

HRC43 | ISHR response to UN Secretary General's Call for Action on Human Rights

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The promotion, protection and realisation of human rights should be a paramount priority for all UN agencies, ISHR says in response to the UN Secretary-General's new 'Call to Action for Human Rights' launched in Geneva.



'The promotion of human rights, and the participation and protection of human rights defenders, are essential to peace, security and sustainable and inclusive development,' says ISHR Director Phil Lynch.

In this regard, ISHR welcomes key commitments made by the Secretary General in the [Call to Action](#), including that the UN will:

- push governments to take a human rights-based approach to development that provide opportunities for civil society engagement;
- develop a UN-wide strategy on the participation and protection of civil society at the national and international levels;
- strengthen engagement with and protection of human rights defenders, including women human rights defenders, environmental activists, and child human rights defenders; and
- develop a funding strategy to provide financial stability to the international human rights system.

ISHR also welcomes the Secretary-General's recognition that 'the shrinking of civic space is frequently a prelude to a more general deterioration in human rights' and that, particularly 'in the face of persistent disregard for human rights', there is 'a time when speaking out is essential'.

'Restrictions, threats and attacks against human rights defenders and journalists are often an early warning sign of more widespread human rights violations,' says ISHR Programme Manager Salma El Hosseiny.

'We call on the Secretary General, the High Commissioner and other senior UN officials to speak out more strongly and consistently when human rights defenders are systematically repressed, as is currently the case in China, India, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, among others' says El Hosseiny. 'This would increase the political cost of such repressive policies and practices, as well as show solidarity with the brave human rights defenders working for a better humanity.'

Together with a group of international NGOs and regional NGOs from the Global South, ISHR was pleased to meet with the Secretary-General immediately following the launch of the Call for Action, stating that it is imperative that the broad commitments therein are followed up on with a clear implementation plan.

'If the Secretary General's Call to Action is to be effective and he is prepared to be held accountable, the commitments need to identify who is responsible for implementation and to be concrete, measurable, time bound and adequately resourced,' Lynch says.

The full Call to Action for Human Rights is available here in [English](#) and in [French](#).

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