

Special Procedures: Recommendations to strengthen State cooperation and combat reprisals

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In a [submission](#) to the annual meeting of the Special Procedure mandate holders of the Human Rights Council - which includes Special Rapporteurs, Independent Experts and members of Working Groups - ISHR also made a range of recommendations as to how the mandate holders could become more accessible and responsive to victims of human rights violations and promote better State cooperation with the Human Rights Council.

'The Special Procedure mandate holders play a crucial role in the promotion and protection of human rights at both the international and national levels,' said ISHR Director Phil Lynch.

'At the international level, their invaluable reports and input to the Human Rights Council provide that body with the independent expertise necessary to understand and respond effectively to both thematic and country issues. At the national level, their country missions can provide expert guidance to States as to domestic implementation of international human rights obligations, while their communications in relation to individual cases can give voice to victims and help ensure that national level human rights violations are exposed at the international level,' Mr Lynch said.

Regrettably, a [recent report by the UN Secretary-General](#) exposes that individuals and organisations continue to face intimidation and reprisals for cooperating with and submitting information to the Special Procedures, ranging from arbitrary detention to ill-treatment and even torture.

ISHR deeply regrets the continued incidence of intimidation and reprisals against individuals and organisations which cooperate or seek to cooperate with Special Procedures. The [Secretary-General's 2014 report](#) to the Human Rights Council on cooperation with the UN human rights mechanisms documents a number of cases in this regard, including the arrest, incommunicado detention, ill-treatment and even torture of persons in connection with their cooperation with Special Procedures.

ISHR's [2015 reprisals report](#), submitted to inform the Secretary-General's new reprisals report to be presented to the Human Rights Council in September, also illustrates the latest regressions and case studies emblematic of this growing issue.

'The Special Procedures have a moral, legal and institutional obligation to protect those individuals and organisations who contribute to their work,' said Mr Lynch. 'In this regard, we urge the mandate holders to take all such preventative and precautionary measures as are necessary to reduce the risk of reprisals, and to play a more active role in investigating, following and promoting accountability in cases of reprisals,' Mr Lynch said.

The ISHR submission also sets out a range of recommendations aimed at increasing the level of State cooperation with Special Procedure mandate holders.

'All States have an obligation to cooperate fully with the work of the UN Human Rights Council's Special Procedures,' said Michael Ineichen, ISHR's Director of Human Rights Council Advocacy. 'This obligation is particularly pertinent in the case of States that are members of the Human Rights Council and, as such, pledge

to uphold the highest human rights standards and cooperate fully with the Council's mechanisms.'

'It is unacceptable that States, including Member States, fail to respond either promptly or substantively to communications from the Special Procedure mandate holders. In this regard, the ISHR submission makes a number of recommendations aimed to creating incentives for States to do so and raising political costs for continued non-cooperation'.

The submission has been made to the [22nd annual meeting of Special Procedure mandate holders](#), which is taking place from 8 to 12 June in Geneva.

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