



ENDING INTIMIDATION AND REPRISALS AGAINST THOSE WHO COOPERATE WITH THE UN IN THE FIELD OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Submission to the UN Secretary-General on recent developments, cases and recommendations.

APRIL 2026

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL SERVICE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

The International Service for Human Rights (ISHR) is an independent non-governmental organisation dedicated to the promotion and protection of human rights. We do this by supporting human rights defenders, strengthening human rights protection systems, and leading and participating in coalitions for human rights change.

CREDITS

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INTRODUCTION

ISHR is pleased to make the following submission to the Secretary-General to inform his upcoming report on **Cooperation with the United Nations, its Mechanisms and Representatives in the field of human rights**.

This submission addresses developments in United Nations (UN) and regional human rights bodies regarding the prevention of and response to intimidation and reprisals during the reporting period (1 May 2025 – 30 April 2026). It also provides details of cases of intimidation and reprisals that ISHR was made aware of during the period and our understanding of how these cases have been addressed both by the mechanisms and relevant States.

ISHR works to bring cases of alleged intimidation and reprisals to the attention of relevant UN officials, including the Secretary-General, the Assistant Secretary-General in her capacity as senior official, the President of the Human Rights Council, as well as members of Treaty Bodies, and Special Procedure mandate holders, to press for effective preventative measures and responses to alleged cases of reprisals.

Several of the individual cases of intimidation and reprisals described below have taken place in a context of systematic harassment, threats and attacks against human rights defenders. These come in many forms, including through the use and abuse of laws to criminalise the work of human rights defenders, together with the initiation of arbitrary legal proceedings intended to hinder such work. Preventing and addressing cases of intimidation and reprisals is closely associated with States' obligations to ensure a safe and enabling environment for human rights defenders and other civil society actors to carry out all aspects of their work.

LEGAL OBLIGATION OF STATES AND THE UN TO ADDRESS REPRISALS

International law provides for a right to unhindered access to and communication with international bodies on matters of human rights and fundamental freedoms. This right is derived from the human rights to freedom of expression, association, assembly and

movement contained in international human rights instruments and in customary international law.¹

The right to unhindered access to and communication with international bodies is also explicitly recognised in the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders² and is codified in certain UN human rights treaties.³

Enjoyment of this right implies that those accessing or attempting to access or communicate with these bodies should not face any form of intimidation or reprisal for doing so. The Declaration on Human Rights Defenders recognises the right of human rights defenders to protection from reprisals for their communication or cooperation, or attempted communication or cooperation, with the UN's human rights bodies.⁴

The right to be free from reprisals that threaten an individual's life or physical liberty is also an aspect of the protection afforded by other international human rights, such as freedom from arbitrary arrest, detention or deprivation of liberty; torture; cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment; and arbitrary deprivation of life. ISHR further notes that international human rights jurisprudence establishes that States that confiscate passports, issue travel bans or prevent human rights defenders or representatives of NGOs from attending international meetings may contravene the right to freedom of movement under Article 12 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.⁵

States have the primary duty to uphold the co-related rights to unhindered access to the UN and to be protected from intimidation and reprisals in connection with any cooperation or attempted cooperation. As subjects of international law, UN bodies such as the Human Rights Council and the ECOSOC Committee on NGOs may also be bound by these obligations.⁶

In 2024, a coalition of 18 international and regional human rights organisations released the Declaration +25, a landmark document complementing the 1998 UN Declaration on Human

¹ In 2012, the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association called on States to ensure that these rights 'are enjoyed by everyone and any registered or unregistered entities' and that no one is subject to 'harassment, persecution, intimidation or reprisals' for exercising them.

² UN Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, Annex to UN Doc A/RES/53/144, 8 March 1999, Articles 5(c) and 9(4).

³ See: Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Prevention of Torture, Article 15; Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, Article 11; Optional Protocol to the international Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Article 13; and Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a Communications Procedure, Article 4.

⁴ Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, Articles 2(1), 9(1) and 12(2).

⁵ Human Rights Committee, 'Concluding Observations: Morocco', UN Doc CCPR/CO/82/MAR, 1 December 2004, §18.

⁶ Interpretation of the Agreement of 25 March 1951 between the WHO and Egypt (Advisory Opinion) [1980] ICJ Rep 73, pp 89–90. See also Reparations for injuries suffered in the service of the UN (Advisory Opinion) [1949] ICJ Rep 174, p 179.

Rights Defenders taking into account relevant regional and international jurisprudential developments of the last 25 years. The Declaration +25 specifically refers to reprisals in Article 19 on the Role and Responsibility of International and Regional Bodies and Mechanisms, in which it states that International and regional bodies, mechanisms and processes, including multilateral processes, should, in consultation with human rights defenders, adopt and implement laws, policies and practices, and take all necessary measures, to recognise and enable the exercise of the right to defend human rights, particularly the right to communicate and cooperate with international and regional bodies, mechanisms and processes, including by preventing, investigating, and promoting accountability for all acts of intimidation or reprisal associated with the exercise or attempted exercise of the right to defend human rights or to access, communicating or cooperating with international or regional bodies, mechanisms and processes; and sanctioning any State or non-State actor responsible for any act of intimidation or reprisal and promoting non-recurrence.

DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN HUMAN RIGHTS SYSTEMS

Senior official on reprisals

As the senior official on the issue of reprisals, the Assistant Secretary-General (ASG) for Human Rights, Ilze Brands Kehris, leads the UN's efforts to put a stop to all intimidation and reprisals against those cooperating with the UN on human rights.

ISHR acknowledges on-going efforts to provide clarity on the functioning of this mandate and how defenders can best engage with it, including consultations in Bangkok in February 2018, Bishkek in May 2018, and Nairobi in May 2019. However, ISHR reiterates that a clearer, accessible, public-facing policy on how the senior official addresses cases of reprisals is necessary to ensure that victims can effectively access the protection the senior official can provide. In this regard, the [Fact Sheet No 1](#) produced by the Focal Point on Reprisals of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights provides a useful example.⁷

ISHR acknowledges that the senior official is complementary to existing UN mechanisms to address reprisals and encourages coordination and collaboration amongst mechanisms. We

⁷ Fact Sheet # 1 on Reprisal in Africa, African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, 2019, available at: <https://www.achpr.org/public/Document/file/English/Fact%20Sheet%20N°1%20on%20Reprisals%20in%20Africa.pdf>.

continue to emphasise that the establishment of the senior official does not in any way diminish the obligation of other UN bodies and mechanisms to develop and implement policies and take necessary steps to prevent, investigate and remedy cases of reprisals.

We understand that the senior official primarily fulfils her mandate through private representations, addressing cases of reprisals bilaterally with the relevant State, although she may also make public statements and representations. ISHR notes that her predecessor, Andrew Gilmour, spoke publicly in very few instances. He addressed cases of reprisals in Egypt and Bahrain while presenting the Secretary-General's Reprisals Report to the Human Rights Council in September 2017.⁸ In a May 2018 opinion piece, the ASG also addressed cases of reprisals against human rights defenders in Asia, including against mandate holders.⁹ He addressed cases of reprisals against two NGOs (**Alkarama and the International Dalit Solidarity Network (IDSN)**) in his remarks to the 39th session of the Human Rights Council.¹⁰ He also raised IDSN and Alkarama, at a side event at the General Assembly's Third Committee in October 2018,¹¹ where he also raised the case of the **head of B'tselem** who was attacked and threatened after briefing the UN Security Council, as well as threats of reprisals in Myanmar and South Sudan in the context of Security Council visits. The senior official also specifically mentioned the case of the **head of B'tselem** in a statement at the Cairo Institute of International Studies' Third Regional Forum of the Arab Human Rights Movement, in Tunis in November 2018.¹² He mentioned the case of Egyptian defender **Ibrahim Metwally Hegazy** in his closing remarks during his interactive dialogue with the Human Rights Council in September 2019.¹³

The current senior official, Ilze Brands Kehris, does not appear to have raised any specific cases publicly. ISHR reiterates that in relevant circumstances, public statements can play a key role in deterrence, denunciation, prevention and protection.

⁸ A copy of the statement can be found here:

https://extranet.ohchr.org/sites/hrc/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/16/OTH/OTH_272_56_416d12d8_bfb7_4c28_9244_5bd5036fff5f.docx. The ASG mentioned those cases again, without referring to specific names, at the Cairo Institute of International Studies Third Regional Forum of the Arab Human Rights Movement, 4 November 2018, Tunis,

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=23863&LangID=E>.

⁹<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/may/18/imprisoned-threatened-silenced-human-rights-workers-across-asia-are-in-danger>.

¹⁰ Human Rights Council, 39th Session, Oral presentation by the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights of the report of the Secretary-General on cooperation with the UN, its representatives and mechanisms in the field of human rights, Agenda Item 5, Geneva, 19 September 2018

https://extranet.ohchr.org/sites/hrc/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/26/OTH/OTH_564_65_4b594b4a_d4a2_4936_910c_9b453ab34d37.docx.

¹¹ <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Reprisals/ReprisalsEvent24Oct2018.docx>.

¹² <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=23863&LangID=E>;
<https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Reprisals/ReprisalsEvent24Oct2018.docx>.

¹³ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25027&LangID=E>.

Human Rights Council

The Human Rights Council is legally obliged to take action if it possesses information about a credible risk or allegation of reprisals and to protect individuals who communicate, cooperate or seek to engage with the Human Rights Council, its independent experts or the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process.¹⁴ The Human Rights Council's President and Bureau have the responsibility to protect the Human Rights Council's processes and defend its integrity, particularly as it relates to the right of civil society to participate fully and safely in its work.¹⁵ Attacks against those who cooperate with the Human Rights Council, or its mechanisms, constitute an attack not only on those individuals but on the institution itself.

While the President and Bureau of the Human Rights Council maintain their rhetorical commitment to addressing reprisals, visible action to prevent and if necessary, respond and ensure accountability for cases of reprisals remains weak. However, the minutes of the Human Rights Council Bureau from 18 June 2025, noting concerns of intimidation and reprisals against Special Procedure mandate holders raised by the Coordination Committee, reiterated that 'insulting remarks, personal attack and threats against the Council's mandates holders are unacceptable'.¹⁶

The minutes of the Human Rights Council Bureau from 15 July 2022 mentioned allegations of reprisals against **Anexa Brendalee Alfred Cunningham**, a member of the Human Rights Council's Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP), who was prevented from boarding her confirmed flight to return home to Nicaragua following her participation in the 15th session of the EMRIP. These minutes clearly name an organisation, mention the name of the person facing the reprisals as well as the country responsible for these reprisals. The bureau also expressed its concerns over these reprisals and 'called on the Government of Nicaragua to cooperate with the President of the Human Rights Council (HRC) to urgently clarify the situation and to give its assurances that Alfred Cunningham will not be subjected to any act of intimidation or reprisal, including impeding her return to Nicaragua, for discharging her mandate'. It is important that the Bureau continues discussing cases of intimidation and reprisals and reporting on these discussions publicly in the minutes.

Prior to Alfred Cunningham's case, the last time a country was named in bureau minutes regarding reprisals was Bahrain in 2016. In March 2021, the bureau minutes state that the Bureau took note of information provided concerning instances where possible intimidating

¹⁴ See further Memorandum of Advice from Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer, Sir Nicolas Bratza and Professor Egbert Myjer of October 2014: available at <http://www.ishr.ch/news/human-rights-council-time-act-legal-obligation-end-reprisals>.

¹⁵ See further Memorandum of Advice from Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer, Sir Nicolas Bratza and Professor Egbert Myjer of October 2014: available at <http://www.ishr.ch/news/human-rights-council-time-act-legal-obligation-end-reprisals>.

¹⁶ Minutes of the Human Rights Council Bureau meeting, 18 June 2025. Available at: <https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/PresidencyBureau/BureauRegionalGroupsCorrespondence/Pages/Bureau-meetings.aspx>.

language had been directed towards non-governmental organisations during virtual informal consultations. No country nor organisation was named.

We welcome the fact that the HRC Presidency and the Bureau mentioned the case of Aneta Brendalee Alfred Cunningham. The Presidency and Bureau should follow this example and take a more proactive role in investigating and following-up on cases of intimidation and reprisals. The practice on the discussion of reprisals in the minutes of the Human Rights Council Bureau meetings, and documentation of those discussions in the Bureau meeting minutes has been inconsistent across Presidencies, despite cases having been systematically brought to the President's attention for action.

We strongly urge the Bureau to resume the practice of discussing reprisals and intimidation during meetings, documenting those discussions in Bureau meeting minutes, and reporting on those discussions publicly at the following session. The Presidency and Bureau should maintain a publicly accessible register of cases of alleged acts of intimidation and reprisals on the extranet, including allegation letters if victims give consent, and documentation.

We recommend that the HRC President and Bureau adopt a two-step approach, similar to that of UN Special Procedures communications, depending on the urgency of the case: Urgent Appeals are sent to States privately and then published after 48 hours in the public communication database; and Letters of allegations are sent to States privately and then published after 60 days in the public communication database. The HRC Presidency should provide short oral updates on cases of alleged intimidation or reprisal, including actions taken, at the start of the Item 5 general debate of each Human Rights Council session and provide States concerned with the opportunity to respond.

At its 36th session, the Human Rights Council adopted resolution 36/21¹⁷ on reprisals. Notably, the resolution asks the senior official to present the annual report of the Secretary-General on reprisals to the Council and for it to serve as the basis of an interactive dialogue with a view to ensuring adequate attention to the report and to sharing good practices, challenges and lessons learned. In practice, the Council's discussion of cases in the reprisals report and follow-up to those cases has not been very systematic. The interactive dialogue could theoretically ensure adequate attention to the report and to sharing good practices, challenges and lessons learned and for States to raise cases and push other States to ensure the safety of the human rights defenders involved.

At the first such dialogue in September 2018, only one State, Germany, raised a specific case of reprisals during the dialogue, citing the case of Egyptian lawyer **Ibrahim Metwally Hegazy**, detained since October 2017 by the Egyptian authorities. Furthermore, half of the

¹⁷ Human Rights Council, 'Cooperation with the UN, its representatives and mechanisms in the field of human rights', A/HRC/RES/36/21 (29 Sept. 2017), <http://undocs.org/A/HRC/RES/36/21>.

States cited in the report intervened during the dialogue to deny the allegations against them.¹⁸

During the second such dialogue in September 2019, **Germany** cited again the case of **Ibrahim Metwally Hegazy**. **Costa Rica** was the only other country to raise a specific situation of reprisals: it expressed particular concern about acts of intimidation and reprisals in Nicaragua. **The Maldives** and **The Bahamas** addressed cases in their own countries. The Maldives shared that an amendment to the Human Rights Commission Act was being considered in parliament, which would guarantee that the National Human Rights Commission of the Maldives can communicate with international organisations. The Bahamas addressed the case of **Alicia Wallace**, a woman human rights defender who suffered attacks and threats related to her engagement with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

In September 2020, at HRC 45, the **Benelux** countries named specific cases from Egypt (**Mohamed El-Baqer, Ramy Kamel Saied Salib, and Ibrahim Metwally Hegazy**), Burundi (**Niyongere, Bashirahishize, Nshimirimana, Nigarura**), and Laos (**Od Sayavong**).¹⁹ Germany raised cases from Egypt (**Mohamed El-Baqer, Ibrahim Metwally Hegazy**) and the UK raised cases from Egypt (**Mohamed El-Baqer and Ibrahim Metwally Hegazy**), and China (**Li Yuhan, Chen Jiangfang, Xu Yan, and Qin Yongming**).²⁰

In September 2021, at HRC 48, **the UK** and **Germany** both raised the case of **NGO Fundaredes** from Venezuela; and the **Benelux** countries raised the following cases: Belarus: **Sergey Drozdovskiy**; Laos: **Chue Youa Vang**; Iran: **Manouchehr Bakhtiari, Vahid and Habib Afkari**; Turkmenistan: **Nurgeldi Halykov**; Nicaragua: **Vilma Nuñez de Escorcia, Anibal Toruño, Marcos Carmona and Jonathan López**.

In September 2022, at HRC 51, eight States raised individual cases of reprisals. The case of the **Human Rights Center Viasna** in Belarus was publicly raised by the **Benelux countries**, **Liechtenstein** and **Germany**.²¹ **Germany** and **Liechtenstein** raised the case of **Ibrahim Metwally Hegazy** from Egypt, while the **Benelux countries** also raised the cases of **Armel Niyongere, Dieudonné Bashirahishize, Vital Nshimirimana** and **Lambert Nigarura** from Burundi and **Jiang Tianyong** from China. **Germany** additionally raised the cases of

¹⁸<https://www.ishr.ch/news/hrc39-l-states-largely-decline-cite-specific-cases-during-councils-first-discussion-reprisals>.

¹⁹https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/37/SP/31587_44_d6cb787b_0ed3_4908_b36b_b601a049739b.docx.

²⁰<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/un-human-rights-council-45-interactive-dialogue-with-assistant-secretary-general-ilze-brands-kehris-on-the-secretary-generals-report-on-reprisals>.

²¹https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/61/SP/47647_56_52391f7d_a788_41c4_b24a_ad7b4cc993d1.docx; https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/61/SP/48207_56_b58c5023_577d_4de3_a3ca_657bcd8eff88.docx; and https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/61/SP/48627_56_4abe9cd3_f1e2_4446_b9fe_7ca50a15a44f.docx.

Mohamed El Baqer from Egypt and **Li Qiaochu, Li Yuhan, Guo Feixiong** and **Tang Jitian** from China. Meanwhile, **Namibia**'s statement included the reprisals against **Palestinian human rights organisations** by Israel.²² **Denmark** specifically drew attention to the case of **Abdulahdi Al-Khawaja** in Bahrain and **Armenia** included in their statement the case of **Ahmad Mammadli** in Azerbaijan.²³

In September 2023, 13 States publicly raised specific cases and situations of reprisals and intimidation at the HRC 54:

- **Luxembourg**, on behalf of the the **Benelux countries**, publicly addressed the situations of the Bangladeshi organisation **Odhikar** and its members **Adilur Rahman Khan** and **Nasiruddin Elan, Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja** in Bahrain, and **Félix Alejandro Maradiaga, Aníbal Toruño** and **Vilma Núñez de Escorcía** of the Nicaraguan group **Comisión Permanente de Derechos Humanos**. Luxembourg also included in its statement mentions of Belarussian **NGO Viasna** and **Ibrahim Metwally Hegazy** in Egypt, **Jiang Tianyong** in China and **Armel Niyongere, Lambert Nigarura, Diudonné Bashirahishize** and **Vital Nshimirimana** from Burundi.²⁴
- **Germany** also raised the case of **Viasna**, as well as those of Chinese defenders **Gui Minhai, Ilham Tohti, Li Qiaochu, Li Yuhan, Yu Wensheng** and his wife **Xu Yan**, and of Egyptian activists **Alaa Abd el-Fattah** and **Alaa El-Din El-Adly**.
- **The United States** cited the targeting of **civil society organisations under Hong Kong's sweeping 'National Security Law'** and also included in their statement the harassment of the **legal team defending the jailed pro-democracy media mogul Jimmy Lai**.²⁵
- **Pakistan** cited the cases of Kashmiri activists **Khurram Parvez** and **Irfan Mehraj**.²⁶
- **Liechtenstein**²⁷ and **Czechia**²⁸ also raised the case of **Viasna** before denouncing **legislative measures to criminalise assistance to and cooperation with**

²²https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/61/SP/48548_56_a26077e7_5deb_4c5c_89c4_2e488b85da21.docx.

²³https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/61/SP/49841_56_0429513e_30fc_4e7a_9bf4_00688d12afb7.docx.

²⁴https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/70/SP/58221_60_6fbbd112_bb44_4040_8505_79e66c2446c5.docx.

²⁵https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/70/SP/58311_60_9c064953_c972_4ccd_9b6a_d6179da89ee5.docx.

²⁶https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/70/SP/58917_60_099ce283_648f_44d5_b8cf_13d5c7ccd20e.docx.

²⁷https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/70/SP/60447_60_9f801212_b5e3_46b6_aa7c_9d07406a5d7c.docx.

²⁸https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/70/SP/59546_60_9e993a89_768c_4645_8804_af603f9ae875.docx.

international bodies in Belarus and Russia. The **Russian measures** were also mentioned by the representative **Lithuania**, speaking on behalf of **Poland** and **Ukraine**.²⁹

- **Denmark** cited the case of **Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja** detained in Bahrain.³⁰ The **United Kingdom** also cited the case of **Sebastian Lai**, the son of Jimmy Lai from Hong Kong as well as the cases of **Anexa Brendalee Alfred Cunningham** from Nicaragua.³¹
- **The UK** also addressed the situation of the **NGO Viasna** and trade unionist **Alexander Yaroshuk** from Belarus and the lawyers **Armel Niyongere, Lambert Nigarura, Dieudonné Bashirahishize** and **Vital Nshimirimana** from Burundi.
- The representative of **Botswana** called out acts of reprisals committed against official UN mandate holders, which are not included in the Secretary-General's annual report.

In September 2024, specific cases and situations of reprisals and intimidation were raised during the 57th session of the HRC:

- **The Benelux** countries brought up the cases of **Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, Félix Alejandro Maradiaga, Kadar Abdi Ibrahim, Li Qiaochu, Pham Doan Trang**, and the **NGO Human Rights Centre Viasna**.³²
- **Denmark** mentioned the case of **Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja** and highlighted the situation of all political prisoners in **Bahrain's Jau prison**.³³
- **Liechtenstein** raised the cases of **Cao Shunli, Ibrahim Metwally Hegazy, Loujain Al-Hathloul** and the **situation in Hong Kong**.³⁴
- **Germany** expressed concerns over the cases of **Chow Hang Tung** and her two colleagues, **Dang Dinh Bach, Xu Yan**, and **Yu Wensheng**.³⁵

²⁹https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/70/SP/58413_60_56f44fd8_3947_42ea_9853_17b193a63a5d.docx.

³⁰https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/70/SP/60446_60_88a6b5ef_f7c8_4160_8160_c05c2b6750c1.docx.

³¹<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/un-hrc54-uk-statement-on-reprisals>.

³²https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/81/SP/81_18842083_419995e3-5a84-436d-acd6-ad459c94c214.docx.

³³https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/81/SP/81_18842083_419995e3-5a84-436d-acd6-ad459c94c214.docx.

³⁴<https://www.llv.li/serviceportal2/diplomatische-vertretungen/genf/uno/2024/hrc57-9.9.-9.10.2024-/li-statement-hrc57-item-5-id-on-sg-report-on-reprisals-27-september-2024.pdf>.

³⁵https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/81/SP/81_18842083_1d208d31-9bd3-4deb-b6eb-7d5f358033c5.docx.

- **Czechia** highlighted the case of the **Human Rights House Foundation**, while the **United Kingdom** raised the cases of **Jimmy Lai, Sebastian Lai, Pham Doan Trang, the NGO Human Rights Centre Viasna**, and the **NGO Man and Law**.³⁶ **Canada, Australia** and **New Zealand (CAN)** also referred to the case of **Jimmy Lai**.

In September 2025, specific cases and situations of reprisals and intimidation were raised during the 60th session of the HRC:

- In a statement for the BENELUX States, Luxembourg raised the cases of Djibouti journalist **Kadar Abdi Ibrahim**, Guatemalan lawyer **Claudia González Orellana**, human rights defenders **Manouchehr Bakhtiyari** from Iran, **Chow Hang-Tung** from Hong-Kong, Vietnamese journalist **Pham Doan Trang** and the staff members of Belarussian rights group **Viasna**.
- Australia, on behalf of Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, raised concerns about **civil society in Nicaragua**, the designation of the **International Committee of Indigenous Peoples of Russia** as ‘extremist’, and the situation of **Jimmy Lai’s** legal team and their families in Hong Kong and **human rights defenders in Iran**.
- Liechtenstein welcomed the recent release of Alaa Abd El-Fattah in Egypt and also drew attention to **Loujain Al-Hathloul** in Saudi Arabia, **Ibrahim Hegazy** in Egypt, and Jimmy Lai from Hong Kong. Czechia noted the cases of **Alexey Gorinov** in Russia and the **Human Rights Centre Viasna**. Denmark raised **Abdulahdi Al-Khawaja** in Bahrain, while Palestine highlighted **Francesca Albanese**, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Occupied Palestinian Territories.
- Germany mentioned **Alexey Sokolov** in Russia, the **Human Rights Centre Viasna** in Belarus, **Mohammad Seifzadeh** in Iran, **Yu Wensheng and Xu Yan** in China, **Chow Hang Tung** in Hong Kong, **Basma Mostafa** in Egypt, **Olnar Alberto Ortiz Bolívar** in Venezuela, as well as **Maximilienne Ngo Mbe** and **Alice Nkom** in Cameroon.

Beyond the interactive dialogue, which only takes place annually at the September session of the Council, some States have brought up cases at other sessions under item 5, or item 2 of the Council’s agenda.

- In June 2019, the **Benelux** countries made a statement referencing the following specific cases: **Dora Mesa** and **Juan Antonio Madrazo Luna** from Cuba, **Rizal Rozhan** and **Numan Afifi** from Malaysia, and **Yahya Al Assiri** from Saudi Arabia.³⁷

³⁶https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/81/SP/81_18842083_26a5cd34-081b-40aa-b0e5-22ce4a28ea2c.docx.

³⁷https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/30/SP/21703_40_825b7a74_fcf7_4dcf_beeb_826d022caa28.docx.

- At the resumed 43rd session in June 2020, the **Benelux** countries raised cases from Saudi Arabia (**Samar Badawi** and **Loujain Al-Hathloul**), Bahrain (**Sayed Ahmed Al-Wadaei**, **Nabeel Rajab** and **Ebtesam Abdulhusain Ali-Alsaegh**), Yemen (**Huda Al-Sarari**), Burundi (**Armel Niyongere**, **Dieudonné Bashirahishize**, **Vital Nshimirimana**, and **Lambert Nigarura**), Venezuela (**medical personnel, human rights defenders and members of students' movements** in Venezuela who cooperated with OHCHR during its first visit to the country in March 2019), and China (**Chen Jianfang**).³⁸
- In March 2021 at the 46th session, the **Benelux** countries followed up on a number of previously raised cases from Cuba (**Dora Mesa**, **Juan Antonio Madrazo Luna**), Saudi Arabia (**Samar Badawi**), Bahrain (**Sayed Ahmed Al-Wadaei**, **Nabeel Rajab**, **Ebtesam Abdulhusain Ali-Alsaegh**), China (**Chen Jianfang**), and Egypt (**Mohamed El-Baqer**, **Ramy Kamel Saied Salib**).³⁹
- In March 2022 at the 49th session of the HRC, the Governments of **Belgium**, **Luxembourg** and **The Netherlands** made an intervention asking the President of the Human Rights Council to follow up on nine unresolved cases of reprisals: Laos human rights defender **Od Sayavong**, Chinese women human rights defenders **Chen Jianfang**, **Ebtesam Abdulhusain Ali-Alsaegh**, a woman human rights defender from Bahrain, **Sayed Ahmed Al-Wadaei**, **Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja** and **Abduljalil Al-Singace**, also from Bahrain, and the civil society organisation **Organic Farming for Gorillas Cameroon (OFFGO)**, as well as **Jan Joris Capelle**, **Prince Vincent Awazi** and **Elvis Brown Luma Mukuna**, from Cameroon.⁴⁰
- Also, in March 2022 at HRC 49, **the USA** raised the cases of presidential candidates **Felix Maradiaga** and **Christiana Chamorro** and **five others** in Nicaragua, who were convicted for their activism and criticism of the regime.⁴¹ In Maradiaga's case, his remarks before the UN Security Council were used against him and he was sentenced to 13 years in prison.
- In March 2023, at the 52nd session of the HRC, the **Benelux** countries made a statement referencing the following specific cases: **Ibrahim Metwally Hegazy** from Egypt, **Jiang Tianyong** from China, **The Human Rights Center Viasna** in Belarus, **five NGOs** from Venezuela: **El Comité de Familiares de Víctimas del Caracazo (COFAVIC)**; **El Observatorio Venezolano de Conflictividad Social (OVCS)**; **El Centro**

³⁸https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/33/SP/25086_42_ada6cfc0_57c2_4858_bf2c_0ff15922185d.docx.

³⁹https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/41/SP/33790_46_d6ac7508_cb6e_4fdf_a561_b41164e20fa7.docx.

⁴⁰https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/56/SP/42084_54_c4438cea_01c2_4984_add1_ec341989cdbf.docx.

⁴¹https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/56/SP/43026_54_65658beb_c445_416b_b25b_f64ccef2686e.docx.

de Justicia y Paz (CEPAZ); Control Ciudadano (and its director **Rocío San Miguel**); and **Espacio Público** (and its director **Carlos Correa**), **Armel Niyongere**, **Dieudonné Bashirahishize**, **Lambert Nigarura** and **Vital Nshimirimana** from Burundi as well as **Jan Capelle** and **Elvis Brown** from Cameroon.

- Also in March 2023 at the 52nd session of the HRC, **Luxembourg** raised the case of **Anexa Brendalee Alfred Cunningham** during the General Debate on Item 3.
- In March 2024 at the 55th session of the HRC, the **Benelux countries** raised the following cases: **Abdulahdi Al-Khawaja** (Bahrain), **Viasna** (Belarus), **Li Qiaochu** (China), **Kadar Abdi Ibrahim** (Djibouti), **Felix Maradiago** (Nicaragua).⁴²
- In March 2025 at the 58th session of the HRC, the **Benelux countries** raised the cases of **Chow Hang-Tung**, **Claudia González Orellana**, **Kadar Abdi Ibrahim**, **Manouchehr Bakhtiyari**, **Pham Doan Trang**, and the **NGO Human Rights Centre Viasna**.⁴³ **South Africa**, during the adoption of resolution L.30 rev1 on the SR on the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, raised the case of **Francesca Albanese, the Special Rapporteur on the Occupied Palestinian Territories**.⁴⁴
- In June 2025, at the 59th session of the HRC, **Pakistan on behalf of the OIC**, **Bahrain on behalf of the Arab League**, **Ghana on behalf of the Africa Group**, **Qatar**, **Tunisia**, **Libya**, **Mexico**, and **Eritrea** raised the case of **Francesca Albanese, the Special Rapporteur on the Occupied Palestinian Territories**, during the interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur, under item 7.
- In March 2026, the **BENELUX** countries mentioned Chow Hang-Tung's case at the 61st session of the Human Rights Council, along with those of Roberto Perez Fonseca, Pham Doan Trang, and Alexey Gorinov, under item 5.

In November 2020, **The Netherlands** raised a case from Andorra (**Vanessa Mendoza**) in the context of the UPR.⁴⁵

On 14 March 2024, **nine European human rights ambassadors released a [joint statement](#)** honouring **Cao Shunli's** legacy and calling on all States to stop engaging in acts of reprisals and to allow for safe and unhindered access to, and communication with, the UN.

At its 42nd session, the Human Rights Council adopted [resolution 42/28 on reprisals](#) in which it reaffirmed that reprisals can never be justified. Council members rejected attempts to

⁴²<https://www.netherlandsandyou.nl/web/pr-un-geneva/w/benelux-reprisals>.

⁴³<https://www.netherlandsandyou.nl/web/pr-un-geneva/w/hrc58-benelux-reprisals>.

⁴⁴<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1OWTNAgfO9YpY0TyMcsWzfkAQRmtmYgG4/edit>.

⁴⁵<https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=A%2FHRC%2F46%2F11&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop>.

weaken the text including deleting the references to the roles of the Assistant Secretary-General and the Human Rights Council President. The resolution listed key trends such as the patterns of reprisals, increasing self-censorship, the use of national security arguments and counter-terrorism strategies by States as justification for blocking access to the UN, acknowledged the specific risks to individuals in vulnerable situations or belonging to marginalised groups, and called on the UN to implement gender-responsive policies to end reprisals. The Council called on States to combat impunity and to report back to it on how they are preventing reprisals, both online and offline.

At its 49th session, the Human Rights Council adopted [resolution 48/17](#) on reprisals by consensus, in which it invites the Secretary-General to submit his annual reprisals report to the General Assembly. ISHR hopes this will ensure greater attention to the issue and contribute to a more coherent system-wide response across the UN.

At HRC 54 in September 2023, States adopted another resolution by consensus. The resolution encourages, *inter alia*, all UN entities to strengthen efforts to prevent and address acts of intimidation or reprisal, including through adopting dedicated protocols or guidelines, and ensuring that dedicated civil society focal points are adequately resourced to proactively promote an enabling space where civil society actors can safely contribute, at the country and global levels, to United Nations meetings, networks, processes and arrangements, and calls upon all States and relevant stakeholders to contribute to these efforts.

At HRC 60 in September 2025, States adopted another resolution [60/23](#) by consensus. Importantly, the resolution recognised and included attacks against mandate holders ‘targeted in connection with the discharge of their functions’ and the increasing trend of transnational repression. It is incumbent on the Secretary-General to document attacks against mandate holders in the annual report, in line with this consensus resolution from member States.

UN General Assembly, Third Committee

The [Secretary-General’s report on reprisals](#) was introduced for the first time at the General Assembly in October 2022. During the second presentation of the report at the General Assembly on 12 October 2023, specific cases and situations of intimidation and reprisal were raised for the first time. The cases of **Anexa Brendalee Alfred Cunningham** and **Jimmy Lai** and the **situation in Hong Kong** were cited by the **United States**. In October 2024, the **Benelux countries** mentioned the cases of **Abdulahadi Al-Khawaja, Félix Alejandro Maradiaga, Kadar Abdi Ibrahim, Li Qiaochu, Pham Doan Trang** and the **NGO Human Rights Centre Viasna**. It is hoped the dialogue will be further strengthened in future years and become a space in which a greater number of States call for accountability and constructively address cases in their own countries. In October 2025, in a joint statement the **Benelux** countries highlighted a number of cases of reprisals, including those of **Chow**

Hang-Tung from **Hong Kong**, **Pham Doan Trang** from **Vietnam**, and members of the **Human Rights Center Viasna** from **Belarus**.

Additionally, during the 74th session of the General Assembly, a cross-regional group of countries made a [joint statement](#) in the Third Committee calling on all States and the UN to prevent, respond to, and ensure accountability for cases of intimidation and reprisals against those who engage or seek to engage with the UN. Seventy-one countries highlighted that the UN must ensure that civil society organisations and human rights defenders who wish to engage with the UN are able to do so without fear of reprisal or intimidation.⁴⁶

During the 75th session of the General Assembly, a follow-up joint statement at the Third Committee was delivered on behalf of seventy-five countries.⁴⁷ This welcome move led by the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom to the UN is in line with the call made in [resolution 42/28 at the Human Rights Council](#) for the General Assembly to remain seized of all work in this area.

During the 76th session of the General Assembly, the UK delivered another [joint statement at the Third Committee on behalf of 80 countries](#).

During the 77th session of the General Assembly, Ireland delivered another [Joint Statement at the Third Committee](#), again on behalf of 80 countries.

During the [78th](#) and [79th](#) sessions of the General Assembly, Ireland together with Uruguay delivered another Joint Statement at the Third Committee, again on behalf of 80 countries.

During the 80th session of the General Assembly, Ireland together with Uruguay delivered another [Joint Statement](#) at the Third Committee, on behalf of 70 countries and the European Union.

Treaty Bodies

With the endorsement of the Guidelines against Intimidation or Reprisals (the ‘San José Guidelines’) in July 2015, the Treaty Body Chairpersons sent a strong signal that the intimidation of individuals and groups cooperating with the Treaty Bodies is unacceptable.

⁴⁶ The statement was made by the United Kingdom on behalf of Afghanistan, Albania, Andorra, Australia, Austria, the Bahamas, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, the Dominican Republic, Denmark, Ecuador, El Salvador, Estonia, Fiji, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Latvia, Lebanon, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Marshall Islands, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, the Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Panama, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Samoa, San Marino, Seychelles, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tunisia, Turkey, Tuvalu, Ukraine, the United States, Uruguay and Vanuatu.

⁴⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/every-reprisal-diminishes-our-ability-to-deliver-for-the-people-we-serve>.

The San José Guidelines emphasise the responsibility of States 'to avoid acts constituting intimidation or reprisals and to prevent, protect against, investigate and ensure accountability and to provide effective remedies to victims of such acts or omissions'. They further acknowledge that the Treaty Bodies have to take action, including reactive measures when allegations of intimidation or reprisals are received as well as preventative measures to protect individuals or groups at risk.

The San José Guidelines envisage the appointment within each Treaty Body of a rapporteur or focal point on intimidation or reprisals to coordinate proactive implementation of the policy, which includes receiving and assessing allegations, and determining the appropriate course of action.

To date, nine Treaty Bodies out of ten have adopted the San José Guidelines or a policy on reprisals. The Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) is the only Treaty Body that has not formally endorsed or adopted the San José Guidelines.

During their annual meeting in June 2018, the Chairs expressed concern at the reported increase of acts of intimidation and reprisals against those who were cooperating, had cooperated, or sought to cooperate with the Treaty Bodies, in particular human rights defenders. The Chairs further recommended that the practices of the Treaty Bodies in implementing the San José Guidelines, including the role of focal points and rapporteurs be further aligned, including by sharing good practices in that regard. The Chairs also encouraged focal points and rapporteurs in the various Treaty Bodies to work together between sessions as needed and recommended that Treaty Bodies make information about reprisals available on their websites. Finally, for their 31st annual meeting, the Chairs requested the Secretariat to prepare a paper on the role of focal points and rapporteurs with respect to reprisals against those who were cooperating, had cooperated or sought to cooperate with the Treaty Bodies, including good practices in that regard.⁴⁸

In response to the call by the Chairs of the Treaty Bodies to identify good practices and the roles of focal points and rapporteurs with respect to addressing reprisals, OHCHR and the International Service for Human Rights (ISHR) jointly organised a workshop in Geneva on 12 and 13 December 2018, together with Amnesty International and the NGO Network on UN Treaty Bodies.⁴⁹ The objective of the workshop was to facilitate a discussion between focal points and rapporteurs on reprisals and other members of Treaty Bodies to help develop a common understanding of the scope and impact of the issue and to identify good practices and proposals to align the roles and approaches of the Treaty Body rapporteurs and focal points on reprisals. The outcome of the workshop includes a compilation of good practices in handling reprisals and a set of recommendations by participants. The recommendations touch on a range of issues including: the role of the rapporteurs or focal points on reprisals, preventative and further measures (for State party reviews, monitoring visit and inquiries,

⁴⁸ https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=a/73/140 at page 16.

⁴⁹ https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/TB/AnnualMeeting/31Meeting/HRI_MC_2019_CRP_2.docx.

individual complaints, awareness-raising), coordination with other mandates, mechanisms or procedures, as well as monitoring the implementation and dissemination of the San José Guidelines.⁵⁰

In April 2019, the Secretariat developed a shared internal repository of information and a common webpage on reprisals against those cooperating with the Treaty Bodies. The common webpage sets out information on the role of the rapporteurs and focal point and on how to submit information on reprisals.⁵¹

There is still significant divergence between Treaty Bodies in both the accessibility of information about reprisals and in the response to reprisals.

Treaty body ⁵²	Separate policy or guidelines on reprisals	Rapporteur or focal point on reprisals appointed	Functions of the rapporteur or focal point on reprisals defined in a specific document	Letters of allegation, and responses from States publicly posted on the treaty body's web page	Endorsed or adopted the Guidelines against Intimidation or Reprisals (San José Guidelines)
Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination	Yes	Yes	Yes ⁵³	Yes ⁵⁴	Yes August 2014
Human Rights Committee	No	Yes	No	No	Yes ⁵⁵ June 2016
Committee on Economic, Social	No	Yes ⁵⁶	No	No	No ⁵⁷

⁵⁰ <https://undocs.org/HRI/MC/2019/2>.

⁵¹ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/Pages/Reprisal.aspx>.

⁵² HRI/MC/2025/2, Annex.

⁵³ https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2FCERD%2FRLE%2F9029&Lang=en.

⁵⁴ Not systematically, but on a case-by-case basis, keeping in mind the principle to 'do no harm.'

⁵⁵ See A/72/40.

⁵⁶ The Bureau of the Committee acts as the focal point.

⁵⁷ However, in 2016, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights adopted a statement on human rights defenders and economic, social and cultural rights (E/C.12/2016/2)..

and Cultural Rights					
Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes July 2018
Committee against Torture	Yes	Yes	Yes ⁵⁸	Yes	Yes ⁵⁹ September 2015
Committee on the Rights of the Child	No ⁶⁰	Yes	No	No	Yes May 2016
Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families	Yes	Yes	Yes ⁶¹	Yes	Yes April 2016
Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	Yes	Yes	Yes	None reported to date	Yes September 2015
Committee on Enforced Disappearances	Yes	Yes	Yes	No Disclosed in annual reports	Yes September 2015

⁵⁸ See CAT/C/55/2.

⁵⁹ In 2015, the Committee stated that, in handling allegations of reprisals, it would follow the San José Guidelines (CAT/C/55/2, para. 2).

⁶⁰ Endorsed the San José Guidelines.

⁶¹ See www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CMW/Pages/Reprisals.aspx.

Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment	Yes ⁶²	Yes	Yes	Allegations of reprisals disclosed when visit reports are made public	Yes ⁶³ November 2015
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In a welcome development, an annual overview of the status of implementation by the Treaty Bodies of the San José Guidelines and mapping of the practices of Treaty Bodies on intimidation and reprisals is included as an input to the annual meeting of Treaty Body chairs.⁶⁴

In **2022**, the Secretariat reported that fewer reprisals have been reported. The transition from largely in-person to almost fully virtual engagement has not been a smooth one for the Treaty Bodies. During the pandemic, fewer allegations of reprisals or intimidation experienced by those submitting information to, or cooperating with, the Treaty Bodies were reported to the Secretariat and the Treaty Body rapporteurs or focal points on reprisals. The overarching obstacles that have contributed to the decline in reporting include lack of clarity and awareness of how to participate through online channels, lack of access to virtual channels by victims, their relatives and lawyers and civil society actors and lack of trust in online channels, in particular with regard to reporting on sensitive issues, or engaging with the Treaty Bodies thereon, from high-risk environments.⁶⁵

In **2023**, the rapporteurs and focal points on reprisals participated in the inaugural meeting to discuss challenges in preventing and addressing acts of intimidation and reprisal against those who cooperate with the Treaty Bodies and to identify the issues that need further action by the Treaty Bodies' Chairs, experts, focal points and rapporteurs on reprisals. The Director of the Human Rights Council and Treaty Mechanisms Division highlighted four key recommendations, namely, that the rapporteurs and focal points on reprisals should work together to align their approaches, including through meetings as appropriate, that good practices in the implementation of the San José Guidelines should be identified and replicated among the Treaty Bodies, that focal points and rapporteurs in the various Treaty Bodies are encouraged to work together inter-sessionally and that the Treaty Bodies should make information about reprisals available on their web pages. Experts raised challenges in

⁶² See CAT/OP/6/Rev.1.

⁶³ See CAT/OP/C/57/4.

⁶⁴ HRI/MC/2020/2/Rev.1.

⁶⁵ <http://undocs.org/HRI/MC/2022/4>.

responding to allegations of reprisals, such as lack of cooperation of States parties and a perceived culture of denial when reprisals were addressed.⁶⁶

In **2024**, the Treaty Bodies reported that there seemed to be a slight decrease in allegations reported to the focal points, working-level Secretariat focal points and rapporteurs and Treaty Body experts compared with the previous reporting period, though also reported that it is difficult to ascertain whether this is reflective of reality, due to self-censorship or due to the preventive actions and responses to allegations that the Treaty Bodies are taking that are effective in the prevention of cases.⁶⁷

The Chairs expressed concern about their capacity to provide protection to human rights defenders and cautioned against limiting work on reprisals to engaging only with States parties. The Chair of the 35th meeting stressed that the concluding observations of the Treaty Bodies highlighted the importance of supporting civil society interlocutors and that it was always important to look at every case and the context in which reprisals occurred. Following the discussions on engagement with stakeholders, during their 35th annual meeting, the Chairs agreed to develop common guidelines in this regard and to strengthen their cooperation to prevent and address acts of intimidation and reprisals for cooperation with the human rights Treaty Bodies, in line with the San José Guidelines.⁶⁸

At their 36th annual meeting in **2024**, the Chairs noted that they had observed trends of self-censorship by human rights defenders and increased misuse of national security laws. They further stated that the use of new technology increased the range of acts that could amount to intimidation or reprisals. A public consultation with Member States was also held in the context of the 36th meeting, during which the Chairs recalled States' responsibility to prohibit reprisals against civil society representatives for cooperation with treaty bodies and the importance of Committees appointing or nominating treaty body experts as rapporteurs or focal points on reprisals.⁶⁹

The Chairs recommended that, in order to align the working methods on **inquiry procedures** for the benefit of all stakeholders, the Treaty Bodies would develop and use common guidelines on inquiry and visit procedures, in accordance with the respective human rights treaties and taking as guidance the commonalities between Committees' practices, as outlined in the background paper for the 34th meeting of Treaty Body Chairs ([HRI/MC/2022/CRP.3\[TL1\] \[G02\]](#)) and mandate the focal points on working methods of the Treaty Bodies to develop the guidelines ([OHCHR working paper, guiding questions 2.14.1 and 2.14.2\[TL3\] \[G04\]](#)), which cover the following areas, inter alia(d): A common protocol in relation to reprisals in the context of inquiries and country visits;

The Chairs also called for regular exchanges between the Treaty Bodies' rapporteurs and focal points on reprisals. They suggested increasing references to reprisals for cooperation

⁶⁶ HRI/MC/2023/2.

⁶⁷ HRI/MC/2024/2, para 17.

⁶⁸ HRI/MC/2024/2, paras. 12-13.

⁶⁹ HRI/MC/2025/2, paras. 7-8.

with the United Nations in concluding observations, in particular in follow-up recommendations, as well as in the context of individual communications and to strengthen coordination between the Treaty Bodies and OHCHR regional and country offices through the OHCHR reprisals team.

They encouraged the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to endorse the San José Guidelines.

The Practices of the human rights Treaty Bodies on intimidation and reprisals and issues for further action by the Chairs - Note by the Secretariat ([HRI/MC/2024/2](#)), April 2024 included a number of recommendations:

- As recommended in previous reports, the Treaty Bodies could further improve awareness-raising and the provision of public information on reprisals, including by posting references to cases and communications, when public, on a web page dedicated to allegations of reprisals, as some Treaty Bodies already do; by emphasising, at the opening of each session or at meetings with States parties, that Treaty Bodies have an approach of zero tolerance towards reprisals and intimidation; and by including a section dedicated to intimidation and reprisals in their annual or biennial reports, in cases where one does not yet exist.
- There is room for improvement, and there are inconsistencies, regarding the provision of public information on reprisals by the Treaty Bodies in relation to their cooperation with victims of violations (as in the context of individual petitions) or civil society (NGOs, civil society organisations and national human rights institutions). Treaty Bodies could ensure that guidance and information are readily available on their websites, in order to facilitate the submission of individual complaints or the participation of civil society organisations and national human rights institutions, and are updated to include reference to: (a) the San José Guidelines; (b) a zero-tolerance approach to reprisals; and (c) clear reporting channels, such as a public email address, to raise concerns. The guidelines of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on cooperation with NGOs and the paper of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on cooperation with national human rights institutions are good examples.
- Holding induction sessions for new experts with specific discussions about reprisals, and how the Treaty Bodies can respond to them, is a good practice and should be continued and strengthened in the future. Other improvements could include making more strategic and consistent use of press releases or end-of-session media advisories on concluding observations adopted on the reports of States parties and addressing individual cases through formal communications or meetings with the permanent representatives of the States parties concerned.
 - In that regard, induction sessions for new Treaty Body experts were held on 6-7 February 2024 and 23-24 January 2025, which included sessions on prevention and addressing of reprisals.

- In March 2025, during the informal meeting of Treaty Body experts and rapporteurs on the implementation of the San José guidelines, the experts were briefed about the new OHCHR policy on protection of civil society actors.
- The Treaty Bodies should continue to align their working methods to prevent and address intimidation and reprisals, including with regard to the role of focal points and rapporteurs, specific policies or guidelines on reprisals and the disclosure of allegations of reprisals and responses received from States with the consent of those concerned. The Chairs could introduce a practice of regular exchanges on good practices regarding intimidation and reprisals, including intersessionally, with the focal points and rapporteurs on reprisals, in the form of coordination meetings held virtually. The Chairs should be regularly informed of any developments regarding reprisals.
- More regular communication among the focal points or rapporteurs on reprisals and the holding of annual meetings of such focal points or rapporteurs, together with the focal points in the Secretariat, held virtually, could also be envisaged.
- Coordination among the Treaty Body focal points and rapporteurs on reprisals should be strengthened, including by reaching out to the Office of the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights for a coordinated and strategic response to individual allegations and cases.
- Coordination and communication could be strengthened among human rights mechanisms, in particular between the rapporteurs and focal points of the Treaty Bodies and the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council, such as the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders and the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression.
- The Treaty Bodies could undertake further efforts to prevent acts of intimidation or reprisals by coordinating with the United Nations field presences in, or desk officers for, States of concern, including before the review of reports submitted by those States in the context of the periodic reporting cycle. They could also seek cooperation and assistance in connection with follow-up to individual cases from United Nations field presences, when acts of intimidation or reprisals have been committed and/or are publicly reported, such as in the report of the Secretary-General. Protective measures could be strengthened, including by holding confidential meetings with NGOs and human rights defenders and by providing secure online and offline channels for receiving information.

In **2025**, the Secretariat reported a slight decrease in the number of cases or allegations of reprisals reported to treaty bodies compared to the last reporting period.⁷⁰

It was also noted that the OHCHR web page on intimidation and reprisals, including the list of treaty body rapporteurs and focal points, was updated regularly throughout the review

⁷⁰ HRI/MC/2025/2, para. 17.

period.⁷¹ Induction sessions were held for new members of the human rights treaty bodies in February 2025 which included a session and presentation on reprisals.⁷² Meetings were also held with stakeholders and treaty bodies⁷³.

On preventive actions and awareness raising, the Secretariat reported that representatives of the Secretary General or of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights referred to the prevention of reprisals for cooperation with treaty bodies in their opening addresses at the sessions of several treaty bodies. The treaty bodies also did so in their annual reports. Treaty bodies facilitated dialogue and cooperation with civil society organizations, human rights defenders and other stakeholders.⁷⁴

Several recommendations were also made by the Secretariat:⁷⁵

- As recommended in previous reports, the treaty bodies could further improve awareness-raising and the provision of public information on reprisals, including by posting references to cases and communications, when public, on a web page dedicated to allegations of reprisals for cooperation with the treaty bodies, as some treaty bodies already do; by emphasizing, at the opening of each session or at meetings with States Parties, that treaty bodies have an approach of zero tolerance towards reprisals and intimidation for cooperation with the Committee; and by including a section on intimidation and reprisals in their annual or biennial reports and any sessional reports, in cases where such a section does not yet exist. The Chairs could continue to urge the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to endorse or adopt the San José Guidelines to ensure their use as a common framework for action across the treaty bodies.
- There is room for improvement, as, despite progress that has been made, there remain inconsistencies regarding the provision by the treaty bodies of public information on allegations of, cases of and action taken on reprisals in relation to their cooperation with victims of violations (as in the context of individual petitions) or civil society (NGOs, civil society organizations and national human rights institutions). Treaty bodies could ensure that guidance and information are readily available on their websites, in order to facilitate the submission of individual complaints and the participation of civil society organizations and national human rights institutions, and are updated to include reference to: (a) the San José Guidelines; (b) a zero-tolerance approach to reprisals; and (c) clear reporting channels, such as a public email address, to raise concerns. The guidelines of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on cooperation with NGOs and the paper of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on cooperation with national human rights institutions are two good examples. The Committee against Torture also

⁷¹ HRI/MC/2025/2, para. 13.

⁷² HRI/MC/2025/2, para. 14.

⁷³ HRI/MC/2025/2, paras. 15-16.

⁷⁴ HRI/MC/2025/2, para. 41.

⁷⁵ HRI/MC/2025/2, paras. 51-58.

provides information on how to interact with the Committee for NGOs, civil society and national human rights institutions.

- Holding induction sessions for new experts with specific discussions about reprisals, and how the treaty bodies can respond to them, is a good practice and should be continued and strengthened in the future. Other improvements could include making more strategic and consistent use of press releases or end-of-session media advisories on concluding observations adopted on the reports of States Parties and addressing individual cases through formal communications or meetings with the permanent representatives of the States Parties concerned.
- The treaty bodies should continue to align their working methods to prevent and address intimidation and reprisals for cooperation with them, including with regard to the role of rapporteurs and focal points, specific policies or guidelines on reprisals and the disclosure of allegations of reprisals and responses received from States with the consent of those concerned. The Chairs could introduce a practice of regular exchanges on good practices regarding intimidation and reprisals for cooperation with the treaty bodies, including intersessionally, with the rapporteurs and focal points on reprisals, in the form of coordination meetings held virtually. The Chairs should be regularly informed of any developments regarding reprisals.
- In line with a previous recommendation concerning more regular communication among the treaty body rapporteurs or focal points on reprisals, meetings of such rapporteurs or focal points, together with the focal points in the Secretariat, will be held, online, every six months.
- Coordination among the treaty body rapporteurs and focal points on reprisals should be strengthened, including by reaching out to the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights for a coordinated and strategic response to individual allegations and cases.
- Coordination and communication could be strengthened among human rights mechanisms, in particular between the rapporteurs and focal points of the treaty bodies and the special procedures of the Human Rights Council, such as the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders and the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression.
- Other measures could include increased coordination with United Nations field presences on addressing reprisals. The treaty bodies could undertake further efforts to prevent acts of intimidation or reprisals by coordinating with the United Nations field presences in, or desk officers for, States of concern, including before the review of reports submitted by those States in the context of the periodic reporting cycle. They could also seek cooperation and assistance in connection with follow-up to individual cases from United Nations field presences, when acts of intimidation or reprisals have been committed and/or are publicly reported, such as in the report of the Secretary-General on cooperation with the United Nations, its representatives and mechanisms in the field of human rights. Protective measures could be strengthened, including by holding confidential meetings with NGOs and human rights defenders and by providing secure online and offline channels for receiving information.

At their 37th annual meeting in **2025**, the Chairs reiterated their previous calls for regular exchanges between treaty body focal points and Rapporteurs on reprisals and emphasized the importance of increased references to reprisals in concluding observations, follow-up procedures and individual communications.⁷⁶ They also decided on the following actions to further implement the San José Guidelines:⁷⁷

- (a) To reiterate their encouragement to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to adopt or endorse the San José Guidelines. The Chair welcomed the information that the issue would be discussed at the next session of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights;
- (b) To generalize the practice of an introductory statement in order to promote civic spaces for NGOs and civil society and acknowledge that this engagement is valued for the rule of law and the proper functioning of the treaty body system;
- (c) To generalize the practice of making a statement at the opening of State Party reviews that reprisals, threats or harassment against anyone meeting with or giving information to the treaty bodies sessions will not be accepted, in line with the San José Guidelines, as a preventive measure;
- (d) If appropriate, to include information on reprisals in public documents. This should include cases or allegations, trends, situations that were resolved or good practices on how Committees reacted to reprisals allegations or cases;
- (e) To take measures to reinforce early warning and prevention by, for example, continuing to conduct training for new members on reprisals;
- (f) To generalize the protocol on reprisals during country visits;
- (g) To include members of national preventive mechanisms and national human rights institutions as actors potentially impacted by reprisals;
- (h) To consider ways and means of addressing acts of reprisal from non-State actors;
- (i) To ensure stronger protection against reprisals, by enhancing the visibility of actions taken under the San José Guidelines and the use of interim measures in urgent cases;
- (j) To undertake diplomatic representations through meetings with the permanent missions in question in order to follow up on an allegation or case;
- (k) To conduct separate meetings with NGOs for protection purposes;
- (l) To convene twice a year, online, intersessional meetings of all Committee Rapporteurs and focal points on reprisals to discuss challenges and good practices;

⁷⁶ A/80/294, para. 31.

⁷⁷ A/80/294, para. 97.

- (m) To ensure that, for those Committees that have a procedure for disclosing information on cases publicly on the web page, the allegation/case is resolved or addressed with the protection of the individuals in mind by upholding the 'do no harm' principle;
- (n) To maintain as a concern that needs to be addressed online/Internet-based surveillance and threats or harassment;
- (o) To reflect on the causes of the decrease in the reporting of allegations of intimidation or reprisals, as mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General, on reprisals against those who cooperate with the human rights mechanisms;
- (p) To request the Secretariat to collect information of instances of how treaty bodies address allegations of reprisals for the next meeting of the Chairs, including allegations of reprisals against treaty body experts and staff members.

Special Procedures and UN experts

In their annual report, Special Procedures mandate holders reported that they continued to take up cases concerning acts of intimidation and reprisal, in relation not only to their work, but also to the wider United Nations system in the field of human rights. They also reported that they implemented their internal guidelines on reprisals and intimidation in a coherent and systematic manner.

In **2023**, mandate holders continued to use communications, public statements, press releases, reports and meetings with various stakeholders to express their serious concern regarding all such acts. The issue of intimidation and reprisal was raised, as appropriate, with the President of the Human Rights Council and/or the Chair of the Third Committee of the General Assembly. Mandate holders held a dedicated discussion during their annual meeting and revised the enhanced response to reprisals adopted in 2015. Sorcha MacLeod, the focal point of the Coordination Committee on the issue, led the discussion, which allowed for an assessment of the actions taken by Special Procedures and the United Nations to address the issue, as well as the identification of trends and possible follow up actions by the Committee. Mandate holders acknowledged the growing use of online platforms and new technologies for intimidation and reprisal. They also underscored the significance of reacting to such cases through various tools at their disposal and reporting on incidents in the annual report of the Secretary-General.⁷⁸

The 2023 report of the Secretary-General on reprisals includes new allegations from ten communications concerning nine States and one non-State actor, and follow-up information on cases and legislation concerning 12 States. The mandate holders noted concerns about reprisals due to cooperation with the United Nations in eight reports and one oral statement

⁷⁸ A/HRC/55/69, para 70.

to the Human Rights Council, and in three reports to the General Assembly. They also included references to the issue in two public statements following country visits and in five press releases addressing restrictive legislation, actions at a United Nations conference and two individual cases concerning four countries.

In **2024**, mandate holders continued their efforts building on previous discussions and actions. They issued nine communications concerning eight States and provided follow-up information on cases from previous reports. Mandate holders also reported incidents of reprisals in their submissions to the Human Rights Council and General Assembly, through oral statements, end-of-mission reports, and press releases. During their annual meeting, they revised the enhanced response to reprisals adopted in 2015 and explored ways to strengthen engagement with States that have a track record of such actions. The Coordination Committee, under the leadership of its focal point, proposed closer collaboration with the President of the Human Rights Council and other relevant actors to reinforce responses to reprisals. Additionally, mandate holders emphasised the importance of leveraging United Nations field presences and country teams to mitigate risks on the ground.

The 2024 report of the Secretary-General on reprisals included information on allegations from seven communications concerning seven States, as well as updates on five previously reported cases.

In 2025, mandate holders continued to use communications, public statements, press releases, reports and meetings with various stakeholders to express their serious concern regarding all acts of intimidation and reprisal in relation to their work and also to the United Nations system in the field of human rights.⁷⁹ In 2025, mandate holders issued seven communications concerning seven States and they noted concerns regarding reprisals in nine reports and four oral statements to the Human Rights Council and one report to the General Assembly.⁸⁰ In June 2025, the focal point of the Coordination Committee on reprisal met with representatives from NGOs and underscored that addressing reprisals remains a priority for mandate holders and the Coordination Committee. Steps taken by special procedures included systematic inclusion of reprisals in this annual report and Secretary-General report on reprisals, communications, end-of-mission statements and public statements, with approximately 30 reprisal-related cases from the system addressed annually. Special procedures are in close engagement with the President of the Human Rights Council, the Assistant Secretary-General and the High Commissioner, as well as attentive to restrictive legislation, surveillance, criminalization of human rights defenders and shrinking civic space.⁸¹

The 2025 report of the Secretary-General on reprisals included information on allegations from five communications concerning five States taken up by special procedure mandate

⁷⁹ A/HRC/61/66, para. 70.

⁸⁰ A/HRC/61/66, para. 71.

⁸¹ A/HRC/61/66, para. 70.

holders and follow-up information on cases and legislation concerning five States included in previous reports based on the continued work of mandate holders.⁸²

Attacks against mandate holders

ISHR continues to be very concerned about attacks of a personal nature against Special Procedure mandate holders, as well as members of Expert Mechanisms and Commissions of Inquiries⁸³ by several UN member States. ISHR views these attacks as reprisals against mandate holders for their work to investigate and report on allegations of human rights violations and abuses. It is wholly unacceptable that these individuals have been targeted simply for trying to fulfil the mandates given to them by the Human Rights Council. Beyond the impact on these individuals themselves, these acts of intimidation and reprisal constitute an attack on the Human Rights Council and the UN human rights system more broadly. We are particularly concerned at the proliferation of attacks, which speaks to a ‘copycat’ phenomenon regarding States’ tactics to effectively discredit, disparage, defame, threaten, and otherwise undermine these experts, ultimately hampering their abilities to fulfil their mandates. Furthermore, prominent UN experts being attacked without consequence may deter civil society from engaging with the mechanisms and is likely to increase fear in those seeking the protection of the UN.

In March 2021, media reports emerged that a senior Saudi Arabian official issued what was perceived to be a death threat against then Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial Executions, Agnès Callamard, after her investigation into the murder of journalist **Jamal Khashoggi**.⁸⁴ In July 2022, **Anexa Brendalee Alfred Cunningham**, a Miskitu Indigenous woman, lawyer and expert in Indigenous Law and Policy, and a citizen of Nicaragua travelled to Geneva to carry out her first official mission to the 15th session of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP), two months after being appointed to EMRIP. On Cunningham’s way back to Nicaragua, the government of Daniel Ortega and Rosario Murillo denied her entry and did not allow her to board the plane. On 15 July 2022, the President of the HRC, Federico Villegas, had contacted the Permanent Representative of Nicaragua and had requested clarification of the situation as well as the cooperation of the Government in rectifying the matter numerous times, without being able to receive any response or explanation. It clearly indicates an act of reprisal for her participation in the EMRIP session and seriously jeopardised Cunningham’s safe return to Nicaragua. Unfortunately, it is not an isolated incident and is part of a series of actions the Nicaraguan government has taken to repress and punish dissident voices.

On 16 May 2024, the Coordination Committee of Special Procedures issued a statement denouncing unacceptable acts of intimidation, threats as well as personal attacks against

⁸² A/HRC/61/66, para. 71.

⁸³ See also <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22421&LangID=E>.

⁸⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/mar/23/top-saudi-official-issued-death-threat-against-uns-khashoggi-investigator>.

Special Procedures mandate holders for carrying out their mandates to protect and promote human rights, according to a committee of experts that coordinates and facilitates their work.⁸⁵

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, Francesca Albanese, is currently facing accusations of financial misconduct, including improper payments for official work and travel allegedly received from pro-Hamas advocacy organisations. These claims of non-compliance with the provisions of the UN Code of Conduct of the Special Procedures have been raised by Israel and the NGO UN Watch.⁸⁶ On 28 March 2025, the President of the Human Rights Council received a letter from the Chairs of the Coordination Committee of Special Procedures regarding these allegations. Recalling the crucial importance of avoiding real or perceived conflicts of interest, the Coordination Committee conclusions did not identify any violations of the Code of Conduct by the Special Rapporteur. The Committee has expressed being ‘deeply concerned by the intimidation and personal attacks faced by the Special Rapporteur, which have escalated in severity and scope recently’, condemning ‘in the strongest terms the coordinated campaign against the Special Rapporteur and the negative consequences on her family and those working with her as well as the attempt to undermine her work and reputation.’⁸⁷ On 31 March 2025, the President of the Human Rights Council acknowledged the personal attacks faced by the Special Rapporteur and their negative impact on her family and colleagues.⁸⁸ In April 2025, her mandate was renewed for three years. This pattern of criticism and allegations is raising serious concern among legal and human rights organisations,⁸⁹ who have also warned of the chilling effect such campaigns can have on the independence and integrity of UN Special Procedures, as well as how the framing of these accusations are part of a broader effort to discredit and constrain her ability to carry out her mandate effectively. This situation raises serious concerns over the protection of UN human rights experts from harmful acts of reprisals and retaliation while working to address serious human rights violations.

In the reporting period, the situation has continued to deteriorate. Despite being granted diplomatic immunity under her remit as a special rapporteur, Albanese was sanctioned by the **United States** in July 2025 – along with multiple members of the International Criminal Court

⁸⁵<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/05/attacks-against-un-human-rights-experts-must-cease-coordination-committee>.

⁸⁶<https://unwatch.org/uns-francesca-albanese-accused-of-financial-misconduct-by-human-rights-watchdog/>.

⁸⁷<https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/PresidencyBureau/BureauRegionalGroupsCorrespondence/Correspondence/Letter%20from%20the%202023-2024%20and%202024-2025%20Chairs%20of%20the%20Coordination%20Committee%20to%20the%20HRC%20President%20concerning%20allegations%20raised%20in%202024%20against%20the%20Special%20Rapporteur%20on%20the%20situation%20of%20human%20rights%20in%20the%20Palestinian%20territories%20Occupied%20since%201967.pdf>.

⁸⁸ <https://unwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/Bureau-meeting-minutes-1-April-2025.pdf>.

⁸⁹<https://eldh.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/ELDH-against-the-defamation-of-Francesca-Albanese.pdf>.

(ICC). The sanctions mean that Albanese is unable to access any bank accounts or assets based in the US, and is unable to travel to the country.

At a Human Rights Council press conference, several Special Procedures mandate holders warned of an escalating pattern of intimidation, delegitimization and pressure against the UN human rights system and those who engage with it, including smear campaigns, political attacks, and financial coercion. Speakers pointed to recent targeted attacks against individual mandate holders, including sanctions imposed by the **United States** on **Francesca Albanese**, as well as sustained public campaigns by States to discredit and undermine experts such as **Richard Bennett**. They underscored that such actions, alongside broader efforts to question the legitimacy and independence of Special Procedures, have a chilling effect on civil society cooperation with the UN, with individuals and organisations facing harassment, detention, travel restrictions and other forms of reprisals. Speakers stressed that these trends are systemic rather than isolated, reflecting broader efforts by some States to weaken independent scrutiny and accountability. They called for a stronger, more visible and more consistent response from the United Nations, including clearer public backing for mandate holders, enhanced protection for those at risk of reprisals, and more robust follow-up and accountability for cases of intimidation and retaliation linked to engagement with UN mechanisms.⁹⁰

UN Committee on NGOs

The UN's Committee on NGOs, which recommends NGOs to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) for consultative status, has come under fierce criticism for failing in its core task of giving civil society a voice at the UN and for deviating from the guiding principles in ECOSOC resolution 1996/31 in its handling of applications for consultative status.⁹¹

ISHR has reported consistently that some Member States on the Committee have continuously deferred applications by posing questions on issues that applicants are not required to provide information on, or through repetitive questioning.⁹² Human rights organisations and humanitarian organisations face a disproportionately high likelihood of being deferred compared to other kinds of NGO applicants. The continued deferral of applications for consultative status has, in some cases, amounted to de facto rejection, especially for organisations working on human rights.⁹³

⁹⁰ <https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k1o/k1optw9ah2>.

⁹¹ <https://www.ishr.ch/news/ngo-committee-accusations-terrorism-remain-unretracted>;
<https://www.ishr.ch/news/un-ngos-relationship-must-evolve-take-full-advantage-civil-society-expertise>;
and
<https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/politics/ngos-face-uphill-battle-to-gain-access-to-the-un/48318440>.

⁹² <https://ishr.ch/latest-updates/committee-on-ngos-politicised-committee-defers-almost-two-thirds-of-ngos-seeking-un-accreditation/>.

⁹³ <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/57/60>.

The **International Dalit Solidarity Network (IDSN)** has held the record of the longest deferred NGO in the history of the NGO Committee, the most egregious example of reprisals by the Committee against an NGO seeking to cooperate with the UN. Starting 2008 when the application was first considered, it received over 100 questions including repeated and arbitrary questioning over the course of 15 years. In December 2022, IDSN was finally granted consultative status when ECOSOC voted to grant consultative status to IDSN and eight other NGOs.⁹⁴

Member States working within multilateral institutions are legally obligated to ensure the full and effective participation of civil society. The Declaration on Human Rights Defenders affirms ‘the right, individually and in association with others, to unhindered access and communication with international bodies.’⁹⁵ The Committee on NGOs must ensure apolitical, fair and transparent consideration of all NGO applications for consultative status consistent with international human rights standards that include the rights to due process, non-discrimination, and the fundamental freedoms of expression, association and assembly. On 20 June 2019, the Coordination Committee of the Special Procedures sent a letter to the Committee on NGOs,⁹⁶ in which it submitted the following proposals and recommendations to ECOSOC and the Committee for their consideration.

The Coordinating Committee recommended that ECOSOC:

- strengthen its oversight and coordination role with the Committee by:
 - reviewing and rejecting its recommendations to defer applications in cases where there are no objectively good reasons for the continued deferral, and
 - directly intervening in support of NGOs whose applications have been deferred for several years.
- ensure that the Committee fairly, transparently, and expeditiously assesses applications for consultative status in an apolitical and non-discriminatory manner by, for example, clearly reasserting and explaining the objective criteria it must use to assess applications and by requiring it to justify its decisions, preferably in writing, with regard to deferrals extending beyond three years and all denials of consultative status.
- consider expanding the membership of the Committee and promoting membership rotation to increase participation, inclusiveness, and diversity.
- study the possibility of establishing a new accreditation system and process, such as a tripartite model similar to the model adopted at the International Labour Organization or an independent expert body.

⁹⁴<https://ishr.ch/latest-updates/un-finally-grants-access-to-dalit-rights-organisation-blocked-for-a-record-15-years/>.

⁹⁵ General Assembly resolution 53/144 (1998), <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Defenders/Declaration/declaration.pdf>.

⁹⁶https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/SP/CC_Chair_letter_to_NGO_Committee_20062019.pdf.

- consider instituting a mechanism to expedite applications for consultative status to civil society organisations that have been cooperating with UN bodies and mechanisms for the past five years.
- establish accountability and grievance mechanisms, including an expeditious process to reconsider any erroneous or arbitrary decisions deferring or denying applications for consultative status by the Committee.
- impose a limit on the number of times an application can be deferred, after which ECOSOC can then decide whether an application for consultative status should be approved or denied.

The Coordinating Committee recommended that the Committee on NGOs:

- institute safeguards against arbitrary delays, deferrals or denials of consultative status by, among other things:
 - developing clear, transparent, and publicly available objective eligibility criteria for obtaining consultative status on which applications are to be assessed based on the principles and criteria contained in Resolution 1996/31
 - ensuring that all applications for consultative status are considered in a fair, transparent, non-discriminatory, and timely manner in accordance with Resolution 1996/31 and that its criteria are uniformly applied with a view towards upholding the rights to freedoms of expression and association, and preventing perpetual deferral of applications for status with repetitive and/or irrelevant questioning and requests for documentation by, for example, allowing the Chair to engage the Committee in an in depth review of long differed applications and to require States to justify the relevance of their questions or requests for additional documents.
- continue enhancing the use of information technology, including by allowing NGOs to participate in the Committee's Q&A sessions via videoconferencing, to foster and increase the participation of, among others, NGOs from developing countries.
- ensure that all NGOs are provided with the right to respond to objections to their applications and allegations lodged against them during the application process before it takes a decision on suspensions and withdrawals as expressly required by paragraph 15 of Resolution 1996/31.

On 1st April 2026, 28 UN Special Procedures mandate holders issued a [statement](#) highlighting how the Committee's practices constitute serious barriers to civil society engagement with the UN, disproportionately targeting independent human rights NGOs and effectively muting certain organisations in UN spaces. The experts urge States to reform the procedures of the Committee to allow easier and more timely processing of accreditation requests from civil society and in the long run to periodically review membership on this body benchmarked against their ratification of human rights treaties, universal periodic review

performance and other indices of cooperation with the human rights system. The statement also cites [ISHR's most recent analysis and reporting](#) on the Committee's practices.

UN Security Council

On 21 February 2020, Belgium, the Dominican Republic, Estonia, Germany, and the United Kingdom convened an unprecedented 'Arria Formula'¹ informal meeting of the Security Council to address reprisals against women human rights defenders and women peacebuilders who engage with the Security Council. States overwhelmingly reaffirmed their responsibility to protect civil society briefers from intimidation and reprisals related to their engagement with the Security Council. However, many recognised that States were failing to uphold these responsibilities, as civil society briefers — especially women human rights defenders (WHRDs) and peacebuilders — all too often face acts of intimidation and reprisals related to their engagement with the Security Council.

A number of the recommendations made in ISHR's [policy brief on reprisals and the Security Council](#) were reflected in the recommendations made by States during the interactive dialogue. These included calls for comprehensive risk assessments for those briefing the Security Council; a reprisals 'docking point', or creation of a focal point within the Security Council Affairs Division for briefers; support for defenders and peacebuilders prior to arrival, during their visits, and after they return; and contingency plans should threats materialise.⁹⁷ Member States of the Security Council should build on this first informal meeting and commit to further, concrete steps to combat reprisals against WHRDs and women peacebuilders who engage with the Council.

Also, in line with recommendations made by ISHR in its policy brief, OHCHR reportedly developed guidance and capacity building to better mitigate against reprisals associated with Security Council cooperation, by civil society briefers.

In January 2022, the Security Council held an open debate on Protecting Women's Participation. This was the first time the Security Council held a formal meeting on reprisals and their effects on women's participation. Kaavya Asoka, of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security shared several civil society recommendations, including that OHCHR be provided with the necessary financial support to carry out its work on reprisals, including better monitoring and reporting and critically, providing support to civil society at risk and proactively following up on individual cases. The burden must be shifted away from individuals who have faced attacks, to the system with the capacity to protect them.⁹⁸

The 2022 Secretary-General's report on women, peace and security follows up on the Secretary-General's directives to the United Nations and the five goals for the decade (2020

⁹⁷ <https://www.ishr.ch/news/reprisals-new-ishr-policy-brief-reprisals-and-security-council>.

⁹⁸ <https://www.womenpeacesecurity.org/resource/statement-unsc-wps-open-debate-january-2022/>.

to 2030) laid out in the reports of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security from 2019 and 2020, paying special attention to the goal of turning the unconditional defence of women's rights into one of the most visible markers of the work of the United Nations on peace and security, and in particular the protection of women human rights defenders.

The report noted that across the globe, women human rights defenders have increasingly been targeted with attacks that silence their advocacy and prevent them from participating in public life. The ascendancy of extremist political actors and the resurgence of military coups and unconstitutional changes of Government have made the work of human rights defenders more dangerous. In most conflict-affected countries, men hold power, women are structurally or directly excluded, and women's rights and freedoms are deliberately targeted, even though women are at the forefront of protests against authoritarian leaders and are firm in their refusal to accept political settlements that do not guarantee their rights. Women expect concrete actions towards their inclusion and reject tokenistic meetings with women's groups or the insertion of language in deals without their direct participation. To protect women's rights activists and their organisations, the Security Council has called for specific measures. In 2022, it held its first-ever formal meeting focusing on reprisals against women participating in peace and security processes.

This 2022 report documented that since 2018, more than a third of the women briefers invited to address the Security Council assisted by the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security have been subjected to reprisals and intimidation. When UN-Women surveyed the women civil society representatives who briefed the Council between January 2021 and May 2022, 9 out of 32 respondents reported reprisals. Furthermore, not all survey respondents had undertaken a risk assessment and protection planning ahead of the meeting, and many of these were conducted by civil society instead of the United Nations or the inviting Security Council member. The Secretary-General welcomed the development of guidance material to mitigate reprisals against civil society briefers by OHCHR and the formation of an informal group of Member States on the issue. Between September 2021 and July 2022, every elected Council member signed a commitment to prioritise women and peace and security during their rotating presidency. Their commitments included giving greater visibility to the agenda in their programmes of work when they hold the presidency, promoting the participation of women in Council meetings and taking specific measures to prevent reprisals against them, requiring United Nations briefers to include gender analysis in their statements, paying special attention to the recommendations of the Informal Expert Group or of women from civil society, and holding joint media stakeouts on these issues. During this period, there were four open debates on women and peace and security, and several country-specific meetings devoted to gender issues.

In terms of conclusions and recommendations, the Secretary-General requested all relevant entities and departments to strengthen their responses to cases when individuals are at risk or have experienced reprisals. He also urged Member States and regional organisations to use all forums, including the Security Council, to report regularly on steps to improve the enabling environment for women human rights defenders, provide both material and political

support to their work and their organisations, and prevent and respond to specific threats or reprisals against them. Finally, he encouraged the members of the Security Council to consider mandating that peacekeeping operations, special political missions and monitoring mechanisms linked to sanctions committees monitor and respond to risks, attacks, and reprisals against all human rights defenders and peacebuilders.

The 2023 report of the Secretary-General on Women, Peace and Security reported that the Security Council used stronger language on protecting women who defend human rights from reprisals, as well as more attention being paid by Council members to preventing reprisals against women briefers from civil society who are invited to provide briefings, or to addressing such reprisals, when they occur. UN-Women launched a survey to collect information about reprisals against these civil society briefers to improve the reporting and documentation of such cases. In 2022, the survey was sent to 56 women who briefed the Council that year, 24 of whom responded, with 7 who self-reported having been targeted as a consequence to their briefing. Three cases reported through the survey are included in the report of the Secretary-General on cooperation with the United Nations, its representatives and mechanisms in the field of human rights, two of them having been included anonymously owing to the fear of further reprisals (A/HRC/54/61, para. 13).⁹⁹

The 2023 report of the Secretary-General on Women, Peace and Security also mentions that between May 2021 and April 2022, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) documented incidents of reprisal and intimidation against 172 women, girls, women human rights defenders and civil society organisations working in the field of human rights, who were targeted for their cooperation with the United Nations.

The 2024 report of the Secretary-General on Women, Peace and Security mentions that several Member States, regional organisations such as the European Union, and the United Nations are taking stronger measures to respond to attacks and reprisals against women human rights defenders. In a survey sent by UN-Women to the 45 women from civil society who briefed the Security Council in 2023, five of the 23 who responded reported having been targeted as a consequence of their briefing. Furthermore, the report noted that 2025 would mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). In that regard, the Secretary-General recommended that pledges made at the 25th anniversary include: adopting and fully implementing a zero-tolerance approach to any form of intimidation or reprisal against women for their political participation, human rights and humanitarian work, peacebuilding activities or cooperation with United Nations mechanisms, including the Security Council, while safeguarding their right to participation and the independence of their views. Such an approach could entail, for example, reviewing legislation and policies to provide stronger protection to women human rights defenders at risk, including by protecting their work in the digital space, and taking gender-based persecution into consideration in asylum-granting processes.

⁹⁹ <https://undocs.org/S/2023/725>.

The 2025 report of the Secretary-General on Women, Peace and Security reported that in 2024, UN-Women continued its annual survey to collect information about reprisals against women civil society briefers. In 2024, 25 of the 55 women from civil society invited to brief the Security Council that year responded to the survey, 7 of whom reported having been subjected to reprisals, from smear campaigns and cyberattacks to raids on their offices. That proportion is similar to the findings of the same survey in 2023 and 2022.

NATIONAL LAWS FOR THE RECOGNITION AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

The legal recognition and protection of defenders is crucial to ensuring that they can work in a safe, supportive environment, free from attacks, reprisals and unreasonable restrictions.

In 2016, ISHR developed in consultation with over 500 defenders from every region a [Model Law for the Recognition and Protection of Human Rights Defenders](#) (Model Law), which was then settled and adopted by 28 of the world's leading human rights experts and jurists.¹⁰⁰ The Model Law provides authoritative guidance to States on how to implement the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders at the national level and specifically contains provisions relating to the protection of defenders from reprisals.

In March 2019, ISHR made a submission to the 2019 UN Secretary-General's report on 'Cooperation with the United Nations, its representatives and mechanisms in the field of human rights' outlining good practices in the legal and policy framework at the national level to ensure the right to participation at the international level.¹⁰¹ The submission puts forward arguments for a legislative response by individual States and provides a brief review of the extent to which the national human rights defender laws and policies have addressed the right to unhindered access to and communication with international bodies, and the obligation to prevent and ensure protection from intimidation and reprisals.

The information below reflects developments since the 2019 submission, up to and including April 2026.

¹⁰⁰ <https://www.ishr.ch/news/model-law>.

¹⁰¹ <https://www.ishr.ch/ishr-submission-sg-report-reprisals-good-practices-legal-and-policy-framework-national-level>.

Relevant sections in national laws and policies on defenders

While the vast majority of States do not have specific laws or policies on human rights defenders, several States have adopted such laws and policies in recent years, including national laws in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Liberia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mongolia, Niger and Peru, as well as provincial laws in the DRC and Mexico. Before them, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Honduras, Mexico (including State-level laws) and Mali had done so as well.

Other countries are developing or have proposed such laws and policies (or reforms), including Benin, the Central African Republic, Costa Rica, Colombia, DRC, Guinea, Madagascar, Mexico, Nigeria, Nepal, Paraguay, Perú, the Philippines, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Togo, Uganda and Zambia.

The efficacy of these laws and policies has been discussed before high national courts in Brazil and Colombia.¹⁰²

While much valuable work is being done to evaluate how well defenders are protected by these laws and policies.¹⁰³ ISHR has also noted, in its Model Law,¹⁰⁴ the need for them to provide specifically for the right of unhindered access to and communication with international bodies and the State's obligation to protect against intimidation or reprisals.

This section examines the extent to which States that have devised, or are devising, specific laws or policies for defenders have provided for the relevant rights and obligations in those laws or policies. The aim is to point to some of the characteristics of this evolving legislative landscape, some good practices, as well as gaps remaining to ensure full realisation of these rights.¹⁰⁵

At the outset, it is useful to note that several of the older laws and policies on the protection of defenders do not recognise rights or create obligations but rather create protection mechanisms. As such, they do not address the rights and obligations related to engagement with international human rights bodies and mechanisms.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² <https://colombiareports.com/colombia-massively-violating-rights-of-human-rights-defenders-court/>.

¹⁰³ 2017 FOCUS report, public policies for the protection of Human Rights Defenders, Protection International (2017); Americas: The Situation of State Protection Mechanisms for Human Rights Defenders, Amnesty International, October 2018.

¹⁰⁴ 2017 FOCUS report, public policies for the protection of Human Rights Defenders, Protection International (2017); Americas: The Situation of State Protection Mechanisms for Human Rights Defenders, Amnesty International, October 2018.

¹⁰⁵ Ending Reprisals: The role of national laws and policies in protecting those who cooperate with the United Nations, International Service for Human Rights, 2013, at page 23.

¹⁰⁶ These include the Mexican Law for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders and Journalists, approved in 2012, http://sil.gobernacion.gob.mx/Archivos/Documentos/2019/04/asun_3873000_20190430_1556642966.pdf; the Brazilian Protection Programme for HRDs (PPDDH in Portuguese), established in 2007 and

Regarding the right to communicate with NGOs, governmental and intergovernmental organisations, as reflected in Section 8 of the Model Law:

- The draft policy of **Liberia** references the right to communicate without restriction with non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations (Paragraph 7);¹⁰⁷
- the 2025 draft law of the **DRC** recognises this right in Article 4(6);¹⁰⁸
- in the bill being considered in the **Philippines**,¹⁰⁹ Section 10 incorporates the Model Law language;
- in the **Burkinabe** law, only the right to be affiliated with non-governmental organisations is mentioned in Article 6;
- the **Ivorian** law states that defenders have the right to communicate with persons, associations, governmental organisations, NGOs or international organisations that pursue the same goals (Article 3);¹¹⁰
- the **Honduran** law speaks of the right to communicate with NGOs and intergovernmental organisations (Article 4[5]);¹¹¹
- the law in **Mali** (Article 3[3])¹¹² and law in **Niger** (Article 4)¹¹³ both state that defenders have the right to communicate with persons or organisations, including governmental, non-governmental or intergovernmental, pursuing the same goals;
- the 2024 draft law of **Nigeria** incorporates the Model Law language in Section 8;¹¹⁴
- a current draft law in **Mexico** which seeks to improve the 2012 law recognises the right to freely communicate with NGOs, governmental and intergovernmental organisations, including subsidiary bodies, mechanisms or experts with a human rights mandate, as

updated in 2019, http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/ Ato2019-2022/2019/Decreto/D9937.htm; and the Colombian National Protection Unit (UNP in Spanish), created in 2011, <https://www.funcionpublica.gov.co/eva/gestornormativo/norma.php?i=45248>.

¹⁰⁷ Republic of Liberia, National Policy for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (Aug. 2025).

¹⁰⁸ Avant-projet de Loi N° ... du ... portant protection des défenseur(e)s des droits humains en République du Congo, <https://ishr.ch/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/DRC-Draft-law-on-HRDs-Avant-projet-2025.pdf>.

¹⁰⁹ House Bill No. 77, Human Rights Defenders Protection Act, https://edcellagman.ph/images/2022/HRD_Protection_Bill_2022.pdf. This is a consolidated draft from bills that were presented to the House of Representatives (HoR). Identical bills were passed on third and final reading in the HoR during the 17th and 18th Congresses but were not acted upon by the Senate. This refiling (from 4 July 2022) seeks HoR, Senate and presidential approval.

¹¹⁰ Loi No 2014-388 portant promotion et protection des défenseurs des droits de l'Homme (2014), <http://ci-ddh.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Loi-N%C2%B0-2014-388-du-20-Juin-2014-portant-promotion-et-protection-des-d%C3%A9fenseurs-des-droits-de-l'Homme.pdf>.

¹¹¹ Law for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, Journalists, Social Communicators and Justice Officials (2015), <https://irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/country-information/research/Pages/honduras-attach.aspx>.

¹¹² Loi No2018-003/Du 12 Janvier 2018 Relative aux Défenseurs des Droits de l'Homme (2018), https://ishr.ch/sites/default/files/documents/mali_loi_relative_aux_ddh.pdf.

¹¹³ Loi n° 2022-27 du 20 juin 2022 fixant les droits et devoirs des défenseurs des droits de l'Homme au Niger, <https://ishr.ch/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/NIGERL1.pdf> (English translation: https://ishr.ch/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Niger-HRD-Law_ENG.pdf).

¹¹⁴ A Bill for an Act to Recognise and Protect Human Rights Defenders, and for Enhancing the Capacity of the Government of Nigeria to Protect Human Rights Defenders and for Related Matters, 2024.

well as diplomatic representations; this law also recognises the right to unhindered access and communication with regional and international human rights bodies (Article 7[VI, VII]);¹¹⁵

- only one of the regional edicts from the **DRC (South Kivu)** recognises this right in Article 4d.¹¹⁶

Regarding the right to access, communicate and cooperate with international and regional human rights bodies and mechanisms, as reflected in Section 9 of the Model Law:

- the 2025 draft law of the **DRC** recognises this right in Article 5(4);¹¹⁷
- the draft law being developed by civil society in **Uganda** (Part II [2.1.a.viii])¹¹⁸ and the bill being considered in **the Philippines** (Section 10)¹¹⁹ incorporate the Model Law language;
- Article 7 of the **Ivorian** law says that human rights defenders have the right to address competent international institutions and organisations without any restrictions to receive and examine communications related to human rights, while conforming to applicable international procedures and instruments;¹²⁰
- the law in **Mali** similarly states that in conformity with applicable procedures and international instruments, defenders have the right to communicate without restriction to international bodies competent to submit, receive and examine communications regarding human rights (Article 7);¹²¹
- the **Mongolian** law on HRDs recognises in Article 6.1.4 the right of defenders to communicate and cooperate with national, international and regional human rights bodies and networks in charge of human rights protection; furthermore, in Article 6.1.10 it recognises the right to refer a complaint about violations of human rights and

¹¹⁵ Initiative of a general law to respect, protect, guarantee and promote the rights of human rights defenders and journalists (2019), <http://gaceta.diputados.gob.mx/Gaceta/64/2019/abr/20190430-III.html#Iniciativa19>.

¹¹⁶ Edict N°001-2016 of 10 February 2016 on the protection of human rights defenders and journalists in the South Kivu province (10 Feb. 2016), <https://ishr.ch/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/DRC-South-Kivu-Edict-001-2016.pdf>.

¹¹⁷ Avant-projet de Loi N° ... du ... portant protection des défenseur(e)s des droits humains en République du Congo, <https://ishr.ch/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/DRC-Draft-law-on-HRDs-Avant-projet-2025.pdf>.

¹¹⁸ The human rights defenders' bill (2018), <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1O76qSF8vZICtrF2TyGrjHQI4xNrD4pHX/view?usp=sharing>.

¹¹⁹ Senate Bill No. 1699, An act to promote and protect the rights of human rights defenders (2018).

¹²⁰ Loi No 2014-388 portant promotion et protection des défenseurs des droits de l'Homme (2014), <http://ci-ddh.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Loi-N%C2%B0-2014-388-du-20-Juin-2014-portant-promotion-et-protection-des-d%C3%A9fenseurs-des-droits-de-l'Homme.pdf>.

¹²¹ Loi No 2018-003/Du 12 Janvier 2018 Relative aux Défenseurs des Droits de l'Homme (2018).

freedoms perpetrated by State organisations and legal entities, to the competent international human rights body;¹²²

- the law in **Niger** states that HRDs may submit individual complaints to treaty bodies regarding human rights violations, without restriction or risk of reprisals or intimidation (Article 8)
- the 2024 draft law of **Nigeria** incorporates the Model Law language in Section 9;¹²³
- the draft law being developed by civil society in **Sierra Leone** sets out (Part II, Section 2[VI]) that human rights defenders have the right to submit without restriction communications relating to human rights to international bodies competent to receive and consider such matters in accordance with the applicable international procedures and instruments in;¹²⁴
- the draft policy of **Liberia** references a right to seek the protection and realisation of human rights at the national and international levels, but lacks detail on communicating and cooperating with human rights bodies (Paragraph 7).¹²⁵

Regarding freedom from intimidation and reprisals, as set out in Section 15 of the Model Law:

- the 2025 draft law of the **DRC** recognises this right in Article 7;¹²⁶
- the bill being considered in **the Philippines** incorporates the Model Law language in Section 17;¹²⁷
- Articles 5 and 6 of the law in **Mali** provide that defenders cannot be sued, arrested, detained for opinions and reports issued within the scope of their activities and cannot have their homes searched (except if caught in the act of committing an offence) without the Public Prosecutor's authorisation and the relevant ministry having been informed;¹²⁸
- the **Mongolian** law contains a provision stating that State organisations, officials and legal entities have an obligation to refrain from interfering in any way with human rights defenders without a ground specified in law (Article 9.1.5);¹²⁹

¹²² Law of Mongolia on the legal status of human rights defenders,

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1zvHQEznUkt4cbqMoPkW5xANLBffRHkwe/view?usp=sharing>.

¹²³ A Bill for an Act to Recognise and Protect Human Rights Defenders, and for Enhancing the Capacity of the Government of Nigeria to Protect Human Rights Defenders and for Related Matters (2024).

¹²⁴ The Human Rights Defenders Bill 2017,

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ISZkyCst5E8lUzQyf9yZRI1JokpMn1wB/view>.

¹²⁵ Republic of Liberia, National Policy for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (Aug. 2025).

¹²⁶ Avant-projet de Loi N° ... du ... portant protection des défenseur(e)s des droits humains en République du Congo, <https://ishr.ch/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/DRC-Draft-law-on-HRDs-Avant-projet-2025.pdf>.

¹²⁷ Senate Bill No. 1699. An act to promote and protect the rights of human rights defenders (2018).

¹²⁸ Loi No 2018-003/Du 12 Janvier 2018 Relative aux Défenseurs des Droits de l'Homme (2018).

¹²⁹ Law of Mongolia on the legal status of human rights defenders Draft Law on the Legal Status of Human Rights Defenders.

- the 2024 draft law of **Nigeria** incorporates the Model Law language in Section 15;¹³⁰
- both regional edicts from the **DRC** partially protect this right. The **South Kivu** edict states in Article 14 that the provincial government must take all necessary measures to ensure that HRDs are protected against all forms of threats and reprisals.¹³¹ The **North Kivu** edict states in Article 5 that HRDs shall not be subjected to any form of stigmatisation, harassment, intimidation, judicial prosecution or others as a consequence of their work.¹³²

Regarding the obligation to prevent and to ensure protection against intimidation or reprisals, as set out in Section 26 of the Model Law:

- the draft policy of **Liberia** refers to the duty of protection against, among other things, intimidation or retaliation in Paragraph 8;¹³³
- the 2025 draft law of the **DRC** recognises this in Article 12;¹³⁴
- the bill being considered in **the Philippines** incorporates the relevant language from the Model Law in section 24,¹³⁵ as does the draft being developed by civil society in **Sierra Leone** (Part IV, Section 11);¹³⁶
- the **Burkinabe** law sets out that the government must protect human rights defenders against a range of acts of violence, intimidation and harassment (Articles 12, 13);¹³⁷
- the **Ivorian** law merely addresses the protection of women human rights defenders from harassment, violence and/or against all forms of discrimination, as well as the obligation of the State to ensure the protection of HRDs and their families in in case of risk arising from their activities (Articles 9, 17);¹³⁸
- the law in **Mali** has several obligations that relate to the one in the Model Law. The State has the obligation to: promote and protect the rights of defenders in its territory

¹³⁰ A Bill for an Act to Recognise and Protect Human Rights Defenders, and for Enhancing the Capacity of the Government of Nigeria to Protect Human Rights Defenders and for Related Matters, 2024

¹³¹ Edict N°001-2016 of 10 February 2016 on the protection of human rights defenders and journalists in the South Kivu province, <https://ishr.ch/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/DRC-South-Kivu-Edict-001-2016.pdf>.

¹³² Edict N° 001/2019 of 30 November 2019 on the Protection of Human Rights Defenders in the North Kivu Province, https://www.ishr.ch/sites/default/files/documents/edit_portant_protection_des_deifenseurs_des_droits_humains_au_nord-kivu.pdf.

¹³³ Republic of Liberia, National Policy for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (Aug. 2025)

¹³⁴ Avant-projet de Loi N° ... du ... portant protection des défenseur(e)s des droits humains en République du Congo, <https://ishr.ch/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/DRC-Draft-law-on-HRDs-Avant-projet-2025.pdf>.

¹³⁵ Senate Bill No. 1699. An act to promote and protect the rights of human rights defenders (2018).

¹³⁶ The Human Rights Defenders Bill 2017; The Human Rights Defenders Act, 2017.

¹³⁷ Including: extrajudicial executions, acts of torture or similar practices, arbitrary arrest and detention, enforced disappearance, death threats, harassment, defamation and forcible confinement, arbitrary restrictions to the freedoms of expression, association or reunion, and arbitrary searches and intrusions into their homes and workplaces. Loi N° 039-2017/AN, Portant Protection des Défenseurs des Droits Humains au Burkina Faso (2017).

¹³⁸ Loi No 2014-388 portant promotion et protection des défenseurs des droits de l'Homme (2014).

and to take legislative and regulatory measures to give effect to those rights (Articles 11 and 12) and to protect them, their families and their collaborators from risk arising from their activities (Article 15);¹³⁹

- the law in **Niger** adopted in 2022 contains a range of provisions spelling out the protection obligations of the State, including the obligation to protect HRDs and members of their families when they are at risk arising from the exercise of their activities (Article 18);¹⁴⁰
- the 2024 draft law of **Nigeria** incorporates the Model Law language in Section 26;
- the **Mongolian** law imposes common obligations on the State, its officials and other legal entities, which include: avoid violating the rights of HRDs, refrain from interfering with their rights without a legal justification, implement regulations to protect HRDs, and have the police protect HRDs from any assault on their rights (Articles 9.1 and 9.2);¹⁴¹
- the **DRC South Kivu** edict states in Article 14 that local authorities shall protect HRDs against any form of violence, threats, reprisals, discrimination or other actions that they may be subjected to as a consequence of their work.¹⁴² The **North Kivu** edict states in article 10 that local authorities shall ensure the protection of HRDs, and article 6 states that WHRDs shall enjoy special protection against any kind of threat, violence or any other form of abuse.¹⁴³

Regarding the obligation to make intimidation and reprisals an offence, as set out in Section 30 of the Model Law,

- the 2024 draft law of **Nigeria** incorporates the Model Law language in Section 30;¹⁴⁴
- the draft **Liberian** policy advocates in Paragraph 9.1(b) for the enactment of legal provisions that will investigate and hold perpetrators accountable for any forms of attacks and threats against HRDs;¹⁴⁵

¹³⁹ Loi No 2018-003/Du 12 Janvier 2018 Relative aux Défenseurs des Droits de l’Homme (2018).

¹⁴⁰ Loi n° 2022-27 du 20 juin 2022 fixant les droits et devoirs des défenseurs des droits de l’Homme au Niger, <https://ishr.ch/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/NIGERL1.pdf> (English translation: https://ishr.ch/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Niger-HRD-Law_ENG.pdf).

¹⁴¹ Law of Mongolia on the legal status of human rights defenders.

¹⁴² Edict N°001-2016 of 10 February 2016 on the protection of human rights defenders and journalists in the South Kivu province, <https://ishr.ch/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/DRC-South-Kivu-Edict-001-2016.pdf>.

¹⁴³ Edict N° 001/2019 of 30 November 2019 on the Protection of Human Rights Defenders in the North Kivu Province, https://www.ishr.ch/sites/default/files/documents/edit_portant_protection_des_deifenseurs_des_droits_humains_au_nord-kivu.pdf.

¹⁴⁴ A Bill for an Act to Recognise and Protect Human Rights Defenders, and for Enhancing the Capacity of the Government of Nigeria to Protect Human Rights Defenders and for Related Matters, 2024.

¹⁴⁵ Republic of Liberia, National Policy for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (Aug. 2025).

- the bill being considered in **the Philippines** states that violations to the rights of HRDs enunciated in the law committed or permitted by public officials can be sanctioned with prison and fines (Section 36), while any violation to other provisions of the act would be sanctioned with applicable criminal and administrative sanctions (Section 37);
- articles 19-28 of the **Burkinabe** law establish criminal sanctions for different violations to the rights of HRDs;¹⁴⁶
- the law in **Mali** states that violations against defenders shall be sanctioned in accordance with applicable laws (Article 17);¹⁴⁷
- the law in **Mongolia** states that people who breach the law may be subject to administrative, civil or criminal liability, depending on what each specific law regulates (Article 13);¹⁴⁸
- the law in **Niger** states that the Public Prosecutor may take up any case of physical or verbal aggression, threats or intimidation committed against a HRD (Article 25);¹⁴⁹
- Part V(10) of the draft law being developed by civil society in **Uganda** makes it an offence to intimidate a human rights defender;¹⁵⁰ and the draft law in **Sierra Leone** states that violations against defenders shall be sanctioned in accordance with applicable laws (Part IV, Section 11, XIX);¹⁵¹
- the **DRC South Kivu** edict states in Article 15 that violations against HRDs shall be sanctioned in conformity with the Congolese Penal code.¹⁵² The **North Kivu** edict states in article 13 that any person that violates the rights of HRDs recognised in the edict or whose conduct is likely to hinder the activities of HRDs in the Province, will be punished in accordance with the applicable criminal legislation. If the conduct is not punishable by other legislation, the perpetrator can face prison for up to 2 years and/or a fine from 100,000-1,000,000 Congolese francs.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁶ Including: defamation, harassment, arbitrary arrest or detention, kidnapping, death threats, torture, enforced disappearance, and summary or extrajudicial executions. Loi N° 039-2017/AN, Portant Protection des Défenseurs des Droits Humains au Burkina Faso (2017).

¹⁴⁷ Loi No 2018-003/Du 12 Janvier 2018 Relative aux Défenseurs des Droits de l'Homme (2018).

¹⁴⁸ Law of Mongolia on the legal status of human rights defenders.

¹⁴⁹ Loi n° 2022-27 du 20 juin 2022 fixant les droits et devoirs des défenseurs des droits de l'Homme au Niger <https://ishr.ch/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/NIGERL1.pdf> (English translation: https://ishr.ch/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Niger-HRD-Law_ENG.pdf).

¹⁵⁰ The human rights defenders' bill (2018).

¹⁵¹ The human rights defenders bill (2017).

¹⁵² Edict N°001-2016 of 10 February 2016 on the protection of human rights defenders and journalists in the South Kivu province.

¹⁵³ Edict N° 001/2019 of 30 November 2019 on the Protection of Human Rights Defenders in the North Kivu Province.

REGIONAL AGREEMENTS

On 25 October 2017, the '**Joint mechanism of the Inter-American Commission and OHCHR Latin America for the protection of HRDs**' was launched. The mechanism aims to improve protection of HRDs in the region, including from reprisals for cooperating with the Inter-American System and the UN.¹⁵⁴

On 21 October 2021, the Meeting of the Parties to the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (the **Aarhus Convention**) adopted a decision establishing a rapid response mechanism for the protection of environmental defenders (the Special Rapporteur on Environmental Defenders under the Aarhus Convention). The mandate of the Special Rapporteur is to: take measures to protect any person who is either: (a) experiencing persecution, penalisation or harassment, or (b) at imminent threat of persecution, penalisation or harassment in any way, for seeking to exercise their rights under the Aarhus Convention. Such penalisation, persecution or harassment may arise from the acts or omissions of public or private entities or individuals.¹⁵⁵ The first mandate holder, Michel Forst, was appointed on 24 June 2022.

On 4 March 2018, the **Escazú Agreement** (the Agreement) was adopted, becoming the first binding international agreement to explicitly mention human rights defenders (specifically, those in environmental matters) and the obligation to protect them and ensure a safe and enabling environment for their work.¹⁵⁶ The Agreement entered into force on 22 April 2021.

On 25 April 2024,¹⁵⁷ the 'Committee to Support Implementation and Compliance of the Escazú Agreement' (the Committee) started operations.¹⁵⁸ This Committee can consider allegations of non-compliance with the Agreement from a Party with respect to itself, a Party with respect to another Party or a member of the public with respect to a Party. Non-compliance can arise from reprisals suffered by HRDs. Furthermore, article VII.6(a) of the Rules of Procedure of the Committee states that the Committee may withhold information if it

¹⁵⁴ La CIDH y Oficinas de Derechos Humanos de la ONU se comprometen a desarrollar mecanismo para personas defensoras de derechos humanos y periodistas, <https://www.oacnudh.org/la-comision-inter-americana-de-derechos-humanos-cidh-y-oficinas-de-derechos-humanos-de-naciones-unidas-oacnudh-del-hemisferio-se-comprometen-a-desarrollar-mecanismo-conjunto-para-personas-defensora-mecanismo-de-acciones-conjuntas-para-contribuir-a-la-proteccion-de-personas-defensoras-de-derechos-humanos-en-america>, <https://www.oas.org/es/cidh/docs/pdfs/2017/Mecanismo-Acciones-Conjuntas-Def.pdf>.

¹⁵⁵ Decision VII/9 on a rapid response mechanism to deal with cases related to article 3 (8) of the Convention, ECE/MP.PP/2021/2/Add.1, <https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2022>.

¹⁵⁶ Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean, Article 9.

¹⁵⁷ Members were elected on 21 April 2023. See Decision II/1 of the COP to Escazú (21 April 2023) (first session was on 10 Aug. 2023).

¹⁵⁸ <https://caac.cepal.org/en/>.

considers that people related to the information may suffer reprisals or prosecution.¹⁵⁹ To date, no communications have been concluded; albeit some have been submitted.

THE ISSUE OF SELF-CENSORSHIP

In October 2018, the ASG noted that he was conscious of gaps in information, including because of the serious risk that human rights defenders, journalists and others face for sharing information, and that the cases the mandate receives may be just the tip of the iceberg. He noted that he was aware many cases go unreported, in addition to those that are not included in the Secretary-General's report on reprisals because consent has not been obtained from the victims or their families. He further noted that he was also aware that his office is likely to receive information from countries where there is a relatively vibrant civil society who have been able to engage with the UN (and then suffered reprisals). This comment was made to explain that the report presents a slightly distorted picture insofar as there is more coverage of those countries than of others which may be even more closed and repressive and where it is impossible for the UN to engage with civil society at all.¹⁶⁰

In 2019, the Secretary-General reported that he was particularly concerned at the body of evidence pointing to growing self-censorship by victims and civil society actors who decide not to engage with the UN, both in the field and at Headquarters, out of fear for their safety or in contexts where human rights work is criminalised or publicly vilified.¹⁶¹ In his dialogue with the Human Rights Council at the 42nd session in September 2019, the ASG said that self-censorship is the aim of States and others who carry out reprisals and intimidation and that it is only when defenders refuse to self-censor that reprisals are taken. The ASG noted that it is a very difficult issue because it is hard to prove if human rights defenders and organisations are so intimidated that they do not even want to engage with the UN.

On 12 March 2020, ISHR launched a study, '[Intimidation and its Impact on Engagement with the UN Human Rights System: Methodological challenges and opportunities](#)'.¹⁶²

Self-censorship has led to a situation in which there are States not cited in the annual report of the Secretary-General on Reprisals, but where the intimidation has 'worked' to sustain inhibition and it is very difficult or impossible for civil society to engage with the UN at all. In other States still, there may be some reported cases of reprisals, but these don't tell the full story because many more defenders are intimidated from engaging. This phenomenon is

¹⁵⁹ Rules relating to the structure and functions of the Committee to Support Implementation and Compliance. annex 1 of decision I/3 of the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean.

¹⁶⁰ <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Reprisals/CommentsReprisalsEvent24Oct2018.docx>.

¹⁶¹ A/HRC/42/30.

¹⁶² https://www.ishr.ch/sites/default/files/documents/final_ishr_intimidation_reportweb.pdf.

deeply concerning in and of itself, but an additional concern is the difficulty inherent in monitoring it, documenting it, and thus seeking accountability for it.

ISHR's study responds to this challenge and proposes methodological approaches to strengthen the future capacity to measure and understand how intimidation tactics – both blunt and subtle – effectively inhibit human rights reporting and action, thus reinforcing impunity for States' abuses. As a starting point, the study finds that in order to maximise or optimise cooperation with the UN's human rights mechanisms and address intimidation, we need to understand who uses these mechanisms, why they use them, and how they react to the wide range of obstacles they face in the course of doing so. In that regard, the study recommends that the UN:

- develop more impact analysis that assesses the positive outcomes resulting from the use of UN human rights mechanisms and disseminate and popularise any impact analysis that exists. The system needs to give defenders a basis for making judgments about whether to go to the trouble of engaging.
- develop and strengthen new tactics for raising awareness about UN mechanisms in more closed and repressed countries. The more repressive the situation, the less information is available to people about the potential of UN mechanisms.
- acknowledge the structural inequities that make it more difficult for some victims and activists to access UN mechanisms and make an extra effort to compensate for them, by encouraging engagement and offering protection to those who are more isolated or marginalised.

The study's reflections on data-based approaches and limitations point to several initial steps that could strengthen our ability to assess intimidation and its impact on UN cooperation.

- The UN system should systematically track cooperation with its diverse human rights mechanisms, creating a database on cooperation coded by country, year, theme, mechanism approached, type of citizen or organisation cooperating, and other relevant parameters. This data should form the basis of regular quantitative reports on cooperation, which could also track deterioration or improvements from year to year.
- Major human rights data-collecting institutions (including OHCHR) should continue to improve the level of collection and management of data on all human rights abuses, collaborating with NGO and academic data-based efforts that enable quantification and comparative ranking of abuse levels.
- These two data sources will enable the identification of countries where there is high abuse and low cooperation as well as those with high abuse and high cooperation. Best practice research can then extract lessons learned from countries with high levels of abuse and high levels of cooperation that may assist countries where intimidation has been more successful in sustaining inhibition.
- OHCHR and human rights NGOs should encourage deeper survey-based research into intimidation and inhibition and how it is experienced by citizens and activists in targeted countries of concern. Partnerships with academic institutions should be

established to promote research. All such research should follow careful context-based protocols for protecting researchers and participants.

- OHCHR and human rights NGOs should take advantage of existing data and measurement tools on freedom, civil liberties and civic space as proxy measurements of levels of intimidation. This data can also help to identify countries where deeper study is needed.

In 2024, the Secretary-General reported that self-censorship and the choice not to cooperate with the United Nations, as well as the choice to do so under conditions of anonymity due to fear of reprisals, continued. The choice not to cooperate poses methodological challenges for the documentation of allegations and is likely under-identified and underreported. In several new instances, individuals and groups declined to communicate or meet with or submit information to the United Nations and, in other cases, they requested closed-door or confidential spaces to cooperate.

The Secretary-General also reported that alleged victims of reprisals requested anonymous reporting in half of the Member States with new cases compared with two thirds the previous year. Nonetheless, the overall number of individuals requesting anonymous reporting was significantly higher. A total of 120 victims, including women and young people, consented to report and have their cases documented and verified by OHCHR, under the condition that their identities and the details of their cases are not included in the report. They represent 75 per cent of the total new victims this year.

In 2025, the Secretary-General reported that self-censorship and the choice not to cooperate with the United Nations or to do so under conditions of anonymity due to fear of reprisals continued as a trend. Self-censorship was documented in contexts marked by repressive policies, human rights violations, fear of reprisals and criminal liability for cooperation with the United Nations.

The Secretary-General reported that the choice not to cooperate continues to pose methodological challenges in the documentation of allegations and is likely underidentified and underreported. In several instances, OHCHR and other United Nations entities, including peace operations, documented cases of individuals who declined engagement with the United Nations citing fear of reprisals, including 62 individuals in one State. While the number of individuals and organizations requesting anonymous reporting (more than 40 individuals and 14 organizations) represented a small reduction compared to the 2024 figure, the numbers remained significant, consistent with earlier reporting periods.

THE ISSUE OF GOVERNMENT-ORGANISED NGOS, AKA GONGOS

Human rights defenders engaging with the UN human rights system face intimidation and reprisals perpetrated not only by representatives of governments, but also by individuals affiliated with, supported by or acting as an extension of governments. In sessions of the Human Rights Council and the Universal Periodic Review, as well as various Treaty Body reviews, ISHR has noted over time the proliferation of so-called ‘GONGOS’ – governmental non-governmental organisations - and analysed their role in shaping the environment where reprisals and intimidation occur. Governments’ support to GONGOs means that they are often granted consultative status with the UN, while independent NGOs continue to be denied such status, or subject to frivolous or excessive questioning - which can, in some cases, amount to intimidation - in the NGO Committee and its parent organ, the UN ECOSOC. The presence of GONGOs allows these governments to influence the discourse about human rights in a particular State or region and water down the real issues at stake, by extensive use of speaking slots at the Human Rights Council, and convening side events or exhibitions in UN premises; in a handful of cases, GONGOs have used space allotted for civil society in the Human Rights Council and Treaty Bodies to undermine the credibility and legitimacy of other, independent civil society voices. GONGO presence has also led to concrete dangers to independent civil society, in the form of verbal intimidation or harassment, or covert monitoring of civil society engagement.

In the Treaty Bodies, GONGO representatives – who are considered on equal footing with other members of civil society by the UN secretariat – have registered for confidential and closed briefings with Committee members. In all cases, this has created a chilling environment for independent HRD participation, who may opt not to participate, or may self-censor, to mitigate risks of being identified by GONGOs. In at least one case discussed below, GONGO participation in a Treaty Body review is believed to have led to a direct reprisal from government authorities. More generally, human rights defenders who have travelled to Geneva to participate in HRC or Treaty Body sessions have faced reprisals upon their return to their countries which they believe to be directly linked to information provided to the government by GONGOs.

DENIAL OF ACCESS TO THE UN

Both UN Headquarters in New York and the UN Office in Geneva have implemented policies requiring individuals to present identification issued by a UN member or observer State as a condition for accessing UN premises. However, there is a clear inconsistency in how this is applied. Geneva enforces a stricter standard, accepting only passports from member or

observer States or national ID cards from European member States, whereas New York permits a broader range of photo identification issued by any UN member or observer States, including driver license. This lack of uniformity may result in unequal access to UN spaces depending on the location.

This practice is reportedly backed by internal regulations or guidance that are not public. This practice also does not appear to be driven by necessary and proportionate security needs of identification and management of entry and exit of UN premises, but by unrelated considerations of national sovereignty and State recognition thereof. This poses significant obstacles to a significant number of individuals who, for a diverse range of reasons, do not possess a passport issued by a UN member or observer State. This includes stateless persons and other individuals in possession of travel documents exclusively. This also includes Taiwanese individuals, who do not hold passports issued by the People's Republic of China, and who are unable to request or obtain, or have been refused by the Chinese authorities, a 'Mainland Travel Permit for Taiwan Residents' (known as *taibaozheng*).

CASES OF INTIMIDATION AND REPRISALS

During the reporting period, ISHR received information regarding a number of allegations of intimidation and reprisals against human rights defenders and others cooperating with the UN and its human rights mechanisms, including follow-up on cases previously submitted. Follow-up information has been bolded.

Algeria

1. Kaddour Chouicha and Jamila Loukil, members of the Algerian League for the Defence of Human Rights (LADDH)

The cases of Jamila Loukil and Kaddour Chouicha, both members of La Ligue Algérienne pour la Défense des Droits de l'Homme (LADDH), were included in the 2023, 2024 and 2025 report of the Secretary-General due to obstacles to, and a ban on, travelling abroad that prevented their in-person participation in the fourth cycle of Algeria's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in August 2022 (DZA 2/2023). In June 2023, mandateholders addressed the dissolution of LADDH, and of judicial harassment of Chouicha and Loukil since 2019. They also referenced the appeals lodged by Chouicha, including in relation to the interdiction to

leave the national territory (DZA 2/2023). The Government responded noting that Chouicha was indicted under national security charges and awaiting trial and as such not permitted to travel. It further noted that in June 2024 his appeal related to the interdiction to leave the country had been rejected. In July 2024, the Government informed that Loukil and Chouicha had been acquitted of all charges against them and that no order banning their travel outside of Algeria had been issued.

On 26 February 2025, the Algiers Court of Appeal upheld the judgement of the Court of First Instance acquitting Loukil and Chouicha of the terrorism related charges and other charges brought against them since April 2021. The Prosecutor subsequently filed an appeal in cassation before the Supreme Court. **In terms of follow up, Loukil and Chouicha still have not received a response in this regard.**

Chouicha is still awaiting the ruling of the Conseil d'Etat on the appeal he had lodged alleging that he had been effectively subjected to a travel ban, after the Administrative Court of Appeal had rejected his initial complaint against his travel ban on the grounds that there was no proof he had been prevented from travelling and that no such ban had been issued by the Ministry of the Interior. **In terms of follow up, evidence of the ban imposed on him, including the statement by the Algerian representative during the 52nd session of the Human Rights Council (during Algeria's UPR), which formally justified this ban, were submitted in March 2024 to the Council of State prior to the filing of the appeal against the dissolution of the LADDH on 22 April 2025.**

In a separate legal proceeding, Chouicha was sentenced in absentia by the Oran Court on 18 February 2024 to one year of imprisonment for 'publishing information prejudicial to public order' without having been notified. He was subsequently retried before the Oran Court of Appeal and acquitted on 10 November 2024.

In December 2024, the Administrative Court of Algiers confirmed the dissolution of the LADDH and rejected the appeal filed by Chouicha in 2023. On 22 April 2025, Chouicha lodged an appeal before the Conseil d'Etat. **In terms of follow up, on June 19, 2025, the Conseil d'Etat ruled that the complaint could not be accepted on procedural grounds because it did not include any of the legal grounds provided for by law, rendering it inadmissible. Following this rejection, Chouicha filed a complaint with the UN Human Rights Committee on 30 October 2025.**

Bahrain

The cases of **Abdulahdi Al-Khawaja, Abduljalil Al-Singace, Hassan Mushaima and Ali AlHajee** were included in the 2025 Secretary-General report. Mandate holders addressed the situation of **Abdulahdi Al-Khawaja, Abduljalil Al-Singace** and **Hassan Mushaima**, whose

cases had been included in previous reports of the Secretary-General, due to arbitrary arrest, torture and lengthy sentences on terrorism charges, following their engagement with the United Nations. Specifically, their situation was included in the 2011 and 2012 reports of the Secretary-General as well as in the 2021, 2023 and 2024 reports concerning Mr. Mushaima and since 2021 regarding Mr. Al-Khawaja and Mr. Al-Singace.¹⁶³

Al-Khawaja, former Protection Coordinator of the NGO Frontline Defenders, Al-Singace, former Director of the Human Rights Bureau of the Haq Movement for Civil Liberties and Democracy and Mushaima, former Secretary of the Haq Movement for Liberty and Democracy, are currently serving a life sentence on terrorism related charges. Al-Singace has a disability and requires the use of a wheelchair. United Nations treaty bodies¹⁶⁴ and special procedure mandate holders have addressed the situation of Al-Khawaja,¹⁶⁵ Al-Singace¹⁶⁶ and Mushaima¹⁶⁷ on numerous occasions, to which the Government has responded.^{168[5]}

On 11 July 2024, mandate holders addressed continued arbitrary detention of Al-Khawaja, Al-Singace and Mushaima and their exclusion from the Royal Pardon of 8 April 2024. Mandate holders reiterated their alarm at their deteriorating health condition and lack of access to adequate medical treatment and care ([BHR 3/2024](#)), to which the Government responded.¹⁶⁹

Since the previous reporting period, the UN Committee Against Torture (CAT), in its Concluding Observations of November 2025, expressed particular concern about three of the individuals detailed below – **Abdulahdi Al-Khawaja, Hassan Mushaima, and Abduljalil Al-Singace** – calling on Bahraini authorities to release all three in recognition of their detention as retaliation for their human rights work.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶³ [A/HRC/18/19](#), paras. 15–24; [A/HRC/21/18](#), paras. 53–54; [A/HRC/48/28](#) Annex II paras. 5–8; [A/HRC/51/47](#), Annex II paras. 5–6 and 9 and 14; [A/HRC/54/61](#), Annex II, paras. 8–9. [A/HRC/57/60](#), Annex II, paras. 9–13, 17–18;

¹⁶⁴ [E/C.12/BHR/CO/1](#), paras. 8–9.

¹⁶⁵ [BHR 3/2023](#); [BHR 1/2023](#); [A/HRC/WGAD/2012/6](#); [BHR 3/2012](#); [BHR 18/2011](#); 17/2011; 9/2011; 5/2011; 4/2011; 2/2009; 2/2007; 6/2005; see also press releases:

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2021/06/bahrain-un-expert-alarmed-prolonged-detention-human-rights-defenders>; <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/09/bahrain-un-expert-alarmed-health-human-rights-defenders-prison#:~:text=%E2%80%9C%20am%20extremely%20concerned%20about,situation%20of%20human%20rights%20defenders>.

¹⁶⁶ [BHR 3/2023](#); [A/HRC/WGAD/2023/2](#); [BHR 5/2021](#), [BHR 4/2021](#), [BHR 1/2019](#), [BHR 5/2016](#), [BHR 18/2011](#), [BHR 4/2011](#), [BHR 7/2010](#), and [BHR 5/2010](#).

¹⁶⁷ [BHR 1/2019](#); [BHR 5/2014](#); [BHR 4/2012](#); [BHR 17/2011](#); [BHR 4/2011](#); [BHR 3/2011](#); [BHR 2/2007](#).

¹⁶⁸ See government replies at:

<https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadFile?gId=37802>;
<https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadFile?gId=37486>;
<https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadFile?gId=30542>;
<https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadFile?gId=30543>; and
<https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadFile?gId=30544>.

¹⁶⁹ <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadFile?gId=38655>.

¹⁷⁰ UN Committee Against Torture, Concluding observations on the fourth periodic report of Bahrain

1. Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja

In 2025 the Secretary-General reported that, on 16 March 2025, authorities suspended Al-Khawaja's video calls with his family. A week later, Al-Khawaja learnt that the video calls had been permanently suspended and started a water only hunger strike that he discontinued after prison authorities promised to reinstate the calls. On 9 April 2025, the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders publicly called for his immediate release in a video posted on social media.¹⁷¹ A week later, on 15 April 2025, Al-Khawaja reportedly initiated a peaceful sit-in outside his cell to protest that the suspension of the video calls with his family was still in force. Three days later, he discontinued the sit-in to protect access to medical treatment for other prisoners. In November 2024, he was recommended for hernia surgery by a medical professional, which has not yet been scheduled at the time of writing.

In terms of follow up, at age 65, Al-Khawaja continues to be denied adequate medical care, including treatment for his dental issues and chronic jaw pain, following multiple fractures in his jaw sustained during his violent arrest in 2011, requiring specialist dental treatment which has been suspended for approximately one and a half years. He is actively being denied his scheduled follow up appointment for his glaucoma, which causes blindness without proper monitoring and treatment. He has also experienced prolonged delays in receiving medication for chronic conditions, including crucial heart medication. Video calls with his family, suspended in March 2025, were restored only in early 2026 following a hunger strike, only to be suspended again with the beginning of the US-Israel/Iran conflict. He was able to have one video call with his family on 16 March 2026, but has since had only phone contact with them. Decisions regarding his treatment fall under the direct authority of the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior rather than the prison administration.

2. Abduljalil Al-Singace

In 2025, the Secretary-General reported that Al-Singace reportedly remained in prolonged solitary confinement in his room at Kanoo Medical Centre and continued to be denied access to outdoor spaces, direct sunlight, the physiotherapy and mobility aids required for his disability, and adequate medical care for multiple conditions. He remained on a solid-food hunger strike to protest the confiscation of his scientific research.

In terms of follow-up, Al-Singace escalated to a full hunger strike as of December 2025 in protest at the denial of shoulder surgery. Tests taken in February 2026 confirmed the

(CAT/C/BHR/CO/4), 28 November 2025, paragraph 39. Available at:

https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/SessionDetails1.aspx?SessionID=2844&Lang=en.

¹⁷¹ <https://x.com/MaryLawlorhrds/status/1909910485501169956>.

necessity of surgery. He remains in prolonged solitary confinement, with little access to heating or appropriate winter clothing. Given the danger that the full nutritional strike posed to his life, Al-Singace began taking Ensure (multivitamin supplement) on 29 January 2026. In return, he was able to attend three physiotherapy appointments.

3. Hassan Mushaima

In 2025, the Secretary-General reported that **Hassain Mushaima's** medical needs continued to be neglected despite his worsening health. During the reporting period, he reportedly faced delays receiving specialized care, including for chronic diseases, and his requests for scans and certain medical tests continue to be ignored. Reportedly, Mr. Mushaima remains in solitary confinement in Kanoo Medical Centre.

In terms of follow up, now 78 and the oldest political prisoner in Bahrain, Mushaima suffered a significant deterioration in health in late December 2025. The Undersecretary has made it clear to the family that he will not provide the medical records. Mushaima's family has faced harassment, including the detention of two of his sons on 1 January 2026. On 12 January 2026, a judge at the Ministry of Justice assigned a forensic doctor to assess whether Mushaima's continued detention poses a threat to his life. As of the date of this submission, the outcome of the evaluation and any judicial determination on whether Mushaima should be released on medical grounds remain pending.

4. Ali AlHajee

In 2025 the Secretary-General documented the case of **Ali AlHajee**, a human rights defender and former political prisoner. On 28 February 2025, he received a written summons from the Ministry of Interior's General Directorate of Crime Detection and Forensic Science, followed by a telephone call from the Criminal Investigation Directorate (CID), instructing him to report to it immediately.

AlHajee was reportedly subjected to prolonged interrogation regarding his human rights activities, in particular his social media posts, including one on his meeting with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders in October 2024.¹⁷² He was also questioned about his engagement with the United Nations.

On 1 March 2025, the Public Prosecution's Terrorism Crimes Unit ordered his detention for seven days on charges of 'spreading false news using social media.' Both his interrogation and detention orders were carried out without access to legal counsel. On 3 March, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders publicly denounced AlHajee's

¹⁷² <https://x.com/elhajee/status/1849947641620090907?s=46>.

detention and interrogation regarding his human rights work in a post on social media, and called for his immediate release.¹⁷³

During the first six days of detention, AlHajee was denied access to basic necessities, held in unsanitary conditions, and not provided meals suitable for his health needs. On 6 March, his detention was extended by 15 days, but he was released on 10 March after 11 days in custody.

In terms of follow up, he has faced escalating reprisals since his detention and prosecution. In December 2025, he was informed that his employment contract at Standard Chartered Bank in Bahrain would not be renewed, without written justification, after the Bank reviewed his concerns and considered the matter closed. He was banned from entering Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries in November 2025, including the United Arab Emirates. These measures constitute a pattern of reprisals designed to punish him for his engagement with the United Nations and deter future cooperation with UN mechanisms.

On 22 March 2022, during the 49th session of the Human Rights Council, **Denmark** delivered an oral intervention calling for **Al-Khawaja**'s release.¹⁷⁴

On 24 March 2022, the **Benelux countries** made a statement at the Human Rights Council , that called for an end to an end to reprisals against rights activists in Bahrain who engage with the Council, including reference to **Al-Khawaja** who was described, alongside **Al-Singace** as 'arbitrarily detained for 10 years in connection to their human rights work'.¹⁷⁵

On 29 November 2022, **Denmark** raised the case of **Al-Khawaja** at the 51st session of the Human Rights Council during the interactive dialogue on the report on reprisals with the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights.¹⁷⁶

On 28 September 2023, both Denmark and the **Benelux countries** mentioned the case of **Al-Khawaja** at the 54th session of the Human Rights Council during the interactive dialogue on the report on reprisals with the Assistant Secretary-General.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷³ <https://x.com/marylawlorhrds/status/1896507400649351574?s=12>.

¹⁷⁴ Americans for Democracy & Human Right in Bahrain, Twitter (22 Mar. 2022, 11:43), <https://twitter.com/ADHRB/status/1506235100543041539>.

¹⁷⁵ United Nations Web TV. Presentation of Reports & Item:5 General Debate - 44th meeting, 49th Regular Session of Human Rights Council [Online video] (2022), <https://media.un.org/en/asset/k1w/k1wv3jxcg> and https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/81/SP/81_18842083_646434d0-ba8d-4c1c-acbe-954d78317e81.docx.

¹⁷⁶ https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/61/SP/49841_56_0429513e_30fc_4e7a_9bf4_00688d12afb7.docx.

¹⁷⁷ https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/70/SP/58221_60_6fbbd112_bb44_4040_8505_79e66c2446c5.docx and https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/70/SP/60446_60_88a6b5ef_f7c8_4160_81_60_c05c2b6750c1.docx.

On 21 March 2024, the **Benelux countries** raised the case of **Al-Khawaja** at the 55th session of the Human Rights Council during the General Debate under item 5.¹⁷⁸

On 26 September 2024, both Denmark and the **Benelux countries** mentioned again the case of **Al-Khawaja** at the 57th session of the Human Rights Council during the interactive dialogue on the report on reprisals with the Assistant Secretary-General.¹⁷⁹

In October 2024, the **Benelux countries** brought up **Al-Khawaja's** case at the 69th session of the UN General Assembly's Third Committee during the interactive dialogue with the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights.

In September 2025, **Denmark** brought up Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja's case at the 60th session of the UN Human Rights Council during the interactive dialogue with the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights.¹⁸⁰

5. Sayed Ahmed Al-Wadaei

The cases of **Sayed Ahmed Al-Wadaei** and several of his relatives were included in the 2018, 2019, 2020, 2022 and 2023 reports of the Secretary-General¹⁸¹ on allegations of arbitrary arrest, ill-treatment, removal of citizenship and reprisals against family members for Al-Wadaei's continuous engagement with the UN. Al-Wadaei, a human rights defender and co-founder of the NGO BIRD, fled Bahrain in 2012 and currently lives in exile. The Working Group on Arbitrary Detention found the detention of Al-Wadaei's relatives to be arbitrary, in reprisal for his cooperation with the UN, and based on their family ties with him.¹⁸²

In July 2021, forensic evidence from an investigation reportedly showed that Al-Wadaei was amongst nine human rights defenders targeted and successfully hacked using NSO Group's Pegasus spyware on their mobile phones between June 2020 and February 2021.

On 29 September 2023 Al-Wadaei was stopped by the United Kingdom Border Force upon his return from Geneva,¹⁸³ where he had addressed the Human Rights Council to shed light on abuses faced by political prisoners in Bahrain. He was detained for two and half hours at Gatwick Airport without sufficient explanation.¹⁸⁴

¹⁷⁸ <https://www.netherlandsandyou.nl/web/pr-un-geneva/w/benelux-reprisals>.

¹⁷⁹ https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/81/SP/81_18842083_419995e3-5a84-436d-acd6-ad459c94c214.docx and https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/81/SP/81_18842083_646434d0-ba8d-4c1c-acbe-954d78317e81.docx.

¹⁸⁰ https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/89/SP/89_18842490_9180b8e2-3b9f-44dc-b0a9-80247fc27d6e.docx.

¹⁸¹ A/HRC/39/41, Annex I para. 5; A/HRC/42/30, Annex II, paras. 3–6; A/HRC/45/36, Annex II paras. 1–4.

¹⁸² WGAD/2018/51, paras. 85, 93 and 96.

¹⁸³ Tweet by Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei (@SAlwadaei) (29 Sept. 2023), <https://twitter.com/salwadaei/status/1707705327238455363?s=61&t=Tk8l5c906iu817vyppsgA9Q>.

¹⁸⁴ Tweet by Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain (@ADHRB) (26 Sept. 2023), <https://twitter.com/adhrb/status/1706714275463496136?s=46&t=cRHQAIDKMM9qbVUmCQCmFQ>.

During his stay in Geneva, Al-Wadaei was hosted by the US Ambassador to discuss risks faced by Bahraini human rights defenders. He also met with the OHCHR Deputy High Commissioner, various UN Special Rapporteur offices, and ten diplomatic missions, including the European Union, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Austria, Netherlands, Luxembourg, Belgium, Switzerland and Ireland.

On 5 December 2023, Al-Wadaei's lawyer, Ben Keith of 5SAH, filed a letter under the Pre-Action Protocol for Judicial Review (PAP) to challenge the UK Border Force's decision to retain him at Gatwick airport upon his re-entry to the UK.¹⁸⁵ Keith argued his detention was unlawful on the grounds of unlawfully exercising powers to stop, detain and arrest an individual without suspicion upon entry to the UK under the Immigration Act of 1971.

In response to the claim, the Home Office admitted liability and offered an apology and compensation on 22 December 2023.

The Home Office stated: 'Following your client's complaint, the [Secretary of State for the Home Department (SSHD)] has reviewed his records and accepts that your client was unlawfully detained. The SSDH apologises to your client for the actions of his officials and officers [...] compensation for the distress caused. Your client's immigration records have been checked and the records updated to make sure that this does not happen in the future. The Secretary of State is unable to discern what powers were purported to be exercised.'

Furthermore, following his return from Geneva, Al-Wadaei was tagged in a malicious tweet from an account that is apparently affiliated with the Bahraini security services.¹⁸⁶ A comment on the post further states: 'I believe that such actions, if carried out without the knowledge and coordination of the State, may amount to treason, which requires tightening the penalties to the maximum extent including the death penalty.'¹⁸⁷

It was alleged based on official documents that the UK's Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) cited 'bilateral implications' with Bahrain to discourage the Home Office from granting Mr Al-Wadaei British citizenship — despite the Home Office reportedly concluding in early 2023 that there were no grounds for rejection. Daniel Carey, partner at Deighton Pierce Glynn and legal representative for Mr Al-Wadaei, stated to the Independent that 'it should not require legal proceedings just to get a Home Office decision on a citizenship application, but the over three-year delay in this case has made this necessary. My client will argue this delay is unlawful and it will require very good reasons to defend such a claim. 'Bilateral' concerns associated with the Bahrain government are not a good reason,

¹⁸⁵ Diane Taylor, The Guardian (8 Feb. 2024), <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2024/feb/08/james-cleverly-apology-unlawful-detention-bahraini-activist-sayed-ahmed-alwadaei>.

¹⁸⁶ Tweet by Khulood Salman (@khulood_salman) (30 Sept. 2023), https://twitter.com/khulood_salman/status/1709466082799489446.

¹⁸⁷ Comment on tweet by (@king_my_one) (4 Oct. 2023), https://twitter.com/king_my_one/status/1709581947473682904.

indeed they raise troubling questions about the extent to which foreign persecution of human rights activists is permitted to interfere in the UK government's own immigration decisions.¹⁸⁸

Following significant legal pressure and media scrutiny, it took over three years for Mr Al-Wadaei to be granted British citizenship, while Bahrain was claiming that 'there are no stateless individuals in the Kingdom of Bahrain,' using its diplomatic leverage with foreign states to target activists abroad.

On 9 March 2026, Sayed participated in a side event in Geneva on transnational repression. His engagement with the UN resulted in retaliation against him and his family—his Bahraini citizenship remains withdrawn and his children unable to obtain Bahraini citizenship, as Bahrain law discriminates against women and prohibits them from passing citizenship to their children.

Sayed Ahmed Al-Wadaei's case was raised by the Benelux countries in 2020 and on 17 March 2021 at the 43rd resumed session and 46th session of the Human Rights Council.¹⁸⁹ It was also raised in March 2022, at the 49th session of the Human Rights Council under item 5.¹⁹⁰

Belarus

1. Human Rights Centre Viasna

The case of the NGO **Human Rights Centre Viasna**, a human rights organisation providing legal aid in Belarus, has been included since 2021 in the reports of the Secretary-General on allegations of raids, arbitrary arrest, criminal charges and long prison sentencing of its Chair and staff in connection with their cooperation with the United Nations. Special Procedures mandate holders addressed the situation of Viasna staff and the persecution of the NGO on several occasions to which the Government has responded.

In December 2023, Special Procedures mandate holders noted with concern the decisions in August 2023 by the State Security Committee and the Ministry of Internal Affairs declaring the NGO Viasna and its regional branches as 'extremist' organisations. Based on these decisions, the NGO Viasna and its branches were added to the list of extremist organisations

¹⁸⁸ The Guardian, 'We are human rights defenders, but Bahrain says we're terrorists' (9 Feb. 2015), theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/feb/09/human-rights-defenders-bahrain-says-terrorists.

¹⁸⁹ https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/33/SP/25086_42_ada6cfc0_57c2_4858_bf2c_0ff15922185d.docx and https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/41/SP/33790_46_d6ac7508_cb6e_4fdf_a561_b41164e20fa7.docx.

¹⁹⁰ https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/56/SP/42084_54_c4438cea_01c2_4984_add1_ec341989cddf.docx.

administered by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and their websites and other online resources were banned (BLR 10/2023).

In terms of follow up, we welcome the release of 250 political prisoners in March 2026, including Viasna human rights defenders Valiantsin Stefanovic and Marfa Rabkova, and Human Constanta co-founder Nasta Loika. Despite their release, they were forcibly deported from the country; after years of imprisonment, they now face numerous health issues as well as challenges with resocialization and adaptation in their countries of residence.

It recently became known that the passports of political prisoners released and deported in September and December of last year have been annulled. This includes the passports of Viasna chairperson and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Ales Bialiatski and Viasna lawyer Uladzimir Labkovich. This is yet another method of exerting pressure on those who have already endured detention, raids, torture, prolonged imprisonment, and unacceptable conditions behind bars. (<https://spring96.org/en/news/120014>)

In addition, many human rights defenders in the broadest sense—lawyers, journalists, trade union leaders, Viasna volunteers, and hundreds of other political prisoners—remain in detention in Belarus. All of them face severe restrictions on communication with the outside world: they are allowed visits and phone calls with only a limited number of relatives (usually one or two people), and they may receive letters and parcels only from family members. They are forced to work in prison production facilities, receiving pittance for their grueling labor. Medical care is inadequate, and the staff's attitude is dismissive and degrading. While in detention, people lose their health, social connections, and professional skills.

In the run-up to Viasna's 30th anniversary, pressure is intensifying on the organization's human rights defenders both inside the country and in exile.

Several are subject to criminal prosecution in absentia. In March 2025, a new criminal case was opened against Leanid Sudalenka for 'assisting extremist activity,' though the substance of the charges remains unknown. He had previously been sentenced in absentia to five years in prison under a similar article.

Relatives of HRDs in Belarus are subjected to searches and interrogations. Family members of Natallia Satsunkevich were summoned for questioning by GUBOPiK as witnesses in a criminal case reportedly linked to her public speeches at international forums and media interviews.

More than 10 Viasna's members have been added to a joint wanted persons database with Russia, including Natallia Satsunkevich, Pavel Sapelko, Leanid Sudalenka, Alena Masliukova, Aleh Matskevich, and volunteer Andrei Chapiuk, who was released in April 2025, and a few others. In some cases, officers have visited their registered addresses in Belarus and questioned relatives about their whereabouts.

Property belonging to convicted and/or exiled HRDs is seized, and the confiscated assets are later sold at auction at below-market prices to enforce court sentences. In 2024, the two-room apartment of Uladzimir Labkovich and a car belonging to Valiantsin Stefanovic were auctioned off; in 2025, the apartment of Viasna volunteer Vital Chopik was sold. Currently, a 1/7 share of a property in Minsk registered to Stefanovic is listed for sale. The premises are co-owned by six other Viasna members and were previously used for free public events.

Some members of Viasna's Council also received messages on Telegram from individuals believed to be KGB officers offering 'mutually beneficial cooperation,' including assistance with returning to Belarus.

After his release, Uladzimir Labkovich revealed that a new criminal case had been opened against Viasna. In autumn 2025, he was transferred to the KGB pre-trial detention center, where he was interrogated about Viasna's funding and its contacts with European embassies. He was also reportedly questioned in connection with a possible charge of 'treason against the state.'

Since Viasna is recognized as an 'extremist formation,' any interaction with it may result in criminal liability and imprisonment. Even sharing information with its representatives can be treated as participation in an extremist formation. This severely complicates efforts to assess and analyze the real human rights situation in Belarus.

Recently, three Belarusian human rights organizations—the Belarusian Helsinki Committee, PEN Belarus, and Human Constanta—were designated as 'extremist formations.' The human rights defenders of these organizations now face criminal prosecution and sentences of up to 7 years in prison (including in absentia). (<https://spring96.org/en/news/120031>)

Such actions by the authorities confirm once again that repressions continue, any dissent in the country is prohibited, and human rights activity has been criminalized.

The case of the Viasna has been raised by States multiple times.

Liechtenstein and Germany brought it up on 29 September 2022 during the 51st session of the Human Rights Council, during the interactive dialogue on the reprisals report with the Assistant Secretary-General.¹⁹¹

¹⁹¹https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/61/SP/47647_56_52391f7d_a788_41c4_b24a_ad7b4cc993d1.docx and https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/61/SP/48207_56_b58c5023_577d_4de3_a3ca_657bcd8eff88.docx.

At the 54th session in September 2023, the case was again raised by Liechtenstein,¹⁹² the Benelux countries,¹⁹³ Czechia,¹⁹⁴ Germany, and the United Kingdom¹⁹⁵ during the same interactive dialogue.

In June 2023, the Netherlands highlighted the case at the resumed session of the Human Rights Council during the interactive dialogue on Belarus.

It was also mentioned by the Benelux countries at the 55th session of the Human Rights Council¹⁹⁶ and alongside the United Kingdom at the 57th session of the Human Rights Council in 2024.¹⁹⁷

The Benelux countries further raised the issue at the 69th session of the General Assembly Third Committee and again in October 2025, during the general debate under item 5 at the 58th session of the Human Rights Council.¹⁹⁸

The Benelux countries also raised the case in September 2025 during an interactive dialogue with the Associate Secretary General at the 60th session of the Human Rights Council, wherein Czechia, Germany, and the UK also raised it.

Burundi

Armel Niyongere, Dieudonné Bashirahishize, Vital Nshimirimana and Lambert Nigarura

The cases of human rights lawyers **Armel Niyongere, Dieudonné Bashirahishize, Vital Nshimirimana and Lambert Nigarura** were included in the 2021, 2020, 2019, 2018 and 2017 reports of the Secretary-General following the disbarment of three of the lawyers and suspension of one by the Court of Appeal at the request from the Public Prosecutor following their cooperation with the Committee against Torture (CAT) during the consideration of a special report on Burundi in July 2016 ([CAT/C/BDI/CO/2/Add.1](#), paras. 33 and 34^[TL7]).

The lawyers had been previously accused of participating in an insurrectional movement and attempted coup d'état and have been living in exile due to fears of being targeted. On 2

¹⁹²https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/70/SP/60447_60_9f801212_b5e3_46b6_aa7c_9d07406a5d7c.docx.

¹⁹³https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/70/SP/58221_60_6fbbd112_bb44_4040_8505_79e66c2446c5.docx.

¹⁹⁴https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/70/SP/59546_60_9e993a89_768c_4645_8804_af603f9ae875.docx.

¹⁹⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/un-hrc54-uk-statement-on-reprisals>.

¹⁹⁶ <https://www.netherlandsandyou.nl/web/pr-un-geneva/w/benelux-reprisals>.

¹⁹⁷https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/81/SP/81_18842083_419995e3-5a84-436d-acd6-ad459c94c214.docx and https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/81/SP/81_18842083_26a5cd34-081b-40aa-b0e5-22ce4a28ea2c.docx.

¹⁹⁸ <https://www.netherlandsandyou.nl/web/pr-un-geneva/w/hrc58-benelux-reprisals>.

February 2021, the Supreme Court's verdict of 23 June 2020 was made public. Niyongere, Bashirahishize, and Nshimirimana were part of a group of twelve individuals sentenced in absentia to life imprisonment for participating in a revolutionary/insurrectional movement and for an attempted coup d'état. The judgement, following a trial where the defendants were absent and had no legal representation, also ordered the defendants to pay financial compensation, which included the seizure of financial assets of their families.

The Committee against Torture considers the verdict of the court as an act of reprisal for their engagement with the Committee and the UN human rights system.¹⁹⁹ Communications were sent by the President of the Committee and the Rapporteur on reprisals in February 2017 to the Representative of the Permanent Mission of Burundi in Geneva.

On 19 March 2020, the International Service for Human Rights filed a complaint against the Republic of Burundi, on behalf of the victims, with the Committee against Torture. The complaint alleges that Burundi's actions are contrary to Article 13 of the Convention Against Torture, which prohibits this type of retaliation.

On 2 February 2021, three of the four lawyers (Armel Niyongere, Vital Nshimirimana, et Dieudonné Bashirahishize) were among a group of twelve defenders sentenced in absentia to life imprisonment for insurrection and organising a coup. The judgement also ordered the defendants to pay financial compensation, including the seizure of the financial assets of their families.²⁰⁰

To date, the lawyers have not obtained a copy of the judgement, making it difficult to challenge it. Moreover, the claimants' attempt to appeal the judgement from abroad has been dismissed. Burundi responded to the CAT on 3 October 2022, alleging that the claim was inadmissible. The victims replied to the CAT on 19 December 2022.

Furthermore, on 15 December 2022, Lambert Nigagura wrote to the Burundi Bar Association requesting to be reinstated as a member of the Bar. They responded that he must produce a document from the Court of Appeal to the effect that he is no longer being prosecuted.

In an unprecedented move, the Burundian delegation withdrew from the dialogue with the Human Rights Committee during its review of Burundi in July 2023, after demanding the exclusion of civil society representatives, including Armel Niyongere, President of Acat-Burundi and Secretary General of SOS-Torture/Burundi, despite being duly accredited by the United Nations.

¹⁹⁹https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2FCAT%2FRLE%2FBDI%2F26799&Lang=en.

²⁰⁰<https://www.omct.org/fr/ressources/appels-urgents/burundi-condamnation-in-absentia-à-une-peine-de-prison-à-perpétuité-de-douze-défenseurs-des-droits-humains-en-exil>.

The case was raised by the Benelux countries at the resumed part of the 43rd session of the Human Rights Council in June 2020,²⁰¹ its 45th session in September 2020,²⁰² its 51st session in September 2022, and its 52nd session in March 2023. The Benelux countries raised also the cases at the Council's 54th session in September 2023,²⁰³ while the United Kingdom raised the case at the 54th session.²⁰⁴

The lawyers remain disbarred / suspended. Nigagura, Niyongere, Nshimirimana and Bashirahishize remain in exile for fear of new reprisals. In terms of follow up, the UN Committee against Torture issued a [precedent-setting decision](#) in November 2025, finding that Burundi violated the Convention against Torture by retaliating against the lawyers for cooperating with the Committee. In its [Views](#), the Committee held that Burundi breached article 13 of the Convention, obliging States to protect complainants and witnesses from intimidation or retaliation for engaging with UN mechanisms. The Committee also went further, stating that under article 16 of the Convention, 'reprisals constitute a form of cruel treatment or punishment... and may amount to torture in certain circumstances.' In addition, the Committee found that Burundi's refusal to engage with the individual complaints procedure constituted a further violation of the Convention. This decision is the clearest and strongest ever ruling by a UN treaty body that there is a State duty to cooperate with the UN and that reprisals against human rights defenders for engaging with the UN are unlawful and may amount to cruel, inhuman or even torturous treatment.

However, at this time, the decision of the CAT has not yet been implemented by Burundi.

Cameroon

1. Maximilienne Ngo Mbe and Alice Nkom

The cases of **Maximilienne Ngo Mbe** and **Alice Nkom** of Central Africa Human Rights Defenders Network (REDHAC) were included in the 2018, 2019 and 2025 reports of the Secretary-General.²⁰⁵ They suffered physical attacks, intimidation and harassment in connection to their cooperation with the Human Rights Committee during the review of Cameroon in October 2017. On 26 October 2017, five special procedure mandate holders addressed their situation (CMR 5/2017), and on 11 July 2017 the Government responded

²⁰¹https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/33/SP/25086_42_ada6cfc0_57c2_4858_bf2c_0ff15922185d.docx.

²⁰²https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/37/SP/31587_44_d6cb787b_0ed3_4908_b36b_b601a049739b.docx.

²⁰³https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/70/SP/58221_60_6fbbd112_bb44_4040_8505_79e66c2446c5.docx.

²⁰⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/un-hrc54-uk-statement-on-reprisals>.

²⁰⁵ A/HRC/39/41, para. 31, and Annex I, paras. 7–8; A/HRC/42/30, Annex II, paras 15-16.

affirming that Ngo Mbe and Nkom have never been persecuted for their human rights work or cooperation with the UN and requested further detail about the allegations.²⁰⁶

REDHAC continued to actively engaged with the United Nations, particularly in the context of the review by the Committee against Torture and the Human Rights Committee of the 6th periodic reports of Cameroon under their respective Conventions.

On 19 September and 11 October 2024, respectively, REDHAC's joint reports²⁰⁷ submitted for the adoption of the list of issues prior to the review of the 6th periodic report of Cameroon under the ICCPR and for the review of the 6th period report under CAT, were made public on the OHCHR website. Prior to that, on 4 and 5 September 2024, REDHAC had co-organised, with the OHCHR Treaty Body Capacity Building Programme and several civil society organizations a workshop in Yaoundé on the drafting of alternative reports in the context of the Lists of Issues Prior to Reporting for the Human Rights Committee, ensuring the participation of a broad range of civil society actors from all regions of the country. The Human Rights Committee received and considered allegations of reprisals against REDHAC and its leadership reportedly for cooperation with the Committee.

On 6 December 2024, the Ministry of Territorial Administration issued a decree suspending the activities of REDHAC for three months,²⁰⁸ and subsequently issued an order banning the organization.²⁰⁹ On 9 December, the doors of REDHAC's offices were sealed by the authorities and its lawyers filed an administrative appeal.

On 20 and 22 January 2025 respectively, Nkom was summoned by the relevant authorities in connection with investigations into alleged 'attempts to undermine State security', 'financing terrorism' and 'breaking the seals' of REDHAC's office. A week later, Ms. Nkom and Ms. Ngo Mbe were summoned to appear before the Court of First Instance of Douala-Bonanjo in relation to the offence of 'breaking of seals.' Under Article 191 of the Penal Code, 'breaking of seals' carries potential penalties of 6 months to 2 years of imprisonment and a fine ranging from 50,000 to 500,000 FCFA (around 80 to 870 USD). The hearing, initially scheduled for 7 April 2025, was postponed to 2 June 2025. The accusations of 'rebellion,' 'attempting to undermine State security' and 'financing of terrorism', remained under investigation at the Secretariat of State for Defence (SED) and had not yet resulted in formal judicial charges or court proceedings against Nkom or Ngo Mbe.²¹⁰

In terms of follow up, on April 6, 2026, while the case was under deliberation at its eighth hearing, the representative of the State in the person of the Sub-Prefect of Douala 1 came for the first time to the hearing and requested the reopening of the debates, which the court accepted and referred the case back to May 04, 2026.

²⁰⁶ <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadFile?gId=34200>

²⁰⁷ https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2FCCPR%2FICS%2FCMR%2F59851&Lang=en.

²⁰⁸ <https://x.com/MinatDivcom/status/1865451597515346303>. See ARRETE N°000121/A/MINAT.

²⁰⁹ See ARRETE N°000122/A/MINAT.

²¹⁰ These charges carry particularly severe penalties under Article 3 and 4 of Cameroon's 2014 anti-terrorism law, including life imprisonment and the offence of rebellion, under Article 157 of the Penal Code, is punishable by imprisonment penalties from 3 months to 4 years.

2. Organic Farming for Gorillas Cameroon (OFFGO)

The case of civil society organisation **Organic Farming for Gorillas Cameroon (OFFGO)** has been included the Secretary-General's reports on allegations of reprisals since 2020, following a communication by Special Procedures mandate holders (CMR 3/2019). Reprisals against OFFGO members have included the expulsion from Cameroon of Jan Joris Cappelle, a Belgian national and co-founder of the organisation, in 2019; threats against (Prince) Vincent Awazi, a traditional chief; and death threats, surveillance, and attacks against Elvis Brown Luma Mukuna, OFFGO's lawyer OFFGO, and his relatives. Mandate holders have addressed the allegations (CMR 5/2019 and CMR 4/2022), to which the Government has responded.

Reportedly, in June 2023, the Examining Magistrate at the High Court of Momo (Mbengwi) issued a 'no case ruling' in the preliminary inquiry into Mr. Capelle's case and consequently closed the case. On 20 September 2023, Mr. Brown addressed the General Prosecutor of the NorthWest Region urging the opening of a new investigation into the case. In December 2023, he was notified by the High Court of Momo of the continuation of the proceedings. In May 2024, Mr. Cappelle was granted a visa to travel to Cameroon to attend hearings before the Court of First Instance of Mbengwi. On July 7 2024, the matter before the court was transferred to the High Court of Mezam.

In terms of follow up, hearings took place on 19/7/2024, 16/7/2024, 22/7/2024, 23/7/2024, 25/7/2024, 8/10/2024, 7/11/2024, 5/12/2024, 4/01/2025, 14/4/2025, 29/5/2025, 12/06/2025, 10/07/2025, 27/11/2025, 28/11/2025 and 19/02/2026. Of the 15 identified defendants, 11 are high ranking senior police and administrative officials, including Leopold Manxime Eko Eko, former Director-General of the Directorate-General for External Research (DGRE). The Examining Magistrate of the High Mezam ruled on 19 February 2026 the closure of the rogatory commission on grounds that all high, well known public, rank senior police and administrative officials refused to appear before the Court. A further delay has to be considered as a denial of justice (Ruling, 19 February 2026, HCMB/02 RC/2024).

A few days later, on 23 February 2026, Cappelle was arrested in the streets of Bamenda by three officials under commandant Ekossonno of the Directorate-General for External Research (DGRE). The officials tried to force Cappelle to tell them what he said before the Examining Magistrate of High Court Mezam, to which he responded that it was a preliminary inquiry and therefore confidential. Cappelle reminded the officials that he expects to see DGRE before the Examining Magistrate, in accordance with the law. The DGRE officials insulted Cappelle, accusing him of bringing their friends to court and faking a story of torture in order to get international attention. The men continued with their insults even after Cappelle's lawyer appeared. They then threatened Cappelle, saying for example that unexpected events such as a car accident can easily happen.

Commandant Ekossonno allowed Cappelle to go after speaking with barrister Elvis Brown about the content of the accusations before the Examining Magistrate.

On 6 December 2025, Cappelle received death threats messages on WhatsApp. The person said that he will ‘activate search for [Cappelle]’ if he ‘[tries] going back to Cameroon again’. He added that Cappelle ‘will meet barrister Kemende’; Cappelle ‘will never step foot in Mbengwi’ and ‘Danpullo will not spare [Cappelle] this time. Biya is back to power.’ For context, Barrister Kemende was one of Cappelle's lawyers and was killed on 11 January 2022 (CMR 4/2022) in the streets of Bamenda. In the days and weeks after the killing, Cappelle's lawyer Mr. Mukuna received numerous death threats (CMR 4/2022), saying that he will be next. Danpullo is a businessman, and one of the suspects who worked with Leopold Manxime Eko Eko, former Director-General for the Directorate-General for External Research DGRE, in the deportation of Cappelle on 13 May 2016 (CMR 2/2019), and on 26 February 2022 due to his collaboration with the UN Special Procedures (UN Secretary-General Reprisals report A/HRC/45/36).

China

1. A Chinese human rights defender working on a UN monitoring project

A Chinese human rights defender, whose identity is withheld due to fear of further reprisals, has faced cyberattacks, censorship and intimidation following their dissemination of UN-related information online.

In March 2023, the defender co-founded an independent project to monitor the growing influence of Chinese government-organised NGOs (GONGOs) at the Human Rights Council. The project published regular briefings related to China based on UN Web TV coverage of Council sessions, which included statements of States, civil society organisations, and Special Procedures. It is one of the few platforms that systematically document China’s engagement and mentions at the UN.

In October 2024, after the ninth issue of the briefing was published, the project’s website was targeted by a cyberattack. A review by a European cybersecurity firm found that the site had been compromised with malicious code. They also found that another project website of theirs was also attacked. Administrator accounts were deleted and project staff lost access.

In November 2024, with the support of the cybersecurity firm, the servers were transferred, and both websites were restored. However, within a week, the website was not accessible in China.

On 21 April 2025, a few hours after publishing the tenth briefing, the defender received a phone call from someone claiming to be a police officer from Chengdu Municipal Public Security Bureau.

The caller requested a meeting at a local cafe to 'verify' a matter. At the meeting, the two officers were identified as agents of the National Security Bureau of Ngawa Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture instead of the Public Security Bureau as they first claimed, after the defender insisted on seeing their official identification documents. The officers demanded that the defender hand over their mobile phone to check for encrypted messaging applications and social media accounts, including X and Facebook. They also questioned their use of a commercial VPN. The defender refused, stating that the phone was not a smartphone and incapable of running apps. The officers then warned them not to 'spread false information' online with VPNs.

In terms of follow up, in January 2026, the organisation announced that it would cease operations and shut down its project websites due to ongoing pressure. Later, the defender reported that police officers attended their residence and requested to conduct a search of the premises, including examination of their laptop, computer, and other electronic devices. Upon the defender's refusal to consent to the search, they were taken to a local police station for questioning. The questioning was reportedly conducted on the basis of an alleged violation of the Interim Provisions of the People's Republic of China on the Administration of International Networking of Computer Information, specifically concerning the alleged unlawful access to international internet services.

2. Jiang Tianyong

The case of human rights lawyer Jiang Tianyong was included in the reports of the Secretary-General from 2019 until 2022, in 2024 and 2025 and prior to that in 2017,²¹¹ due to intimidation and harassment for his cooperation with the then Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights during his visit to China in August 2016²¹² and was the subject of actions by special procedure mandate holders ([CHN 9/2019](#) and [CHN 13/2016](#), [CHN 15/2016](#); [CHN 3/2017](#)).

In 2018, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention found the detention of Tianyong arbitrary ([A/HRC/WGAD/2018/62](#), paras. 59, 62, 77, 78). On 24 September 2019, special procedure

²¹¹ [A/HRC/36/31](#), Annex I, paras. 22–24, [A/HRC/39/41](#), Annex II, paras.14–16, [A/HRC/42/30](#), para. 46 and Annex II, paras. 25–26 and 31, [A/HRC/45/36](#), Annex II, para. 26 and [A/HRC/48/28](#), para. 59, Annex II, para. 26; [A/HRC/57/60](#), Annex II, para 60.

²¹² <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=20987>.

mandate holders called upon China to immediately end harassment and surveillance of Tianyong.²¹³

Since his release from prison in February 2019, Tianyong has remained under house arrest at his parents' home in Luoshan, banned from international travel and under close surveillance by local public security. Between 23 and 31 October 2024, Tianyong was held in administrative detention in relation to a scuffle that involved his client's son, in which he himself claims was not involved. He was released by the authorities at a train station 50 kilometers away from the detention center, where his relatives and lawyer were awaiting him. In November 2022, Jiang received the International Bar Association's Outstanding Contribution to Human Rights Award in absentia. **As of April 2024, five years after he completed his arbitrary sentences of imprisonment and deprivation of political rights, Jiang's movements remain closely monitored. Though security officers no longer station themselves near his home, they track him when he leaves the city, and surveillance cameras outside his home remain operational. He is still barred from Beijing and overseas travel.**

In September 2025, Jiang was taken away by three unknown persons in Changsha, China.²¹⁴ He was later released, but still currently faces an exit ban and travel restrictions in the country.

On 28 September 2023, the Benelux countries raised his case at the 54th session of the UN Human Rights Council during the interactive dialogue on the report on reprisals with the Assistant Secretary-General.²¹⁵

3. Li Wenzu, Wang Qiaoling, Wang Quanzhang and Li Heping

Li Wenzu and Wang Qiaoling - wives of prominent human rights lawyers **Wang Quanzhang** and **Li Heping**, respectively - have faced years of reprisals by Chinese authorities following their attempted cooperation with the UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights Philip Alston during his official visit to China in August 2016.

At the time, Li Wenzu was arbitrarily detained and prevented from meeting the Special Rapporteur. Since then, she has been subjected to persistent surveillance and harassment by security forces. These reprisals have continued beyond the original incident. In August 2023, she was denied a passport by the Public Security Bureau in Hubei, after an earlier

²¹³<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2019/09/china-harassment-human-rights-lawyer-jiang-tianyong-must-stop-say-un-experts>.

²¹⁴<https://www.rfi.fr/cn/%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD/20250917-%E5%85%AC%E6%B0%91%E8%AE%B0%E8%80%85%E5%BC%A0%E5%B1%95%E5%86%8D%E8%A2%AB%E6%8E%A7-%E5%AF%BB%E8%A1%85%E6%BB%8B%E4%BA%8B-%E6%A1%88%E6%9C%AC%E5%91%A8%E5%BC%80%E5%BA%AD-%E7%BB%B4%E6%9D%83%E5%BE%8B%E5%B8%88%E6%B1%9F%E5%A4%A9%E5%8B%87%E7%AA%81%E5%86%8D%E8%A2%AB%E6%8D%95>

²¹⁵https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/70/SP/58221_60_6fbbd112_bb44_4040_8505_79e66c2446c5.docx.

refusal in Beijing. She and her family have reportedly been evicted from their rented homes multiple times, and their son has been unable to enrol in school due to pressure by State officials, including police, on different schools.

Wang Qiaoling was also targeted following her 2016 cooperation with the Special Rapporteur, facing intimidation and state monitoring. These reprisals continue in 2023: on 9 June, Wang, her husband Li Heping, and their daughter were barred from leaving China while attempting to travel to Thailand.

4. Yu Wensheng and Xu Yan

On 13 April 2023, **Xu Yan** and **Yu Wensheng** were stopped by plainclothes police in the Beijing subway, en route to a meeting with EU officials, and detained on charges of ‘picking quarrels and provoking troubles.

They received an additional charge of ‘inciting subversion of state power’ later. Xu Yan had reportedly lost 14kg since being detained and the conditions of her detention in Beijing may amount to torture and other ill-treatment. She had been subjected to verbal abuse, including being intimidated by police who threatened to arrest her son if he undertook advocacy on her and Yu’s case. Their son, who turned 18 just before their detention, has faced a serious deterioration of his mental health over the last year, and currently suffers from depression.

Xu Yan was released on 13 January 2025 after serving her prison sentence and is now under strict surveillance by the authorities at her home. The authorities have yet to issue Xu Yan her legal professional qualification certificate, even though she should have been able to obtain it after her release. Yu Wensheng was released after completing his sentence on 13 April 2026.

The case of Xu Yan was raised by the United Kingdom on 30 September 2020 at the 45th session of the UN Human Rights Council during the interactive dialogue on the report on reprisals with the Assistant Secretary General.²¹⁶ Germany raised the cases of Xu Yan and Yu Wensheng in September 2023 and September 2024, at the Council’s 54th and 57th sessions, during the interactive dialogue on the report on reprisals again with the Assistant Secretary-General.²¹⁷ Germany also raised Yu Wensheng’s case in September 2025 at the Council’s 60th session.²¹⁸

5. Cao Shunli

²¹⁶<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/un-human-rights-council-45-interactive-dialogue-with-assistant-secretary-general-ilze-brands-kehris-on-the-secretary-generals-report-on-reprisals>.

²¹⁷https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/81/SP/81_18842083_1d208d31-9bd3-4deb-b6eb-7d5f358033c5.docx.

²¹⁸https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/89/SP/89_18842490_196eaea7-188b-4af1-bffe-18fd30425b1d.docx.

In 2013, **Cao Shunli** was arrested as a result of her campaigning for transparency and greater participation of civil society in international human rights mechanisms. State authorities at Beijing Capital International Airport stopped her as she was about to board a flight to Geneva to participate in a UN human rights training course and attend a session of the Human Rights Council.

For the first five weeks following her disappearance, her family was given no information about her whereabouts. During the five months she was detained, Cao was repeatedly denied access to medical treatment. Requests by her lawyer and family to release her on medical grounds were denied. Cao's health deteriorated and she died on 14 March 2014, nominally of organ failure caused by tuberculosis.

The Committee against Torture in its 2015 Concluding Observations expressed concern over deaths in custody in China, including the case of Cao Shunli, specifically citing the lack of investigation.²¹⁹ Despite Cao's death being included in previous reports of the Secretary-General,²²⁰ the 2017 report of the Secretary-General does not include Cao's case. To date, no independent investigation has taken place about Shunli's death, and no Chinese official or government body has been held responsible for it.

At the 30th session of the Human Rights Council, the Chinese government claimed that Cao was 'not a human rights defender' and that she had 'received good medical care.' These statements do not accord with the facts and considering the Chinese government's on-going harassment of defenders for their human rights work, including for efforts to promote universal human rights and engage with the UN, these statements should not be seen as fulfilling any of the State's obligations to respond to these serious allegations.

The UN Special Procedures released statements in 2014,²²¹ 2019²²² and 2024²²³ to call for justice and full investigation into her death, and to 'hold those responsible to account.' In their 14 March 2024 statement on the ten-year anniversary of Cao Shunli's death, the experts further stated that 'failing to properly investigate a potentially unlawful death may amount to a violation of the right to life' and 'noted that the participation of human rights defenders and civil society from China in UN human rights mechanisms and bodies has dropped to a record low'. **The case remains unresolved. There has been no official response by the Chinese government and no steps towards an independent investigation into her death.**

ISHR delivered a statement at the Human Rights Council in March 2014 calling on the human rights community to observe a moment of silence to remember Cao Shunli. Following a procedural challenge and protracted debate, the moment of silence was

²¹⁹ CAT/C/CHN/CO/5.

²²⁰ A/HRC/27/38 and A/HRC/30/29.

²²¹ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2014/03/deadly-reprisals-un-experts-deplore-events-leading-death-chinese-human>.

²²² <https://www.ohchr.org/en/news/2019/03/china-un-experts-renew-calls-probe-death-cao-shunli>.

²²³ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/03/china-un-experts-renew-calls-accountability-cao-shunli-death>.

interrupted, as China argued that NGO speakers in the Human Rights Council were not allowed to be silent.²²⁴

On 22 March 2024, ISHR delivered a joint statement on behalf of 16 NGOs at the Human Rights Council for the ten-year anniversary of Cao Shunli's death, concluding with a short silence and a call to States and NGOs to always stand in solidarity with victims of reprisals. Mirroring its 2014 procedural move, the Chinese delegation raised a point of order protesting the statement. While Cuba, Venezuela, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Russia supported China, Belgium on behalf of the 27 States of the European Union, supported by the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom, took the floor to defend NGOs' right to speak freely. The Human Rights Council President gave the floor back to the ISHR speaker to finish her statement.²²⁵

On 27 September 2024, Liechtenstein raised the case of Cao Shunli at the 57th session of the Human Rights Council during the interactive dialogue on the report on reprisals with the Assistant Secretary-General.²²⁶

6. Chen Jianfang

In September 2013, human rights defender **Chen Jianfang** was invited, alongside the late Cao Shunli, to attend a training session in Geneva and participate in the Human Rights Council session. Both women had been involved in efforts to promote public participation in China's Universal Periodic Review process. Chen was stopped at Guangzhou airport, barred from leaving the country and subsequently arrested.

Years later, in March 2019, Chen was arrested again, this time on charges of 'inciting subversion of State power' in relation to her continued human rights advocacy. She was held in prolonged pre-trial detention, during which she was denied regular access to legal counsel. In August 2022, she was sentenced to four years and six months in prison following a closed-door trial. She completed her sentence on 21 October 2023.

As of December 2025, two years after her formal release, Chen remains under strict surveillance and effective house arrest. Her mobile phone has been confiscated, and she is prohibited from receiving visitors.

The case of Chen Jiangfang was raised by the Benelux countries in June 2020 at the 43rd resumed session of the Human Rights Council, in March 2021 at the 46th session

²²⁴ <https://ishr.ch/latest-updates/english/>.

²²⁵ <https://ishr.ch/latest-updates/china-fails-in-disrupting-tribute-at-un-to-cao-shunli-ten-years-after-her-death-in-custody/>.

²²⁶ <https://www.llv.li/serviceportal2/diplomatische-vertretungen/genf/uno/2024/hrc57-9.9.-9.10.2024-/li-statement-hrc57-item-5-id-on-sg-report-on-reprisals-27-september-2024.pdf>.

and in March 2022 at the 49th session of the Council under item 5.²²⁷ In September 2020, the United Kingdom mentioned her case at the Council's 45th session during the interactive dialogue on the report on reprisals with the Assistant Secretary-General.²²⁸

7. Reprisal against civil society organizations engaging with UN Fora in Geneva

During the UN Forum on Business and Human Rights and the Forum on Minority Issues in November 2025, representatives of the Permanent Mission of China repeatedly intervened to disrupt civil society participation. Following multiple oral interventions delivered by Uyghur human rights defenders (at least eight), the delegation systematically raised points of order seeking to interrupt or terminate the statements. On several occasions, the delegation explicitly requested that the Chair halt the interventions. In one instance, during an oral statement under Item 3 at the Minority Issues Forum, the delegation accused the organisation concerned of links to terrorism and separatism and claimed that it had previously been reported to the United Nations Office at Geneva. Human rights defenders, including those engaging with the UN system for the first time, reported feeling intimidated and discouraged from further engagement.

Further incidents were documented during the UN Forum on Business and Human Rights. Civil society organisations, including those presenting information on forced labour and supply-chain risks linked to the Uyghur region (Xinjiang), were repeatedly interrupted by Chinese diplomats across multiple parallel sessions over three days. This pattern of disruption appeared to be selectively applied and was not observed in relation to comparable discussions involving other countries.

In addition, on 26 November 2025, two NGO information tables at the UN venue belonging to organisations presenting research related to the Uyghur region and North Korea were found damaged and materials removed, despite the presence of security cameras and the use of standard UN authorisation procedures for all participating organisations. While the perpetrator of these acts remains unknown, the fact that only tables associated with documentation of abuses linked to China and North Korea were affected raises concerns that warrant further investigation.

²²⁷https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/33/SP/25086_42_ada6cfc0_57c2_4858_bf2c_0ff15922185d.docx;
https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/41/SP/33790_46_d6ac7508_cb6e_4fdf_a561_b41164e20fa7.docx; and
https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/81/SP/81_18842083_646434d0-ba8d-4c1c-acbe-954d78317e81.docx.

²²⁸<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/un-human-rights-council-45-interactive-dialogue-with-assistant-secretary-general-ilze-brands-kehris-on-the-secretary-generals-report-on-reprisals>.

Taken together, these incidents suggest a pattern of intimidation, interference, and possible reprisals against individuals and organisations seeking to engage with UN human rights mechanisms on issues related to China. They raise serious concerns regarding the ability of civil society to participate safely and effectively in UN processes, as well as the protection of those cooperating with the UN.

8. Anna Kwok and Carmen Lau

The Secretary-General reported in 2025 that two staff members of the Hong Kong Democracy Council (HKDC), Anna Kwok (Executive Director) and Carmen Lau, (Senior International Advocacy Associate), neither of whom resided in China, were the subject of reprisals for their past and ongoing cooperation with the United Nations, including in the context of the fourth cycle of the Universal Periodic Review of China in the Human Rights Council. The work of both Kwok and Lau focused on human rights advocacy with the United Nations and its human rights mechanisms and with Member States.

On 24 December 2024, at an official press conference of the Government of HKSAR, the Secretary for Security announced the designation of seven individuals, including Kwok, as ‘absconders’ under the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance, and the revocation of their HKSAR passports, among other measures. The Secretary further informed that arrest warrants had been issued by the Court for all seven individuals. The same day, HKSAR Police issued a public appeal for information on Kwok, offering a reward of approximately 1 million HKD (around USD 130,000) for information leading to her arrest. The appeal stated that she was suspected of ‘collusion with foreign forces’ under article 29 of the Hong Kong National Security Law (NSL), in connection with her meetings with foreign officials and political figures in her capacity as a member of HKDC, and her alleged engagement in other hostile actions against China, including HKSAR specifically, between September 2021 and February 2022.

In October 2023, special procedure mandate holders expressed concerns on the arrest warrant issued in July 2023 against Kwok and six other individuals in self-exile in the context of the first mass trial under the NSL (CHN 16/2023). In November 2024, OHCHR expressed grave concern about the use of the NSL to convict and impose harsh sentences on 45 people in HKSAR in the context of the mass trial, reiterating further that the United Nations Human Rights Office, special procedures and human rights treaty bodies had repeatedly called on the HKSAR authorities to repeal the NSL. The chilling effect of this law on human rights defenders and other parts of civil society was also noted.

At the 24 December 2024 press conference, the HKSAR Deputy Commissioner of Police and HKSAR Senior Superintendent identified six individuals, including Lau, as wanted fugitives who had fled to a third State, for whom arrest warrants and ‘red notices’ had been issued. Specifically, Lau was cited as suspected of ‘incitement to secession’ and ‘collusion with foreign forces’, under articles 21 and 29 of the NSL. On the same day, the HKSAR Police also issued a public appeal for information offering a reward of approximately 1 million HKD (around

130,000 USD) for information leading to Lau’s arrest. The public appeal also linked the alleged crimes to her role as a core member of HKDC, citing publication of articles, delivery of speeches and dissemination of messages or videos on social media advocating for HKSAR’s separation from China, and her engagement in other alleged hostile actions against China, including HKSAR specifically, between October 2021 and May 2024.

In February and March 2025, neighbours of Lau’s residence in a third country received leaflets containing a public appeal issued by HKSAR’s Police concerning Lau. In March 2025, Lau was targeted through the wide dissemination of a video apparently generated by artificial intelligence on social media platforms. The video mimicked her and included false statements that discredited her.

In terms of follow-up, in February 2026, Kwok’s father, Kwok Yin-sang, was convicted under the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance (also referred to as ‘Article 23’) for ‘attempting to deal with, directly or indirectly, any funds or financial assets belonging to an absconder’ and sentenced to eight months’ imprisonment. The charges relate solely to alleged financial dealings connected to his daughter, who has been designated an ‘absconder’ in connection with her human rights advocacy abroad. This case raises serious concerns regarding acts of transnational repression and the targeting of family members of human rights defenders.

With regard to Lau, in November 2025 she was subjected to a campaign of harassment, including the distribution of letters containing fabricated and sexually explicit images of her to her neighbours in the United Kingdom.

The UK raised both Kwok and Lau’s cases during an interactive dialogue with the Assistant Secretary General on reprisals during the 60th session of the Human Rights Council.

Egypt

1. Ibrahim Abdelmonem Metwally Hegazy

In an urgent [joint statement](#) on 15 September 2017, the Chair of the UN Working Group on enforced or involuntary disappearances (WGEID) and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders expressed dismay about the arrest of lawyer and activist, **Ibrahim Abdelmonem Metwally Hegazy**.

Metwally, the co-founder of the Association of the Families of the Disappeared—a network of families of forcibly disappeared individuals in Egypt—was arrested and prevented from boarding a flight to Geneva on 10 September 2017 to attend the 113th Session of the WGEID. Metwally founded the Association of the Families of Disappeared following the disappearance of his son in July 2013, whose whereabouts remain unknown.

The WGEID and Special Rapporteur denounced the way he is treated, stating that ‘the fact that Metwally was arrested while en route to meet the Working Group suggests that this is an act of reprisal for his cooperation with a UN human rights mechanism, as well as a deliberate obstruction of his legitimate human rights activity to seek to establish the fate and whereabouts of his son and other disappeared people in Egypt’. Metwally’s whereabouts remained unknown for two days following his arrest. Metwally reported that he was tortured during that time.

The UN experts called on the Egyptian authorities to, ‘[immediately provide us with all relevant information concerning his arrest and detention, to fully ensure Metwally’s right to physical and psychological integrity as well as to due process.](#)’ The experts expressed serious concern with regard to the allegations that Metwally had been tortured. Their statement has also been endorsed by the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention.

After the arrest he was charged with ‘running a group that was illegally established, spreading false news, and cooperating with foreign organisations’, and his pre-trial detention was ordered, and he was transferred to the Maximum-Security Prison known as Scorpion (al-Aqrab) at the Tora Prisons Complex in Cairo, a prison notorious for inhumane detention conditions and the ill-treatment of prisoners.

On 20 November 2019, Special Procedures [urged](#) his immediate release and called his referral to another case with the exact same charges as ‘double jeopardy’. Metwally’s pre-trial detention continued to be renewed, and he was added to another case with identical charges in November 2019.

On September 6, 2020, Metwally was investigated by State Security Prosecution in Case 786/2020 and charged with ‘leading a terror group’, which the authorities accused him of having formed while in preventive detention. This new charge came just after the Criminal Court of Cairo had ordered his release on August 26, 2020, under precautionary measures in State Security Case 1470/2019. Despite the August 26 release decision, Metwally was kept in detention until new charges were brought against him on September 6, manifestly to keep him under preventive detention.

The result is Metwally has been under preventive detention since September 10, 2017, which exceeds the permissible legal period of two years under the Egyptian criminal procedure law. He is a victim of Egypt’s practice of ‘rotation’, where the authorities circumvent judicial decisions to release defendants by accusing them with similar charges in new cases. Thirty-two States at the UN Human Rights Council [denounced](#) this pattern on 12 March 2021. He is also still facing charges of ‘founding and leading an illegal organisation’, ‘communicating with foreign entities in order to undermine national security’ and ‘spreading false news’. His case was raised at HRC 45 by Germany, the United Kingdom and the Benelux countries.²²⁹

²²⁹https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/37/SP/31587_44_d6cb787b_0ed3_4908_b36b_b601a049739b.docx and <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/un-human-rights-council-45-interactive-dialogue-with-assistant-secretary-general-ilze-brands-kehris-on-the-secretary-generals-report-on-reprisals>.

On 15 February 2022, the Cairo Criminal Court renewed the detention of Metwally under case 786/2020 State Security Prosecution. In October 2021, his lawyers indicated that his life is at risk due to the lack of medical treatment in detention despite the several requests they filed.

In June 2022, in its [list of issues](#) issued, the Human Rights Committee requested Egypt to provide 'information on the cases of Ibrahim Metwally, a lawyer who was arrested on 10 September 2017, before traveling to Geneva where he was planning to provide information to the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, and who was then forcibly disappeared, subjected to torture and ill-treatment and held in pretrial detention for more than two years, as well as accused of various crimes, including 'membership in a terrorist group'.

At the 52nd session of the Human Rights Council, the Benelux countries (Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands) '[expressed](#) its concern about cases of intimidation and reprisals for cooperating with the UN on human rights, including Ibrahim Metwally Hegazy in Egypt, who is the co-founder and coordinator of the Association of the Families of the Disappeared.'

The Cairo Criminal Terrorism Court continued to renew the detention of Ibrahim Metwally and he remains in detention despite exceeding the legal maximum length of pre-trial detention.

During a prosecution's questioning, Metwally explained that he had been arrested on September 10, 2017, from Cairo International Airport in connection. He confirmed that when he was arrested, he was on his way to Geneva to meet with the UN Working Group on Enforced Disappearances to attend a conference to which he had been invited to present his problem regarding the enforced disappearance of his son, Amr, since July 8, 2013. Metwally told the prosecution that he had turned to the National Council for Human Rights, whose officials encouraged him to contact the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and its Working Group on Enforced Disappearances

In terms of follow-up, Ibrahim Metwally was referred in 2024 to trial on three cases (900 of 2017, 1470 of 2019 and 786 of 2020 with similar charges) brought against him by Supreme State Security Prosecution. It is worth mentioning that charging the same person with the same charges more than once at the same time is against Egyptian law. He is charged in Case 900 of 2017 with leading and funding a terrorist group, in Case 1470 of 2019 with joining and funding a terrorist group and participating in a criminal agreement to commit a terrorist offence, and in Case 786 of 2020 with leading and funding a terrorist group. He has spent over two years in pretrial detention and denied family visits in Case 900 of 2017. He has spent 9 months in pretrial detention in Case 1470 of 2019. He has spent more than 4 years in pretrial detention since August 2020 in Case 786 of 2020.

Metwally's next hearing session in Case 900 of 2017 is scheduled for 20 May 2026, in Case 1470 of 2019 is scheduled for 23 May 2026 and Case 786 of 2020 is scheduled for 4 May 2026.

For the past eight years, Metwally has not been able to see any of his family members without separation barriers. In 2022, he was transferred to Badr 3 Prison, whose administration allowed Metwally's family to visit him for the first time in June 2023 and met with them by phone in a glass booth. Metwally developed an enlarged and severely inflamed prostate, his family requested the authorities multiple times to conduct the necessary medical examinations, and enable him to undergo surgery. Metwally hasn't undergone the surgery yet.

The case of Ibrahim Metwally Hegazy was raised by Germany in September 2019 at the Human Rights Council 42nd session,²³⁰ by Germany and Liechtenstein in September 2021 at the 51st session,²³¹ by the Benelux countries in September 2023 at the 54th session,²³² and again by Liechtenstein in September 2024 at the 57th session,²³³ during the interactive dialogues on the report on reprisals with the Assistant Secretary-General.

2. Reprisals against Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR) staff

Gasser Abdel Razek, Mohamed Bashir, Karim Ennarah, three directors of the **Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR)**, a prominent Egyptian human rights organisation, were arbitrarily arrested in November 2020 after meeting with foreign diplomats, accused of terrorism-related charges and spreading false information.

Although they were released after significant domestic and international pressure, neither they nor their lawyers have been able to access the case documents under which they were accused since then (No. 855/2020). They continue facing judicial harassment, including travel bans and asset freezes. EIPR has filed multiple appeals, including to the Supreme Judicial Council, but has never been granted a court session to challenge these punitive measures.

In 2023, EIPR researcher **Patrick Zaki** was sentenced to three years in prison for an article he wrote on religious discrimination in Egypt. He was pardoned after spending nearly two years in prison.

²³⁰https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/31/SP/22133_41_336e81b7_c412_4e1d_8fc1_8f2548abff92.docx.

²³¹https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/61/SP/48207_56_b58c5023_577d_4de3_a3ca_657bcd8eff88.docx and https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/61/SP/47647_56_52391f7d_a788_41c4_b24a_ad7b4cc993d1.docx.

²³²https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/70/SP/58221_60_6fbbd112_bb44_4040_8505_79e66c2446c5.docx.

²³³https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/81/SP/81_18842083_ce6b1281-efdb-415c-9e45-a4fa67c5abd8.docx.

In April 2024, Egypt lifted travel bans and asset freezes on some civil society representatives, including EIPR's **Hossam Bahgat**. However, measures against other staff members Abdel Razek, Bashir, and Ennarah, prosecuted in a separate case, remain unaffected.

In the weeks leading up to Egypt's Universal Periodic Review in January 2025, the Egyptian government again escalated reprisals against Hossam Bahgat. On January 19 2025, he was arrested, interrogated for four hours, and charged with aiding and financing a terrorist organisation, and spreading false information to harm national security, charges that could lead to the death penalty. On 19 January 2025, the Supreme State Security Prosecution (SSSP) ordered the release of Bahgat on bail set at EGP 20,000 pending investigation. Bahgat was questioned about a statement published by EIPR calling on the Prosecutor General to investigate the claims made by some families of detainees held in Tenth of Ramadan / 6 prison about the deteriorating detention conditions.

This marks the fifth round of criminal charges against him and EIPR staff, stemming from his human rights work, including submissions to UN Special Procedure, advocacy during the UPR process including UPR submissions and participation in the UPR pre-session in Geneva, briefing international organisations, and reports highlighting Egypt's human rights abuses.

In terms of follow up although the SSSP has not announced it is proceeding with its investigation in the case, the case remains open and Bahgat is still facing the danger of being referred to trial at any time.

3. Basma Mostafa

The case of **Basma Mostafa**—an Egyptian investigative journalist and human rights defender in exile since November 2020, and the co-founder and Director of Programs of the Berlin-based Law and Democracy Support Foundation (LDSF)—was included in the Secretary-General's reprisals reporting following a joint Special Procedures communication (EGY 6/2024) documenting continued harassment and transnational repression against her in Germany, Switzerland and other countries in connection with her engagement with UN human rights mechanisms.

Mostafa's situation was subsequently noted in the Secretary-General's 2025 reprisals report (A/HRC/60/62) , including at (paras. 48–51). Mandate holders expressed concern that the pattern of intimidation and cyberattacks indicates reprisals for UN cooperation and highlighted earlier arrests, detention and an alleged enforced disappearance in Egypt that ultimately forced her into exile. The Government of Egypt later issued a response dated 14 July 2025 to the note verbale referenced in that report (para. 51).

On 25 July 2025, Mostafa submitted a formal report to the UK Home Office concerning Ahmed Mohamed Ahmed Abdelkader, the agent who physically assaulted her in Berlin in 2022 and whose name is explicitly referenced in the UN Special Procedures

communication EGY 6/2024. On 26 July 2025, she filed an online report with the Dutch authorities regarding another individual residing in Amsterdam who incited rape against her in 2022 during coordinated harassment and who is likewise referenced in EGY 6/2024. As far as Mostafa is aware, no investigation has been initiated to date by the Dutch authorities regarding her 26 July 2025 complaint, and she has not been informed of investigative progress by UK authorities following her 25 July 2025 report.

On 25 August 2025, Ahmed Mohamed Ahmed Abdelkader—explicitly named in EGY 6/2024 in connection with the 2022 Berlin assault—was arrested in the United Kingdom for incitement-related activities targeting other Egyptian activists in exile. He was subsequently released following diplomatic intervention. In the immediate aftermath, Mostafa became the target of a coordinated retaliatory online hate campaign, consistent with the same network responsible for prior harassment documented in EGY 6/2024. The campaign included: (i) posts labelling her a ‘spy,’ ‘agent,’ ‘terrorist,’ and ‘fugitive’; (ii) harassment across multiple platforms; (iii) doxxing-style attacks using her name and photographs; and (iv) posts aimed at delegitimizing her human rights work and punishing her for taking legal steps against those targeting her.

On 17 September 2025, amid the intensifying campaign, Mostafa received a direct threatening message on her German phone stating she would be subjected to further physical assault, including the explicit phrase ‘wait for your punishment.’ The sender is the same individual who incited rape against her in 2022, as documented in EGY 6/2024, demonstrating continuity of targeting by the same perpetrator across years, platforms and jurisdictions, and marking an escalation from sexual-violence incitement to direct, personal threats.

On 26 September 2025, then UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, Mary Lawlor, issued a public statement expressing alarm that Mostafa ‘continues to be subjected to threats by supporters of an Egyptian state agent who attacked her in Berlin and who was recently arrested in London for his threatening behaviour,’ and urged the German authorities to ensure her protection (consistent with concerns already set out in EGY 6/2024).

On 28 September 2025, Mostafa faced a new intimidation attempt in Berlin. While seated in a café, an unfamiliar man—not matching any previously documented individuals referenced in EGY 6/2024—sat beside her and made a phone call in Egyptian Arabic within earshot, stating that a senior ‘National Security’ officer had asked him to ‘send a car tomorrow.’ Although the name and rank cited were later confirmed to be false, the deliberate use of a plausible title and coded language commonly associated in Egyptian security slang with abduction operations created a targeted intimidation effect, especially given Mostafa’s history of having been forcibly taken into vehicles during previous arrests in Egypt. The incident occurred shortly after the 17 September 2025 direct threat to ‘wait for your punishment,’ and forms part of an escalating pattern. Mostafa reported the incident to the Berlin police immediately.

Despite Mostafa's immediate report of the 28 September 2025 incident, the police response treated it as an isolated event, without considering the documented pattern of coordinated targeting described in EGY 6/2024 and subsequent threats reported throughout 2025. During the interaction, some officers questioned her psychological state, thereby minimizing the credibility of her concerns rather than addressing the recurrent cross-border nature of the threats. Notably, EGY 6/2024 had already been transmitted to the German Government, placing authorities on formal notice of the pattern.

Following the police response to the 28 September 2025 incident—which treated the event as isolated, questioned Mostafa's psychological state, and failed to account for the cumulative pattern documented since 2022—she increasingly lost confidence in the effectiveness of reporting to law enforcement in Germany and concluded that further reporting would neither trigger protection nor prevent future harm. This deterrent effect—resulting from repeated ineffective responses and the absence of accessible accountability and redress mechanisms—has left her without meaningful access to national protection, prevention, or remedies, despite ongoing cross-border retaliation risks.

Despite multiple reports since 2022 and the increasingly severe acts of transnational repression documented in EGY 6/2024—which was formally shared with the German Government—the authorities have not implemented meaningful preventive, protective, or accountability measures, allowing risks to persist and escalate. Of particular concern, the agent explicitly referenced in EGY 6/2024 as implicated in the 2022 Berlin assault—and arrested in London in August 2025 for incitement against other Egyptian activists—was subsequently able to re-enter Germany without apparent restriction. Mostafa received no prior police notification and learned of his presence through colleagues; the individual reportedly boasted publicly that 'no one can touch him.' These concerns were compounded by: (i) Ms. Mostafa's publicly known address; (ii) the 17 September 2025 direct threat ('wait for your punishment') by the same 2022 perpetrator, as reflected in EGY 6/2024; and (iii) the 28 September 2025 café incident using coded 'send a car' language consistent with intimidation tactics linked to abduction methods previously used against her in Egypt.

In parallel, the Coalition Against Transnational Repression in Germany—a coalition of Berlin-based civil society groups—issued a public statement expressing profound concern for Mostafa's safety and the effectiveness of Germany's protection mechanisms against TNR. The statement notes that Ahmed Abdelkader, who assaulted Mostafa in 2022 and is publicly documented by UN Special Procedures, was allowed to re-enter Germany despite his arrest in the UK in August 2025 for intimidation and assaults against other human rights defenders, and calls for immediate preventive measures, including an entry ban, notification protocols when a known perpetrator

enters Germany, and rapid, low-threshold protection and safe housing for targeted individuals.

Collectively, these incidents illustrate retaliatory escalation and cross-border targeting occurring after the UN communication had placed German authorities on formal notice and after Mostafa's inclusion in the Secretary-General's 2025 reprisals report, as well as after the Egyptian Government's 14 July 2025 reply (para. 51). Notwithstanding that reply—which affirmed respect for the rule of law and reliance solely on established legal channels—the continued targeting described herein raises serious concerns regarding the Source State's duty to refrain from reprisals for UN cooperation and to ensure that no State agents, or persons acting with their acquiescence, engage in transnational repression against Mostafa.

Germany raised Basma Mostafa's case at the 60th Session of the Human Rights Council during an interactive dialogue with the Assistant Secretary General on reprisals.²³⁴

4. The impact of Egyptian legislation on the ability of individuals and civil society groups to cooperate with the United Nations

References to the impact of Egyptian legislation on the ability of individuals and civil society groups to cooperate with the United Nations have been included in the reports of the Secretary-General since 2017, noting allegations on the misuse of the Terrorist Entities Law (Law 8 of 2015), the Anti-Terrorism Law (Law 94 of 2015), and the NGO Law 149/2019 and its regulations, to hinder or punish cooperation with the United Nations, as well as the use of travel bans. On 8 November 2024, mandate holders raised concerns about the Draft Law on the Issuance of the Criminal Procedure Law No. 150 of 1950, which would repeal the current Law No. 150 of 1950 on the Code of Criminal Procedure and any provision in Egyptian law that is in contradiction of the draft law (EGY 5/2024).

Specifically, mandate holders expressed concern that Article 147 permits one-year travel bans with unlimited renewals, and Article 148 allows judicial challenge without guaranteeing notification to affected individuals. They also warned that Articles 266 and 267 could limit the ability to report on and comment on judicial processes without fear of reprisals, as they restrict media coverage, criminalize publishing trial related information that may 'influence the trajectory of justice,' and prohibit disclosing information about judges, prosecutors, witnesses or defendants, especially in terrorism cases. (EGY 5/2024).

²³⁴https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/89/SP/89_18842490_196eaea7-188b-4af1-bffe-18fd30425b1d.docx.

The draft law on the Issuance of the Criminal Procedure Law No. 150 of 1950 was adopted by the House of Representatives on 29 April 2025. In May 2025, the Spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights urged the Egyptian President ‘*to consider carefully the proposed Criminal Procedure Code in light of these concerns prior to granting any assent, in order to ensure that it fully complies with Egypt’s international human rights obligations.*’ President Al-Sisi referred the law back to Parliament in September 2025 for review of just 8 of its articles, neglecting other dangerous provisions listed above. The House of Representatives reviewed and amended those 8 articles only, and adopted it thus amended. Thus, it failed to take the opportunity to review the entire law and address the fundamental concerns conveyed repeatedly by the UN High Commissioner, Special Procedures and civil society; even the amendments provoked alarm from rights groups and political parties. On 12 Nov. 2025, President Al-Sisi ratified the amended law; it is due to come into force on 1 Oct. 2026.

Guatemala

Background

Acts of reprisals against judges, lawyers and prosecutors for their cooperation with the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) have been included in the reports of the Secretary-General since 2019, and have been addressed by multiple United Nations actors.

1. Claudia González Orellana

The case of Claudia González Orellana was included in the 2024 and 2025 reports of the Secretary-General on allegations of arbitrary detention and prosecution in reprisal for her work with the CICIG during 2011-2019, and as a lawyer of justice officials who worked for or investigated cases with the technical assistance of the CICIG. The Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers had expressed concerns regarding her detention and prosecution for ‘abuse of power,’ in connection to a high-profile investigation with the technical support of the CICIG ([GTM 5/2023](#)).

In November 2023, Ms. González was released under non-custodial measures, including house arrest and a prohibition on leaving the country without authorization from the Court, after 81 days in detention.

A new report, ‘Climate of Fear: Fact-finding mission report on Guatemala’²³⁵ documents that the proceedings against her have been characterized by undue delays, manifested in repeated postponements of hearings, as well as by restrictions on full access to the case file and the adoption of decisions to keep proceedings confidential without proper factual and legal justification. Such measures resulted in the exclusion of diplomatic representatives, the media, and the general public from various hearings, undermining the principle of public access to the proceedings.

Furthermore, the defense has reported substantial limitations on access to evidence considered essential for the preparation of an adequate technical defense.

In this context, the defense filed a motion to recuse Judge Jimi Bremer Ramírez, presiding judge of the Tenth Multi-Judge Court of First Instance for Criminal Matters, Drug Trafficking, and Crimes Against the Environment of Guatemala, citing serious objective doubts regarding his impartiality. The motion was denied by the competent court.

Currently, the criminal proceedings are in an advanced intermediate stage, pending the oral hearing scheduled for 6 May 2026 before the Seventh Criminal Sentencing Court.

On 21 March 2025, the Benelux countries raised her case at the 58th session of the UN Human Rights Council during the general debate under item 5.²³⁶

2. Thelma Aldana

The case of former Attorney General, **Thelma Aldana**, was included in the 2023 and 2025 reports of the Secretary-General, regarding an arrest warrant issued against her in January 2023 on charges of conspiracy, obstruction to justice and abuse of authority in a high-profile case investigated with CICIG’s technical assistance. In 2019, Aldana left the country, and in 2022 and 2023, two extradition orders were requested against her on charges of abuse of authority, ideological falsehood, embezzlement, and fraud. The new Attorney General reiterated the extradition requests.

In terms of follow up, the persecution and criminalization continue since arrest warrants for fabricated charges remain in effect and the extradition request is still pending. No information is being provided to Aldana. In one of the social media attacks last year, the account ‘¡Yes, Master!’ and others like it spread false information that Aldana was seriously ill and then claimed that she had died. Aldana’s situation in exile is one of survival and without support from the Guatemalan government.

²³⁵ https://www.lawyersforlawyers.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/INFORME-MISION-JURISTAS-GUATEMALA_DEFINITIVO1.pdf.

²³⁶ <https://www.netherlandsandyou.nl/web/pr-un-geneva/w/hrc58-benelux-reprisals>.

3. Samari Gómez Díaz

The case of Samari Gómez Díaz, a prosecutor at the Special Prosecutor's Office Against Impunity (FECI), was included in the 2023 and 2025 report of the Secretary-General due to detention and prosecution for allegedly leaking confidential information to the former FECI Chief in connection with a high-profile case investigated with CICIG's technical assistance.

In June 2023, Gómez Díaz was acquitted of the charge of disclosing confidential information and released from prison, following 309 days of detention. In July 2023, special procedure mandate holders addressed allegations of due process violations in her case (GTM 4/2023). An appeal court ordered a retrial of the case, which may result in her detention upon the resumption of proceedings. Based on the second instance judgement, three appeals of Cassation were filed in September 2024.

In terms of follow up, the case is still in the appeals stage; it is currently in the cassation phase, awaiting a new ruling from the Court regarding the possibility of a complete retrial. This has had negative implications for Gomez Diaz, as it means the possibility of returning to prison should a new court find her 'guilty' of the acts for which she has already been tried once, even though this accusation has no basis whatsoever. The process has caused serious damage to her professional, work and family life.

4. Pablo Xitumul de Paz

The case file against judge **Pablo Xitumul de Paz**, that was included in reports of the Secretary-General since 2020 in relation to high-profile cases investigated with CICIG's technical assistance, was transferred to the Second Criminal Court of First Instance in the jurisdiction of Guatemala City in early 2025, as all judges of Mixco recused themselves from hearing the case. At the time of the publication of the Secretary-General report in September 2025, the defence team had not yet received notification of the transfer, nor of the new court taking control of the case.

In terms of follow up, his case remains unresolved due to delay tactics and the Judicial Branch has reduced his security detail (personnel and vehicle).

5. Virginia Laparra Rivas

The case of **Virginia Laparra Rivas**, former FECI Chief in Quetzaltenango, was included in the 2022, 2023 and 2025 reports of the Secretary-General due to arrest, arbitrary detention, conviction and sentencing for her work with the FECI in high-profile corruption cases against public officials and organized crime, including many investigated with the technical assistance

of the CICIG. In May 2023, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention issued opinion 24/2023 considering her detention arbitrary (A/HRC/WGAD/2023/24, para. 109). In January 2024, Laparra was released under non custodial measures, such as house arrest, prohibition to leave the country and biometric control checks every 15 days in court, after 680 days of detention.

On 8 July 2024, a second judgement was issued against Laparra, finding her guilty of disclosing confidential information from a case in 2017. She was sentenced to a commutable five-year sentence, a ten-year ban from holding public office, and a fine amounting to 50,000 quetzales. Right after the issuance of the sentence and under the constant threat of detention, Laparra decided to leave the country. In April 2025, the Public Prosecutor's Office and plaintiffs reportedly requested the revocation of the alternative measures to the deprivation of liberty of Laparra. Even though the petition was dismissed by the sentencing court, plaintiffs reportedly requested that the Fifth Chamber of Appeals for Criminal Matters, Drug Trafficking and Crimes against the Environment of Quetzaltenango declare Laparra in contempt and revoke the alternative measures. They also reportedly requested that the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) issue a Red Notice for her international arrest. The 2025 Secretary-General report documented that the Chamber has not yet responded to this request.

In terms of follow up, the convictions remain in effect and have not been overturned. Furthermore, there is reportedly ongoing interest in reactivating arrest warrants against Laparra and requesting new ones, as well as the possible issuance of an international arrest warrant and/or an INTERPOL Red Notice in the case for 'abuse of authority' initiated for administratively reporting acts of corruption against then-Judge Lester Castellanos.

Due to this situation, Laparra remains in exile, facing the constant risk of being arrested again if she should return to Guatemala, and facing additional spurious charges. There are at least two more open cases against her: one before Judge Sergio René Mena Samayoa, who previously ordered her arrest in 2022 without jurisdiction, keeping her imprisoned for two years; and another before Judge Jimi Rodolfo Bremer Ramírez, who also ordered the imprisonment of her then-lawyer, Claudia González. These cases remain sealed.

6. Eva Siomara Sosa Pérez

Former prosecutor **Eva Siomara Sosa Pérez** was included in the 2022 and 2024 report due to her arrest and criminalisation as a reprisal for her work with FECI and CICIG. In terms of follow up, **there are still currently three criminal proceedings open against her.** On 29 August

2023, an arrest order was issued against Siomara Sosa Pérez for abuse of authority. The case is allegedly linked to her investigations at the General Attorney's Office against Impunity, in collaboration with CICIG, of alleged influence peddling by a Supreme Court justice (GTM 5/2023). In terms of follow up, the prosecutor subsequently requested that she be declared in contempt of court.

The other two cases have been unduly delayed and all requests and appeals have been denied or left unresolved. **In MP001-2022-4389, case 01081-2022-00063, she is being prosecuted for the crime of collusion along with Leyli Indira Santizo Rodas, who was her defense attorney and representative of CICIG. The hearing to hear the charges was never held, as the judge was recused, and a subsequently appointed judge was also recused, and to this day the recusal has not been resolved. In that case, she filed preliminary motions for lack of action against the FCT, which were never considered by the judge of guarantees.**

In MP001-2018-108160, case 01081-2019-0677, the Odebrecht agreements case, she was summoned for her initial statement on April 19, 2022, a hearing that never took place, as a series of recusals were filed that led the Third Chamber of Appeals for Criminal Matters to issue 26 arrest warrants on May 30, 2025, including hers, both nationally and internationally; however, an injunction was granted to other co-defendants, and on April 9, 2026, the Supreme Court of Justice, in injunction 3851-2025, nullified the May 30th resolution. However, the appeal that the Public Prosecutor's Office will file is still pending.

In MP001-2021-412337, case 01070-2023-0228, the Blanca Stalling case, her arrest warrant was authorized on August 23, 2024, against which she filed a motion for reconsideration which was declared inadmissible and she filed an appeal before the Supreme Court of Justice which was declared inadmissible, so the warrant is in effect. It is for this case that Claudia Gonzalez is in prison pending trial on May 5, 2026.

7. Iris Yassmín Barrios Aguilar

The case of Judge **Iris Yassmin Barrios Aguilar** was included in the 2019 and 2024 Secretary-General reports. In 2024, the Secretary-General reported that, on 6 July 2023, mandate holders addressed allegations of criminal investigations against judge Yassmín Barrios Aguilar (GTM 3/2023) to which the Government responded.²³⁷ On 10 October 2023, mandate holders also addressed allegations of a notification by the National Police

²³⁷ See Government reply at <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gld=28223>.

announcing the withdrawal of her security (GTM 7/2023), to which the Government responded.²³⁸

In terms of follow up, within the context of selective persecution that began in late 2019—which resulted in the exile of independent judges and prosecutors, journalists, and human rights defenders—Barrios Aguilar has managed to remain in the country but conditions have been difficult.

The rule of law and the justice system have been significantly weakened and attempts have been made to render independent judges invisible, to the point of causing what they call 'civil death,' which results in few or no opportunities to exercise their rights.

Barrios Aguilar has been barred from participating in events related to the judiciary and it has even been made to appear as though she is not in the country, which is not true.

Recently, the IACHR visited Guatemala, and despite being an Independent Judge and facing persecution, Barrios Aguilar did not have the opportunity to speak. It was not until this week that she received an invitation to participate, along with two other judges, in a meeting to be held virtually.

8. Leily Santizo

The case of Leily Santizo, a lawyer and former CICIG employee, was included in the Secretary-General's reports for 2022, 2023, and 2025 due to two improper criminal proceedings brought against her on charges of obstruction of justice. In 2025, the Secretary-General reported that the Constitutional Court had lifted the 'total confidentiality' order in her case. This procedural measure, which restricts access to case information and proceedings for all parties, was requested more than 28 times by the Prosecutor's Office. A recusal request against the fourth judge of the Criminal Court remains pending, and the arrest warrants issued against Santizo remain in effect. Despite having left the country, Santizo continued to suffer the consequences of the ongoing criminal proceedings abroad, including attempts to issue an international travel ban and a formal extradition request.

In terms of follow-up, Santizo's case remains unresolved. A new arrest warrant has been issued. At first, there was only one criminal case against Santizo, but over time, other cases have been opened.

²³⁸ See Government reply at <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gld=28533>.

9. Erika Aifan

In 2025 the Secretary-General reported that reprisals also continued against former judge **Érika Aifán**, who has been included in reports of the Secretary-General since 2019 due to intimidation, attacks and reprisals from State and non-state actors linked to her decisions on high impact and emblematic cases. Special procedure mandate holders addressed her case on several occasions. An arrest order was issued in May 2023 against Aifán in connection with her judicial functions in a high-profile case investigated in collaboration with CICIG. In December 2024, a new arrest warrant was issued against Aifán and another individual, on the grounds that their personal relationship may have influenced her judicial decisions. Aifán remains in exile.

India

1. Khurram Parvez and Irfan Mehraj

The situation of the staff and associates of the Jammu and Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society (JKCCS), a union of various non-profit organisations based in Srinagar, has been included since 2017 in the reports of the Secretary-General on allegations of travel bans, ill treatment, and arbitrary detention as a result of counter-terrorism charges in relation with their cooperation with United Nations entities and mechanisms.

The case of Khurram Parvez, Chair of the JKCCS, and his last arrest in November 2021 on terrorism charges has been addressed on several occasions by mandate holders.

The case of Irfan Mehraj, JKCCS associate and journalist, was included in the 2023 report of the Secretary-General on allegations of arbitrary arrest in March 2023 in the same case as Parvez, under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967.

On 28 March 2023, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention deemed Parvez's detention in 2021 arbitrary and called for his release (A/HRC/WGAD/23/8). In June 2023, a group of mandate holders addressed once more the situation of Parvez and Mehraj and expressed concern at the reported judicial harassment against them, noting that, in their view, the legal situation of Parvez and Mehraj would appear to gravely conflate their legitimate human rights work with terrorism (IND 4/2023).

The judicial detention of Parvez and Mehraj was extended during the period to allow more time for the National Investigation Agency to complete the investigation. In September 2023, the National Investigation Agency reportedly filed a chargesheet claiming that the concerned

NGOs and individuals had been collecting funds domestically and from various foreign countries and directing them to sustain and promote terrorist and secessionist activities.

In its concluding observations of 22 July 2024 on India's fourth periodic report, the Human Rights Committee raised concerns over allegations that human rights defenders had been barred from travelling abroad and engaging with United Nations bodies. The Committee cited the case of Parvez. The Committee urged the State party to prevent and combat harassment, intimidation, persecution and violence, including arbitrary detention and prosecution, against individuals expressing criticism of actions or policies of public authorities, and to ensure their protection and freedom to carry out their work without fear of harassment, violence or reprisal; (CCPR/C/IND/CO/4, paras. 51 and 52).

In terms of follow up, they remain detained at the Rohini Jail Complex. The 2020 case targeting JKCCS and in respect of which both Parvez and Mehraj were arrested is now before its fourth judge and, like three times before, is being reargued from the beginning (including with respect to bail). In the 2021 case targeting Parvez, proceedings regarding bail continue in the high court but no substantive arguments on the charges have yet occurred. In January 2026, HRF and FORUM-ASIA submitted Mehraj's case to WGAD requesting an opinion confirming his detention as arbitrary.

Pakistan raised Khurram Parvez and Irfan Mehraj's case on 28 September 2023 at the 54th session of the UN Human Rights Council during the Interactive Dialogue on the report on reprisals with the Assistant Secretary-General.²³⁹

2. Bhai Moninder Singh

Bhai Moninder Singh is a prominent Sikh activist and human rights defender based in Canada. He has publicly advocated for Sikh human rights and self-determination, including through the establishment of an independent Khalistan, and has done so in domestic and international forums, including the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council.

On 22 February 2026 Canadian security agencies visited Bhai Moninder Singh at his home on 22 February 2026 and issued a formal 'duty to warn' notice informing him of a credible and imminent threat to his life and that of his family. The warning was based on intelligence received from a confidential source who informed Canadian police of a plot to assassinate Bhai Moninder Singh, his wife and his two children. The information was assessed by authorities to be sufficiently serious as to require direct notification.

²³⁹https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/70/SP/58917_60_099ce283_648f_44d5_b8cf_13d5c7ccd20e.docx.

Bhai Moninder Singh was scheduled to travel to Geneva to participate in the 61st Session of the UN Human Rights Council days after the duty to warn notice was issued. His planned engagements included a spoken intervention during the Item 3 General Debate and meetings with diplomatic missions to the UN and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). The timing, nature, and severity of the threat indicate a serious attempt to prevent his engagement with the UN Human Rights Council.

The incident forms part of a broader pattern of threats identified by Canadian law enforcement authorities targeting Bhai Moninder Singh which have occurred in the context of his increasing public advocacy at UN fora and related international advocacy concerning India's transnational repression of Sikhs.²⁴⁰ This includes his participation in the first World Congress on Enforced Disappearances on 15–16 January 2025, as well as his public participation at the 58th and 60th Sessions of the UN Human Rights Council in 2025 and the 18th session of the UN Forum on Minority Issues on 27–28 November 2025. This pattern must also be read in light of existing UN attention to India's alleged targeting of Sikh advocates abroad. In communication AL IND 10/2024,²⁴¹ five UN Special Rapporteurs raised concerns regarding the 'alleged killing of a Canadian citizen, Mr. Hardeep Singh Nijjar, in Canada on 18 June 2023, in apparent retaliation against his political and human rights advocacy for the Sikh minority in India' and 'other credible threats to life and measures of intimidation and harassment against Sikh activists outside India.'²⁴²

In October 2024, then Prime Minister of Canada, Justin Trudeau, issued a statement²⁴³ confirming ongoing investigation into violent criminal activity in Canada linked to the Government of India, including agents of the Government of India as persons of interest in criminal activity. Bhai Moninder Singh received a similar 'duty to warn' notice in March 2025 immediately upon his return to Canada after participating in the 58th session of the UNRCH.

The perpetrator of the assassination plot subject to the 22 February 2026 duty to warn notice is believed to be the Government of India and/or its agents or proxies. Canadian law enforcement authorities issued the duty to warn notice and have taken no further protective and monitoring measures. There is no publicly available information indicating that accountability measures have been taken against those responsible for the threat. At the international level, the case has been informally communicated to diplomatic missions to the UN and OHCHR and raised publicly through media reporting and advocacy by the Sikh Federation International. No response has been taken by UN mechanisms to date.

²⁴⁰<https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20260324-silence-not-an-option-says-canadian-sikh-activist-after-fresh-threats>

²⁴¹ <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=29509>

²⁴² <https://globalnews.ca/news/11680095/police-warn-sikh-activist-threat-carney-india/>

²⁴³<https://www.pm.gc.ca/en/news/statements/2024/10/14/statement-prime-minister-ongoing-investigation-violent-criminal-activity-linked>

Israel & the United States of America

1. Francesca Albanese, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967

On 9 July 2025, the United States government imposed sanctions on Francesca Albanese, the UN Special Rapporteur (SR) on the situation of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories (OPT) since 1967 for ‘directly engag[ing] with the International Criminal Court (ICC) in efforts to investigate, arrest, detain, or prosecute nationals of the United States or Israel, without the consent of those two countries.’²⁴⁴ The sanctions block assets within the U.S. and ban entry to the United States for the SR and her family.

Attacks on Albanese and her office’s mandate followed her release of letters to business entities, ‘including major American companies across finance, technology, defense, energy, and hospitality,’ putting them on notice of their complicity and recommending the ICC investigate and prosecute companies materially invested in Israel’s ongoing apartheid regime and genocide, as detailed in her report at the 59th session of the Human Rights Council entitled ‘From economy of occupation to economy of genocide.’²⁴⁵ The sanctions were issued as part of a broader United States foreign policy to silence dissent against the ongoing war on Gaza. Notably, they were also reportedly issued in response to at least two of the companies named in the letters having sought intervention from the Trump administration after receipt of the letters.²⁴⁶

The sanctions against Albanese represent clear reprisals for her UN human rights work, specifically as it relates to Palestinians’ rights in the occupied territories and accountability, including corporate accountability. They likewise demonstrate the disturbing outsized influence of private companies on both domestic and international governing institutions, reflecting growing corporate capture.

²⁴⁴<https://www.state.gov/releases/office-of-the-spokesperson/2025/07/sanctioning-lawfare-that-targets-u-s-and-israeli-persons/>.

²⁴⁵ <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/59/23>.

²⁴⁶<https://www.reuters.com/investigations/trumps-war-global-justice-court-staff-un-face-terroristgrade-sanctions-2026-02-06/#:~:text=staff%20and%20U.N.,face%20terrorist%E2%80%91grade%20sanctions,Despite%20U.N.>

Francesca Albanese's case was raised by South Africa at the 55th and 58th sessions of the Human Rights Council,²⁴⁷ as well as by Eritrea,²⁴⁸ Mexico,²⁴⁹ Libya,²⁵⁰ Tunisia,²⁵¹ Qatar,²⁵² Ghana on behalf of the African Group,²⁵³ Bahrain on behalf of the Arab League,²⁵⁴ and Pakistan on behalf of the OIC at the 59th session of the Human Rights Council.²⁵⁵ Palestine and Brazil also raised the Special Rapporteur's case in September 2025 during an interactive dialogue at the 60th session of the Human Rights Council with the Assistant Secretary General.²⁵⁶

2. International Criminal Court

On 15 March 2019, then US Secretary of State, Michael Pompeo, announced that the US would revoke or deny visas to members of the International Criminal Court (ICC) involved in investigations of alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by US nationals in Afghanistan or elsewhere, and threatened to take other measures including economic sanctions.²⁵⁷ Pompeo's announcement followed threats made by then US National Security Advisor John Bolton in a 10 September 2018 speech to the Federalist Society. In that instance, Bolton explicitly threatened ICC judges, prosecutors, and personnel if they proceed with an investigation into alleged war crimes committed by US military and intelligence forces in Afghanistan, as well as any company or State that assists the ICC.²⁵⁸

²⁴⁷ <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1n3zG3eYIFPUxBVN1kqU4EOvJoSCulCrS/edit>;
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1OWTNAgfO9YpY0TyMcsWzfkAQRmtmYgG4/edit>.

²⁴⁸ <https://conf.unog.ch/digitalrecordings/en/clients/12.0870/meetings/74E62671-6451-4B58-8C9D-CB41583B8ABF/10h00/en>.

²⁴⁹ https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/88/SP/88_18842369_ce6e4719-c908-40d0-a5b8-192a196ca030.docx.

²⁵⁰ https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/88/SP/88_18842369_ba8be37c-dc38-4fef-80aa-3f77e11ac50d.docx.

²⁵¹ https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/88/SP/88_18842369_5769cca0-26d1-48d6-b2a0-9ab7796b41b8.docx.

²⁵² https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/88/SP/88_18842369_ad0ba9c0-809d-427a-b877-23d3f9ab7a25.docx.

²⁵³ <https://conf.unog.ch/digitalrecordings/en/clients/12.0870/meetings/74E62671-6451-4B58-8C9D-CB41583B8ABF/10h00/en>.

²⁵⁴ <https://conf.unog.ch/digitalrecordings/en/clients/12.0870/meetings/74E62671-6451-4B58-8C9D-CB41583B8ABF/10h00/en>.

²⁵⁵ <https://conf.unog.ch/digitalrecordings/en/clients/12.0870/meetings/74E62671-6451-4B58-8C9D-CB41583B8ABF/10h00/en>.

²⁵⁶ <https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k14/k14rrl8zjfj>;
https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/89/SP/89_18842526_b6f5332b-53df-4cbc-a539-75aa00c5814b.docx.

²⁵⁷ Remarks to the Press, Michael R. Pompeo, Secretary of State, Press Briefing Room, Washington, D.C. (15 Mar. 2019), <https://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2019/03/290394.htm>.

²⁵⁸ John Bolton made the remarks at the Federalist Society on 10 Sept. 2018, <https://fedsoc.org/events/national-security-advisor-john-r-bolton-address>.

The Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders and the Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers said threats against the International Criminal Court must stop. The UN press release mentioned that the experts are in touch with the US authorities. The action by the Special Rapporteurs came on the heels of a letter sent to the UN experts on 20 March 2019 by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) and ISHR underlining that the policy is a blatant effort to intimidate and retaliate against International Criminal Court personnel as well as lawyers and advocates seeking justice for victims of alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity, and urging them to take up the situation with the US.²⁵⁹

The intimidation continued. During a media briefing on 17 March 2020, United States Secretary of State, Michael Pompeo made remarks in relation to an ongoing investigation at the ICC. During the briefing, Secretary Pompeo spoke of the possible implication of US nationals in investigations conducted by the ICC Office of the Prosecutor, derogatorily referring to the ICC as a 'so-called court' and a 'nakedly political body'. Pompeo also named two members of the prosecution's staff and implied measures could be imposed on these individuals, and their families.

On 11 June 2020, then President Donald Trump issued an executive order authorising asset freezes and family travel bans against ICC officials and potentially others who assist ICC investigations. In February 2021, more than 80 Non-Governmental Organisations, Faith-Based Groups, and Academic Institutions called for the Biden Administration to Repeal ICC Sanctions and engage constructively with the ICC.²⁶⁰ On 2 April 2021, President Biden revoked the June 2020 order by then-President Donald Trump authorising asset freezes and entry bans.²⁶¹

In 2024, the threats against the International Criminal Court, its prosecutor, Karim Khan, his associates, and their families resumed over the decision to seek arrest warrants for senior Israeli officials accused of war crimes in Gaza. Republican Senator Tom Cotton said the announcement shows that the ICC is 'a farce'. 'My colleagues and I look forward to making sure neither Khan, his associates nor their families will ever set foot again in the United States,' Cotton wrote on X. Republican Congressman Anthony D'Esposito said the ICC was 'playing with fire', writing on social media that 'there will be serious consequences if they proceed.' Brian Mast, another Republican in the House of Representatives, said: 'America doesn't recognize the International Criminal Court, but the court sure as hell will recognize what happens when you target our allies.'

²⁵⁹ <https://www.ishr.ch/news/reprisals-us-must-stop-threatening-international-criminal-court>.

²⁶⁰ https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media_2021/03/Call%20for%20the%20Biden%20Administration%20to%20Repeal%20ICC%20Sanctions_0.pdf.

²⁶¹ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/04/02/us-rescinds-icc-sanctions#>.

These threats built on earlier threats made by several Republican legislators sent to Khan in late April 2024 regarding potential arrest warrants against Netanyahu or other Israeli officials after reports began to circulate that such a request was imminent. ‘Such actions are illegitimate and lack legal basis, and if carried out will result in severe sanctions against you and your institution,’ they wrote in a letter made public this month. The letter was signed by a dozen top Republican senators, including Cotton, Mitch McConnell, Ted Cruz, Marco Rubio and Tim Scott. ‘Target Israel and we will target you. If you move forward ... we will move to end all American support for the ICC, sanction your employees and associates, and bar you and your families from the United States. You have been warned,’ it concluded.

On 6 January 2025, President Trump signed an Executive Order which states that ‘any effort by the ICC to investigate, arrest, detain, or prosecute protected persons [...], constitutes an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States’, and declares a national emergency to address this ‘threat’. It ‘opposes and expects our allies to oppose’ all actions by the ICC against the US, Israel or any other ally that has not consented to ICC jurisdiction.

In terms of follow up, the United States administration imposed new sanctions against ICC officials in June 2025, targeting senior ICC personnel. [The ICC emphasized](#) that such sanctions constitute an attempt to intimidate and pressure the Court and undermine the rule of law and the international justice system. The Court reaffirmed its commitment to continue carrying out its mandate independently and impartially, and called on States Parties and the international community to stand firmly in support of the Court and its officials.

3. Palestinian NGOs

- a. **Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association (Addameer), Al-Haq, the Bisan Center for Research and Development (Bisan), Defense for Children International – Palestine, (DCI-P), the Union of Agricultural Work Committees (UAWC), and the Union of Palestinian Women’s Committees (UPWC)**

The cases of six Palestinian human rights and humanitarian organizations, namely the Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association (Addameer), Al-Haq, the Bisan Center for Research and Development (Bisan), Defense for Children International – Palestine, (DCI-P), the Union of Agricultural Work Committees (UAWC), and the Union of Palestinian Women’s Committees (UPWC) have been included in the reports of the Secretary-General since 2022, on allegations that their designations as ‘terror[ist] organizations’ under Israel’s Counter-Terrorism Law 5776 of 2016 were related to their cooperation with the United Nations and their human rights and humanitarian work. UN actors condemned the

designations and noted the critical work of these long-standing key partners of the United Nations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

In terms of follow up, and a few months before sanctioning a handful of other Palestinian NGOs (see part b. below), on 10 June 2025, the United States designated Addameer under its counter-terrorism sanctions regime, exposing the organisation and counterparties to asset-blocking measures and sanctions risk. Most of the designated organizations henceforth faced challenges regarding their banking transactions, including de-risking practices by banks, intermediary banks and donors. For example, Addameer has experienced a total restriction on receiving and sending funds, rendering it unable to compensate its 23 employees.

Also following the June 2025 designation, several digital service providers suspended or removed Addameer’s online presence, including the removal of its YouTube channel and social media accounts and the shutdown of its website, with no identified means of restoring these platforms. These restrictions have further impeded Addameer’s ability to communicate publicly and disseminate information about its work and the state of Palestinian political prisoners. They have also affected Addameer’s functioning and relations with supporters, be they international organizations or individuals, especially those based in the United States.

Additionally, on 1 December 2025, the Israeli military raided and vandalised the offices of the UAWC. The OHCHR reported that the attack on UAWC ‘comes amidst an escalating Israeli targeting of Palestinian civil society and human rights defenders, most recently in the context of olive harvest season.’²⁶²

b. Al-Haq, Al Mezan, and the Palestinian Center for Human Rights (PCHR)

In September 2025, the United States sanctioned several other Palestinian international organizations—including Al-Haq, Al Mezan Center for Human Rights, and the Palestinian Center for Human Rights (PCHR), again for engaging with the International Criminal Court ‘to investigate, arrest, detain, or prosecute Israeli nationals, without Israel’s consent.’²⁶³ The sanctions came into effect on 4 October 2026, cutting the organisations off from the international financial system, leaving the organisations unable to send or receive funds, and entirely preventing them from paying staff salaries as aforementioned in the case of Addameer. All staff with United States citizenship were forced to resign due to potential criminal penalties for associating with the

²⁶² <https://www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/UAWC-raid-En.pdf>.

²⁶³ Marco Rubio, Office of the Spokesperson of the Department of State, Press Statement: ‘Sanctioning Foreign NGOs Directly Engaged in ICC’s Illegitimate Targeting of Israel (4 Sept. 2025), <https://www.state.gov/releases/office-of-the-spokesperson/2025/09/sanctioning-foreign-ngos-directly-engaged-in-iccs-illegitimate-targeting-of-israel/>.

sanctioned organizations under US law. US service providers including Youtube, Gmail, Mailchimp and Meta also de-platformed or limited services to the sanctioned organizations.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and UN experts expressed concern that such measures could have a chilling effect on civil society and hinder the ability of human rights organisations to document violations, support victims and engage with international accountability mechanisms. Subsequent UN communications also raised concerns about digital service restrictions affecting Palestinian human rights organisations, including limitations on online communication and advocacy tools, which have further constrained organizations' ability to operate and engage internationally.

As with Addameer, Al Mezan, and Al-Haq, the sanctions have meant closure of bank accounts for PCHR, preventing the organization from sending or receiving any funds. Notably, the executive order issuing the sanctions prohibits 'the making of any contribution or provision of funds, goods, or services by, to, or for the benefit of' anyone under these sanctions, and those who do so in violation of the order risk up to \$250,000 in civil fines and a maximum of 20 years in prison. This means all staff have been working on an entirely voluntary basis without regular compensation, under the preexisting conditions of an ongoing genocide, during which PCHR's three offices in Gaza have been targeted and completely destroyed.²⁶⁴ Al Mezan's staff have also been working on a voluntary basis under similar conditions, as Israel destroyed the organization's offices in Jabaila and Rafah and damaged its Gaza City office, with documents and office supplies dispersed among the rubble.²⁶⁵

PCHR has also shared that following the sanctions, its U.S.-based donors immediately withdrew all of their funding and cut off communications with PCHR, fearing risk of financial penalties and criminal liability for engagement with the sanctioned organization. Moreover, the sanctions have in general contributed to an overall atmosphere of fear regarding engagement with PCHR, and in some cases overcompliance with U.S. sanctions, as many European donors and partners have also withdrawn funding from and ceased partnerships with the organization.

Moreover, the sanctions have reached beyond operational impact and have touched the communities that PCHR serves. The organization has heard from Palestinian victims who have become afraid of what the US's sanctions mean for them and worry for their safety and that of their loved ones. Some of these victims have also become fearful of engaging in public-facing events and with UN bodies.

²⁶⁴ Margherita Capacci, Justice Info .Net, Life under sanctions: 'We are like Outcasts' (20 March 2026), <https://www.justiceinfo.net/en/156738-we-are-like-outcasts.html>.

²⁶⁵ <https://www.justiceinfo.net/en/156738-we-are-like-outcasts.html>.

For PCHR, sanctions have likewise shifted operations away from its mandate of documenting violations on the ground for judicial bodies such as the ICC and advocating for an end to the ongoing genocide in Gaza and crimes committed in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, as the organization has instead been forced to divert energy to mitigate the impacts of the sanctions.

PCHR's access to digital public spaces has also been restrained, as Youtube removed its account, along with those of Al-Haq and Al Mezan, deleting more than 700 videos documenting Israeli violations of international humanitarian law in the territories across the three organizations.

On 29 September 2022, Namibia brought up the situation of the designation of Palestinian human rights organisations as terrorist organisations by Israel at the 51st session of the UN Human Rights Council during the Interactive Dialogue on the report on reprisals with the Assistant Secretary General on Human Rights.²⁶⁶

Morocco

Enaama Asfari and Claude Mangin-Asfari

In November 2016, the Committee against Torture (CAT) found that Morocco had breached six provisions of the Convention against Torture and had committed acts of torture against Sahrawi human rights activist **Enaâma Asfari**.²⁶⁷ Asfari had been campaigning for the self-determination of Western Sahara, a former Spanish colony that remains under Moroccan occupation despite a 1992 UN ruling for a referendum on independence, which has yet to be complied with. In their decision, the CAT requested that Morocco provide redress and compensation to Enaâma Asfari, and 'refrain from any form of pressure, intimidation or reprisals ... and enable the complainant to receive visits from his family in prison'. However, following the CAT's decision, the complainant was subjected to a range of vexatious actions, and his relatives were not able to visit him in prison. In a letter to Morocco, the CAT underlined the 'seriousness of the allegations' of reprisals and called on Morocco to fully comply with the Committee's decision.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁶https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/61/SP/48548_56_a26077e7_5deb_4c5c89c4_2e488b85da21.docx.

²⁶⁷ <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G17/093/43/PDF/G1709343.pdf?OpenElement>.

²⁶⁸ https://web.archive.org/web/20220327134707/https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CAT/Share_d%20Documents/MAR/INT_CAT_RLE_MAR_8705_F.pdf

The case of Ennaâma Asfari was included in the 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022 reports of the Secretary-General on alleged deterioration of detention conditions following the decision of the Committee against Torture on his case in 2016 (CAT/C/59/D/606/2014). Reported reprisals in the form of an entry ban against **Claude Mangin-Asfari**, the wife of Asfari, were also included in the 2019 report of the Secretary-General.

The case was inexplicably excluded from the 2023,2024 and 2025 report of the Secretary-General. The reprisals already reported to the Secretary-General in the form of a ban on entry into the country against Claude Mangin-Asfari, are still ongoing. In 10 years, Mangin-Asfari has only been allowed to visit her husband once, following a hunger strike she went on in 2018. Since then, she has been permanently banned from entering Moroccan territory and has not been able to see her husband again. Furthermore, Asfari is also prevented from receiving mail.

Between March 30 and June 2, 2025, Claude Mangin-Asfari participated in the 'March for Freedom,' which passed through 10 cities in France and 10 cities in Spain to demand the release of all Sahrawi political prisoners, including Naâma Asfari. Mangin-Asfari, together with other participants in the March, faced numerous acts of retaliation. In 5 of the 10 cities they passed through in France (Ivry-sur-Seine, Tours, Poitiers, Angoulême, and Béziers), they faced violence from Franco-Moroccan associations orchestrated by the Moroccan consulates in France, which attempted to silence them through verbal and physical attacks, while pressuring the managers of the venues hosting their meetings and gatherings—the goal being to have the March banned and prevent them from exercising their right to free speech. In most of the cities along the route, they organized workshops to write letters to Sahrawi prisoners, which resulted in 350 letters being mailed to all the prisoners; none were distributed to the prisoners by the Moroccan prison authorities. On May 31, 2025, a group of 14 French and Spanish activists, which included Mangin-Asfari and four elected officials from Tangier, who had boarded a Spanish ferry in Algeciras, were prevented from disembarking in Tangier, effectively barring them from traveling to Kenitra to visit Asfari in prison. The crossing was marred by violent incidents involving some twenty Moroccan security force representatives in plain clothes, while no members of the Spanish law enforcement were present on the boat to protect them.

Peru

Amendments to the law governing the Peruvian Agency for International Cooperation (APCI)

In March 2025, the Congress of Peru adopted amendments to the law governing the Peruvian Agency for International Cooperation (APCI) that significantly restrict the activities of civil

society organisations receiving international funding and may hinder their engagement with regional and international human rights mechanisms. The amendments classify as a 'very serious' offence the use of international cooperation funds to provide legal advice, assistance or financial support for judicial, administrative or other actions against the Peruvian State. As a result, organisations that support victims in bringing cases or petitions before regional or international human rights mechanisms could face sanctions.

The law also requires NGOs registered with APCI to obtain prior approval of their annual activity plans before carrying out programmes or projects, granting the agency broad discretionary powers to supervise and sanction organisations. Penalties for non-compliance include substantial fines, suspension of benefits, cancellation of registration and possible judicial dissolution. In addition, the law prohibits NGOs from engaging in activities related to the country's 'internal politics,' a broadly defined concept that could encompass activities such as monitoring public policies, supporting civic mobilisation, or documenting human rights violations. Civil society organisations have warned that these measures undermine freedom of association, restrict access to justice, and may create a chilling effect on organisations that assist individuals and communities in seeking accountability and engaging with regional and international human rights bodies.

Prior to the adoption of the amendments, several UN Special Procedures mandate holders raised concerns in a communication to the Peruvian Government ([OL PER 4/2024](#)), warning that the proposed reforms could severely affect the right to freedom of association and restrict organisations' ability to carry out national and international advocacy, including engagement with international human rights mechanisms. The experts cautioned that the measures could undermine Peru's international human rights obligations and contribute to increased impunity by limiting the capacity of civil society and human rights defenders to support victims in seeking accountability.

Russia

1. New legislation in Russia violating the right to access and communicate with international bodies and mechanisms

In April 2025, Russia passed a law that bans 'foreign agents' from 'any educational activity,' expanding the criteria of who constitutes a foreign agent to include 'assistance to international organizations or foreign State bodies' deemed to threaten national security.²⁶⁹ Additionally, effective as of September 2025, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation reported on Russia's expanding deployment of law designating organizations with positions critical of the state's actions as 'foreign agents,' thereby revoking

²⁶⁹<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session60/advance-version/a-hrc-60-59-aev.pdf>, citing Federal Law No. 100-FZ of 21 April 2025.

their eligibility for ‘socially oriented’ status and financial support from the government. Imposing further restrictions, Russia passed a law introducing more stringent financial penalties for non-compliance with the foreign agents law, allowing the government to fine organizations that do not comply with the law’s requirements up to \$5400.²⁷⁰

Similarly, Russia has continued designating certain organizations as ‘undesirable,’ effectively criminalizing their engagement with foreign and international organizations, banning their operations in the Russian Federation, and enabling prosecution under article 284.1 of Russia’s Criminal Code. This has resulted in at least 37 convictions reported as of September 2025. As of 24 July, 2025, the Russian Federation had designated 245 organizations as ‘undesirable,’ 46 of them having been added since the beginning of 2025 (as of the date of publication of the SR’s report, 15 September 2025).²⁷¹ Those organizations labeled as ‘undesirable’ include, among others, Amnesty International, the Elton John AIDS Foundation, the British Council, Yale University, and Reporters sans frontières international/Reporters without Borders International, as well as six organizations founded by Russians in exile.²⁷²

The Human Rights Council has noted these regulations, expressing alarm at the use of such measures to penalize and criminalize cooperation with international organizations and punish those who engage with United Nations human rights mechanisms.²⁷³ Relatedly, the Council adopted a resolution on 7 October 2025 expressing concern at the designation of at least 55 indigenous Peoples’ organizations as well as other regional and minority groups to its list of ‘extremist organizations,’ further entrenching criminalization of civic activity.²⁷⁴

On 28 April 2023, Article 284.3 was added to the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation it criminalises assistance in the enforcement or execution of decisions relating to the criminal prosecution of public officials or persons participating in armed conflicts on Russia’s side issued by an international organisation to which the Russian Federation is not a member State, or by a foreign State body. Given the lack of legislative intent and the vague wording used, the law could be interpreted to intimidate those cooperating or seeking to cooperate with international organisations.

²⁷⁰<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session60/advance-version/a-hrc-60-59-aev.pdf>, citing Federal Law No. 171-FZ of 24 June 2025.

²⁷¹<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session60/advance-version/a-hrc-60-59-aev.pdf>, citing <https://minjust.gov.ru/ru/documents/7756/> (in Russian).

²⁷²<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session60/advance-version/a-hrc-60-59-aev.pdf>.

²⁷³ <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/RES/60/21>.

²⁷⁴ <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/RES/60/21>.

Clearly, the article aims at the decisions of the International Criminal Court (ICC). The ICC was expressly mentioned during the second reading of the bill,²⁷⁵ and the Chairman of the State Duma, later noted that the law was adopted because of the ‘unlawful’ actions of international organisations including the ICC.²⁷⁶ In the context of the arrest warrants issued by the ICC against Vladimir Putin and Maria Alekseyevna Lvova-Belova,²⁷⁷ the word ‘decisions’ is broadened to not only refer to final judgements, but any type of order or act that an international organisation issues relating to criminal prosecution.

On 14 February 2024 Vladimir Putin signed the law amending provisions on property confiscation in the Criminal Code.²⁷⁸ The amendments extend asset confiscation to those convicted under Article 284.3 of the Criminal Code for assisting in the execution of decisions by foreign state bodies or international organisations not involving Russia.²⁷⁹

The vagueness of the article can also be used to do an expansive interpretation and include any communication with an international organisation provided that Russia is not a State party to that particular organisation. This would include applications submitted to the European Court of Human Rights, as such decisions often implicate the obligation to prosecute and Russia is not a State member to the European Convention on Human Rights.²⁸⁰ This raises concerns as UN bodies, including human rights mechanisms could be captured under this law, exposing human rights defenders who communicate and advocate for actions and accountability within the UN system.

Article 275.1 was introduced to the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation on 14 July 2022. It criminalises confidential cooperation with a foreign government, international or foreign organisation in order to assist them in activities knowingly directed against the security of the Russian Federation.²⁸¹ The official response from the Government of Russia to the bill noted that ‘certain provisions of the bill contain evaluative and not clearly defined terms’ in particular,

²⁷⁵ The transcript is available on the page of bill No. 232768-8 on the official portal of the Federal Assembly: <http://duma.gov.ru/news/56895> (in Russian).

²⁷⁶ Quote from the official website of the State Duma, <http://duma.gov.ru/news/56895/>.

²⁷⁷ Press Release, Situation in Ukraine: ICC judges issue arrest warrants against Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin and Maria Alekseyevna Lvova-Belova, (17 Mar. 2023), <https://www.icc-cpi.int/news/situation-ukraine-icc-judges-issue-arrest-warrants-against-vladimir-vladimirovich-putin-and> (in Russian).

²⁷⁸ The law on the ‘Amendments to the Russian Federation Criminal procedure Code’: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/document/0001202402140012?index=1> (Russian).

²⁷⁹ Press release, Putin Signs Law Enabling Asset Seizure for Convictions Related to Desertion, Genocide, and ‘Fake News’ about Army,’ Meduza (14 Feb. 2024), <https://meduza.io/en/news/2024/02/14/putin-signs-law-enabling-asset-seizure-for-convictions-related-to-desertion-genocide-and-fake-news-about-army>.

²⁸⁰ BBC News Russian, Gosduma uzhestochila Ugolovnyy kodeks. Komu grozit pozhiznenny srok i opasno li teper' obrashchat'sya v YESPCH? [The State Duma has tightened the Criminal Code. Who faces a life sentence and is it dangerous now to apply to the ECtHR?] (18 April 2023), <https://www.bbc.com/russian/news-65317985> (in Russian).

²⁸¹ The federal law dated 14.07.2022 No. 260-FZ amending the Criminal Code is available on the official portal of the government of the Russian Federation: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001202207140023> (in Russian).

‘activities directed against the security of the Russian Federation’ which ‘does not align with the constitutional requirements of clarity, certainty and unambiguity of legal norms.’²⁸²

Given the ambiguous nature of the legislation, there is concern that it could be interpreted in a manner that serves to intimidate, restrict engagement and criminally prosecute individuals who communicate with international bodies, including the UN and related international organisations, and particularly given that it is a well-established practice of the Russian courts to maintain the criminal cases under Article 275.1 closed to public.

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty journalist Nika Novak is the first journalist sentenced under Article 275.1. On 26 November 2024, she was sentenced to four years in prison.²⁸³ Based on the ‘Perviy Otdel’ report issued in December 2024, a total of 38 people were convicted under Article 275.1 in Russia that year.²⁸⁴ Due to challenges of establishing the exact number of detained and sentenced citizens under article 275.1, investigators assume actual numbers are higher.²⁸⁵

These laws have chilling effects on victims, applicants, their representatives and human rights defenders seeking justice and advocating for accountability.

On 28 September 2023, Czechia,²⁸⁶ Liechtenstein,²⁸⁷ Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine²⁸⁸ raised the measures to criminalise assistance to and cooperation with international bodies in Russia at the 54th session of the UN Human Rights Council during the Interactive Dialogue on the Secretary General’s report on reprisals.

2. Daria Anatolevna Egereva and Natalia Leongardt

²⁸² Quotes from the ‘Official response of the Government of Russia’ available on the page of the bill No. 130406-8 on the official portal of the Federal Assembly: <https://sozd.duma.gov.ru/bill/130406-8> (in Russian).

²⁸³ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Case of Nika Novak: <https://about.rferl.org/advocacy/imprisoned-journalists/nika-novak/>.

²⁸⁴ Perviy Otdel 2024 Investigation: <https://dept.one/story/izmena-2024/> (Russian).

²⁸⁵ Database published by Perviy Otdel on cases under articles 275, 275.1 and 276 https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1ck_P8FVSjG71YI3TCrynI-n1zZOItVpRcqP5W3zOu_l/edit?gid=977030097#gid=977030097 (Russian).

²⁸⁶ https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/70/SP/59546_60_9e993a89_768c_4645_8804_af603f9ae875.docx.

²⁸⁷ https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/70/SP/60447_60_9f801212_b5e3_46b6_aa7c_9d07406a5d7c.docx.

²⁸⁸ https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/70/SP/58413_60_56f44fd8_3947_42ea_9853_17b193a63a5d.docx.

Daria Anatolevna Egereva, a Russian citizen of indigenous Selkup ethnicity was detained by the Russian authorities on 17 December 2025 and was charged with participation in the activities of a terrorist organisation on 18 December 2025. The charges carry a minimum of 10 years and a maximum of 20 years imprisonment. Egereva, a non-violent indigenous rights defender, is co-chair of the International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change (IIPFCC), which immediately called for her unconditional release. Egereva's arrest followed her return on 13 December 2025 from a business trip which included her participation in UNFCCC COP in Belém, Brazil (10-21 November).

Egereva was arrested together with **Natalia Leongardt**, who has been liaising with UN offices since around 2005 for the informal network of indigenous human rights defenders and the Centre for the Support of the Indigenous Peoples of the North (CSIPN).

Since approximately 2015, Egereva has been regularly participating in UNFCCC COPs and SBSTA meetings, CBD related meetings, as well as in indigenous-specific bodies such as the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP), and the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

Both are non-violent indigenous rights defenders, who have never called for, endorsed, planned or executed any violent acts, nor called for segregation of indigenous peoples from the Russian Federation. Instead, they have in a fully lawful manner worked to uphold the human rights of indigenous peoples in Russia and to improve their socio-economic status by, inter alia, promoting female indigenous social entrepreneurship as a means of combating rural poverty, promotion of traditional knowledge for climate change adaptation and many related lines of activity aimed at supporting one of Russia's most disadvantaged population groups.

Harassment and intimidation against indigenous rights defenders by Russia

There are clear indications that their arrest is related to their indigenous rights activism within various UN bodies, underlined, inter alia, by the timeline of events preceding the arrests. The arrests were, inter alia, preceded by incidents of harassment and intimidation during the first meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Article 8(j) (SB8(j)-1) of the Convention on Biological Diversity, held in Panama from 27–30 October 2025. Sergei Chumarev, Deputy Director of the Department of Multilateral Cooperation on Human Rights at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation was observed engaging in actions perceived as attempts to monitor and potentially intimidate independent Indigenous representatives during the session. Additionally, on 28 October the Russian government delegation again called for the exclusion of non-state-sanctioned Indigenous representatives from Russia, explicitly naming Valentina Sovkina's recent appointment to the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. Sovkina was another target of the raids of 17 December that led to the arrests.

This behaviour follows a pattern. Russia consistently engages in acts criminalizing any domestic dissent while demanding the exclusion of any person outside of the reach of its oppressive apparatus from any UN fora or bodies.

A similar incident occurred during the 15th session of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP) in 2022, where Chumarev reportedly attempted to intimidate Yana Tannagasheva, an Indigenous human rights defender from Siberia. This incident triggered immediate reactions from Indigenous organisations, including the International Committee of Indigenous Peoples of Russia (ICIPR), as well as from UN mandate holders and Member States. At that time, several governments — including Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Norway, Iceland, and Canada — expressed serious concern and reaffirmed the importance of ensuring safe and unimpeded access for Indigenous human rights defenders to UN processes.

Fabricated charges

The accusations of participating in the activities of a terrorist organisation are clearly fabricated: On 22 November 2024, the Supreme Court ruled an organisation called 'Forum of Free Nations of Post-Russia' with whom neither Egereva nor Leongardt have any relation whatsoever to be terrorist organisations. Both the evidence provided by the FSB and the ruling itself are classified and therefore unavailable to the public. However, the FSB eventually added 172 organisations into its list of terrorist entities, as what it called 'structural subdivisions' of the forum. This list included an informal network of indigenous rights defenders called 'Aborigin Forum'. Their participation in the latter forms the basis for the terrorism charges against Egereva and Leongardt, even though Aborigin Forum was never in any way affiliated with the Forum of Free Nations of PostRussia and had even dissolved itself in Summer 2024, months before the ruling.

This was made possible by the overly broad and vague definition of 'terrorism' in the federal act 'On Counteracting Terrorism' (35-FZ, dated 6 March 2006), which allows for its arbitrary application against whomever the State intends to prosecute, regardless of any evidence of violence, violent intent, or even calls for violence.

3. Reprisals against ICC Prosecutor and judges

On 12 December 2025, the Moscow City Court convicted ICC Prosecutor Karim Khan and eight ICC judges on charges related to 'unlawful prosecution of Russian citizens', sentencing them to terms of imprisonment ranging from 3.5 to 15 years. Prosecutor Khan received a 15-year sentence, and all defendants were convicted in absentia and declared internationally wanted.

The charges stem directly from the ICC's judicial activities relating to war crimes committed in the context of Russia's war against Ukraine, including the issuance of arrest warrants

against Russian President Vladimir Putin and Russian Children’s Rights Commissioner Maria Lvova-Belova in March 2023 for the illegal deportation of Ukrainian children from the occupied Ukrainian territories to Russia.²⁸⁹

ICC judges and prosecutors enjoy the functional immunity accorded to them under the Rome Statute for acts performed in the exercise of their official functions, and that no domestic court may assert criminal jurisdiction over core judicial acts of an international tribunal.

The proceedings violate, among others, Russia’s obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, including the prohibition of arbitrary detention, the right to a fair trial before an independent and impartial tribunal, and the principle of legality. Trials in absentia conducted without effective notification, access to independent legal counsel, or the possibility of mounting a defence fall short of minimum due process standards. The case follows a broader pattern of transnational repression by Russian authorities aimed at silencing dissent and anti-war expression beyond Russia’s borders, including Russia’s growing use of criminal proceedings in absentia against Russian exiled critics of the war against Ukraine, human rights defenders, journalists, academics, and individuals cooperating with UN human rights mechanisms and international courts.

UN Special Procedures called on the Russian Government to annul the convictions, withdraw arrest warrants, end the abuse of criminal law against international judicial officials as well as critics abroad, and comply with international human rights obligations.

Saudi Arabia

Loujain Al-Hathloul

The case of **Loujain Al-Hathloul**, a woman human rights defender, was included in the 2019, 2020, 2021, 2023, 2024 and 2025 reports of the Secretary-General due to her disappearance, detention and torture following her engagement with the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in March 2018. In June 2020, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention found her detention arbitrary (A/HRC/WGAD/2020/33). In December 2020, Al-Hathloul was sentenced under national security related charges (SAU 3/2021). On 10 February 2021, she was released from prison on probation for three years and with a five-year travel ban. The Committee and Special Procedures mandate holders have addressed her situation repeatedly with the relevant authorities, including allegations of acts of reprisals for her cooperation with the United Nations.

²⁸⁹[https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2026/02/russia-must-end-reprisals-and-intimidation-icc-prosecutor-and-judges-un#:~:text=GENEVA%20-%20UN%20human%20rights%20experts.law%2C"%20the%20experts%20said.](https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2026/02/russia-must-end-reprisals-and-intimidation-icc-prosecutor-and-judges-un#:~:text=GENEVA%20-%20UN%20human%20rights%20experts.law%2C)

On 27 March 2024, Special Procedures mandate holders addressed the ongoing travel ban against Al-Hathloul, after the expiration of the 2 years and 10 months travel ban mandated in her sentence of December 2020 (SAU 1/2024), to which the Government responded. The travel ban against her should have ended on 12 November 2023, but on 14 November, the officer in charge of the passport office in Riyadh could not confirm to Al-Hathloul that it had been lifted. Two days later, when she attempted to cross the Saudi-Bahrain border, she was informed that she was subject to a travel ban with no expiration date. Mandate holders noted that the two complaints she filed with the Saudi Human Rights Commission (SHRC), and upon SHRC's recommendation also with the Presidency of State Security through the Board of Grievances, remained unanswered. On 21 February 2024, Al-Hathloul visited the passport office in Riyadh and learnt that she was still subject to a travel ban.

During the interactive dialogue of the Universal Periodic Review of Saudi Arabia held on 22 January 2024, the Member State received a recommendation to refrain from reprisals against human rights defenders for interaction with United Nations human rights mechanisms¹⁷¹ (A/HRC/56/4 paras. 43.65). Saudi Arabia accepted 273 recommendations fully and 24 partially, which did not include the latter (A/HRC/56/4/Add.1 paras. 3 and 25).

In terms of follow up, in December 2023, Al-Hathloul filed a judicial complaint against the Presidency of State Security (PSS), challenging her travel ban and calling for it to be lifted. However, when her complaint came before the Diwan al-Mazalem (Board of Grievances, an administrative court) nine months later, on 10 September 2024, the proceedings were perfunctory and failed to address her case. When the judge asked State Security for their response to Al-Hathloul's complaint, they simply said they had not received the case documents. At that point the judge declared himself incompetent to hear the complaint and closed the case for lack of jurisdiction. On appeal, the judge upheld the ruling, meaning that Al-Hathloul does not have any legal remedy against this illegal travel ban anymore.

Her family also remains under a travel ban. After Al-Hathloul's trip in February 2018 to attend the Human Rights Council' session, her family was put on a travel ban. They only found out when they tried to travel later, as some of the members of the family resided abroad but have been trapped inside since. They have raised the case to the PSS, the Human Rights Council, Ministry of the Interior and other instances on many occasions, and the case is still pending with the Council.

Al-Hathloul's case has been raised in the Human Rights Council four times by member States: by the Benelux countries at the 43rd session in 2020,²⁹⁰ by Finland at the 45th

²⁹⁰https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/33/SP/25086_42_ada6cfc0_57c2_4858_bf2c_0ff15922185d.docx.

session in 2020,²⁹¹ and by Liechtenstein at the 57th session in 2024 and the 60th session in 2025.²⁹²

Sudan

Noon Kashkosh

On 10 September 2024 during the 4th meeting of the 57th session of the UN Human Rights Council during the enhanced interactive dialogue with the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) on the situation of human rights in the Sudan,²⁹³ **Noon Kashkosh**, a Sudanese lawyer and woman human rights defender, delivered the statement by the International Service for Human Rights. The statement highlighted the FFM's findings of violations of human rights and humanitarian law by the warring parties which include 'extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests, torture, enforced disappearances, all forms of conflict-related sexual violence, forced evictions, the use of starvation as a weapon of war against civilians, targeting of human rights defenders and volunteers in the emergency rooms, the use of emergency courts that issue sentences in violation of the right to fair trial, the indiscriminate air strikes by Sudanese Armed Forces and artillery shelling by Rapid Support Forces, and the internet and telecommunications shutdown.'

In his response, the representative of the government of the Sudan made a statement (in Arabic) in which he stated: 'the politicization of the work of NGOs in this form misuses the platforms of the UN and violates the decisions that govern the work of NGOs. Regarding the NGO that allowed its name and status to be used as a political front for some individuals who are wanted by the judiciary - we will file a complaint against them at the NGO Committee. And we refer to the fact that there are no emergency courts in Sudan. Rather, ordinary national courts investigate these crimes.' We consider that this incident amounts to intimidation against Kashkosh and Said.

This case was inexplicably not included in the 2025 report of the Secretary-General. In terms of follow up, since her statement at the HRC in September 2024, Kashkosh has not been able to return to Sudan and has lost her job in Sudan due to the clear threats against — particularly after two of her colleagues working in the same human rights organisations were arrested. In addition, hostile media campaigns continue to target her whenever she speaks out about violations and advocates for the protection of human rights

²⁹¹https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/37/SP/29204_44_0632af8f_5d93_4c96_8507_31756621423b.docx.

²⁹²<https://www.llv.li/serviceportal2/diplomatische-vertretungen/genf/uno/2024/hrc57-9.9.-9.10.2024-/li-statement-hrc57-item-5-id-on-sg-report-on-reprisals-27-september-2024.pdf>;
https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/HRCDocuments/89/SP/89_18842490_2c0203a6-87fd-43cd-b7d5-6842f6599e31.docx.

²⁹³ <https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k1o/k1ok0e7kud>

and fundamental freedoms. Her inability to return to Sudan has caused her significant psychological and economic pressures.

Thailand

Angkhana Neelapaijit

The reports of the Secretary-General between 2017 and 2021 drew attention to alleged harassment, intimidation and an online smear campaign against human rights defenders who had documented cases of torture and ill-treatment by military in the Southern Border Provinces, including of individuals recipients of a grant of the UN Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture. Grant recipient Angkhana Neelapaijit, who continues to cooperate with the UN, was among those targeted (THA 6/2017). Neelapaijit was harassed on social media and, in November 2020, filed a civil case against the Office of the Prime Minister and Royal Thai Army concerning alleged disinformation and smear campaign online. She petitioned to have the reported fake news, offensive content and disinformation removed. Neelapaijit is a woman human rights defender and former National Human Rights Commissioner of Thailand and a member of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearance.

On 20 June 2024, special procedure mandate holders addressed allegations of surveillance of Neelapaijit during commemorative events held on 11 March 2024 for the families of individuals who have been forcibly disappeared, including his husband (THA 7/2024), to which the government responded. Reportedly, two individuals present at the event identified themselves as working for the Internal Security Operations Command when approached. One of them allegedly took photos of Neelapaijit and other participants, including relatives of other forcibly disappeared persons. They reportedly stated to have sent the photos to his supervisor. On 18 March 2024, Neelapaijit submitted a letter to the Minister of Justice, requesting an investigation into the alleged surveillance and intimidation targeting families of the disappeared. At the time of writing, no response has been received (THA 7/2024).

With regard to the ongoing case of Neelapaijit against the Office of the Prime Minister and Royal Thai Army, on 16 February 2023, the Court of Justice dismissed her civil case and Neelapaijit subsequently filed an appeal. The decision on the appeal is still pending. In another legal case concerning a defamation claim filed against Neelapaijit and other human rights defenders, (THA 3/2020), the matter is at the time of writing before the Appeal Court, and remains pending decision.

In terms of follow up, Neelapaijit has continued to face threats and intimidation in connection with her human rights work and cooperation with the United Nations. From October 2025 to the present, she has received death threats and other forms of intimidation, including online threats attributed to nationalist groups. Neelapaijit has reported these incidents to the Royal Thai Police, requesting that the authorities

investigate the threats and provide protection. However, according to the information received, the threats have persisted. In November 2025, United Nations human rights experts expressed alarm at renewed harassment and intimidation against Neelapaijit and other human rights defenders in Thailand, and called on the authorities to ensure their protection and conduct prompt and effective investigations into the allegations.²⁹⁴ Civil society organisations have also documented the alleged threats and intimidation and called on the authorities to take measures to guarantee her safety and the enabling environment for human rights defenders cooperating with international human rights mechanisms.²⁹⁵

In addition, Neelapaijit suffered further reprisals after invoking the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Thai government's 'Education for All' policy, when speaking about the situation of Cambodian children who had been studying in Thailand and were no longer allowed to attend Thai schools after the Thai government closed the Thai–Cambodian during the Thai–Cambodian armed conflict. Thai ultra-nationalists reacted angrily, and Neelapaijit became the target of fake news and hate speech on social media, including claims that she was born and educated in Cambodia. On 8 March 2026, some ultra-nationalists went so far as to fabricate information and edit her biography on Wikipedia with false claims in an attempt to incite hatred toward her. These attacks occurred as debate reignited over whether the Thai government should fund compulsory education for the children of Cambodian migrant workers living in Thailand. The edits to her biography on Wikipedia, which claimed that she was born in Cambodia, led many Thai people to criticize her and direct hate speech toward her.²⁹⁶

Venezuela

1. NGO law

The 2024 report of the Secretary-General on reprisals included follow up information on the proposed Bill on the control, regularisation, performance, and financing of non-governmental and related organisations, which had also been included in the 2023 report, noting its impact on the ability of civil society groups to carry out their work, including their cooperation with the United Nations. In the 2024 report, the Secretary-General documented that mandate holders, the International Independent Fact-Finding Mission on Venezuela, and OHCHR

²⁹⁴ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Press release: 'Thailand: UN experts alarmed by renewed harassment and intimidation of human rights defenders' (Nov. 2025).

²⁹⁵ Front Line Defenders, 'Thailand: Authorities must protect human rights defenders Angkhana Neelapaijit and ...', statement, available at: <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/statement-report/thailand-authorities-must-protect-human-rights-defenders-angkhana-neelapaijit-and>

²⁹⁶ https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=1420268206812350&id=100064875510284&mibextid=wwXlfr&rdid=98rKnzYtvpVz4xoB.

continued to express concerns about the bill and urged the Government to refrain from its adoption, which could hinder the delivery of aid and life-saving humanitarian assistance. On 9 January 2024, the President of the National Assembly announced a public consultation on the content of the bill to facilitate a second discussion that could ultimately lead to its approval. On 12 January the National Assembly resumed the discussion of the bill.

In terms of follow up, on 15 August, the Venezuelan National Assembly approved the Bill. The High Commissioner noted in December 2024 that Restrictive legislation, such as the Simón Bolívar Law and the NGO Law, risk seriously infringing on the exercise of fundamental freedoms of expression, assembly, association, and political participation.²⁹⁷ In accordance with the law, NGOs have been required to update their registration by 14 February. NGOs that don't register face potential prosecution while those that have complied face the possibility of being more closely monitored. The Simón Bolívar Liberator Law against the Imperialist Blockade and in Defence of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela', approved on 28 November provides for sanctions of up to 30 years in prison for direct or indirect collaboration with governments, entities or individuals that promote, implement or support international sanctions against the Venezuelan state. It has clear implications for those that engage with international human rights mechanisms and bodies.

Following its implementation, the bill has forced NGOs to comply with expensive and burdensome reporting and registration requirements in order to remain functioning, or otherwise has forced civil society organizations to relocate abroad, 'go underground,' or cease operation entirely. Venezuelan anti-corruption NGO Transparencia Venezuela, for example, announced that it was closing its domestic office and would continue work from exile, noting their work was 'incompatible' with the new regulations. Some organizations who have shut down have refrained from disclosing it publicly to protect the safety of their members.²⁹⁸ Notably, civil society actors in Venezuela experienced a sharp increase in arrests, detention, and targeting following the bill's passage.

In response to passage of the bill and its potential to criminalize human rights work, Human Rights Watch and others have called for the UN Secretary General and the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to implement strategies in collaboration with the UN team in Venezuela to protect civil society organizations from escalating harassment and repression.²⁹⁹

Yemen

²⁹⁷<https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2024/12/high-commissioners-update-human-rights-council-venezuela>.

²⁹⁸<https://reliefweb.int/report/venezuela-bolivarian-republic/venezuelas-new-ngo-law-and-us-funding-freeze-are-death-blow-countrys-civil-society>.

²⁹⁹<https://www.hrw.org/report/2025/04/30/punished-seeking-change/killings-enforced-disappearances-and-arbitrary-detention>

Mwatana Organization for Human Rights

The case of the **Mwatana Organization for Human Rights**, a Sana'a-based civil society organization, and members of its staff, has been included in reports of the Secretary General since 2021, and previously in 2019, due to detention and prevention of travel following engagement with the United Nations Security Council and United Nations human rights mechanisms (SAU 8/2018; YEM 4/2018). On 25 January 2022, the Chairperson of Mwatana, **Radhya al-Mutawakel**, briefed the Security Council on the situation in Yemen following which she was subjected to a smear campaign and threats on social media.

According to information received by OHCHR, on 17 April 2025, local administrative authorities in the city of Taiz reportedly issued a directive banning Mwatana's activities. Allegedly, public messages were subsequently shared on social media platforms urging the authorities to arrest Radhya Al-Mutwakel should she enter the city and stating that individuals or entities cooperating with Mwatana or its Chairperson should be subjected to legal action.

Thirty-one incidents against Mwatana staff were documented during the reporting period for the 2025 'Secretary-General' report by various parties to the conflict, the majority of which were reportedly attributed to the Houthis (Ansar Allah). These acts aimed to obstruct the organization's work in monitoring and documenting human rights violations and providing legal support to victims of arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, and torture. The reported incidents included arbitrary detention, travel bans, restrictions on freedom of movement, threats of detention or liquidation, summonses, interrogations, and other forms of harassment in ten governorates, including Sana'a, Taiz, Hadhramout, Hudaydah, Lahj, Dhale, Aden, Ibb, Sa'adah, Amran, and Hajjah.

In terms of follow up, from late April 2025 until the end of February 2026, the Mwatana team was subjected to at least 15 retaliatory actions by parties to the conflict and authorities affiliated with them. These ranged from threats of liquidation or detention, harassment, arbitrary suspension, and the issuance of a public memorandum banning its work. Ansar Allah Group (Houthis) are responsible for 12 of the total recorded incidents, as follows: seven incidents of harassment, three incidents of threats, one incident of suspension and restriction of freedom of movement, and one incident of arbitrary detention

The internationally recognized government is responsible for two incidents of threats in addition to issuing a public memorandum to suspend Mwatana's work, ordering entities not to engage with its team, and pursuing and detaining them in areas under its control and under the control of the Southern Transitional Council. The Southern Transitional Council is responsible for one incident of suspension and investigation out of the total incidents recorded during the period covered by this update.

Examples of retaliatory actions against the team during the reporting period:³⁰⁰

³⁰⁰ <https://www.mwatana.org/posts-en/affirming-it-reserves-all-legal-rights-en> and <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/12/16/yemen-government-escalates-repression-against-civil-society>.

- On the afternoon of Monday, 27 October 2025, the Security and Intelligence Service affiliated with the Ansar Allah Group (Houthis) authorities in Al Hudaydah governorate detained Mwatana's **field researcher in Al Hudaydah**. He remained arbitrarily detained until 11 February 2026. During his detention he was placed in solitary confinement for 50 days.
- A **newly appointed researcher** in 'Amran governorate was threatened with arrest and security pursuit by Ansar Allah Group (Houthis) if she continued working with the organization to monitor and document violations. Accordingly, the researcher stopped working with the organization for fear of arrest or other forms of harm. This is the second researcher in Amran governorate to be threatened, pursued, and forced to leave Mwatana.
- Following the campaign launched against Mwatana by authorities of the internationally recognized government in areas under their control in mid-April 2025, the director of Taiz governorate's office contacted **Mwatana's lawyer** in Taiz and informed her that the Taiz axis command — a faction affiliated with the internationally recognized government forces — had told her she would be arrested along with various Mwatana staff in the governorate. The lawyer informed them that she had resigned and no longer works with Mwatana for fear of arrest.
- On 27 November 2025, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor of the internationally recognized government issued an official memorandum banning engagement with Mwatana for Human Rights in areas under the control of several parties within the internationally recognized government and the Presidential Leadership Council. The memorandum relied on the designation of Ansar Allah Group (Houthis) as a terrorist organization and accused Mwatana of working in support of Houthis agendas. The memorandum created additional obstacles for the organization and its staff and increased the level of potential risks they face while working in areas under the Presidential Leadership Council's control.

It should be noted that Mwatana holds valid legal registration in the capital, Sana'a, which has been renewed annually since its initial issuance in April 2013. The organization also holds legal registration issued by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor in Aden, which it has also renewed annually. In 2023, at the time of the annual renewal, Mwatana submitted all required documents and paperwork for renewal to the ministry in Aden and complied with all subsequent requests until the file was completed and forwarded to the Minister of Social Affairs. Despite months of continuous follow-up with the ministry in Aden, Mwatana for Human Rights did not receive any written and substantiated refusal to renew its work permit. The Organization's work permit in Aden has not been renewed yet due to a rejection by the authorities.

UNRESOLVED CASES NEVER INCLUDED IN THE REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

COUNTRY / ENTITY	YEAR(S) SUBMITTED BY ISHR	INDIVIDUAL OR ORGANISATION
China	<u>2025</u>	Yerbakyt Otarbay
China	<u>2025</u>	Abduweli Ayup
China	2020- <u>2025</u>	Chinese Human Rights Defenders (CHRD)
China	2023- <u>2025</u>	Two individuals engaging with the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR)
China	2024- <u>2025</u>	Intimidation and surveillance during China's UPR in January 2024
China	<u>2025</u>	Intimidation and surveillance by GONGOs
Nicaragua	2023- <u>2025</u>	Anexa Brendalee Alfred Cunningham
Russia	2019- <u>2025</u>	Johannes Rohr
UN Women	2021- <u>2025</u>	Hui-Jung Chi

UNRESOLVED CASES INCLUDED IN THE REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL BUT NO LONGER FOLLOWED UP ON

COUNTRY / ENTITY	YEAR(S) INCLUDED IN SECRETARY-GENERAL REPORT	INDIVIDUAL OR ORGANISATION
China	2017, 2019, 2020	Dolkun Isa
Djibouti	2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023	Kadar Abdi Ibrahim
Egypt	2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024	Mohamed el-Baqer
France	2023, 2024	Assa Traoré
Nicaragua	2020, 2022, 2023	Anibal Toruño
Rwanda	2022	Noël Zihabamwe
Venezuela	2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023	Lourdes Afiuni
Venezuela	2019, 2020, 2021, 2022	Fernando Albán
Vietnam	2022, 2023	Pham Doan Trang
Vietnam	2014, 2020, 2021	Pham Chi Dung
Vietnam	2021, 2022	Nguyen Tuong Thuy

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations to States

- States must refrain from intimidation and reprisals against those who cooperate or seek to cooperate with the UN or regional human rights bodies and mechanisms.
- States must investigate and ensure that any allegations of such acts, whether perpetrated by State or non-State actors, are subject to a full, independent and impartial investigation, and ensure that perpetrators are held accountable, and victims are provided with effective remedies.
- States should develop and implement a comprehensive suite of measures to ensure that all persons are able to exercise, individually or in association with others, the right of unhindered access to, and communication with, international human rights bodies and mechanisms and ensure protection from any form of intimidation or reprisal associated with such cooperation, including by: (a) adopting legislative provisions that specifically enshrine this right and prohibit intimidation or reprisals; and (b) reviewing and repealing legislative provisions that may hinder, restrict or impair the enjoyment of this right.
- States should consistently and publicly acknowledge the vital role played by human rights defenders in establishing and safeguarding democratic institutions and processes, as well as the rule of law, and in the promotion and protection of human rights.
- States should cooperate fully, substantively and promptly with the UN's human rights mechanisms and bodies in cases of alleged intimidation or reprisals, including by providing good faith undertakings to prevent and investigate cases and to report back to the relevant body or mechanism — including the Human Rights Council, its Special Procedures, the General Assembly and the Assistant Secretary-General — as to investigative, protective, prosecutorial and remedial steps taken.
- Candidate States for membership of the Human Rights Council should include in their pledges a commitment to ensuring that civil society organisations can conduct their work—including expressing views critical of State authorities—without undue restriction or fear of reprisal, harassment or intimidation.
- Members of the General Assembly, as States electing the members of the Human Rights Council, should not support any candidate State for membership that has

engaged in systematic or widespread reprisals or that has failed to investigate and pursue accountability for cases of reprisals.

- States should hold other States accountable by raising specific cases of intimidation and reprisals in the Human Rights Council. In particular, States should use item 5, and the interactive dialogue at the Human Rights Council called for in resolution 36/21 to ensure adequate attention is focused on the Secretary-General's report on reprisals and to share good practices, challenges and lessons learned and effectively hold other States accountable when the report is presented to the Council.
- States should consider making voluntary contributions and otherwise support and enable the work of the senior official on reprisals.
- States should provide OHCHR with adequate resourcing to strengthen its capacity for data collection and analysis on cooperation.
- Member States that use intimidating tactics to deter cooperation with UN mechanisms should be thoroughly investigated and held accountable. This accountability needs to look beyond the high-profile severe attacks and reprisals, and the visible actions States take in New York or Geneva-based forums. States also need to be called to account for quieter approaches they are using inside their country every day to sustain an atmosphere of fear and inhibition.
- States should encourage and fund OHCHR to expand its field presences; and apply greater political pressure to rights-abusing States who refuse to allow such monitoring or seek to cut resources to support it. OHCHR (or the Department of Peacekeeping Operations - DPKO) human rights monitoring presences help to overcome the remoteness of the UN's human rights system and can provide a more accessible and trustworthy way to bring a local human rights problem to the UN's attention.
- States should demand the implementation of the UN's Human Rights Up Front (HRUF) doctrine by UN Country Teams witnessing human rights abuse and intimidation.
- All Member States should issue standing invitations to Special Procedures and facilitate country visits, and they should encourage other States to do so as well. States should be held accountable whenever they prevent access to such visits or impede contacts with the experts on the ground.
- States should make non-cooperation more politically costly, for instance, by opposing the election of uncooperative States to the Human Rights Council or other human rights-related bodies.

Recommendations to human rights actors, including the UN, NGOs, academics, States

- Study and understand the psychological dynamics that underlie individual decisions about risk-taking.
- Encourage much more impact analysis that assesses the positive outcomes resulting from the use of UN human rights mechanisms and disseminate and popularise any impact analysis that exists. The system needs to give people on the ground a basis for making judgments about whether to go to the trouble of engaging.
- Develop and strengthen new tactics for raising awareness about UN mechanisms in more closed and repressed countries. The more repressive the situation, the less information is available to people about the potential of UN mechanisms.
- Acknowledge the structural inequities that make it more difficult for some victims and activists to access UN mechanisms and make an extra effort to compensate for them, by encouraging engagement and offering protection to those who are more isolated or marginalised.
- Improve the collection and management of data on all human rights abuses. This demands more collaboration among UN, NGO and academic data-based efforts that enable quantification and comparative ranking of abuse levels.
- Use data on abuses together with data on cooperation with the UN to identify countries where there is high abuse and low cooperation as well as those with high abuse and high cooperation. Best practice research should then extract lessons learned from countries with high levels of abuse and high levels of cooperation that may assist countries where intimidation has been more successful in sustaining inhibition.
- Recognise and prioritise intimidation as an invisible harm needing more careful measurement. Investigations going beyond high-level severe abuses should assess the more subtle and pernicious forms of intimidation that are more prevalent and have a constant inhibiting effect on the broader population.
- Implement careful survey-based studies to document the prevalence and patterns of incidents of State intimidation, as well as the consequent levels of inhibition of human rights action, resulting in a more quantified understanding of the scale of the problem. Where possible this could be a joint initiative involving the UN, NGOs and relevant and qualified academic institutions.
- Take advantage as much as possible of existing measurements of political space, civil liberties, and freedom, acknowledging some of the limitations of this existing data. These broader patterns of 'closed space' are linked to the dynamics of intimidation faced by local human rights actors and can serve as proxy measurements.

Recommendations to UN Bodies and Mechanisms

- UN bodies and mechanisms must recognise and act in conformity with their legal obligation to respect and protect the right of all persons to communicate with the body or mechanism in all aspects of its work and should take all necessary steps to prevent, protect against, and promote accountability for any alleged acts of intimidation or reprisals.
- UN bodies and mechanisms should be explicit regarding their condemnation of intimidation and reprisals against those who seek to cooperate and cooperate with them.
- Where relevant, bodies and mechanisms should follow the developing practice of designating a reprisals focal point or rapporteur to coordinate and strengthen the prevention of reprisals as well as ensure effective follow up to allegations.
- Where States fail to adequately investigate and ensure accountability in relation to credible allegations of intimidation and reprisals, the UN should ensure an international, independent investigation into the case, including through pressure or mandates by the Secretary-General, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council and the Human Rights Council itself.
- The UN human rights bodies and mechanisms should systematically gather evidence of incidents in which citizens were deterred in any way from cooperating during country visits, including violent as well as more subtle intimidations, and should publicise these obstacles and hold States accountable.

Recommendations to the OHCHR and UN human rights mechanisms

- Strengthen the feedback mechanisms so that those who use UN mechanisms receive prompt and adequate feedback about the progress of their case or information. Sometimes people make a substantial effort (and take risks) to provide information to the UN but then feel like it has disappeared into a black hole. The UN mechanisms that are more systematic and rigorous about feedback are more likely to build trust and encourage further engagement.
- Recognising that many victims and defenders consider any attention paid to their plight by the UN to be potentially protective in its impact, the UN mechanisms that rely on cooperation should implement more rigorous follow-up advocacy for those at risk to ensure that this protection is real and not just imagined, at both the case level and the policy level.
- Systematically track individual and civil society engagement with the Human Rights Council, Universal Periodic Review, Special Procedures, Treaty Bodies, field presences, country visits and other UN modalities of contact. This data should include tracking attempts to cooperate with the UN and not limit itself to the subset of cases that UN mechanisms acted on.
- If adequate financial and human resources for an exhaustive data-gathering initiative on cooperation are not forthcoming, the Assistant Secretary-General and OHCHR could begin by creating a partial database for the mechanisms for which gathering the data is most feasible.
- Once this data on cooperation is collated, produce a summary report each year analysing how many citizens of different countries are trying to make use of the UN system and enabling comparisons to assess whether that engagement is increasing or decreasing.
- Encourage all States to develop and implement stronger domestic policies and practices for the protection of human rights defenders and the investigation of threats and intimidation.
- Where there is no substantial UN human rights presence, other UN agencies should develop relationships with human rights defenders, help them to use UN human rights mechanisms, and offer follow-up and protection (through advocacy or other support) to those who do. When human rights monitoring is needed, the UN Country Team has an obligation to seek to fill this need, even when a country is blocking access to OHCHR.

Recommendations to the Assistant Secretary-General in relation to operationalisation of her mandate as the senior official on reprisals

Ensure that the position is visible and accessible to rights holders.

- Develop a public facing policy or working method so that rights holders and victims know where and how to submit information and what they can and cannot expect as a response and in terms of follow up.
- Ensure that rights holders and victims are kept regularly apprised of the status of their case – lack of transparency, information, and updates is a common feature of the various human rights communications mechanisms and procedures that needs to be addressed.
- Actively seek inputs and information on allegations of reprisals from the various UN bodies and agencies.
- Compile and maintain a publicly accessible database of cases and correspondence (with the consent of rights holders and victims), bringing greater visibility to cases and enabling follow-up by NGOs and States, including under the Item 5 General Debate at each Human Rights Council session.
 - Use the interactive dialogue at the Human Rights Council called for in resolution 36/21 to ensure adequate attention to the Secretary-General’s report on reprisals and to share good practices, challenges and lessons learned and effectively hold States accountable.
 - The burden should be shifted away from the victims to navigate the bureaucratic reporting requirements and proactively submit information by a specific deadline. Ideally, once a case has been documented, the burden should shift to the system to follow it up until it’s resolved.

Recommendations to the Secretary-General

- Uphold the moral authority and values of the UN by speaking out strongly and consistently against attacks on defenders and restrictions on civil society space and in support of vibrant, independent civil society at the UN. Such statements are important to show solidarity with defenders and increase public awareness and support for their work.
- It is incumbent on the Secretary-General to document attacks against mandate holders in the annual report, in particular given that, at HRC 60 in September 2025, States adopted resolution 60/23 by consensus, which, inter alia, recognises and included attacks against mandate holders ‘targeted in connection with the discharge of their functions’.
- Ensure that all UN staff, particularly senior staff, understand and champion the legitimate and important work of human rights defenders and provide all necessary protection and support to defenders at risk.
- Recognise that the work of human rights defenders is essential to international peace and security and that widespread and systematic attacks and restrictions on defenders may undermine international peace and security.
- Ensure that the Secretary-General’s report, and the presentation thereof, includes all open or unresolved cases, including those in which the State has not responded or provided any follow up information. This is crucial to addressing the current situation in which some States do not respond in the knowledge that if they remain silent long enough the case will no longer be included in the report.
- The UN Secretary-General, Assistant Secretary-General, OHCHR and other UN actors must resist member State pressures to censor or expunge any critique from UN documents or statements. UN actors who make unacceptable compromises to avoid friction with powerful member States need to be held accountable for not upholding UN principles.
- Recognise that systematic attacks and restrictions on human rights defenders may be an early warning sign of more widespread gross and systematic violations and take steps to promote prevention when such signs arise, including by bringing such situations to the attention of the Security Council through Article of the UN Charter.
- Adopt an UN-wide policy on the participation, promotion and protection of human rights defenders.
- The report’s structure should be tweaked to separate positive developments or resolved cases from negative developments because as it reads now, a State that has taken positive steps is listed alongside perpetrators.

Recommendations to the Human Rights Council

- To more effectively prevent reprisals, the Human Rights Council as a whole and/or its President and Bureau should provide guidance that clearly outlines the steps that the Human Rights Council will take upon receipt of information about credible risks of reprisals to ensure consistency of action across different terms of the presidency and memberships of the bureau.
- When acts of intimidation, harassment and reprisals occur during or in connection with Human Rights Council sessions against individuals who are seeking to participate, or participating, in Human Rights Council sessions or events, the Human Rights Council, acting through the president, has a responsibility to investigate and publicly denounce such acts, to ensure the integrity of its processes.
- The president, in consultation with the bureau, should continue to follow up on cases of alleged reprisals brought to their attention. This should include:
 - Investigating the allegation.
 - Where the allegation is verified and the safety of the defender will not be put at risk, sending a communication to the State concerned which (a) strongly condemns the allegations; (b) sets out what steps are required to prevent recurrence and provide an effective remedy; and (c) requests the State to report back urgently on the steps and measures taken in this regard.
 - Following up on all communications with States in this context; and
 - In accordance with the Human Rights Council's mandate to perform its work in a transparent manner, keeping and making publicly available the minutes of any relevant meetings, together with letters of allegation and correspondence on cases where requested by the victim or their representatives.
- The HRC president and bureau adopt a two-step approach, similar to that of UN Special Procedures communications, depending on the urgency of the case: urgent appeals are sent to States privately and then published after 48 hours in the public communication database; and letters of allegations are sent to States privately and then published after 60 days in the public communication database.
- When appropriate, the president of the Human Rights Council and the bureau should publicly identify and denounce specific instances of reprisals by issuing formal statements, conducting press-briefings, corresponding directly with the State

concerned, and publicly releasing such correspondence with and from victims and States where requested by the victim or their representatives.

- The president of the Human Rights Council and the bureau should also automatically submit cases brought to their attention to the Office of the Secretary-General for consideration for the annual report.
- The Human Rights Council should adopt resolutions that publicly and unambiguously identify and condemn reprisals, calling on States to uphold their human rights obligations by investigating, ensuring accountability, providing appropriate remedies and reporting back to the Human Rights Council on measures taken.
- To better ensure effective investigation and accountability, the Human Rights Council should seek information concerning actions taken by States to prevent and ensure accountability for reprisals, assess States' compliance with international human rights obligations, and call on States to take further action where they fall short of meeting those obligations.
- The Human Rights Council should require a State concerned to report back by including the discussion of its response to the risk or allegation of reprisals in Item 5 statements and in its next Universal Periodic Review report.
- The Human Rights Council should adequately monitor the very concerning pattern of attacks of a personal nature against mandate holders and Commissions of Inquiries and make clear that attacks of this kind will not be tolerated. These attacks constitute an attack on the Council itself.
- The Human Rights Council should consider strengthening the mandate of the senior official on reprisals, including by requesting more regular reporting, and that the senior official present the annual report of the Secretary-General on reprisals to the General Assembly and engage in an interactive dialogue on it.

Recommendations to the Special Procedures

- Special Procedures should ensure full and prompt investigations of allegations of intimidation and reprisals that consider the victim's protection needs and the respective roles of different parts of the UN. This should include private and/or public discussion with the State concerned to ensure they uphold their obligations to protect against violations.
- Special Procedures should also undertake specific efforts to work with all involved stakeholders, including the State concerned, to ensure non-recurrence and remedy for reprisals. In some cases, this might require extensive engagement and follow-up for meaningful action to occur.
- Special Procedures should continue to use public communications as a critical tool in raising the political costs of reprisal for States who would otherwise not be exposed.
- Special Procedures should work with Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, in their role as senior official on reprisals, to ensure a coherent and coordinated UN-wide response to acts of intimidation and reprisal.
- Special Procedures should create and maintain a comprehensive record of all cases of intimidation and reprisals against individuals and groups cooperating with Special Procedures, update the record regularly, and ensure that relevant cases are publicly accessible.
- Special Procedures should communicate cases to the president of the Human Rights Council under Items 3 or 5, so that unresolved or outstanding cases can be discussed in the context of the general debate under those Items.
- To allow for effective follow up on communications, including related to intimidation or reprisals, State responses should be translated and made public in a timely fashion.

Recommendations to the Treaty Bodies

- All Treaty Bodies should adopt the San José Guidelines on reprisals without further delay.
- Treaty bodies should implement the best practices identified in the note by the secretariat on the role of treaty body focal points or rapporteurs on reprisals including:
- raising concerns with State party authorities through written communications and follow-up

- using early warning and urgent action procedures where appropriate and relevant
 - raising concerns during dialogues with the State party and in concluding observations, lists of issues, lists of issues prior to reporting, and general comments
 - coordinating with other procedures
 - including information on cases of reprisals in reports to the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council
 - using protection and interim measures where relevant and appropriate
 - undertaking awareness-raising activities
 - reminding States parties of their primary obligation to prevent or refrain from acts of reprisal in the context of State party reviews
 - making information on reprisals available to the public, including communications with States parties, guidelines or policies, press releases, or other public statements.
 - using media to highlight specific cases or generalised practices of reprisal.
- Those Treaty Bodies that have adopted the San José Guidelines should work to ensure they are fully and effectively implemented.
- The Treaty Bodies' webpage on reprisals should include information regarding cases received, communications sent to States concerned, responses received and follow-up communications, while seeking to protect the confidentiality of victims when required.
- The annual meeting of chairpersons should review all cases of reprisals across all Treaty Bodies, assess actions taken by States and the Treaty Body concerned and coordinate on follow up to cases.
- Treaty Bodies should share the information they receive on reprisals with the Secretary-General to feed into his reports on reprisals.

Recommendations to the Security Council

- Act in conformity with its moral obligation to respect and protect the right of all persons to communicate with it and its mandated peace operations, and should take all necessary steps to prevent, protect against, and promote accountability for any alleged acts of intimidation or reprisals.
- Be explicit regarding its condemnation of intimidation and reprisals against those who seek to cooperate and cooperate with it and its peace operations.
- Include references to civil society, human rights defenders, and the risks of intimidation and reprisals in Security Council mandates, to more systematically consider the issue across the work of the Security Council, and consider threats against defenders, including intimidation and reprisals, as early indicators of conflict and instability.
- Contribute through public statements or language in relevant documents to a positive narrative about civil society representatives, including human rights defenders and victims, and their work, including as they contribute to the attainment of peace and security, with a view to ensuring an enabling environment.
- Where relevant, address issues of reprisals and the imperative of prevention, investigation, accountability, and remedy for acts of intimidation or reprisal in resolutions, decisions and statements.
- Consider raising the issue of reprisals in consultations and briefings with a view to increasing awareness and discussion of the issue.
- Raise the issue of intimidation and reprisals in the open debate on working methods with a view to ensuring that preventing and addressing reprisals are addressed in the compendium of working methods by the Informal Working Group on Documentation and other Procedural Questions (IWG).
- Raise specific cases of intimidation or reprisals, including publicly, to increase the political cost for perpetrating States committing them.
- Include an item on reprisals in its annual report and discuss means to prevent and address intimidation and reprisals in its debates on working methods.
- Consider adopting a public policy or guidance document on preventing and addressing intimidation and reprisals.
- Document cases of reprisals to systematically record knowledge of past instances of reprisals and actions taken to address them.



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