

South Sudan | Stop the harassment, intimidation, arbitrary arrest and assassination of human rights defenders

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ISHR urges States to use South Sudan's upcoming Universal Periodic Review to call for an end to the overt and systemic State sanctioned crackdown on human rights defenders, journalists and civil society.



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). South Sudan is scheduled to be reviewed at the 26th session of the Universal Periodic Review in November.

Five years on from its last review, South Sudan has failed to transition into a democratic State. Military rule and the serious deterioration of human rights poses a grave threat to human rights defenders and their activities.

Defenders face torture and inhumane, degrading treatment, journalists are harassed and detained, while the Non-Governmental Organisations Bill enables unwarranted government supervision and excessive force on protesters, hindering the activities of human rights defenders.

The Commission of Inquiry established by the African Commission for Human and Peoples' rights in 2013 has expressed grave concern about human rights violations, repression of media and civil society organisations, and called for respect for the independence of the judiciary.

Most recently, a number of Sudanese human rights defenders decided not to travel to Geneva for advocacy ahead of the UPR due to their concerns that they might be targeted for reprisals upon their return.

In the absence of these voices from the ground, ISHR's [Briefing Paper](#) on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders in South Sudan 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 South Sudan at the UPR include:

- End the overt and systemic State sanctioned crackdown on human rights defenders, journalists, civil society, and immediately implement the latest OHCHR recommendations to respect and promote the role of civil society, including by ensuring that freedoms of opinion and expression and of peaceful assembly are guaranteed and ensure the protection of HRDs and journalists
- Combat impunity by ensuring the prompt, thorough and impartial investigation of all violations against defenders, the prosecution of perpetrators (including members of the National Security Services), and access to effective remedies for victims.
- Review and implement the Broadcasting Corporation Act 2013, the Media Authority Act 2013 and the Right of Access to Information Act 2013 in accordance with international human rights law, and protect independent media as guaranteed under the Transitional Constitution and international human rights law.
- Ensure the Non-governmental Organisations Bill is reviewed and amended, including through a process of public consultation that ensures that such legislation complies with international human rights law in respect of the independence, resourcing and regulation of NGO activities.

For further information about the Briefing Paper or for any assistance or advice in the formulation of recommendations, please contact ISHR's Clement Voulé, c.voule@ishr.ch.