



**VISION AND
STRATEGY**



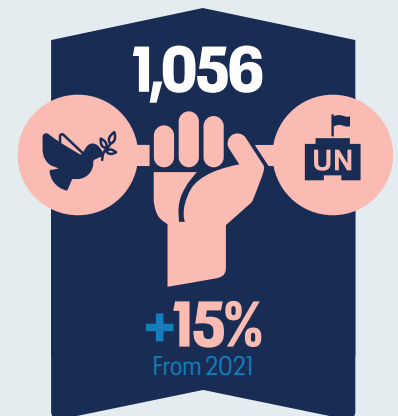
SOLIDARITY AND SUPPORT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

OUR MISSION

ISHR sees human rights defenders as essential agents of progress and positive change.

Their work is vital for gender justice, racial justice, environmental justice, criminal justice and economic justice. **Their work confronts** and challenges power, privilege and prejudice, frequently exposing them to threats and attacks from unscrupulous governments, corporations and other actors. **Their work contributes** to good governance and accountability at the international and national levels.

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



FROM 47 DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

For nearly four decades, ISHR's mission has been to serve, support and provide solidarity to human rights defenders.

Almost 40 years ago, the first defenders supported by ISHR included the parents of detained anti-apartheid activists in South Africa and anti-colonial independence activists from East Timor.

Almost 30 years ago, in 1993, ISHR led the successful campaign to enable national and regional-level organisations to obtain accreditation to the UN and participate in UN bodies and processes – a status previously available only to international NGOs. Over this period, we also played an instrumental role in the negotiation of the **landmark Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, which celebrates its 25th anniversary this year.**

Almost 20 years ago, in 2006, ISHR co-founded **HRCnet, a network of 16 mainly regional and national NGOs** supporting defenders from the Global South to engage with the Human Rights Council. ISHR remains entrusted by the members of the Network to host and auspice the secretariat in our Geneva office.

Around 10 years ago, ISHR worked with defenders and experts to develop an **authoritative model national law** on the protection of human rights defenders, which has subsequently shaped specific protection laws, policies and mechanisms in more than five countries across three continents.

Over the last two years, ISHR used the opportunities for remote participation presented by the pandemic to support and significantly **increase the direct engagement of Global South, anti-racism, feminist and queer human rights defenders and activists at the UN.** We



have sought to ensure that they can speak with their own voices, share their own expertise, articulate their own experiences and demands, and shape an international human rights discourse that is effective and meaningful to them.

And over the last year, we provided **training and advocacy support to defenders** working to secure the freedom of detained defenders in China, promote the protection of civilians in Ukraine, respond to the women's rights emergency in Afghanistan, resist the repression of civic space in Russia and Egypt, address the humanitarian crises in Nicaragua and Venezuela, combat the criminalisation of migrant rights defenders in parts of Europe, and address systemic racism and police violence in the US and elsewhere.

While the countries and contexts may have changed, the essence of ISHR – providing solidarity and support to defenders and working with them to achieve change – has remained constant over 40 years.

OUR GOALS FOR CHANGE

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

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

We provide defenders with tools, capacities and networks to use international and regional human rights laws and systems to contribute to change on the ground.

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, and are held accountable for violations and abuses against them.

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.



They shared their story with us: [Julio Achmadi](#) from Indonesia and [Ketakandriana Rafitoson](#) from Madagascar.



WE'RE
IN THIS
TOGETHER

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.

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 issues of sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or sex characteristics. We also support migrant and refugee rights defenders, anti-racism defenders, and other defenders working to dismantle patriarchal, racist, 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. We seek to ensure that businesses and other non-State actors are effectively regulated with respect to human rights and defenders. We work so that they consult 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, 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. In recent years, this programme has supported defenders working in relation to countries such as Afghanistan, Bahrain, Burundi, China, Egypt, Nicaragua, Russia, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela.

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, as well as those working in environments where there is an opportunity to strengthen legal frameworks for the protection of human rights defenders.

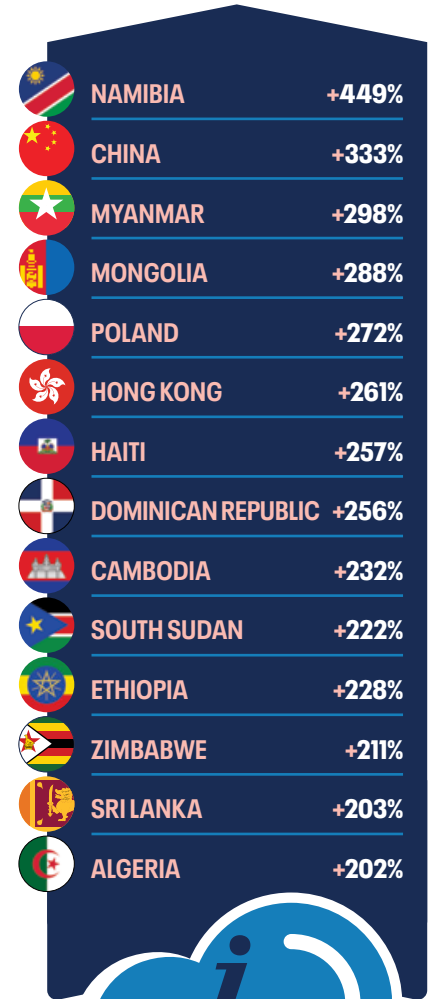
OUR TACTICS

In each of our programmes we use a range of integrated tactics, developed and implemented in partnership with defenders. Our activities include:

- Training, capacity building, strategic advice, advocacy support and fellowships for human rights defenders
- Legislative and policy research, advocacy and advice
- Strategic litigation and amicus curiae interventions
- Narrative development, campaigning and mobilisation
- Coalition building and coordination, including acting as secretariat for HRCnet and the UN Anti-Racism Coalition, co-convenor of the Business Network on Civic Freedoms and Human Rights Defenders, and facilitator of a diverse range of ad hoc coalitions built for specific campaigns or advocacy objectives, such as with respect to the establishment or renewal of international monitoring and reporting mechanisms on Venezuela, Nicaragua and LGBTI rights

We recognise that ISHR holds a privileged position within the international human rights system. With our main offices in Geneva and New York, we have significant systems expertise, as well as strong relationships, access and influence with key decision-makers, including high-level government officials and diplomats, senior UN officials and experts, and international media. Our commitment is to use this privilege to enhance the access and influence of human rights defenders, while simultaneously pushing to reform the system to redistribute power and ensure that frontline defenders, affected communities and victims of violations have direct access and influence.

INCREASE IN USE OF ISHR INFORMATION PRODUCTS BY HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN VARIOUS COUNTRIES AND REGIONS



These increases reflect the relevance and accessibility of ISHR's online resources in multiple languages.

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.

Defender
Odinakaonye 'Odi'
Lagi from Nigeria
shares her story
with us

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.

DISCOVER MORE

We are dedicated to our mission, 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>.

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