international bodies and processes are accessible and responsive to human rights defenders and that they have the tools, resources and networks necessary to **tell their own stories** and articulate their own demands. In 2021, we **supported more than 25 human rights defenders in addressing the UN Human Rights Council directly.**



CÉCILIA CASTELLU • SEE PG 48



Among many others, ISHR was privileged to work with defenders from **France** and the **United Kingdom** to demand an **end to systemic racism in policing**; defenders from **Niger** to call for respect for freedom of expression online and offline; defenders from **Sudan** and **Nicaragua** to push for the establishment of international accountability mechanisms; and partners from **Mozambique**, **the DRC** and **Namibia** to call for **enhanced protection for defenders of the rights of women and LGBTIQ+ persons**.

Addressing the Council directly using the platform provided by ISHR, **Alphonsus Gbanie of Sierra Leone** demanded **accountability for the killing of environmental defenders**, **Denis Ndayishemeza from Burundi** called for an end to the arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance and extrajudicial killing of defenders, Meudy Osio – the **widow of Venezuelan defender Fernando Alban** – articulated her demands for justice, and **Abdullah al Jureiwi** implored the Council to establish an **international monitoring mechanism on Saudi Arabia**.

In Namibia, ISHR worked with a national coalition of LGBTIQ+ organisations to develop and implement **a strategy to decriminalise same-sex consensual sexual conduct**. The strategy integrates international and regional advocacy – including engagement with the Universal Periodic Review, the UN women’s rights committee and the African Commission on Human & Peoples’ Rights – with a range of national level activities. We also worked with the African Intersex Movement to finalise its strategic framework and further build governance and fundraising skills essential for the movement’s functioning and sustainability.





PhilALynch   
@PhilALynch

THREAD


The stories we tell about human rights and those who defend them can contribute to their protection. Check out @ISHRglobal's guide & download the awesome new visuals on human rights defender narratives! <https://ishr.ch/defenders-toolbox/resources/>

@the\_hope\_guy  
@TomClarkeTweets  
@anatosaurus



 In partnership with the **Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions**, ISHR provided online **training to staff of national human rights institutions (NHRIs)** from across the region to strengthen their capacities to support and protect defenders. Staff from the NHRIs of **Bahrain, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Nepal, Palestine, Philippines, Samoa, Sri Lanka, Thailand** and **Timor Leste** participated in the programme, which also established a community of practice to enable collaboration on the protection of defenders beyond the course. The training will aid the effective implementation of the Asia Pacific Forum's **Regional Action Plan on Human Rights Defenders**, to which ISHR contributed significantly as an expert reference group member.

 As an aspect of our unique role in and contribution to civil society coordination and strategisation at the international level, ISHR continued to **host and substantially support the secretariat of HRCnet**, a coalition of leading national, regional and international human rights organisations engaged in advocacy at the UN Human Rights Council. HRCnet members made their voices heard in the three regular sessions and five special sessions in 2021, both individually and collectively; calling for more oversight, accountability and better responses from the international community on thematic and country-specific situations. Network members led and joined more than 20 joint statements and collaborated on almost 40 letters, submissions and campaigns. Among other achievements, this led to the convening of a special session and **establishment of an International Commission of Inquiry on Israel/OPT** mandated to investigate violations and abuses of international humanitarian and human rights law, and all underlying root causes of recurrent tensions. HRCnet members also collaborated to **strengthen human rights monitoring mechanisms on Sudan** and on **Belarus**, although tragically failed to prevent the termination of a vital international mechanism on Yemen.

 With the stories told by and about human rights defenders being a crucial element contributing to their protection, we published a **groundbreaking guide on crafting effective narratives** about human rights and those who defend them. In addition to a widely attended public launch, we also provided targeted narratives training to civil society actors engaged at the UN, as well as to human rights defenders in Kenya and Colombia.

“ ISHR calls on the UAE to release all of those human rights defenders like **Ahmed Mansoor** who have been arbitrarily detained solely for their work to promote human rights, equality and justice. **The UAE should also guarantee a safe and enabling environment** for the work of human rights defenders, and repeal all laws providing for male guardian authority over female family members. ”

ISHR DIRECTOR PHIL LYNCH QUOTED IN *CYCLING WEEKLY*, 15 OCTOBER 2021

# IN DEPTH:

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER ADVOCACY PROGRAMME

Each year, ISHR's flagship Human Rights Defender Advocacy Programme (HRDAP) **provides activists with the tools they need to navigate the UN to achieve even greater impact on the ground.** Running from 5 April to 25 June 2021, HRDAP21 brought together 19 inspiring activists from around the globe through the brand-new **HRDAP Platform** on the ISHR Academy. Over a 12-week period, the defenders engaged with one another through peer check-in sessions, with human rights experts and advocates through live Q&As and discussions, received individual and group coaching sessions, and developed advocacy strategies to effect change back home.

This truly global HRDAP21 cohort comprised defenders from 17 countries, including **Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Lebanon, Mexico, the Netherlands, Peru, Poland, South Africa, Spain** and other countries with restrictive environments.

The defenders work on a wide range of topics, including the advancement of **women's rights**, the **rights of LGBTIQ+ persons**, and **migrant and refugee rights**, as well as **combating racism** and police violence, **countering repression and authoritarianism**, and protecting the **environment and indigenous peoples' rights**.

Despite continued restrictions due to the global pandemic which meant that HRDAP21 took place fully online for its second consecutive year, the dynamic group of defenders remained more committed than ever, engaging actively in the programme and forming a virtual global community of solidarity and support, all while continuing their vital human rights work in their respective countries.

Three months after the end of the programme, HRDAP21 alumni had continued their engagement at the international level. They had submitted reports and met with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, engaged with the Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association and with the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, and delivered evidence and testimony at the 47th Session of the Human Rights Council.

“ Being part of **HRDAP 2021** is a unique experience. Firstly, because the platform they offer us to improve our knowledge about international advocacy is very useful, accessible and practical, besides having many resources and tools that allow us to amplify our work as human rights defenders. Secondly, having the opportunity to **connect and meet defenders from all over the world** makes me feel very motivated, not only to learn about their experiences but also because it makes me more aware that **in every corner of the world actions are being taken to transform our reality and to live in fairer societies.** ”

DONOVAN JIMÉNEZ ORTEGA, FRAY FRANCISCO DE VITORIA HUMAN RIGHTS CENTER, MEXICO

# INCREASE IN ISHR ONLINE MEDIA ACTIVITY SINCE 2020

## SESSIONS ON WWW.ISHR.CH

↑ 44%

212,212

## INSTAGRAM FOLLOWERS

↑ 36%

994

## YOUTUBE VIEWS

↑ 32%

21,731

## FACEBOOK FOLLOWERS

↑ 10%

23,407

## TWITTER FOLLOWERS

### CHINESE

↑ 19%

5,356

### FRENCH

↑ 15%

533

### SPANISH

↑ 19%

770

### ENGLISH

↑ 10%

27,413



# IN DEPTH:

## EFFECTIVE NARRATIVES TO ENHANCE PROTECTION AND SUPPORT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

The stories and narratives that are told about human rights defenders at the UN have a major impact on how they are understood and supported on the ground. According to Media Cloud – an open-source platform that tracks the contents of online news – between 1 January 2019 and 3 June 2020 forty percent of news stories which referenced human rights defenders also referred to the UN.

During the course of 2021, together with a team of communications experts and researchers, ISHR explored perceptions and views that diplomats working at the UN have about human rights and people who defend them. Our objective was to understand the messages that best increase support for human rights defenders at the UN and to craft more effective human rights narratives to increase support for defenders both at the international level and on the ground.

In June 2021, ISHR published a guide with our key findings and recommendations, named **A Seat at the Table**. The guide is for anyone working within or engaging with the UN system to promote and protect human rights and the people who defend them.

With growing evidence that hope-based and values-led narratives are most effective in changing people's hearts and minds and motivating action, the guide provides practical advice and tips on how to craft and implement an effective human rights defender narrative in general and in particular at the UN.

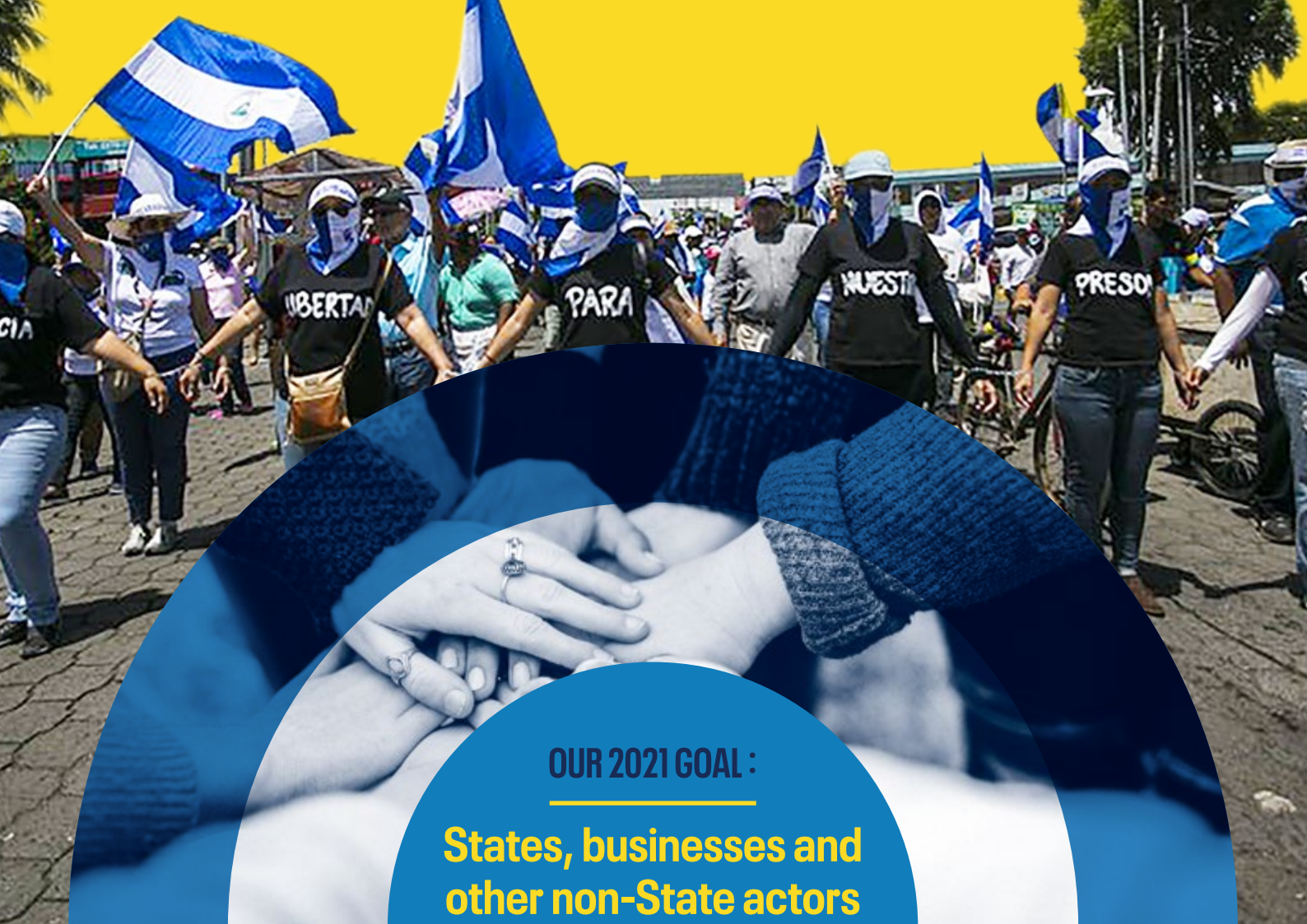
In a nutshell, the guide recommends that:

1. Narratives about people who defend human rights primarily focus on their motivations, achievements and objectives, rather than the dangers and risks they face. Yes, too many of us face risks and a grim reality today, but we mustn't lose sight of our desired destination – the reason we push on and ask others to join us: a better tomorrow.
2. We give frequent reminders that we can all contribute to fulfil the promise of human rights – that creating a world in which everyone enjoys freedom, justice, equality and dignity requires a collective effort.
3. Our stories show what human rights defenders having a seat at the table looks like, whether that's a corporate board table, a conflict resolution and peacebuilding roundtable, or the speakers' table in Room XX at the Palais des Nations. The participation and inputs of defenders are essential to identify problems and ensure that solutions are informed and influenced by the communities concerned.

We can all help cultivate narratives that are beneficial to human rights and the people who defend them. We want to create a picture that showcases the impact achieved and improvements delivered when people promote human rights, that demonstrates the benefits of ensuring these people's essential voices are heard, and encourages everyone to play their part in creating a fairer world.

# GOAL AND IMPACT PROTECTING RIGHTS AND PROMOTING ACCOUNTABILITY





### OUR 2021 GOAL :

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

### WHAT WE ACHIEVED:

**We worked to ensure that States and businesses** respect and protect human rights defenders and fulfil their human rights obligations at the international, regional and national levels, including through legislative and policy action.

**Our unparalleled experience at the UN** and with regional bodies allowed us to rapidly and strategically use those mechanisms to prevent violations and attacks against human rights defenders and pursue justice and accountability where they occurred.

**We worked with local partners to advocate** for national implementation of international and regional human rights standards on the protection of defenders and an enabling environment for their work. Our deep partnerships with grassroots defenders, and our reputation and track record of cooperation with governments and human rights institutions, uniquely positioned us to advise on and support national-level implementation.

**Through our values- and hope-based communications and narratives,** we positively influenced public and political attitudes, behaviours, laws and policies in relation to defenders and countered stigmatisation and smears against them.

# SELECTED HIGHLIGHTS

NUMBER OF LARGE BUSINESSES AND ASSOCIATIONS THAT HAVE ADOPTED PUBLIC POLICIES OR STATEMENTS IN SUPPORT OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

# 30



Following sustained advocacy from civil society, in March 2021 Finland delivered **a joint statement on behalf of 32 governments condemning the deteriorating human rights situation in Egypt** – the first such statement in seven years. The statement called on the Egyptian authorities to release arbitrarily detained defenders, end the use of torture, and respect the rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association. ISHR worked with countries including Belgium, Ireland, Luxembourg and the Netherlands to follow up and pursue accountability for reprisals against human rights defenders from Egypt and other countries.



Together with Race & Equality, ISHR coordinated 'Colectivo 46/2' – a network of 21 Nicaraguan and regional and international civil society organisations – to **monitor and report on the Nicaraguan government's compliance with the Human Rights Council's recommendations** and hold the government accountable for its violations of its international human rights obligations. We are now **campaigning for the establishment of an international accountability mechanism on Nicaragua**.

According to Race & Equality, 'ISHR has played a vital role in drawing the attention of the international community to Nicaragua's human rights situation. ISHR has worked hand in hand with Nicaraguan civil society organisations to involve them in the process of renewing and strengthening the Human Rights Council's resolution on Nicaragua. Their expertise and technical capacity have helped Nicaraguan civil society to engage effectively with the Council.'



Throughout 2021, we remained at the **cutting edge of strategic human rights litigation**. Among others, we obtained a **landmark decision from the UN Human Rights Committee** recognising that the right to communicate with international bodies is integral to the right to freedom of expression, a **judgment from the Inter-American Court of Human Rights** holding Honduras responsible for violating the rights of murdered LGBT rights activist Vicky Hernández, and a **judgment from the European Court of Justice** declaring as invalid laws in Hungary restricting the work of migrant rights defenders. We also submitted innovative communications to UN treaty bodies regarding the harassment of a health rights defender in Venezuela and a minority rights defender in Burkina Faso. We are indebted to the pro bono lawyers who substantially assist ISHR in this work.





ISHR  
@ISHRGlobal

The protection of HRDS is not rocket science! says @MaryLawlorhrds

- You need to embed it in legislation, policy and practice
- Tackle impunity
- Educate the public about defending human rights #HRC46



Together with the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre and the B-Team, ISHR continued to **promote and support corporate action to respect and protect human rights defenders and corporate accountability for abuses against them**. ISHR was instrumental in developing the **new United Nations Guidelines on Business and Human Rights Defenders** and there are now more than 30 major companies and business associations that have adopted public policies or statements in support of defenders.

In December 2021, the **Business Network on Civic Freedoms and Human Rights Defenders** launched its website, enhancing transparency and providing additional information on the 30+ multinational companies the Network engages with on the protection of civic space. We also worked with responsible business and investors to speak out against threats and restrictions against human rights defenders, such as in Myanmar.

As an aspect of our role connecting human rights defenders and business with a view to better protecting the **shared civic space**, ISHR and Access Now convened a dialogue between major technology companies, United Nations experts and civil society activists to identify and strategise on key human rights risks and challenges. Over the last year we convened more than **10 events and briefings** on some of the most pressing issues for human rights defenders in relation to business and human rights.

ISHR also continues to work at the international and regional levels to ensure companies are effectively regulated with respect to human rights, including through the **development of a binding treaty** at the international level, as well as **mandatory human rights due diligence legislation** at the level of the European Union. Where appropriate, we engage constructively with companies to pursue this agenda. According to ABN AMRO, a member of the Business Network on Civic Freedoms and Human Rights Defenders, *'while some companies, including ABN AMRO, have been working to implement human rights due diligence for years, we believe that voluntary measures are no longer enough... mandatory legislation in the EU would help us be more effective in our advocacy for human rights toward our business relationships.'*



With the COVID-19 pandemic being associated in many jurisdictions with laws and measures restricting civic freedoms, ISHR conducted research and consultations, and produced a **report**, on the impact of pandemic restrictions on the work of human rights defenders. The report also identified good practices and made recommendations to ensure both that the pandemic is not used as a subterfuge to restrict and criminalise defenders, and to ensure that their vital work supporting people and communities made vulnerable is safeguarded and enabled.





“ States have the obligation to respect defenders, to provide them with security, to heed their calls and to consider that we are people who support the most vulnerable sectors of society, and recognise that this is a vital contribution to democratic life. ”

DR MARIA LUISA ACOSTA, COORDINATOR OF THE CENTRO DE ASISTENCIA LEGAL A PUEBLOS INDÍGENAS (CALPI), NICARAGUA

# IN DEPTH:

## HOLDING CHINA ACCOUNTABLE FOR WIDESPREAD AND SYSTEMATIC VIOLATIONS

In 2021, in an independent expert evaluation ISHR was described by a UN representative as ‘the go-to organisation when it comes to human rights in China’ and ‘one of the key organisations at the forefront in Geneva when it comes to explaining the human rights situation in China. The work that they are doing is very valuable and very much needed’.

Throughout the year, we continued and strengthened our work to support Chinese human rights defenders and to monitor and hold China accountable for its human rights obligations. We provided Chinese defenders with extensive training, strategic advocacy advice, and access to a wide range of **Chinese-language resources and materials**. Where safe to do so, we supported human rights lawyers and defenders like **Teng Biao**, victims like Gülbahar Jalilova, or family members of detained activists like **Zhang Haitao**, to address the UN Human Rights Council directly.

Reflecting our efforts to mobilise the Human Rights Council and States, UN Special Procedures ensured sustained attention on China, including through strong statements and communications regarding arbitrary detention, forced labour, sexual and gender-based violence and torture in the Uyghur region, as well as the use and abuse of national security legislation to curtail freedoms and imprison journalists and defenders, among other violations.

At the Human Rights Council in Geneva and the UN General Assembly in New York, Canada and France both led **cross-regional statements** supported by over 40 governments regarding widespread and systematic human rights violations in China. These joint statements represent significant steps towards building a coalition of support to establish an international human rights monitoring and reporting mechanism on the country; a key priority for ISHR and partners in the year ahead.

**In line with calls from ISHR and partners**, together with overwhelming evidence of crimes against humanity and other grave human rights violations in Xinjiang and the Uyghur region, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights finally committed

to finalise and publish a report on ‘allegations of serious human rights violations in that region’. Taken together with China’s withdrawal at the September session of the Human Rights Council of a draft resolution which could have undermined universal human rights norms due to a lack of support from other States, it’s a small signal of positive change and an awakening to the need to address **the impact of China’s initiatives on universal human rights standards and the independence of the UN human rights system** as documented by ISHR.

“ Put simply, **Chinese policy on international relations** has been essentially about building barriers to block criticism of its rights record. ”

ISHR PROGRAMME DIRECTOR SARAH BROOKS  
QUOTED IN *THE DIPLOMAT*, 16 MARCH 2021

# IN DEPTH:

## STRENGTHENING LEGAL RECOGNITION AND PROTECTION OF DEFENDERS AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL IN AFRICA AND ASIA

With the legal recognition and protection of human rights defenders being an essential element of holistic security and a safe and enabling environment for their work, we continued to advise and support national level partners on the development of national human rights defender laws and the repeal or amendment of restrictive legislation.

In **Mongolia**, **ISHR supported national partners over several years** to finally secure the adoption of a Law on the Legal Status of Human Rights Defenders in April 2021, the first such law in Asia. While the Mongolian law does not fully align with the provisions of **ISHR's Model National Law** and is deficient in some ways, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet said:

*'The law is a welcome and critical move to create a safe and enabling environment for human rights defenders. It will serve to acknowledge their crucial work, to bring the perpetrators of attacks against them to account, and to end impunity. As the first country in Asia to enact such important legislation, the law will resonate within and beyond Mongolia's borders.'*

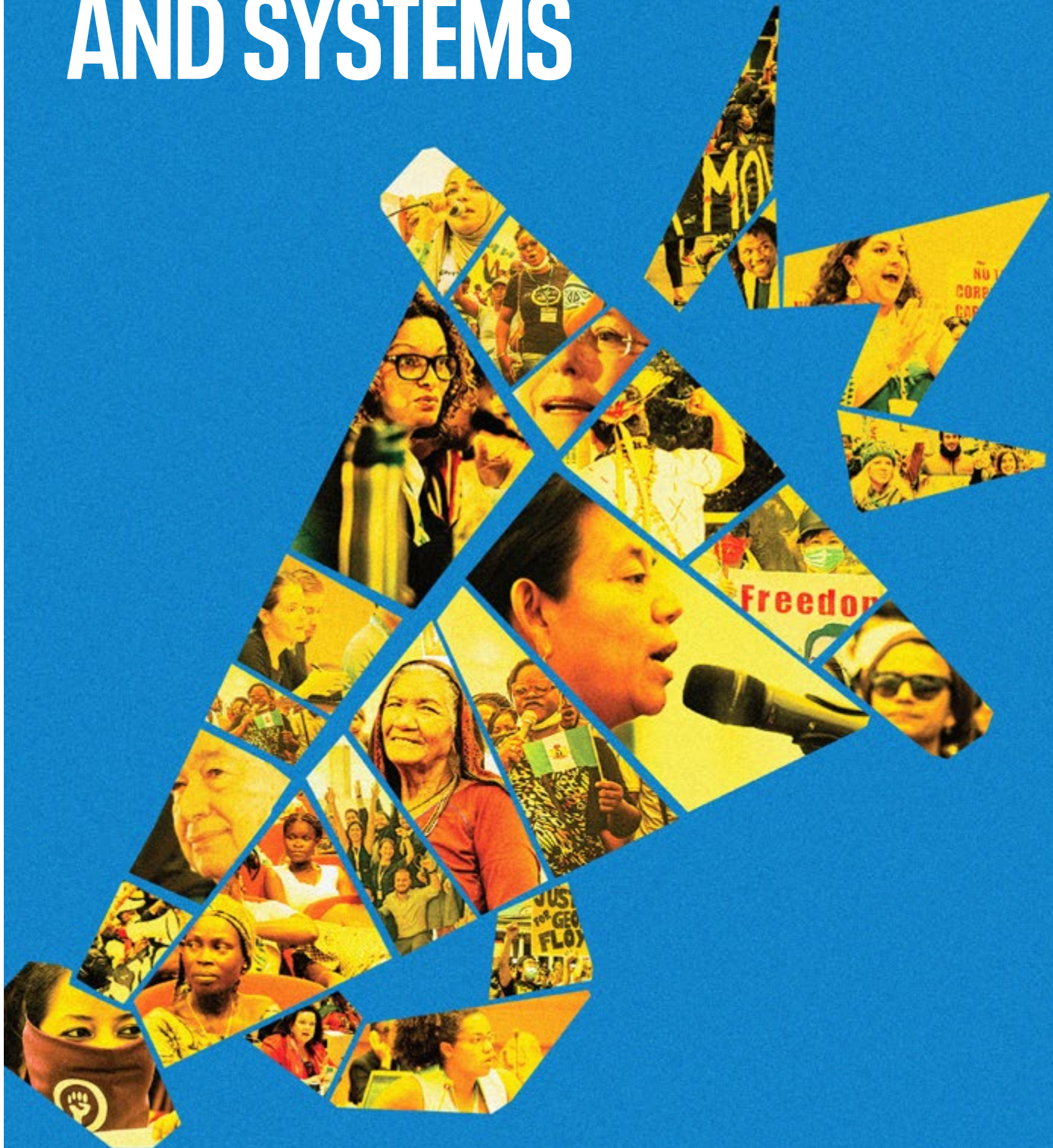
Within Central Asia, ISHR is supporting a civil society coalition in **Kazakhstan** to develop and implement a strategy for a human rights defender protection law, while in South East Asia, ISHR continued to work closely with national partner Karapatan to push for the adoption of a **Philippines** law on human rights defenders. With the **Philippines House of Representatives having passed a Human Rights Defenders Protection Act** on 17 January 2022, we are now pushing for final approval of the law by the Senate.

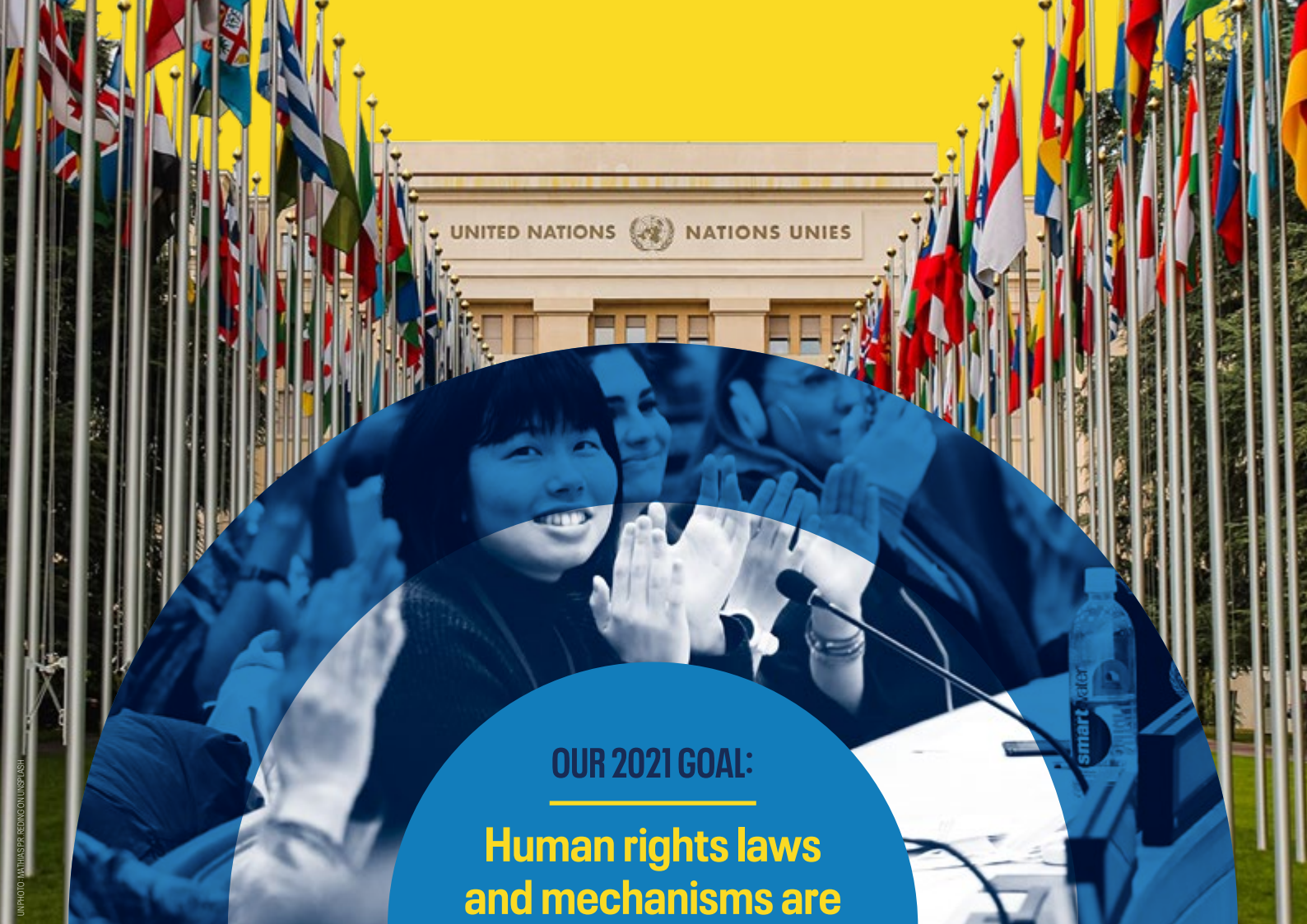
Continuing our decades-long work with national partners in **Africa**, ISHR conducted consultations and workshops, and provided advocacy advice and support, to ensure the effective implementation of human rights defender laws, and the effective functioning of protection mechanisms, in **Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire** and **Mali**. We are also working with civil society partners and national coalitions in **Benin, the DRC, Guinea, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo** and **Zambia** to support efforts towards the adoption of national human rights defender laws, as well as to engage and leverage regional and international human rights mechanisms to positively influence those processes.

“ Human rights defenders have been killed, arrested, detained, red-tagged, and threatened for so long – especially for the past six years under the murderous regime of **President Rodrigo Duterte** – and a law to criminalise these acts and recognise the State's duty to protect defenders is long overdue. ”

CRISTINA PALABAY, SECRETARY GENERAL, KARAPATAN (PHILIPPINES)

# GOAL AND IMPACT STRENGTHENING HUMAN RIGHTS LAWS AND SYSTEMS





UNPHOTO: WALTER SPR. REDINGTON/UNISFLASH

### OUR 2021 GOAL:


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

### WHAT WE ACHIEVED:

**Our deep understanding of the needs and priorities of defenders**, our expert policy research and advocacy, and our access to high-level decision-makers and diplomats within the UN and regional systems, combined to make those systems more accessible, effective and protective for defenders and victims. Our work contributed significantly to ensure that:

- **human rights mechanisms are effective and fit for purpose**, respond to the calls and demands of defenders, and establish appropriate mechanisms and mandates to promote accountability and justice.
- **human rights mechanisms are accessible and safe**, with policies and processes to enable safe and meaningful participation for defenders online and offline.
- **cases of intimidation and reprisals are properly investigated** and perpetrators held accountable.

# SELECTED HIGHLIGHTS

 In line with the calls of families and organisations actively engaged in the struggles against racism and police violence, the UN Human Rights Council adopted a **landmark resolution establishing an independent expert mechanism to address systemic racism and promote racial justice and equality for Africans and people of African descent**. The adoption of this resolution is a testament to the resilience, bravery and commitment of victims, their families, their representatives and anti-racism defenders globally. ISHR is proud to now support and host the secretariat of a global coalition of anti-racism activists and organisations dedicated to pursuing a transformative agenda for racial justice.



 Building on advocacy efforts over the last decade, we substantially strengthened protections from reprisals against those who cooperate and provide vital evidence and testimony to the UN. This work included in-depth **consultations and research to better understand what victims need** and a **major report** showing that **public statements and solidarity actions work**. In addition to successfully **litigating a landmark case** enshrining the rights of defenders and victims to communicate with international bodies, we also **campaignned successfully** to secure a **consensus resolution to condemn reprisals and mandate action** at the UN Human Rights Council. Our advocacy in both New York and Geneva has now put the issue of reprisals firmly on the **agenda of the UN General Assembly**, thereby **raising the political costs for perpetrators** and deterring future violations.



**ISHR**  
 @ISHRGlobal

We need to listen & learn from women defenders about solutions for global & local challenges. The UN must open the door to women's rights organisations!  
[#OpenTheDoors2NGOs](#)  
[#WHRDDay](#)



 Throughout 2021, we lobbied and **advocated to ensure that human rights defenders and other civil society actors could access and participate in the work of the UN**. This work included a **campaign to strengthen the UN's NGO Committee** so that its members comprise more States which support diverse and independent civil society participation at the UN, and engagement with the President and Bureau of the Human Rights Council to ensure that initiatives to make the Council more 'efficient' do not restrict civil society access and participation and thereby result in a Council which is less effective. Building on our efforts for more than 30 years, including as reflected in the 1993 Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action to which ISHR substantially contributed, we also worked to safeguard and provide national-level activists with direct access to the Council, ensuring their rightful seat at a key human rights decision-making table.



**ISHR**  
@ISHRGlobal

Ten years after the first SOGI resolution was passed at the UN Human Rights Council, today 27 States launched the Group of Friends of the #IESOGI mandate. More in this joint article by

ISHR's  
@Tess\_L\_McEvoy and  
@ILGAWORLD's  
@GalilGabriel



Throughout 2021, we also worked with TB-net and other NGO partners to **secure the resumption of periodic reviews** of States parties by UN treaty bodies despite the pandemic. Over the coming year we will work closely with treaty bodies to strengthen jurisprudential recognition and protection of women human rights defenders and land rights defenders through general comments.

Our work on **Human Rights Council membership and elections**, undertaken together with Amnesty International and HRCnet, helped to increase transparency, promote accountability, strengthen the commitments, pledges and actions of various candidates, and improve the potential composition of the Presidency and Bureau, including by ensuring that neither Bahrain nor Uzbekistan served on the Bureau.

In New York, ISHR worked with both civil society and State partners to secure the second ever **resolution of the UN General Assembly** recognising the **prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity**. The resolution was adopted by consensus and builds on a **decade of progress** in the recognition of the rights of LGBTIQ+ people at the UN.

Thanks to the coordinated advocacy and campaigning of over 1300 civil society organisations – together with the principled leadership of the governments of Costa Rica, Maldives, Morocco, Slovenia and Switzerland – the world’s peak multilateral human rights body recognised the **right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment**.

Complementing its recognition of the right to a healthy environment, the Council’s 48th session also established **a new position of Special Rapporteur on Climate Change**. The mandate will provide expert advice to governments and help hold them accountable for their obligations to uphold human rights and address the climate crisis. **Consistent with ISHR advocacy**, both Human Rights Council resolutions on the environment and climate change recognise the vital role of human rights defenders in environmental protection and sustainable development, as well as the obligations of States and business actors to protect and respect their work.

## RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY ISHR

**79%**

WERE TAKEN UP BY **STATES IN THE UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW**, WITH EACH ISHR RECOMMENDATION MADE BY AN AVERAGE OF 6 STATES

**60%**

WERE ADOPTED BY THE **UN TREATY BODY** TO WHICH THEY WERE DIRECTED





“ The comprehensive defeat of **Bahrain and Uzbekistan** demonstrates that there should be no place among the Council’s president or vice presidents for representatives of States that restrict, criminalise and commit reprisals against rights defenders. ”

ISHR DIRECTOR PHIL LYNCH QUOTED IN DEUTSCHE WELLE, 15 JANUARY 2021

“ The Council can reinforce civil society participation or hinder it by renewing the so-called efficiency measures. We must be part of the negotiations. We want any actions undertaken to be informed by and answer our demands and concerns. Civil society participation can’t be an afterthought. The Council must not sacrifice civil society engagement to meet budget and cash flow shortfalls. ”

ISHR HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL PROGRAMME MANAGER SALMA EL HOSSEINY QUOTED IN *THE EUROPEAN TIMES*, 19 NOVEMBER 2021



# IN DEPTH:

## SUCSESSES, FAILURES AND LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL IN 2021

With three regular sessions and five special sessions, 2021 was the busiest year in the history of the UN Human Rights Council, producing a range of highlights and lowlights, together with insights and lessons for the year ahead.

### Let's start with the highlights:

1. The establishment of an Expert Mechanism to Advance Racial Justice and Equality in Law Enforcement tasked with developing a transformative racial justice agenda.
2. The mandating of a standing commission of inquiry on Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories addressing root causes of the conflict. Former ISHR Director Chris Sidoti and former ISHR Board member Navi Pillay are two of the international experts appointed to this historic commission.
3. An unprecedented number of national-level human rights defenders, as well as victims of violations and their families and representatives, addressing the Council directly through video statements. This practice must be maintained, even as the Council returns to in-person meetings.
4. The adoption of resolutions recognising the right to a healthy environment and mandating a new Special Rapporteur on Climate Change, with both resolutions recognising the vital role of environmental human rights defenders and the need for their protection.
5. The adoption of a consensus resolution on reprisals against those who cooperate with the UN, inviting the General Assembly to also consider the issue, thereby raising political costs for perpetrators of acts of intimidation and reprisals.
6. Joint statements condemning the deteriorating human rights situations and repression of human rights defenders in Egypt and Russia, ending the Council's long silence on those grave situations.

*Continued*

7. The convening of five special sessions – the highest number in the Council’s history – showing that the Council can be responsive to grave situations like Myanmar, Sudan, Ethiopia, Israeli apartheid and Afghanistan.

**There were also a decent number of lowlights at the Human Rights Council over the course of the year. Three, in particular, stand out:**

1. Scandalous vote buying efforts and threats by Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and allies to end the mandate of an eminent group of experts tasked with monitoring and reporting on the continuing humanitarian crisis in Yemen.
2. The failure of regional groups to put forward competitive slates for Human Rights Council elections, and the election of a number of States which manifestly fail membership criteria of upholding high human rights standards and cooperating with the UN.
3. The continued failure of the Council, and of the High Commissioner herself, to respond in a meaningful way to prima facie evidence of crimes against humanity in the Uyghur region and other widespread and systematic human rights violations in China.

**Together, these highlights and lowlights provide a number of lessons which should inform engagement and initiatives at the Council in 2022 and beyond:**

1. The importance and impact of civil society participation and coalitions at the Council, especially that of rights holders, victims and representatives of affected communities. Their mobilisation, testimony and powerful stories were critical to action on systemic racism, Israel/OPT, and the recognition of the right to a healthy environment, among others.
2. The importance of strategy, ambition and commitment, even in the face of setbacks. While the special session on Afghanistan did not result in the establishment of an international accountability mechanism such as required by the gravity and urgency of the situation, progressive States and civil society were able to regroup, strategise and mobilise to secure the establishment of a new Special Rapporteur’s mandate at the next ordinary session of the Council. In a similar vein, the bitter defeat of the resolution on Yemen and betrayal of the Yemeni people must be used as motivation to strengthen resolve and pursue further action rather than a reason to diminish ambition and accept impunity.
3. The need for and value of institutional work to ensure that the Human Rights Council is safe, accessible, responsive and effective for national-level rights holders and defenders, and equally to ensure that, in addition to maintaining effective modalities for virtual participation, NGOs are able to access and participate in meetings and negotiations in person on equal terms with diplomats and other stakeholders.



**Adélaïde ETONG**  
@Adelaide\_ISHR

The @UN\_HRC must take bold action and address past and present gross human rights violations against black people in the USA, Latin America and the 🌍. It’s past time to adopt a mechanism to enhance accountability, justice & redress to victims & survivors  
#BlackLivesMatter  
#HRC47

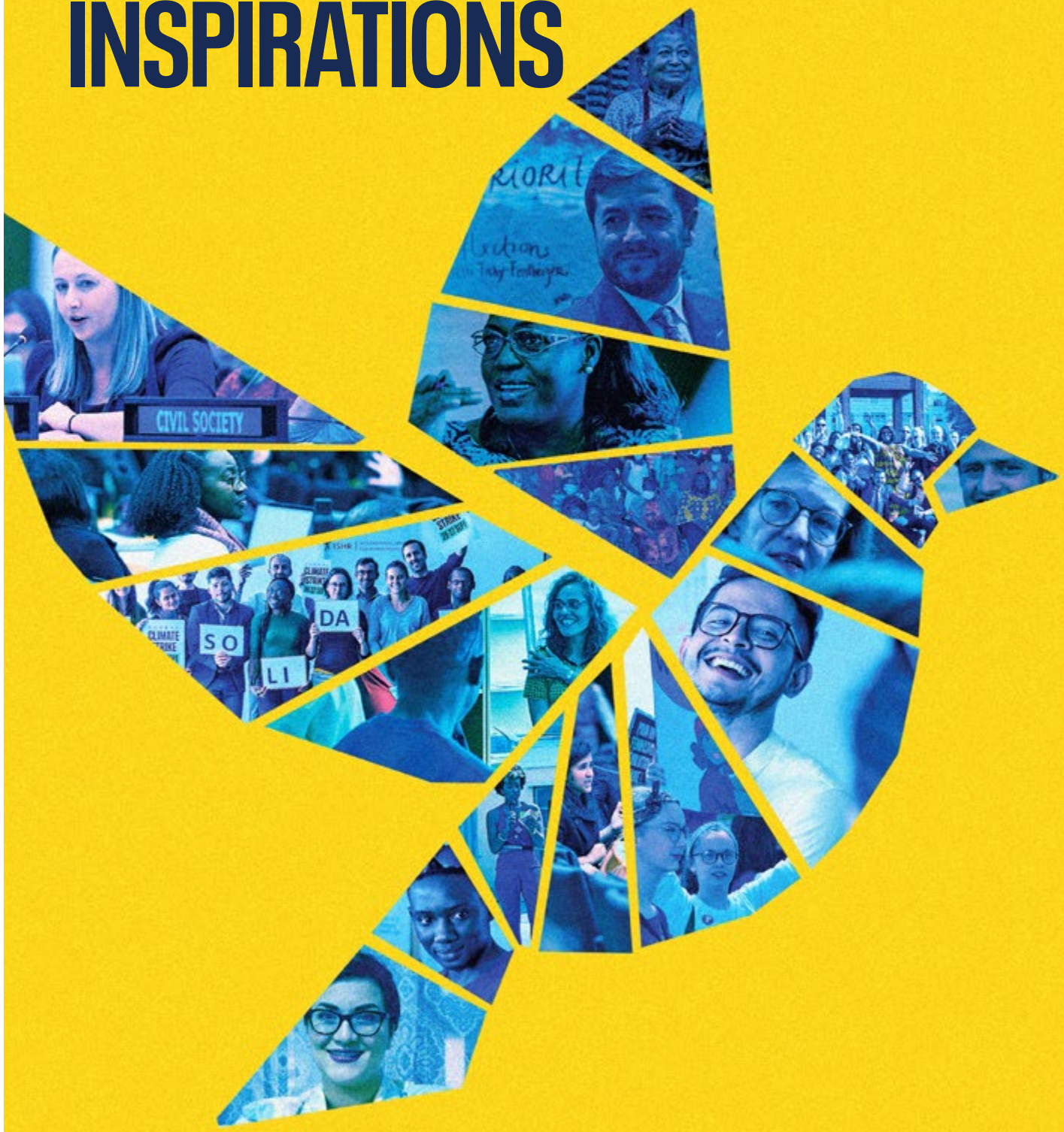


4. Without whitewashing the Council, the importance of propagating a narrative that contributes to the Human Rights Council being, and being perceived to be, legitimate, influential and effective, rather than a self-defeating and self-fulfilling narrative of human rights institutions as polarised, divided or ineffectual.
5. The power and potential of small States, especially working collaboratively with civil society coalitions. The resolution on the environment was led by Costa Rica and a cross-regional group, the climate change resolution was led by the Marshall Islands and a cross-regional group, and the joint statement on Egypt was led by Finland, in each instance in close partnership with civil society. The leadership of such States can assist to ensure that issues are dealt with on their merits rather than on the basis of political or ideological alignments.

“ What is needed from the international community in general, and from the UN in particular, is a **concrete, coherent and unified voice in favour of the protection of human rights defenders, and the safeguarding of fundamental liberties, civic space and human dignity.** ”

ROSANA LEZAMA SANCHEZ, VENEZUELAN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER, CENTRO PARA LOS DEFENSORES Y LA JUSTICIA (CDJ) / OBSERVATORIO VENEZOLANO DE CONFLICTIVIDAD SOCIAL (OVCS) / CENTRO DE DERECHOS HUMANOS DE LA UNIVERSIDAD CATÓLICA ANDRÉS BELLO (CDH-UCAB).

# HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS HOPE AND INSPIRATIONS





134% Burundi

### INCREASE IN USE OF ISHR INFORMATION PRODUCTS BY HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS FROM VARIOUS COUNTRIES

THESE INCREASES REFLECT THE RELEVANCE AND ACCESSIBILITY OF ISHR'S ONLINE RESOURCES, PARTICULARLY FOR DEFENDERS IN RESTRICTIVE OR DETERIORATING ENVIRONMENTS.



89% China



68% Afghanistan

Philippines 63%



63% Guatemala

Vietnam 54%



57% Zimbabwe

Sri Lanka 47%



50% Ethiopia



29% Turkey

Nigeria 25%



13% Egypt

At ISHR we have a custom of starting all staff meetings by sharing our inspirations. The inspiration might be something deeply personal, like the resilience of a loved one recovering from illness, something local, like the renaming of a Geneva street to honour a feminist activist, or something work-related, like the release of a human rights defender from arbitrary detention following a concerted global campaign.

We are constantly inspired by the brave people taking action to defend human rights. These are the people that speak out and mobilise against injustices like racism, sexism, corruption, impunity or the climate crisis and who work with communities to find solutions and advocate for better ways of doing things – to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and make sure that no one is left behind.

In December 2021, we invited you to be 'vulnerable' – to have the courage to be vulnerable – and to share some of the human rights stories and successes that inspire and give you hope. With thanks and gratitude to those who shared, we're delighted to offer this selection.



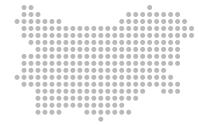
# INSPIRED BY WOMEN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS, FEMINIST ACTIVISTS AND SEXUAL AND GENDER JUSTICE

**NICOLINE NWENUSHI  
WAZEH TUMASANG**  
WOMAN HUMAN  
RIGHTS DEFENDER  
CAMEROON



'I am inspired by and hope for a future built on compassion, unity and hope, where our common humanity and shared vulnerabilities are understood by all. A future where toxic masculinities and patriarchy are dismantled.'

**WOMAN HUMAN  
RIGHTS DEFENDER,  
BULGARIA**



'Women human rights defenders inspire me – from those who work to ensure women and girls can access education and healthcare, to those who work to protect the vulnerable, end conflict and bring love and peace.'

**MAURICIO OCHIENG'**  
TRANSGENDER  
ACTIVIST AND  
HUMAN RIGHTS  
DEFENDER  
KENYA



'I am a survivor of violence, abuse, threats and intimidation. I am inspired, hope and work for a future in which transgender people will be living freely, without stigma and discrimination, with equal access to all rights and public services like education and healthcare.'

**CARME CLAVEL  
ARCAS**  
FEMINIST ACTIVIST  
AND WOMAN HUMAN  
RIGHTS DEFENDER  
JUST ASSOCIATES (JASS)



'Today and for all 2022 my inspiration is the feminist resistance in Nicaragua – from political prisoners to all their family members – where the leaders in most of the cases are mothers, sisters, daughters, wives, nieces. I am especially inspired by the mothers of all 350 people killed during the crisis and the resistance from April 2018.'



# INSPIRED BY ENVIRONMENTAL AND INDIGENOUS HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

**ROMEL GONZÁLEZ DÍAZ**  
MAYAN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER AND MEMBER OF THE REGIONAL INDIGENOUS AND POPULAR COUNCIL OF XPUJIL MEXICO



'My inspiration and hope is that we learn the importance of taking care of our health, the trees and nature and that we don't destroy our natural resources and communities.'

**MARIANNE BERTRAND**  
CAMPAIGN MANAGER ISHR



'I am inspired by people working to change the course of the climate crisis and pushing governments and corporations to take concrete steps like stopping fossil fuels. We need to listen to the solutions offered by indigenous peoples, grass-root communities and human rights defenders all over the world who are telling us to adopt climate and development measures that address the racism, patriarchy, colonialism and capitalism in our societies and systems.'

**HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER, NEPAL**



'I am inspired by human rights defenders globally, working to protect nature and the environment and to promote justice and democracy. To be a part of this movement brings me great joy.'

**MARINA DAILY,**  
FINANCE DIRECTOR ISHR



'I was really inspired by young activist Vanessa Nakate at the COP26. She brought African defenders' and new voices to the climate fight. She explained how "there won't be climate justice if specific groups of people are being left behind" and how the African continent has been struck by some of the most dire consequences of climate change.'

**DIEGO VILLANUEVA,**  
OFFICE AND PROGRAMME SUPPORT MANAGER ISHR



'I was inspired by the film "Animal" and the young activists and defenders working to address climate change. I am inspired by all of those who educate and inform themselves and others, and continue to strike and yell at the top of their lungs in protests in streets around the world to save ourselves and everything else on this beautiful planet. I hope for all of us to join that call, to open our eyes to a future that includes a mutual respect for Earth and each other.'

## CHAN THACK

### PRESIDENT OF KKF OCEANIA



'I am inspired by the dignity and bravery of the Khmer-Krom indigenous peoples of Vietnam, struggling to maintain their religion and culture, and to protect their sacred ancestral lands, mountains and forests. In June 2021, four UN Special Rapporteurs wrote a joint allegation letter to the Government of Vietnam about the arbitrary arrest and detention of young Khmer-Krom human rights defenders. This international scrutiny and pressure forced an unprecedented response from the Government. International scrutiny and solidarity for the cause is vital.'





# INSPIRED BY EFFORTS TO RESIST REPRESSION, PROMOTE ACCOUNTABILITY AND COMBAT IMPUNITY

**BARUN GHIMIRE**  
HUMAN RIGHTS  
LAWYER, LAW AND  
POLICY FORUM FOR  
SOCIAL JUSTICE  
NEPAL



'As a human rights lawyer, my hope and vision is to be effective in using the law as a means to achieve systemic reform that will positively impact on individuals' lives. I want to be part of a process and movement that makes human rights rhetoric a reality.'

**ROSANA LEZAMA**  
HUMAN RIGHTS  
DEFENDER  
VENEZUELA



'My hope and aspiration is that human rights become non-negotiable. I want to see communities and the broader population being more engaged and involved in demanding and defending human rights.'

**VINCENT PLOTON**  
DIRECTOR OF  
DEVELOPMENT  
AND TREATY BODY  
ADVOCACY  
ISHR



'I was really delighted and inspired by Germain Rukuki's release from prison, which marked the culmination and success of collective and concerted efforts involving local, national, regional and international NGOs, diplomats and UN experts, among others. Germain's third son was born when he was imprisoned for having documented human rights violations. It is thrilling to know that Germain has now been reunited with his family and loved ones, and is now able to share his experience and speak publicly about human rights violations in Burundi, most recently upon invitation from the European Parliament.'

**HUMAN RIGHTS  
DEFENDER,  
CHINA**



'I am inspired by those who continue to struggle for a free Tibet.'

**MADELEINE  
SINCLAIR**  
NEW YORK DIRECTOR  
ISHR



'"There is always light, if only we're brave enough to see it / If only we're brave enough to be it". I was inspired by Amanda Gorman's poem "The Hill We Climb" at the US presidential inauguration, and her call for unity, which she delivered on the heels of a divisive election, the January 6 insurrection, with the country very much grappling with issues of racism, hate and division, not to mention the pandemic stretching into its second year.'

# INSPIRED BY MOVEMENTS FOR EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

**MICHAEL INEICHEN**  
 HEAD OF ADVOCACY  
 AMNESTY  
 INTERNATIONAL  
 SWITZERLAND



'Personally, I was happy to see that the Swiss parliament finally adopted a law to create a national human rights institution in Switzerland, something civil society has worked towards for many years. We were also really successful in kicking off a discussion about violence against asylum seekers in federal asylum centres. And finally, the campaign to change the criminal code and move towards a consent-based definition of rape – the 'Yes means Yes' campaign – has been picking up speed.'

**PAULETTE METANG**  
 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
 ASSOCIATION  
 CAMEROUNAISE POUR  
 LA PRISE EN CHARGE  
 DES PERSONNES AGÉES  
 (ACAMAGE)  
 CAMEROON



'I was inspired by Cameroon's ratification of the Africa Union Protocol on older people's rights on 28 December 2021. This is a result of our ongoing advocacy and campaign to stop ageism, discrimination, violence, abuse and neglect towards older people, because we want them to have dignified lives enjoying all their human rights.'

**PATRICE WELLESLEY-COLE**  
 COMMUNITY CHAIR  
 OF LONDON'S  
 HAMPSTEAD ROTARY  
 UNITED KINGDOM



'I was buoyed by the courage, strength and solidarity of a broad coalition of more than 100 civil society organisations and leaders in opposing the UK's racist Nationality and Borders Bill. As a woman of colour, this is deeply personal for me.'

*In November 2020, ISHR and the Cameroon Women's Peace Movement (CAWOPEM) organised a workshop aimed at supporting the production of a civil society report for the review of Cameroon's State report by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD).*



# OUR TEAM

## BOARD



**Vrinda Grover** | Chair  
**India**

Indian lawyer and human rights defender, successfully litigating landmark cases in relation to women's rights, police accountability, freedom of the press and sexual minorities.



**Heba Morayef** | Member  
**Egypt**

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



**Katarina Bervar Sternad** | Vice-Chair  
**Slovenia**

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



**Erik Møse** | Member  
**Norway**

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



**Jean-Claude Ern ** | Treasurer  
**Switzerland**

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



**Lucia Nader** | Member  
**Brazil**

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



**Elizabeth Broderick** | Member  
**Australia**

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



**Mona Sabella** | Member  
**Palestine**

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



**Alice Mogwe** | Botswana  
**Member**

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



**Mirosław Wyrzykowski** | Member  
**Poland**

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

# STAFF



**Lamar Bailey**  
Fellow



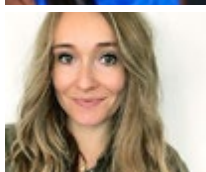
**Marianne Bertrand**  
Campaign and Mobilisation Manager  
[@MariBertl](#)



**Sarah Brooks**  
Programme Director  
[@SarahMcNeer](#)



**Marina Dailly**  
Finance Director



**Paula Danilczyk**  
Digital Communications Officer  
[@Paula\\_ISHR](#)



**Sonia Derreumaux**  
Finance Manager



**Christine Do Phan**  
Communications Director  
[@Christine\\_ISHR](#)



**Salma El Hosseiny**  
Programme Manager  
(Human Rights Council)  
[@Salma\\_ISHR](#)



**Marie Elseroad**  
Human Resources Manager



**Adélaïde Etong Kame**  
Programme Manager (Africa)  
[@Adelaide\\_ISHR](#)



**Eva Homolkova**  
Fundraising Manager



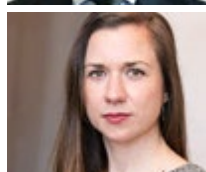
**Fabiana Leibl**  
HRCnet Coordinator  
[@FabiLeibl](#)



**Tina Luft**  
Digital Communications Consultant



**Phil Lynch**  
Executive Director  
[@PhilALynch](#)



**Tess McEvoy**  
New York Office Co-Director and  
Legal Counsel  
[@Tess\\_L\\_McEvoy](#)



**Josel Menez**  
Office and Programme Support  
Assistant



**Eleanor Openshaw**  
Programme Director  
[@EleanorOpenshaw](#)



**Maithili Pai**  
Programme Officer (Civil Society  
Access and Participation)  
[@MaithiliPai](#)



**Pooja Patel**  
Programme Director  
[@Pooja\\_ISHR](#)



**Francisco Pérez**  
Communications and Media Manager  
[@FranciscoJGz](#)

# STAFF



**Vincent Ploton**  
Director of Development and  
Treaty Body Advocacy  
[@VPloton](#)



**Antsa Rakotonanahary**  
Finance Coordinator



**Madeleine Sinclair**  
New York Office Co-Director and  
Legal Counsel  
[@Madeleine\\_ISHR](#)



**Hannah Sobocinski**  
Training and Advocacy Support  
Manager  
[@Hannah\\_ISHR](#)



**Javier Urizar**  
Fellow



**Raphaël Viana David**  
Asia Programme Officer  
[@vdraphael](#)



**Diego Villanueva**  
Office and Programme Support  
Manager  
[@DiegoISHR](#)



**Clément Nyaletsossi Voule**  
Senior Advisor  
[@CVoule](#)



**Stéphanie Wamba**  
Africa Advocate  
[@StephanieWamba](#)



**Andrés Zaragoza**  
Programme Manager  
(Business and Human Rights)  
[@a\\_zarag](#)

During 2021 **Fanny Toutou-Mpondo** left ISHR after six years of service to pursue a career as a lawyer. We acknowledge and thank Fanny for her excellent work as a communications officer and manager, as well as her work to combat discrimination and promote anti-racism and wellbeing at ISHR and through our programmes.

## FELLOWS AND INTERNS

Cheyma Barouk, Sofia García Baudino, Sabrina Benavides, Céline Buholzer, Valeria Castellanos, Jing-Jie Chen, Ayla Danes, Clare Dwyer, Lane Eisenmann, Emily Forbes, JK Lee, Maelle L'Ecureuil, Kiara McKay, Chiara Menghetti, Morgane Schmutz, Mainga Simoonga, Javier Urizar, Dongni Zhao

*The names of some Human Rights Defender Fellows have been omitted for security reasons.*



# OUR SUPPORTERS

## THANK YOU

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

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

### Governmental and Intergovernmental Donors

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 Switzerland Federal Department of Foreign Affairs  
 United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office  
 United States Department of State (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights & Labor and Mission to the United Nations in Geneva)  
 Ville de Genève

### Trusts and Foundations

Brot für die Welt (Bread for the World)  
 Ford Foundation  
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### Special Contributions and Consultancies

Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions  
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 Elizabeth Broderick  
 Jean-Claude Ern e  
 Jon Webster

### \$500 - 999

Professor Hilary Charlesworth  
 Rosemary McCreery  
 Chris and Margaret Sidoti  
 Patricia Schulz

### \$101 - 499

Christopher Duckett, Professor Olivier de Frouville, Hugh de Kretser, Phil Lynch and Lucy McKernan, Erik M se

### Up to \$100

Caroline Avanzo, Wolfgang Benedek, Marina Dailly, Paula Danilczyk, Jill Donnelly, Christine Do Phan, Nathanael Grosser, Holga Heller, Michael Ineichen, Josel Menez, Lorraine Muller, Antsa Rakotonanahary, Stephen Share, John Shawley, Sarah Sobczak, Maria Stewart, Diego Villanueva, Jelena Zaric

### International law firms

During 2021, ISHR worked with some of the world's leading law firms and counsel on a pro bono basis, enabling us to leverage substantial legal expertise and resources.

Akin Gump  
 Ben Juratowitch QC, Essex Court Chambers  
 Daniel M ller  
 DLA Piper  
 Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer  
 Robert Kirkness, Thorndon Chambers  
 Morrison & Foerster LLP  
 Orrick  
 Shearman & Sterling  
 White & Case

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# GOOD GOVERNANCE, EVALUATIONS AND LEARNINGS

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

- In 2021, ISHR's finances and financial management and reporting systems were independently audited by Beau HLB. There were no reported or investigated breaches of ISHR's Code of Conduct or Anti-Discrimination and Equal Opportunity Policy in 2021.
- The ISHR Board met on four occasions during 2021, with an average attendance of 75% per meeting, addressing issues including the external environment, governance, strategy, policy, risk, holistic security, outcomes and impacts, evaluations and learnings, and human and financial resource management.
- ISHR acknowledges the outstanding pro bono contribution of Florian Pollner of McKinsey & Co to the facilitation of our 2021 staff strategy retreat and the refinement and enhanced implementation of our Strategic Framework.

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

- In 2021, ISHR commissioned and received an independent external evaluation of our programme to support defenders working in a highly restrictive environment. The evaluation found that the programme significantly supported and enabled defenders to engage strategically and effectively with the international human rights system, contributed to developing and strengthening networks of solidarity and support, and achieved impacts 'widely outsized in comparison with the resources at its disposal'. Key factors identified as contributing to the impact and effectiveness of the programme included: resilient, adaptable and committed staff; a highly collaborative approach; a very high level of expertise; and long-term commitment and investment.
- In terms of recommendations, the evaluation considered that the programme would benefit from the further development of clear benchmarks to assess progress towards longer-term goals, continued attention to risk management, and further support to beneficiaries to systematically assess risk.

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

- Throughout 2021, ISHR continued to strengthen its approach on these vital issues, implementing an updated policy on Holistic Security as well as advice and recommendations from our Working Group on Digital Security.
- We continued to implement our organisational Wellbeing Policy under the leadership of the Wellbeing Working Group and convened regular sessions on wellbeing, resilience, stress management and sustainability. ISHR's staff strategy retreat included dedicated sessions on wellbeing and workload management, with the ISHR Board, Senior Management Team and Staff Representative all collaborating on initiatives to monitor and address workload issues as a priority within the organisation.

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

- ISHR's Working Group on Non-Discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion, which reports to the Director and directly to the ISHR Board, continued to monitor and make recommendations on ways to better address structural and systemic discrimination and promote diversity and inclusivity. In 2021, 100% of the Working Group's recommendations were accepted and implemented by senior management. Among other matters, the Working Group recommended an update of recruitment policies, and is finalising development of a disability policy.
- In 2022, the Working Group will oversee an independent expert audit of ISHR policies and practices to ensure they promote and reflect values of diversity, equity and inclusion. They will also continue to organise personal and professional development sessions for staff on anti-racism.
- Of ISHR's Board members, seven of ten are women (including the Chair and Vice Chair), while four of six members of ISHR's Senior Management Team are women.
- The composition of ISHR's Board reflects organisational values of diversity and representation, with members from the Asia-Pacific, Africa, the Middle East and North Africa, Latin America, North America, and Western and Eastern Europe. Their work as human rights defenders across various sectors - NGOs, government, courts and private sector - brings considerable insight to ISHR. ISHR's Executive Director is a member of the International Gender Champions initiative.
- In addition to receiving written and oral reports from the Working Group, the Board received a briefing from Dr Karine Genevey, Head of Diversity and Inclusion with Pictet Group, on good practices and developments from the corporate sector.

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

- In 2021 we continued to implement our Environmental Policy, setting out our commitment to promoting biodiversity and a healthy and sustainable environment, reducing our environmental impact, and continually improving our environmental performance.
- ISHR's Strategic Framework 2021-25 identifies defenders working on issues of environmental justice and sustainability as a priority group for support.
- ISHR is proud to have contributed to the successful adoption of historic resolutions at the Human Rights Council in 2021 recognising the right to a healthy environment and mandating a new Special Rapporteur on Climate Change, with each of these resolutions recognising the vital importance of the work and protection of environmental human rights defenders.





# FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

This is an extract of ISHR's audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2021. For a complete version, please contact Marina Dailly at [m.dailly@ishr.ch](mailto:m.dailly@ishr.ch).

## PROFIT AND LOSS STATEMENT

FOR YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021

	2021 CHF	2020 CHF
<b>INCOME</b>		
REVENUE - CORE		
Governmental Agencies	1,245,817	1,292,192
Trusts and Foundations	381,050	449,690
Individual Donors	14,201	30,393
Other Revenue	72,913	80,777
<b>Total Core Grants</b>	<b>1,713,981</b>	<b>1,853,591</b>
REVENUE - EARMARKED		
Governmental Agencies	1,715,184	845,054
Trusts and Foundations	223,187	139,013
Intergovernmental Agencies	22,000	69,426
Special Contributions & Consultancy	42,217	68,241
<b>Total Earmarked Grants</b>	<b>2,002,588</b>	<b>1,121,734</b>
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>3,716,568</b>	<b>2,975,325</b>
<b>COSTS</b>		
Personnel Cost	2,205,580	1,846,629
GENERAL EXPENDITURE		
Missions/Partner Support	374,114	147,328
Publications/Translations/Outreach	407,365	194,527
Office and Operating Costs	294,840	274,891
Financial Charges/Audit Fees	60,952	48,688
Governance and Strategy Costs	1,929	335
New York Costs	281,764	309,554
Support for Mandate of Special Rapporteur	—	127,980
<b>TOTAL COSTS</b>	<b>3,626,543</b>	<b>2,949,663</b>
<b>INCOME (DEFICIT) FOR THE YEAR</b>	<b>90,025</b>	<b>25,663</b>

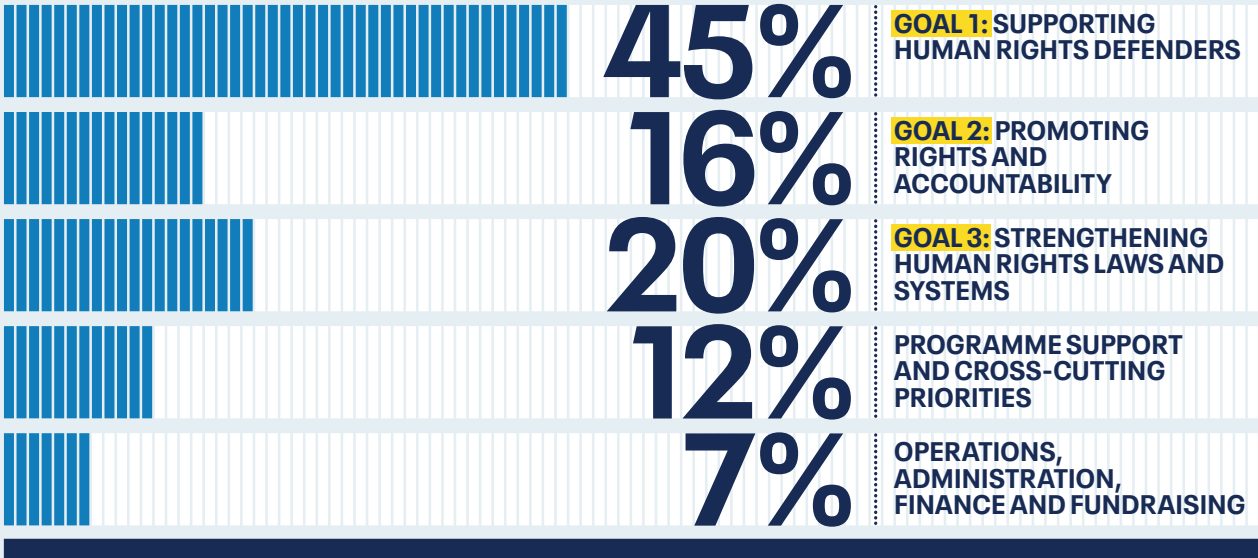
## BALANCE SHEET

AT 31 DECEMBER 2021

	2021 CHF	2020 CHF
<b>ASSETS</b>		
CURRENT ASSETS		
Petty Cash	814	294
Bank Accounts & Special Bank Accounts	1,559,535	1,151,730
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>1,560,349</b>	<b>1,152,024</b>
Debtors	11,630	39,552
Withholding Tax	—	—
DEFERRED & ACCRUED ASSETS		
Deferred Expenses	—	—
Grants Receivable -	406,938	734,292
Governmental & Intergovernmental		
Grants Receivable - Non-governmental	305,353	302,619
<b>Total Deferred &amp; Accrued Assets</b>	<b>712,291</b>	<b>1,036,911</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>2,284,271</b>	<b>2,228,487</b>
<b>LIABILITIES AND RESERVES</b>		
LIABILITIES		
Current Liabilities	150,606	86,642
Provisions	51,408	—
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>202,014</b>	<b>86,642</b>
Deferred Grants	1,397,980	1,547,593
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>1,599,994</b>	<b>1,634,235</b>
RESERVES		
Reserve Funds	592,251	568,589
Income (Deficit) for the Year	90,025	25,663
<b>Total Reserves</b>	<b>684,276</b>	<b>592,252</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND RESERVES</b>	<b>2,284,271</b>	<b>2,228,487</b>

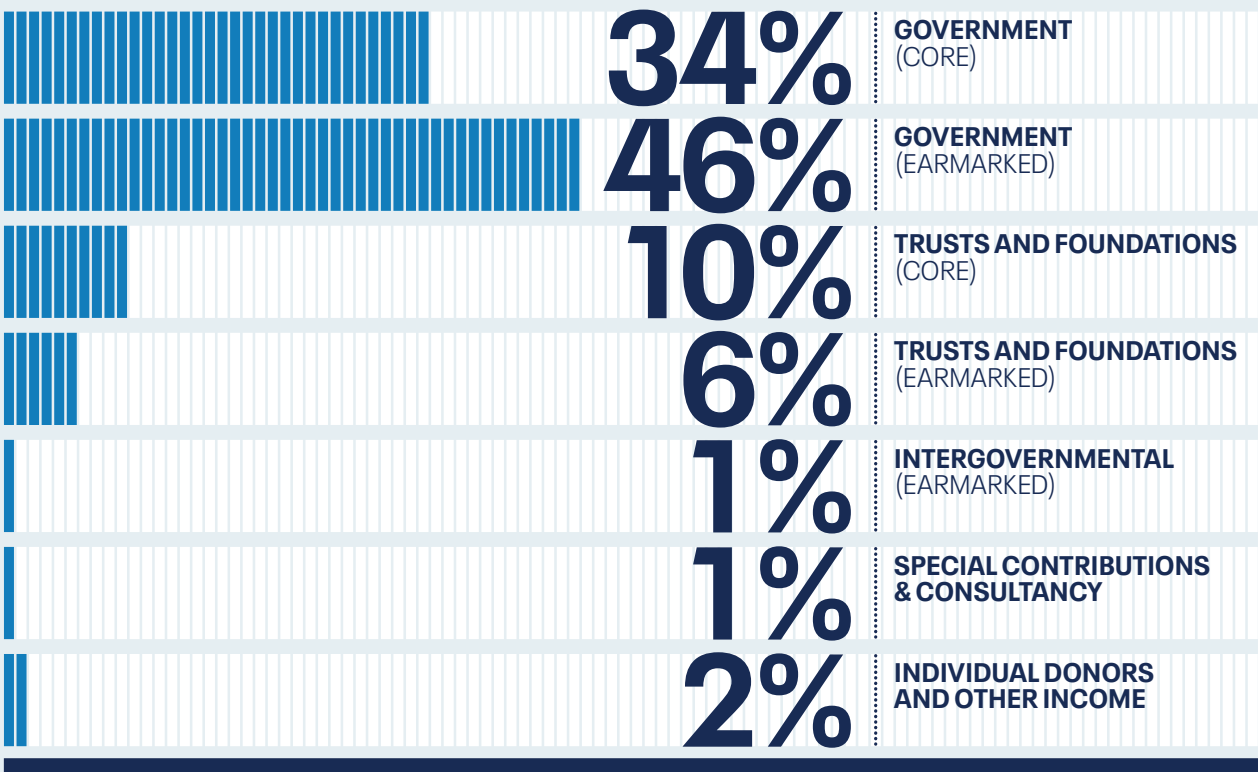
## EXPENDITURE BY CATEGORY

TOTAL CHF 3,626,543



## INCOME BY SOURCE

TOTAL CHF 3,716,568



# HUMAN RIGHTS ARTISTS

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

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

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



## Alex Tait | United Kingdom

Alex Tait graduated from Bucks New University in 2013 and is now working out of his studio in Berkhamsted (just outside of London). He specialises in character design and seeks to produce work that is surreal and spirited using bold colours and playful imagery. Original artwork; <https://thegreats.co/artworks/we-is-me-spelled-differently-series-12-no-text>



## Cecilia Castelli | Italy

Cecilia Castelli is an Italian illustrator and graphic designer. She has collaborated with several international brands and agencies, developing both digital and print projects with the aim to tell a story in a simple but humorous form. Most of her work features conceptual denotations as she likes creating images that "speak", always trying to find a way to look at things differently. Whenever Cecilia is not drawing, she's probably thinking of what to draw next. Original artwork; <https://thegreats.co/artworks/amplify-womens-voices>



## Teo Georgiev | Finland

Teo Georgiev (1992) is a Bulgarian illustrator and graphic designer working from Helsinki, Finland where he is pursuing a MA in Visual Communication Design at Aalto University. He has obtained a BA in Graphic Design at Coventry University, UK. From 2015-2017 he worked as a software designer for IBM England. Since 2017 he has been building a practice as a freelancer with a focus on illustration and graphic design and their intersection with storytelling and cultural studies. Original artwork; <https://thegreats.co/artworks/carry-the-truth>



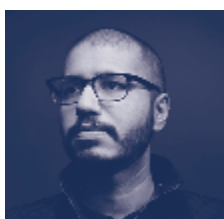
## Kokila B | India

Kokila is a freelance visual artist and activist. Her work revolves around gender, sexuality, corporate crimes, the socio-political and mental health. She currently works with two feminist organisations and loves sleeping. Original artwork; <https://thegreats.co/artworks/pride-series-25>



## Phathu Nembilwi | South Africa

Phathu Nembilwi is the Founder and Creative Director of Phathudesigns. She is a graphic designer and illustrator, who studied graphic design at the Tshwane University. Phathu grew up in a small town in Thohoyandou, South Africa. She draws inspiration from her own life and those around her, including the rich and colorful cultures in South Africa. Original artwork; <https://thegreats.co/artworks/a-real-woman-succeeds-no-text>



## Safwat Saleem | United States

Safwat Saleem is a Pakistani-American visual artist, graphic designer and filmmaker. He's best known for making politically-charged satirical art. His artwork has used a variety of media, including illustration, writing, animation, audio, film and sculpture. He often combines several media to create multimedia storytelling experiences that get his audiences talking – and laughing – about subjects that tend to otherwise make people feel uncomfortable. Safwat's work is shown regularly in galleries around the United States and beyond, and has been featured in publications such as Wired, BoingBoing and Brainpickings. He is a TED Senior Fellow, and a Fine Acts Advisory Board Member. Original artwork; <https://thegreats.co/artworks/persist>

# HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS: INSPIRING HOPE, SHAPING A FAIRER FUTURE



## WE STAND WITH UKRAINE

and with human rights defenders everywhere  
striving for peace, justice and accountability.

 International Service  
for Human Rights

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Feminist  
Anti-War  
Resistance

Feminist Anti-War Resistance is a group of Russian feminists founded in February 2022 to protest against the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine. More information about [Feminist Anti-War Resistance](#) here.