

HRC34 | Council should push for reform of discredited NGO Committee

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The UN Human Rights Council and its member and observer States should push for reform of the UN committee responsible for accrediting NGOs, ISHR said today. The dysfunctional practice of the ECOSOC NGO Committee prevents many human rights NGOs from accessing the UN and deprives the Human Rights Council and other UN mechanisms of their valuable inputs and expertise.



In its statement to the Council, ISHR said that the worsening practice of the NGO Committee in delaying or denying civil society access to the UN through a process which is frequently arbitrary, discriminatory and lacking in procedural fairness, 'violates the rights to freedom of expression and association'. The procedures of the NGO Committee are 'incompatible with the the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the UN Charter itself,' ISHR told the Council.

ISHR's statement drew particular attention to recent cases in which NGOs from Turkey had their applications for consultative status denied by the Committee on [improper grounds](#). At the same session, NGOs were [denied the right to right to even speak](#) about the value of civil society engagement with the UN.

'The practice of the NGO Committee, the gatekeeper to the UN, should be of direct concern to the UN Human Rights Council,' said ISHR's Eleanor Openshaw.

'NGO access to the UN's peak human rights body must not be determined by a Committee and procedure which so wilfully violates the very human rights the Council is charged to uphold.'

ISHR calls on States to prioritise and push for reform of the ECOSOC NGO Committee and its procedures to ensure that NGO access to the UN is determined by a body and process that is fair, transparent, expeditious and compatible with the rights to due process, freedom of expression and freedom of association.

A full version of the [ISHR statement delivered under Item 8 of the Human Rights Council agenda](#) is here, while a series of [modest proposals for reform of the Committee](#) are available here.

ISHR has also produced a comprehensive and [Practical Guide to the UN Committee on NGOs](#).

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