

## **ACHPR61 | Achieving positive human rights change**

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**During the NGO Forum in Banjul, ISHR officially introduced its new report focused on the crucial role played by human rights defenders during transition in African States. We also participated in an event taking stock of the challenges faced by human rights defenders in Africa.**



ISHR's [roadmap on human rights defenders working in States in transition in Africa](#) has been launched at the Book Fair during the NGO Forum ahead of the 61<sup>st</sup> session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) on 30 October 2017.

'As many countries in Africa have gone through democratic transitions during the past few years, it is important to put into perspectives the dangers and opportunities that such situations present,' said Clément Voule, ISHR's African advocacy director and programme manager for States in transition.

In its roadmap, ISHR compiled some of the lessons which emerged from the various meetings and consultations held with human rights defenders throughout Africa in 2015. Building on case studies, it analyses the vital role played by human rights defenders in times of transition and looks at what protection they seek in challenging times as well as the support they receive from regional human rights mechanisms. The roadmap was set up as a tool for defenders to reflect upon the strategies, successes and shortcomings of other campaigns and programmes in order to improve the impact of their work in various countries in Africa.

The document also includes a series of recommendations on how various stakeholders can support and respond to the needs of human rights defenders and help eliminate the dangers that they often face in their work.

The same topics as in the roadmap were discussed and brought to life by testimonials from defenders from several African countries – Eritrea, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Chad and Madagascar – at an event the next day. The regional panel, which was brought together by Amnesty International, also included Voule from ISHR.

Voule explained how encouraging it is to see a growing number of civil society organisations from all over Africa interested in advocating for the adoption of a national law for the promotion and protection of human rights defenders. He also reiterated the importance of having a mechanism whose sole purpose is to implement such a law. 'Having a law protecting human rights defenders is good, having a mechanism to implement it is better,' he stated.

*Photo: ISHR*