

## Training on engaging with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights: **Description**

Online mandatory briefings (2h + 2h): week of 28 September

In-person course: 15-21 October 2026

**Please read the information below before completing the online application form, which can be found [here](#).**

**Applications must be submitted before midnight in Dakar on 26 July 2026, and ONLY complete applications will be considered.**

### 1. Background

Human rights defenders play a vital role in pushing for sustainable human rights improvements. A free and vibrant civil society is essential to ensure States, businesses and other non-State actors respect, protect and fulfil all human rights for all and to hold them to account when they fail to do so.

[DefendDefenders](#), [Front Line Defenders](#) (FLD) and the [International Service for Human Rights](#) (ISHR), or 'the organisers', conduct regular courses on the use of the main human rights mechanisms, including the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights ([ACHPR](#)). This training will equip human rights defenders from Africa with the knowledge and skills to integrate the ACHPR into their existing work at the national level in a strategic manner. The programme also provides an opportunity for participants to engage in lobbying and advocacy activities at the ACHPR with the aim to affect change back home. It is based on the success of the [first edition](#) held in 2025 in Banjul, the Gambia.

### 2. The training & advocacy activities (15-21 October 2026)

**The training course allows African activists to benefit from valuable insights and advocacy support enabling them to develop their knowledge and skills, to make strategic use of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights in their national advocacy strategies.**

The expected venue is Dakar, Senegal and the training will take place in between the [NGO Forum](#) and the 89<sup>th</sup> session of ACHPR.

This training programme consists of the following elements:

- a) Access to the [ISHR Academy](#) e-learning platform, which includes interactive materials and toolkits, before and after the course.

- b) 1 live session ahead of the in-person training, 1 individual session on personal safety (2 hours + 2 hours)
- c) 2,5 days of in-person sessions, which will include:
  - ✓ Learn more about the work of the ACHPR and **how to engage strategically** with its mechanisms
  - ✓ Acquire knowledge and skills on the relevant African instruments and processes: State Periodic Review, Communications, country visits...
  - ✓ Case-studies scenarios to practise **real-life situations and submissions**
  - ✓ **Sharing** stories of good practices



Photos: Training ahead of ACHPR 2025 with participants and organisers, FLD & ISHR (copyrights: ISHR)

- d) Attendance of the [NGO Forum](#) organised by the African Center for Democracy and Human Rights Studies (ACDHRS), where defenders can **meet, discuss and learn more** about the challenges and strategies of CSOs around Africa (*funding contingent*).
- e) Attendance of the first day of the in-person session of the 89th ACHPR (*funding contingent*).
- f) Possibilities of attending side-events and other regional activities.

### 3. Advocacy opportunities

Organisers will provide support and advocacy accompaniment to support defenders to engage (in-person) with key advocacy opportunities during the 89th ordinary session of the ACHPR (October 2026). Such opportunities can include:

- Reports by key **Commissioners/ Special Procedures mandates** in the area of human rights defenders, women's rights, on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises
- Panel Discussions on issues affecting the protection of **human rights in Africa**
- State periodic reviews
- Resolutions submission within the NGO Forum

*Note: Organisers are exploring the possibilities of enabling participants to attend more days of the 89th session of ACHPR.*

### 4. Objectives

The objectives of the course fall into the following three broad categories:

- a) **Supporting human rights defenders from Africa:**
  - Enhance the ability of human rights defenders to engage strategically with the ACHPR, as well as to develop diplomatic and civil society networks;
  - Improve the quality of NGO participation in the ACHPR, with a view to exert a greater influence on human rights foreign policy;

- Share tools and knowledge, which human rights defenders can use to ensure their voice is central in regional human rights decision-making;
  - Explore and compare the benefits of engagement with these mechanisms, and examine how advocates can use them to bolster their work at the national level;
  - Develop strategies and lobbying techniques to increase the potential of human rights defenders' national and regional advocacy work.
- b) **Influencing the substantive outcomes of regional human rights mechanisms** in a positive manner, including ACHPR resolutions and the work of ACHPR thematic and country specific human rights experts (such as Special Rapporteurs).
- c) **Creating a peer group of human rights defenders** working on a diverse range of issues, identifying best practice in advocating for human rights change, and exchanging lessons and experiences in conducting regional/international advocacy.

## 5. Participants profile

This programme is directed at experienced **Africa-based human rights defenders in non-governmental organisations**, who have existing advocacy experience (5 years minimum) at the national level and some prior knowledge of the regional human rights system. Organisers support and promote solidarity with and between, defenders working on all human rights issues or contexts in Africa, which we recognise as **intersectional and interdependent**, such as equality and non-discrimination, environmental justice, accountability or transparency and rule of law.

The call is open to all the continent, and a particular focus will be given to participants from the **following countries**: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cap Vert, Côte d'Ivoire, Comoros, Democratic Republic Congo, Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritius, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, São Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia.

Final decisions regarding participants will be based upon the following criteria:

- Match between applicants' area of work/expertise and/or the opportunities provided by the 89th ordinary session of the ACHPR;
- Applicants' knowledge of human rights and their experience and willingness to engage with the ACHPR and integrate it effectively into domestic level advocacy in a sustainable manner;
- Applicants' experience of carrying out advocacy at the national and/or regional level;
- Applicants' advocacy responsibilities and role within their organisation;
- Applicants' with less opportunities to access the ACHPR;
- Applicants' willingness to contribute to peer education in a diverse group of participants;

**The course will be carried out in French and English with simultaneous interpretation.**

Organisers will also commit to ensure diversity and a fair balance between gender, geographical sub-regions and focus work of the HRDs.

## 6. Application process

By midnight Dakar time on **26 July 2026** each applicant must submit [a completed application form](#) with a reference letter **different** from your organisation & CV (**take some time to read carefully the requirements and collect the information you need**). We expect to receive a high number of applications. This means that we cannot accept many worthy candidates. Your understanding is highly appreciated. **ONLY complete applications will be considered.**

## **7. Cost**

Organisers will cover the cost of participation of all 11-12 selected candidates, this includes flights, visa, accommodation and food as well as NGO Forum fee. In principle, we can welcome more candidates if they are self-funded or can participate in the cost of the training. Please see the application form for more information. Candidates who plan to stay at the ACHPR session and have the funding for doing so are invited to indicate it in the form.

**Contact:** [training@ishr.ch](mailto:training@ishr.ch)