

Zimbabwe UPR | Stop the arbitrary arrest and detention of human rights defenders

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States should encourage Zimbabwe to protect human rights defenders and align domestic laws with international human rights instruments and the protections guaranteed in the Zimbabwe Constitution through its forthcoming UPR.



Every member State of the UN has its human rights record reviewed by its peers every four years in a process known as the Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

Zimbabwe is scheduled to be reviewed at the 26th session of the UPR later this month.

In conjunction with [Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights](#) and [Lawyers for Lawyers, Zimbabwe](#), ISHR has prepared a briefing paper for the States participating in the review – as all States will have an opportunity to make recommendations to Zimbabwe on how to improve its human rights situation.

While Zimbabwe's 2013 Constitution enshrines the rights to freedom of assembly, expression and movement, the Government has failed to align existing national laws with the Constitution. Human rights defenders continue to face harassment, violence, arbitrary arrest and malicious prosecution, while civil society organisations remain subject to substantial legal restrictions.

Vague and broad provisions of the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act, as well as the Public Order and Security Act, which regulates public gatherings, are applied to disrupt the activities of defenders. Journalists face particular risks owing to criminal offences of defamation and slander, while lawyers promoting human rights and access to justice are harassed. Further, at least 38 civil society organisations have also been targeted by state actors through raids, visits or search of offices, and/or seizure of property

This [Briefing Paper](#) on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders in Zimbabwe is intended to assist States and other stakeholders to formulate questions and recommendations regarding the protection of human rights defenders during the UPR.

Key recommendations that should be made to Zimbabwe at the UPR include:

- Take concrete measures to align domestic laws with international human rights instruments and the protections guaranteed in the new Zimbabwe Constitution.
- Repeal and amend legislation which infringes on the rights to freedom of association, expression, demonstration and petition, movement, media and peaceful assembly, including the Public Order and Security Act, Private Voluntary Organisation Act, Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act and the Criminal Law (Codification And Reform) Act.
- Develop and enact specific laws and policies to recognise and protect work of HRDs that give full force and effect to the International Declaration on the protection of HRDs at the national level.
- Assist to guarantee the effectiveness of the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission by ensuring the secretariat receives adequate funding, it operates independently and it is in line with the Paris Principles.

For further information about the Briefing Paper or for any assistance or advice in the formulation of recommendations, please contact ISHR's Tess McEvoy, t.mcevoy@ishr.ch.