

Cote d'Ivoire – The law on the promotion and protection of human rights defenders needs to be implemented

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Since the adoption of the law on the promotion and protection of human rights defenders in 2014 and its implementation decree in 2017, the use of the law by defenders remains shy. In a context where measures adopted by States to stop the spread of COVID-19 have seriously restricted civic space, this workshop was an opportunity to address the effective use of the law by defenders through experience sharing as well as the importance to own its content.



The workshop, co-hosted by the National Human Rights Council (NHRC), the Ivoirian Coalition of Human Rights Defenders (ICHRD/CIDDH) and ISHR, took place in Abidjan on 21st and 22nd July 2020. It focused on strategies for a better appropriation of the content of the law and the sharing of experience on its use. The workshop was organised in compliance with the social distancing measures which limited movements within the country due to the fight against Covid-19. In consequence, the workshop was attended by a limited number of participants joined by an online and physical panel.

During the opening ceremony, Willy Neth, chair of the board of directors of the CIDDH recalled that “this workshop, aims to discuss the effective implementation of the law in Côte d'Ivoire, the role that defenders can play in this regard and the potential advocacy strategies to be adopted to ensure its implementation by all relevant stakeholders”. He concluded by inviting the participants to be diligent and to participate actively.

Légré René HOKOU, Chief of Cabinet, representing the President of the NHRC, expressed his gratitude to ISHR for the support provided to Côte d'Ivoire in the implementation of the law on defenders and its protection mechanism. He underlined that this workshop is an opportunity to reflect together on a strategy for the concrete implementation of the law by defenders, with emphasis on the ownership of its content and the experience sharing of participants in this field.

Achille De N'DJOMOU, Director of Human Rights Promotion and Regulation, representing the Minister, Secretary of State in charge of Human Rights indicated that “this activity is an opportunity to exchange, inform and advocate on the implementation of the Promotion and Protection Mechanism as arises from the 2014 Law and subsequently its implementation decree”. He also indicated that “for the construction of a constitutional state, the promotion of human rights remains a cornerstone. This law establishes a legitimate framework for all defenders in the exercise of their functions” he concluded.

The various sessions during the workshop allowed for defenders to highlight the challenges related to the implementation of the law and its decree since their adoption and the need to become familiar with the rights guaranteed by the law. It also gave the opportunity for experience sharing on concrete cases where the law was used and its impact. In this regard, participants benefited from the experience of the NHRC and the Observatoire Ivoirien des Droits de l'Homme (OIDH) in using the law to win their cases in front of the authorities but also on the importance of using documentation to monitor the use of the law in order to increase their advocacy results. In addition, a case study put defenders in a practical situation where the use of the law is needed.

The workshop concluded with numerous strategies proposed by defenders to national actors, i.e. authorities and defenders, to ensure a better protection of defenders through the use of the law and its implementing decree.

ISHR, CIDDH and NHRC, encourage the Ivoirian defenders and authorities to use the law 2014 to guarantee a better protection of human rights defenders.

"It is important that human rights defenders effectively take ownership of Law 2014. This would effectively reduce and prevent threats against defenders while ensuring a better protection of their rights. Furthermore, it is also up to the authorities to take ownership of the law and to understand the need to develop strategies

for its dissemination and effective use. ISHR will continue to provide technical support to civil society and national authorities to ensure a better protection of defenders” concluded Stephanie Wamba, ISHR’s Africa Program Advocacy Consultant.

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