



GOALS AND IMPACT



SUPPORTING HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

OUR 2022 GOAL

Human rights defenders are equipped, connected, supported and influential

WHAT WE ACHIEVED

Through our human rights defender support programme – which includes training 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

SELECT HIGHLIGHTS



In March 2022, we celebrated the release of award winning Chinese human rights defender Yu Wensheng after four years of arbitrary detention, throughout which we defended his case through the UN system. We were honoured and humbled to support the campaign of his wife, Xu Yan, and rejoiced in their reunion.

There is strong evidence that public statements and solidarity actions can contribute to the release of threatened or arbitrarily detained human rights defenders, as well as enhance their safety and wellbeing. This became obvious as we campaigned and secured high-level statements from UN experts and senior government officials in cases including that of Egyptian human rights defender [Alaa-Abdel Fattah](#) and Mongolian environmental rights defender [Sukhgerel Dugersuren](#), as well as in relation to Palestinian human rights NGOs unlawfully targeted by Israeli authorities. We will continue to support their work and advocate for their unconditional freedom and safety, as well as that of many other unjustly imprisoned human rights defenders. We join the High Commissioner in calling on all governments to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the UDHR through an 'amnesty, pardon or simply release all those detained for exercising their rights'.



As an aspect of our unique role 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. In 2022, the work of HRCnet was vital to safeguard civil society participation at the Council, ensuring that it remained accessible and responsive to victims of violations and human rights defenders working at the national level.



On 29 and 30 March 2022, Nigerian civil society met in Abuja during a workshop co-organised by ISHR and Development Dynamics to discuss and strategise on ways to reduce legislative restrictions which impair the work of defenders and to strengthen legislative protections to support, safeguard and enable their work.

We played a key role in building, coordinating and resourcing a diversity of coalitions with human rights defenders at their centre, including the UN Anti-Racism Coalition (UNARC) which works to combat systemic racism and achieve racial justice.

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. 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 2022, the Academy received over 17,000 visits from defenders from all regions, who downloaded almost 4,000 resources.



We collaborated with international and national environmental and human rights organisations in an unprecedented way to use the [COP27 climate change conference in Egypt](#) to highlight repression in the country, put the protection of [human rights defenders at the centre of the environmental justice agenda](#), and [mount high-profile campaigns](#) for the release of arbitrarily detained Egyptian human rights defenders such as Alaa Abdel-Fattah, Mohamed el-Baqer and Mohamed 'Oxygen' Ibrahim Radwan.

Addressing the Council directly using the platform provided by ISHR, Abahlali baseMjondolo delivered a joint statement supported by 47 organisations [denouncing the killings of activists in South Africa](#), particularly those working to defend land, housing and environmental rights, while Josefa Meza, mother of Jonathan Morazán, one of the young protesters killed during the April 2018 mass protests in Nicaragua, addressed the Council calling for international investigation and accountability. Interventions such as this contributed to the subsequent establishment of a UN-mandated investigative and accountability mechanism on the country.

In total, ISHR provided training and advocacy support to 1056 human rights defenders from 47 countries from all regions, an increase of 15% compared with 2021.



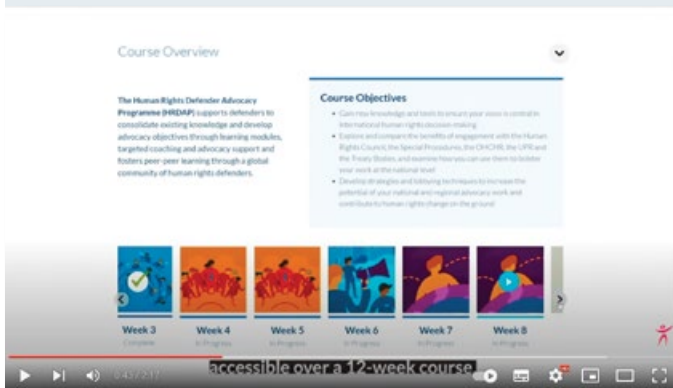
Through ISHR's Human Rights Defenders Advocacy Programme (HRDAP22), 19 activists from 17 countries took part in a three-month distance learning course to deepen their knowledge and understanding of UN human rights mechanisms through interactive learning materials on the tailor-made HRDAP Platform (video below). 100% of participants surveyed were 'very satisfied' with the programme and reported being equipped to take further action at the UN. Six months after the course, in December 2022, 90% of them indicated that they had engaged in follow up actions with international mechanisms to contribute to human rights change and accountability at the national level, from advocating for a national human rights defender protection law in Madagascar to establishing a sub-regional network of defenders in East Africa challenging unsustainable resource extraction. As an aspect of our commitment to long-term partnerships and sustainable capacity building, we will continue to support these activists in their international advocacy objectives over the coming year.



Human rights defender Lambert Nigarura

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 2022, we supported more than 20 defenders to address the UN Human Rights Council directly in ISHR's name.

Among many others, **ISHR was privileged to work with defenders and victims from Syria to push for the establishment of a mechanism to reveal the fate and whereabouts of people forcibly disappeared, and with defenders from Uganda to call for enhanced protection for LGBTIQ+ persons and women human rights defenders. We also supported defenders of African descent to denounce systematic and indiscriminate violence by law enforcement authorities of Morocco and Spain and to demand investigations, justice and reparations.**



Defender Brenda Kugonza from Uganda shares her story with us



“HRDAP provides not only a deep dive to the structures of the **UN human rights Mechanisms**, but the tools to identify the advocacy opportunities before each of them. And the best part is you learn this throughout an interactive platform, sessions with experts, **Special Rapporteurs, and successful activists** who have navigated throughout the system, while building networks with peers throughout the world. It has been a great experience to connect the knowledge, advocacy, and litigation efforts we perform as Colombia Diversa, with the possibilities the UN human rights mechanisms provide. It has really **opened my mind** and amplified the tools to bring change to my country and my region.”

JUAN FELIPE RIVERA OSORIO, HRDAP22 PARTICIPANT
FROM COLOMBIA DIVERSA, COLOMBIA

“Despite the COVID-pandemic, ISHR was able to organise many activities aimed at strengthening LGBTIQ+ organisations in Namibia [...] and **increasing awareness and protection of LGBTIQ+ human rights defenders at the global level**. This has demonstrably contributed to the capacity of Namibian [...] rights holders, with attention to the principle of **local ownership**.”

INDEPENDENT EVALUATION OF ISHR PROJECT
FOR THE NETHERLANDS MINISTRY OF
FOREIGN AFFAIRS, 12 JULY 2022



IN DEPTH

SUPPORTING ANTI- RACISM DEFENDERS IN THEIR STRUGGLE FOR RACIAL JUSTICE

ISHR is privileged to be a founding member and to host the secretariat of the **UN Anti-Racism Coalition (UNARC)**, which works to combat systemic racism and achieve racial justice. UNARC is an international coalition created and led by Africans and people of African descent following the murder of George Floyd. It addresses the ongoing oppression and killing of Black people around the world and the histories of colonialism and the transatlantic slave trade. UNARC provides the tools and resources necessary for defenders to engage with the United Nations on the issue of systemic racism and police violence against Africans and people of African descent, enabling them to use the system as a tool to effect real change in communities across the globe.



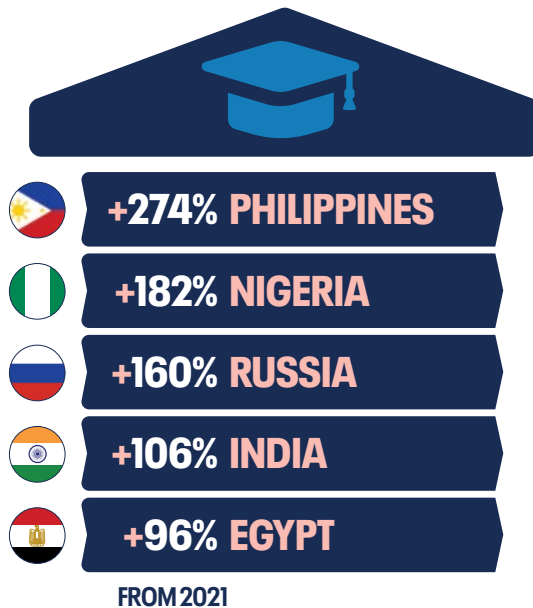
In 2022, UNARC launched a multilingual website and supported eight campaigns of grassroots anti-racism groups working on the ground, including in Brazil, Colombia, Grenada, and Trinidad and Tobago. UNARC also supported members to deliver oral statements at the Human Rights Council, including in the first debate with the newly established Expert Mechanism to Advance Racial Justice and Equality in the context of Law Enforcement (EMLER).



EMLER selected one of UNARC’s members, Collette Flanagan of Mothers Against Police Brutality, whose son was killed by police in 2013, as one of two directly impacted community representatives on the panel for the Enhanced Interactive Dialogue. For the first time, directly impacted people sat on the same panel, and were given equal time with UN experts, to take part in a debate on systemic racism and the excessive use of force by law enforcement agencies against Africans and people of African descent. ■



**INCREASE IN
NUMBER OF VISITORS
TO ISHR ACADEMY BY
HUMAN RIGHTS
DEFENDERS FROM
LISTED COUNTRIES**



These figures reflect the increased reliance of human rights defenders on the international human rights system, particularly those working in restrictive, repressive or deteriorating environments.



PROTECTING RIGHTS AND PROMOTING ACCOUNTABILITY

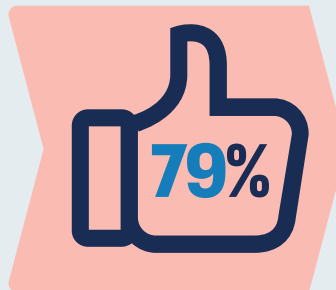
OUR 2022 GOAL

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

RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY ISHR



60% were adopted by the **UN treaty body** to which they were directed



79% were taken up by States in the **Universal Periodic Review**, with each ISHR recommendation made by an average of **6 States**

WHAT WE ACHIEVED

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

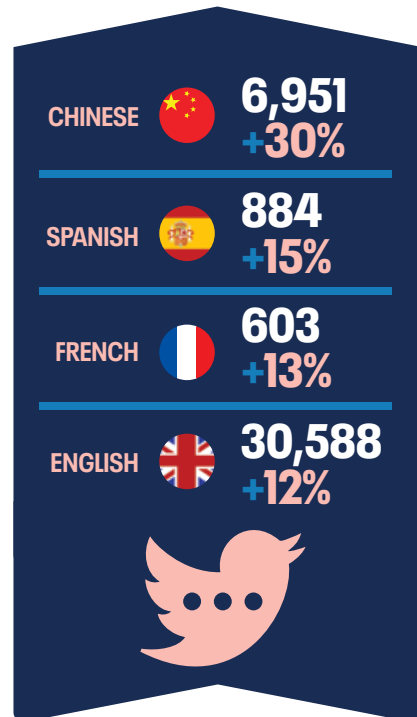
- Our unparalleled experience at the UN and with regional bodies allowed us to rapidly and strategically use those mechanisms to prevent violations and attacks against defenders and pursue justice and accountability where they occurred.

- 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 track record of principled cooperation with governments and human rights institutions, uniquely positioned us to advise 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.



DEFENDER STORIES: BONNIE FLORENCIA SHARIFF FROM MADAGASCAR



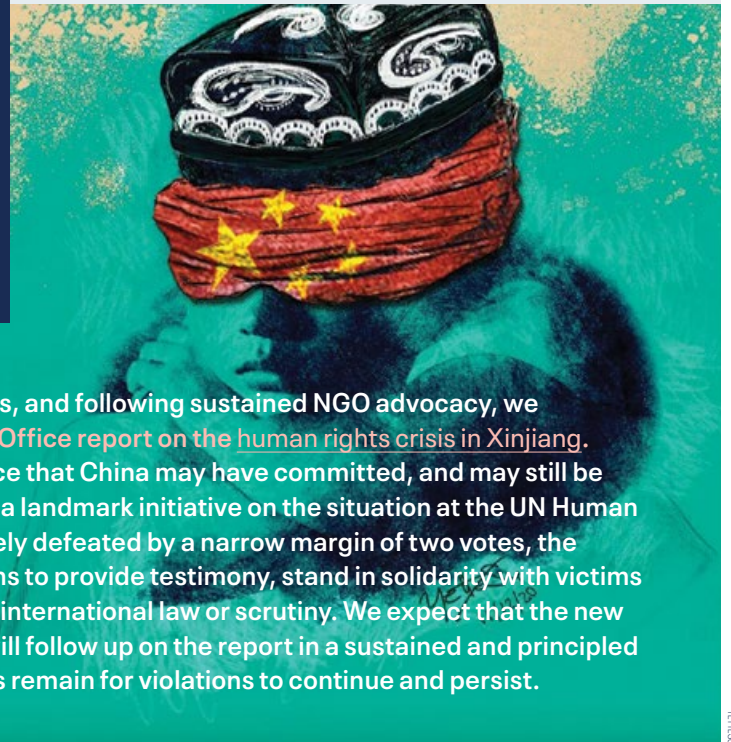
INCREASE IN ISHR TWITTER FOLLOWERS SINCE 2021

SELECT HIGHLIGHTS

With the Taliban adopting systematic policies and practices of gender apartheid, our work with partners to convene an Urgent Debate at the UN provided a powerful platform for women from Afghanistan to share their stories and articulate their demands for international support and accountability. While the resolution adopted following the Urgent Debate should have been stronger in terms of accountability, former Chair of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission Shaharзад Akbar described the urgent session itself as 'a very important and unprecedented moment in the way it brought diverse voices of Afghan women to the Human Rights Council and focused the spotlight on women and girls' rights.' International accountability for the crime of gender apartheid is a key priority for ISHR.



Responding to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, we worked with partners and led successful campaigns to secure Russia's suspension from the Human Rights Council, their first ever defeat in NGO Committee elections, and to mandate a new international expert monitoring mechanism on the human rights situation in the country. Russia's suspension from the Council was crucial to reinforce membership standards and uphold the Council's integrity. Their defeat in NGO Committee elections means they no longer play a role as a gatekeeper of NGO access to the UN. And the mandating of a Special Rapporteur on the country provides a vital bridge between embattled civil society and the international community.



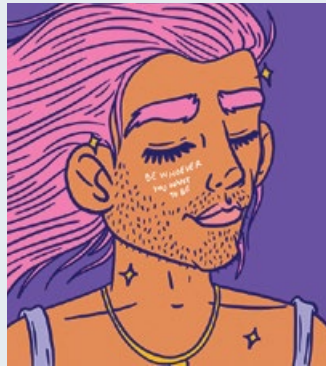
Together with Uyghur organisations and communities, and following sustained NGO advocacy, we secured the release of a landmark UN Human Rights Office report on the human rights crisis in Xinjiang. The comprehensive report found prima facie evidence that China may have committed, and may still be committing, crimes against humanity and prompted a landmark initiative on the situation at the UN Human Rights Council, the first ever on China. While ultimately defeated by a narrow margin of two votes, the initiative did open vital space for Uyghur organisations to provide testimony, stand in solidarity with victims of violations, and demonstrate that no state is above international law or scrutiny. We expect that the new High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, will follow up on the report in a sustained and principled way, particularly given the finding that the conditions remain for violations to continue and persist.

Throughout 2022, we remained at the cutting edge of strategic human rights litigation. Among others, we supported renowned human rights organisation [ADC-Memorial](#) in a successful claim before the [European Court of Human Rights](#), which found Russia's 'Foreign Agents Act' to be incompatible with the rights to freedom of expression and association. The Court recognised the vital roles of NGOs as the 'watchdogs of society', and affirmed their right to solicit and receive funding from a variety of sources. We also [filed claims with the UN Committee against Torture on behalf of a Sahrawi defender against Morocco](#), and with a [Peruvian Superior Court](#) to ensure that mining company 'Yanococha' is held accountable for violating the rights of Elmer Campos and other defenders attacked during a protest. Meanwhile, our comprehensive new [Guide for Third-Party Interventions before UN Human Rights Treaty Bodies](#) will assist human rights defenders and advocates to contribute to the development of international human rights law and jurisprudence. We are indebted to the pro bono lawyers who substantially assisted ISHR in this work.



DISCOVER OUR NEW GUIDE FOR THIRD-PARTY INTERVENTIONS BEFORE UN HUMAN RIGHTS TREATY BODIES!

LAURA ANDRADE



Demonstrating the enduring relevance and impact of ISHR's work to develop the authoritative [Yogyakarta Principles on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics](#) in 2006, as well as the complementary [Yogyakarta Principles + 10](#) in 2017, in 2022 the Swiss Parliament passed legislation comprehensively prohibiting all measures that seek to alter or repress sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. In doing so, they explicitly invoked the [Yogyakarta Principles](#).

After seven years of sustained advocacy in partnership with local civil society organisations, a [human rights defender protection law](#) was finally adopted in Niger! We are now working to ensure the law's effective implementation, together with that of defender laws we have previously secured in countries including Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Mali and Mongolia. Our [new interactive world map on legislative protection](#) enables both advocates and policy makers to easily ascertain the status of legal protection of defenders in each country, including the compatibility of such protections with the [UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders and the Model National Law](#).



Defender Abdoulaye Kanni of Niger shares his story with us



Complementing action at the Human Rights Council, and following the provision of information, evidence and sustained advocacy by ISHR and its partners, the UN's committee on racial discrimination strongly condemned China's persecution of Uyghurs, and decided, for the first time ever, to refer the situation to the UN Secretary-General's Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect. Reiterating the most serious concerns expressed by the UN's Human Rights Office and independent experts, the Committee reminded the Chinese government of its obligation to put an end to systemic racial discrimination in Xinjiang.

ISHR also continues to work at the international and regional level 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.



Together with the Institute for Race and Equality, ISHR co-led the Colectivo 46/2, a coalition of Nicaraguan and international rights groups, [successfully achieving the creation of an international accountability mechanism on Nicaragua](#). As a result of the coalition's sustained advocacy, media engagement, campaigning and mobilisation, the Human Rights Council adopted resolution 49/3. The resolution strengthened the OHCHR's reporting mandate on Nicaragua, and created a Group of Human Rights Experts with a robust mandate to investigate grave human rights violations with an intersectional lens, identify patterns and root causes of violations, and collect and preserve evidence for future accountability. ISHR also regularly provided a platform for Nicaraguan activists, with emphasis on indigenous and women human rights defenders, to address the Human Rights Council.



“ ISHR has provided us great support in our international **advocacy work on Venezuela before UN bodies**. Throughout the process of renewal of the UN fact-finding mission we have had their accompaniment, support in meetings with relevant international actors and help establishing bridges with international organisations. ISHR provides very generous and respectful accompaniment to local processes, increasing the impact of a collective action through presence of **Venezuelan civil society organisations in UN spaces** such as the Human Rights Council. I highlight ISHR’s focus on supporting new voices to participate in these spaces which generally have not had access. We are grateful to the ISHR and all the support that it has given us in such adverse and complex times such as those we face in Venezuela. ”

BEATRIZ BORGES, CEPAZ
(CENTRO DE JUSTICIA Y PAZ), VENEZUELA



Throughout the year, we worked intensively with human rights defenders from Venezuela to secure the continued operation of an independent international mechanism to investigate, report on and promote accountability for grave human rights violations in that country, and to accelerate progress for change.

Human rights defenders urge States to advance the international treaty on corporate accountability, highlighting cases such as in the film "The Illusion of Abundance".



Together with the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre and the B-Team, ISHR continued to promote corporate action to respect and protect defenders and pursue corporate accountability for abuses against them, including through the Business Network on Civic Freedoms and Human Rights Defenders. Both in our own right and through the Network we convened

more than 15 events and briefings on some of the most pressing issues for human rights defenders in relation to business and human rights, including the protection of environmental and land rights defenders, and corporate responsibility with respect to human rights abuses in Xinjiang and Russia.

IN DEPTH

AFTER 7 YEARS, NIGER FINALLY ADOPTS A LAW PROTECTING HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS!

The Law on the Rights and Duties of Human Rights Defenders adopted by Niger reaffirms the vital and legitimate role played by defenders in the country, as well as the State's commitment to reinforce their protection. Its effective implementation will help create an enabling working environment for defenders.

On 15 June 2022, the National Assembly of Niger adopted a law establishing the rights and duties of human rights defenders, becoming the fourth country in Africa to adopt a legal instrument for the promotion and protection of defenders.

'The adoption of the defenders' law is the logical outcome of the work carried out since 2015, that is 7 years! Its aim is to protect human rights defenders in Niger and it takes into account the specificities of women human rights defenders and defenders with disabilities. It addresses the current shortcomings even if there is space for improvement,' highlighted Abdoulaye Kanni, the coordinator of ISHR's national partner, the Collectif des Organisations de Défense des Droits de l'Homme et de la Démocratie (CODDHD).

In a context in which many countries continue to hinder and even criminalise the work of human rights defenders through restrictive measures and laws, Niger's initiative to promote the work of human rights defenders is a welcome development.

3,612

Resources
Downloaded

+90%

From 2021

17,141

Visitors

+57%

From 2021



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

 ISHR Academy

The law, which contains 29 articles, outlines the rights of defenders, as well as remedies, sanctions and reparations for violations against them. For example, article 4 guarantees their rights to **freedom of association and expression**, article 8 their right to **technical and financial support**, and article 9 their right to **communicate with regional and international mechanisms without risk of reprisals**. As is the case in Mali, the new law also grants **specific protections to women human rights defenders and to defenders with disability**. Additionally, the law provides that the State has a duty to respect, promote, protect and fulfil the rights of human rights defenders and their family members against situations of risk or danger they face.

'We invite the government to ensure the implementation of the newly adopted law by establishing an effective, efficient and inclusive protection mechanism whose constitution and functioning will integrate human rights defenders. This is also an opportunity to call on and encourage other States in Africa and in the world to ensure their legal framework is protective of the rights of defenders,' says ISHR Africa Programme Advocate Stéphanie Wamba. ■



REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN AT ISHR



VANESSA MUNDIE (MINTTU)

IN DEPTH

WE DID IT! RENEWING THE FACT-FINDING MISSION ON VENEZUELA

On 7 October 2022, the Human Rights Council **renewed the vital mandate of the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) on Venezuela and the reporting mandate of OHCHR** for another two years, with 19 votes in favour, 5 votes against and 23 abstentions.

ISHR, together with a coalition of Venezuelan and international organisations had campaigned for the renewal of the mandate, highlighting the importance of the FFM in investigating violations and its potential as a deterrent for further atrocities.

Venezuelan and international civil society groups and defenders welcomed the outcome, as both the Mission and OHCHR have proved effective at highlighting gross violations committed by the Maduro regime.

'We hope this renewal will put more pressure on the Maduro government and make

it clear they will not escape accountability for their crimes,' said ISHR partner Clara Ramírez, interim director of FundaRedes, following adoption of the resolution.

Both the FFM and OHCHR have ensured the attention of the international community has remained on Venezuela despite multiple global crises. The FFM has also provided victims of violations with the hope that perpetrators will be held to account. 'The FFM plays a key preventative role in making gross violations of civil and political rights visible,' says Wanda Cedeño, coordinator of Voto Joven.

ISHR will continue to support human rights defenders and organisations in Venezuela with their crucial work and collaboration with the Mission and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in the country. ■

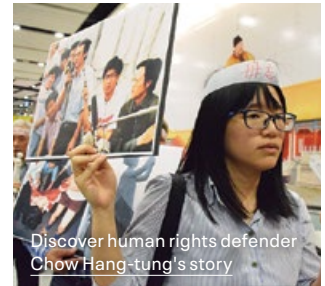
IN DEPTH

PROMOTING ACCOUNTABILITY FOR HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN CHINA

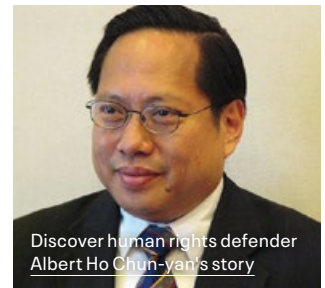
This year saw the culmination of efforts to engage the UN and other actors to hold China accountable for **widespread and systematic rights violations, including against Uyghur and other Turkic Muslim peoples.**

Throughout the year, ISHR supported defenders and worked closely with partner NGOs to shape the first trip to China by a High Commissioner in nearly two decades, ensuring that Michele Bachelet was presented with the voices and views of defenders and their families before her departure. Despite the disappointing outcome and muted criticism during her visit, the OHCHR subsequently released a **foundational report on violations in Xinjiang** in August 2022 that clearly articulated the risks of ongoing crimes against humanity in the region. ISHR effectively leveraged this to press States to negotiate and vote on a decision at the Council's 51st session to debate the report, and continues – despite that vote's defeat – to urge all stakeholders to ensure that China is on the Council's agenda.

Throughout it all, **we accompanied more than a dozen individuals and groups** as they sought to raise cases and concerns to UN experts, channelling their frustration when efforts fall short – as with our campaigns to end the arbitrary detention of social activists



Discover human rights defender
Chow Hang-tung's story

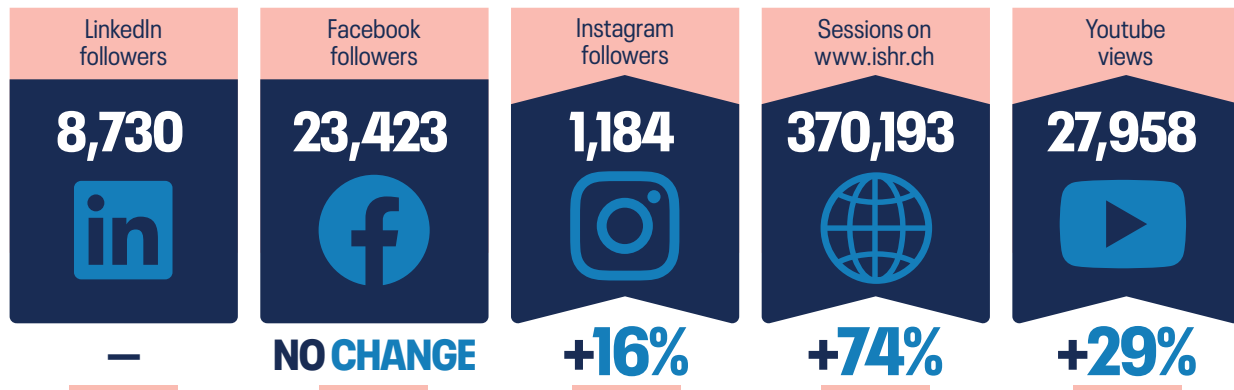


Discover human rights defender
Albert Ho Chun-yan's story

Huang Xueqin and Wang Jianbing – and celebrating their success, such as the release of human rights lawyer Yu Wensheng after serving a four year sentence.

In Hong Kong, **ISHR continued to draw attention to the critical risks posed by Hong Kong’s National Security Law**, in particular its impact on the ability of civil society to safely engage with the UN. A submission to the UN Secretary General laid out the legal concerns in full; this also formed the basis for a submission to the UN’s Human Rights Committee, which reviewed Hong Kong’s efforts to fulfil its obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in July 2022 and gave a resounding fail. After additional research and updates, we released the final paper in September 2022, and launched it at an event in Geneva and a briefing in New York. The impact was clear: both the Committee and the 2022 ‘Reprisals Report’ of the UN Secretary-General are unequivocal in raising the issue, and pressing for the Hong Kong government to ensure that engagement with the UN on human rights is not misconstrued as ‘collusion’ or an attack on national security. ■

INCREASE IN ISHR ONLINE MEDIA ACTIVITY SINCE 2021





STRENGTHENING HUMAN RIGHTS LAWS AND SYSTEMS

OUR 2022 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 accessible and safe, with policies and processes to enable meaningful participation for defenders online and offline
- 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
- cases of intimidation and reprisals are properly investigated and perpetrators held accountable

SELECT HIGHLIGHTS

High-level political support and public advocacy can show solidarity with defenders and help ensure their safety and freedom. [Our work to end reprisals against activists who engage with the United Nations gained momentum](#) as we launched a [database](#) compiling cases of intimidation and reprisals documented by the UN since 2010. Our campaign to #EndReprisals (video below) was a significant success, with a record number of States speaking out to pursue accountability for individual cases of reprisals. This included a significant number of cases advocated for by ISHR, including that of the Human Rights Center 'Viasna' in Belarus, Egyptian human rights defender Ibrahim Metwally Hegazy, the cases of Armel Niyongere, Dieudonné Bashirahishize, Vital Nshimirimana and Lambert Nigarura from Burundi, arbitrarily detained Bahraini defenders Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja and Abduljalil Al-Singace, as well as Chinese human rights defenders Jiang Tianyong and Chen Jianfang.



STATEMENT ON REPRISALS AND INTIMIDATION

Human rights defenders worldwide welcomed the historic adoption of a [resolution recognising the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment](#). [Coming after almost five decades of relentless activism](#), the UN resolution provides a powerful new tool to address the climate crisis, biodiversity loss and deadly pollution.



[Our systemic advocacy and individualised advice helped to finally open the UN's doors for nine previously excluded NGOs, including the International Dalit Solidarity Network and the Gulf Center for Human Rights, bringing their crucial experience and expertise to international policy makers. \[IDSN's accreditation brings to a successful close a 15 year campaign to ensure that defenders of the rights of Dalit minorities can access and participate at the UN!\]\(#\)](#)



Throughout 2022, we 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 that support diverse and independent civil society participation at the UN. In a significant win, Russia, a member of the Committee since its establishment in 1947, was voted out – the first time in 75 years! Despite Russia's departure, however, the incoming NGO Committee still includes members with deeply problematic records on safeguarding human rights and civil society participation.



Consistent with ISHR advocacy and emerging jurisprudence that international law prohibits discrimination on the grounds of a person's status as a human rights defender, the [draft Convention on the Right to Development](#) now includes a provision recognising that States should take 'specific and remedial' measures to ensure the equality and full and effective participation of defenders in decision-making processes, programmes and policymaking.

Incorporating inputs and recommendations from ISHR, the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights issued an authoritative new [General Comment on Land Rights](#), recognising [the vital role of land and environmental rights defenders](#) and providing States with comprehensive guidance on their protection. Protection measures should include public recognition, the repeal of restrictive legislation, the development of specific laws, policies and programmes to protect defenders, and the investigation and punishment of any form of violence or threats against them.

“We welcome the defeat of Venezuela’s campaign for a Human Rights Council seat. Venezuela has been a consistent ally of China and Russia in opposing scrutiny and accountability initiatives at the Council.”

ISHR NEW YORK CO-DIRECTOR TESS MCEVOY
QUOTED IN AFP, 11 OCTOBER 2022



After an intense and successful campaign, human rights defenders celebrate the renewal of the mandate of the Independent Expert on the protection from violence and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.

“Russia’s suspension sends a powerful message that the Human Rights Council is no place for States that are perpetrating massive human rights violations.”

ISHR DIRECTOR PHIL LYNCH QUOTED IN ALJAZEERA, 7 APRIL 2022

Following sustained advocacy by ISHR, ILGA World and over 1200 NGO partners from almost 150 countries, the UN Human Rights Council renewed the crucial expert mandate on sexual orientation and gender identity. This renewal, and the lack of challenge at the Third Committee of the General Assembly, reaffirms the Council’s commitment to combat discrimination and violence, reminds all States of their obligations towards LGBT and gender-diverse people everywhere, and provides defenders with a critical ally in their work for sexual and gender justice.



KRISTIANCHALIKOV



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 Council’s composition, with Bahrain withdrawing its candidacy, and Venezuela failing to secure election.



Throughout the year, ISHR also engaged closely 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 thereby result in a Council which is less effective. Building on our efforts for more than 30 years, 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:

No Council Without Us!

“In recent years, the Human Rights Council has been able to scrutinise international crimes in Palestine, Ukraine or Myanmar, and to investigate systemic racism and police violence in the United States.”

ISHR ADVOCATE RAPHAËL VIANA DAVID QUOTED IN FINANCIALTIMES, 6 OCTOBER 2022

IN DEPTH

#RUSSIA-OUT-OF-HRC: ISHR WELCOMES UNGA VOTE TO SUSPEND RUSSIA FROM UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

On 7 April 2022, an overwhelming majority of States at the United Nations General Assembly voted to suspend Russia's membership of the UN Human Rights Council.

93 States voted in favour of the resolution, easily reaching the two-thirds majority needed for such a move, while just 24 States voted against it.

'This sends a powerful message that the Human Rights Council is no place for States that are perpetrating massive human rights violations, including acts that amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity,' said ISHR Executive Director Phil Lynch. 'The atrocities reported in Bucha, the countless accounts of abuses across Ukraine, as well as the Russian government's crackdown on dissent at home: all of these can and must now be investigated in detail by the international community, including the Human Rights Council,' he added.

The suspension came amid the continued coverage of numerous reports of large-scale atrocities, including the alleged indiscriminate murder of civilians, committed by the Russian army as they retreated from the region around Kyiv. **Civil society actors and allies have been pushing for Russia's suspension from the Human Rights Council since the start of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.**



**IN EIGHT
DIFFERENT
LANGUAGES**

This is just the second time a sitting member of the Human Rights Council has been suspended from the body following a vote by the General Assembly: in March 2011, the UNGA voted to suspend Libya's membership in the wake of its government's brutal crackdown of opposition protesters under then-leader Muammar Gaddafi.

'The General Assembly has taken a decisive stand to publicly reprimand a permanent member of the UN Security Council for their actions,' said Madeleine Sinclair, Co-Director of ISHR's New York office. **'This strengthens both the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council** by setting a clear precedent: even the most powerful States and governments can be held accountable by the international community through transparent processes held in legitimate multilateral bodies,' she highlighted.

Speaking in advance of the vote, ISHR partner and head of the Nobel Peace Prize winning Ukraine Centre for Civil Liberties, Oleksandra Matviychuk, said, 'Russia's war against Ukraine has destroyed the international system of peace and security. This war causes daily pain, suffering and death to civilians, as Russia commits war crimes as a method of warfare. Against this background, Russia's participation in



ISHR STATEMENT ON RUSSIA'S WAR AGAINST UKRAINE:
"WE STAND IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE PEOPLE OF UKRAINE"

the Human Rights Council looks like an evil mockery and undermines the trust of people around the world in the UN.'

Rules regarding the suspension of a member of the UN Human Rights Council are set in OP8 of General Assembly resolution 60/251. From the beginning of the Russian war of aggression in Ukraine, ISHR and civil society partners pushed for Putin's Russia to be suspended from the Council and held accountable for its actions. ■

