

[Call for submissions: Criminalisation of human rights defenders in the Americas](#)

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(New York) - A call for submissions to inform a forthcoming report on the criminalisation of human rights defenders is an important opportunity to highlight the ways in which law is used and abused to suppress dissent and to silence and stifle freedom of expression and association, the International Service for Human Rights said today.

The Office of the Rapporteur on the Rights of Human Rights Defenders of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights is calling for submissions to inform his upcoming report on criminalisation of human rights defenders through the misuse of criminal law.

The [Rapporteur has highlighted](#) that, in recent years, the trend of criminalisation has posed an increasing threat to human rights defenders and organisations.

'Cases such as the closure of leading non-governmental organisation the [Pachamama Foundation](#) in Ecuador demonstrate the spurious ways in which criminal laws and laws relating to national security and public order are increasingly being used to target human rights defenders,' said Eleanor Openshaw of ISHR.

'The Rapporteur's decision to focus on criminalisation is both timely and relevant,' Ms Openshaw said. In its [recent resolution](#) on the protection of human rights defenders, the Organisation of American States expressed concern about the misuse of measures governing national security, counterterrorism, and the establishment and operation of NGOs, that have incriminated defenders and undermined their work and safety.

The UN Human Rights Council has also passed a resolution, Res 22/6, which urges States 'to address, and to take concrete steps to prevent and stop, the use of legislation to hinder or limit unduly the ability of human rights defenders to exercise their work, including by reviewing and, where necessary, amending relevant legislation and its implementation in order to ensure compliance with international human rights law'.

'The planned IACHR report provides the opportunity for the criminalisation of defenders in the Americas to be better understood, and for concrete recommendations to be made to protect defenders from becoming victims of judicial harassment or the misuse of the criminal justice system,' Ms Openshaw said.

The Office of the Rapporteur circulated the following questionnaires to solicit information, requesting they be returned to cidhdefensores@oas.org, with a subject line of 'Subject: Questionnaire on Criminalization.' The deadline for submissions is: 16 September 2014.

[Questionnaire in Spanish](#)

[Questionnaire in English](#)

[Questionnaire in Portuguese](#)

[Questionnaire in French](#)

Contact: Eleanor Openshaw, International Service for Human Rights, on e.openshaw@ishr.ch