



BRIEFING PAPER

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THE SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN

Seychelles

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As part of its previous UPR in 2021, the Seychelles received 215 recommendations and accepted 209. It is important that these are all implemented. Like many countries, the Seychelles face challenges in making human rights a reality, including for human rights defenders (HRDs), migrant workers, and prisoners and those in pre-trial detention, and the government has often restricted human rights and/or turned a blind eye to human rights violations.

This constitutes direct government interference in the operation of associations.²

RISKS AND OFFICIAL RESTRICTIONS TO HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

1. The Public Gatherings Act adopted in 2015 still contains some restrictive provisions, including the need to give five days' notice to the police for gatherings of 10 or more people. It also authorises the Commissioner of Police to impose conditions or refuse the right of assembly for reasons of safeguarding public health, morals and safety, and sets conditions on the time and place of large gatherings.
2. The President of the United Workers Union of Seychelles (the Union) shared with ISHR that in 2021, under the restrictions linked to the COVID-19 pandemic, they notified the relevant authorities of its wish to organise a demonstration against the national television channel of Seychelles. The Union was informed its request had been rejected on the grounds that the venue was not suitable for the demonstration. The Union still held the demonstration, taking care to not block traffic. The police arrived on the scene. The next day, the Police arrived at the President's office with a fine of 5,000 euros for having breached the authorities' decision banning them from holding the demonstration, and threatened him with imprisonment if he refused to pay the fine.¹
3. In Seychelles, according to section 25 of the Associations Act 2022, once an association has elected its Board of Directors, it must seek permission from the Registrar's Office for the newly elected member to discharge their work.

4. In Seychelles, journalists have been known to practise self-censorship for fear of reprisals.³

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS FACING PARTICULAR RISKS

5. ISHR has reported that social discrimination against LGBTIQ+ activists remains a problem despite the decriminalisation of same-sex sexual relations in 2016.⁴
6. The members of the Commission for Women in Enterprise are striving to give women the means to compete and create their own products. Nevertheless, when women defend economic rights by trying to support the economic initiatives of other women, they regularly face social stereotypes and banking institutions encourage them to go look after their home instead of engaging in such activities.⁵

PRISON CONDITIONS

7. In January 2025, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, through the Country Rapporteur on Human Rights in the Republic of Seychelles and the Special Rapporteur on Prisons, Conditions of Detention, and Police Action in Africa expressed profound concern regarding the incidents that occurred at Montagne Posée Prison in Seychelles on 5 December 2024. Reports reaching the African Commission indicate the deaths of two detainees and injuries to others, including law enforcement personnel.⁶
8. The Association for Rights Information & Democracy (ARID) has issued a preliminary

¹ To be seen, heard and recognised, *The Defenders of Island Countries of Africa*, ISHR Report, 2025, p18-19 <https://ishr.ch/defenders-toolbox/resources/to-be-seen-heard-and-recognised-the-defenders-of-island-countries-of-africa/>

² <https://www.nation.sc/articles/18916/suspended-provisions-of-associations-act-would-kill-civil-society-ceps-says>

³ To be seen, heard and recognised, *The Defenders of Island Countries of Africa*, ISHR Report, 2025, p28

⁴ *Ibid*, p9

⁵ *Ibid*, p26

⁶ <https://achpr.au.int/en/news/press-releases/2025-01-23/reports-treatment-prisoners-seychelles>

report on the prison riot of 5th December, 2024. ARID has made several recommendations including to the prison service in Seychelles. The prison riot at the Montagne Posse Prison has led to the killing of two people and more than 100 injured severely. ARID documented that many of those still kept at the prison facility are in need of specialized medical care but they are being deprived of such. ARID is also calling for an inquest into the deaths, which occurred during and after the riot including excessive use of lethal weapons and violence against inmates. ARID's preliminary report on the incident is based on observation, information collected, testimonies gathered and objective analysis of all information collected.

9. The Association for Rights, Information and Democracy (ARID) has brought attention to continuous violations of human rights in the prison. ARID has recorded over 15 reports of inhumane treatment of inmates from family members of prisoners. The violation includes: use of excessive force by some prison wardens, delayed medical attention, emotional and physical abuse, prisoners being locked up in the dry smell for days, one inmate foreigner, allegedly died because of ill-treatment. AIRD is calling on the Commissioner of Prisons to respect the basic human rights to stop abuse in the prison immediately. The prison services commemorated the Mandela Rules, an international protocol aimed at ensuring humane treatment and upholding the dignity of individuals deprived of their liberty, however the very same entity is not respecting the United Nations Standard of Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners. ARID denounces the ongoing inhumane treatment of prisoners and the lack of appropriate mechanisms by the prison service to address these violations.

PROTECTION OF MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

10. Seychelles law does not provide for the granting of asylum or refugee status, and the government has no system nor safeguarding

procedure to provide protection to refugees. The government in cooperation with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other humanitarian organizations provide protection and assistance to asylum seekers. However, the immigration department did not cooperate with UNHCR in the case of two Yemenis in 2022. ARID reports that they were put at the detention centre, their phone taken from them with security officers guarding them 24/7 until their departure.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GOVERNMENT OF THE SEYCHELLES:

- Guarantee the right to defend rights and guarantee fundamental freedoms including freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly;
- End human rights violations including and mistreatment in prisons and ensure medical and psychological care for inmates;
- Conduct an independent investigation on the 5 December 2024 prison riots and the response of the authorities and ensure that perpetrators are held accountable ;
- Guarantee the rights of migrants and refugees.

ABOUT THIS BRIEFING PAPER

ISHR and ARID encourage States to consult UPR submissions by local activists and make recommendations to The Republic of Seychelles regarding the protections of HRDs. This paper is a result of compiling public information and direct contact and experience in the protection of HRDs. Readers should consult sources provided for additional information.