

Towards a UPR which is accessible, strong, effective and protective

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As the second UPR cycle nears its end, ISHR launches a strategy paper on its vision on how the UPR can be strengthened in its third cycle. This strategy was presented to the Human Rights Council in a statement earlier today.



Every four years the UN reviews the human rights record and situation of each country through a process at the Human Rights Council called the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). By March 2017 each country will have been reviewed twice, marking the end of the UPR's second cycle.

The UPR is an important mechanism through which civil society organisations and human rights defenders can highlight problems and assert pressure for improvements on the ground. However, throughout the second cycle, fears that the UPR will disintegrate into a purely 'ritualistic' review have exacerbated; lack of follow-up mechanisms, procedural weaknesses, patchy implementation and obstacles to NGO participation has limited its effectiveness.

The end of the second UPR cycle provides an opportunity to take stock and make changes the UPR process to strengthen it going forward into its third cycle. [ISHR has developed a strategy](#) to do this, which sets out how to guarantee that the UPR's standards improve, civil society's role become more central, and its outputs have a more positive impact on the behaviour of State and non-State actors.

Earlier today ISHR presented this strategy in a [statement to the Human Rights Council](#). A video of this statement can be accessed [here](#).

ISHR's strategy contains some key calls.

1. Establish an institutionalised reprisals mechanism

Civil society should be able to freely engage with the UPR. To ensure this, the President, Bureau and Secretariat should elaborate a policy to prevent, investigate, remedy and promote accountability for intimidation and reprisals suffered by anyone for engaging with the UPR.

2. Ensure civil society space at the Working Group stage

When the UPR was established the cooperation of civil society was highlighted as an important and essential element of the process. Given this, we regret civil society's inability to formally participate at the meeting of the UPR working group where reviews take place through an interactive discussion between the State under review and other UN Member States. The ability for NGOs to speak at that stage would provide States with up-to-date information from the ground which is essential to ensure that there is actual change on the ground.

3. Ensure greater follow-up to, and implementation of, recommendations

During the process, each State under review receives recommendations to improve the human rights situation from reviewing States. While these recommendations are often accepted by States under review, implementation remains varied. ISHR's strategy identifies steps which could be taken by the OHCHR to work towards guaranteeing formal follow-up and monitoring of State compliance with recommendations, thus enhancing the probability of effective implementation of recommendations.

4. Use the Item 6 General Debate at the Human Rights Council to monitor and report on implementation

During the UPR, the human rights situation of the State under review is discussed during a general debate at the Human Rights Council. To ensure that States are not simply giving lip service to the UN, States should use the general debate to update the Council on implementation of recommendations previously received and seek information regarding implementation on recommendations previously made.

ISHR's complete strategy for strengthening the UPR can be accessed [here](#).

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