

## [UNGA 74 | Human Rights Council President applauds human rights defenders for fighting for the rights of others](#)

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**In presenting the report of the Human Rights Council to the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly on 1 November, the President of the Human Rights Council addressed the importance of human rights defenders in the Council's work and called for reprisals against individuals who cooperate with the UN to end.**



### **The role of defenders at the Council**

'Civil society plays a vital role in ensuring that the Human Rights Council stays relevant and based on reality,' stressed Coly Seck as he presented the Human Rights Council report. 'Without civil society and human rights defenders, the Human Rights Council would not have the visibility of the human rights community. Human rights defenders keep us informed and engaged,' he added.

The President's words were welcomed by ISHR's Tess McEvoy. 'We echo Seck's call for enhanced civil society participation in the General Assembly' said McEvoy.

The President also addressed the increased number of reports of reprisals against human rights defenders engaging with the Human Rights Council. Specifically calling for an end to attacks against individuals who cooperate with all UN human rights bodies and mechanisms. 'We welcome the EU's reiteration of the call for an end to human rights abuses by States and - importantly - corporations' added McEvoy.

The President reported on country-specific mandates created by the Council to address national human rights situations such as in Venezuela, Myanmar, Nicaragua and the Philippines. This, as expected, was met with hostility from States that have presently, or previously, been the subject of such a mandate.

Unsurprisingly, Venezuela as a [recently elected member of the Council](#) welcomed the mandate of the President, but asked for his office to ensure that the Council ends the 'politicisation of human rights,' making specific reference to the [Fact-Finding Mission that was established by the Human Rights Council earlier this year](#) 'to investigate extrajudicial executions, enforced disappearances, arbitrary detentions and torture and other cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment since 2014' in the country.

### **Adoption of the resolution on the report of the Human Rights Council**

On 7 November, the Third Committee voted on the resolution presenting the annual Report of the Human Rights Council ([A/74/53](#)).

Controversially, this resolution is presented at each session of the Third Committee by the African Group stating that the Third Committee 'notes' the report of the Human Rights Council. Similar discussions ensued during the adoption of the resolution, with some countries expressing concern over the Council's action on country situations, including on their own. However, numerous other countries spoke out in support of action taken by the Council.

We welcome statements made and voting in support of the independence of the Human Rights Council. Deemed as the UN's premier human rights body, it is integral that the Council takes action toward the protection of human rights on the ground.

### **No challenge to renewal of the Independent Expert on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity**

Critically, the adoption of the resolution on the report of the Human Rights Council took place [without challenge to the extension of the mandate of the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination on the basis of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity](#).

In 2016 when the mandate of Independent Expert was created, an amendment challenging the creation was tabled at the Third Committee through the resolution presenting the Council report. This year, a record-high number of States supported the renewal of the mandate at the Human Rights Council in July, and the mandate was not challenged in the Third Committee. 'This is a clear indication that the international community is becoming both more aware and less tolerant of violence and discrimination on the basis of SOGI' said ISHR's Tess McEvoy

'It was not long ago that the words 'sexual orientation' and 'gender identity' could not even be uttered at the UN. The lack of challenge at the Third Committee is another significant step in the fight against violence and discrimination against LGBT persons,' McEvoy added.

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