

Sierra Leone: Safeguard civil society space and improve the working environment for human rights defenders

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ISHR and the Human Rights Defenders Network Sierra Leone call on the Government to repeal restrictive laws on freedom of expression and assembly, and ensure prompt and transparent investigations and accountability in relation to attacks and violations against human rights defenders.



ISHR, with the support of Human Rights Defenders Network Sierra Leone, took the opportunity of Sierra Leone's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) to commend the Government for steps taken to implement recommendations received during its previous UPR cycle in a [statement made at the 32nd session of the Human Rights Council](#).

These positive developments include the establishment of the Independent Police Complaints Board, together with the enactment of the Right to Access Information Act 2013, and subsequent establishment of the Commission on the Right to Access Information in 2015. ISHR encouraged other African States to follow Sierra Leone's lead and establish a law on the right to information, drawing on the Model Law on Access to Information in Africa adopted by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.^[1]

While Sierra Leone has taken positive developments to safeguard civil society space, in making the statement, Clement Voulé, ISHR African Advocacy Director and Programme Manager highlighted areas requiring further improvement.

'Sierra Leone should commit to progress in the area of constitutional review and constitutional recognition and protection of rights. It is imperative that the new Constitution reflects the needs and aspirations of the people of Sierra Leone and international human rights law and standards,' said Clement Voulé.

'We urge the Government to ensure that the draft NGO bill currently under consideration is amended in consultation with civil society to ensure that it enables rather than restricts the independence and work of NGOs and CSOs, in line with the spirit and commitments of the Civil Society Space Resolution being considered at this very session,' Mr Voulé added.

Mr Voulé ended the statement by commending Sierra Leone for demonstrating its commitment to protecting human rights defenders through its membership of the core group for the Civil Society Space resolution being considered at this session of the Council.

Read ISHR's statement [here](#) or watch a video of the statement [here](#).

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[1] The Model Law on Access to Information in Africa, <http://www.achpr.org/news/2013/04/d84> Accessed: 15 June 2016.