

[HRC45 | More States need to push for accountability for cases of reprisals](#)

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During the [interactive dialogue with the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights on the SG's Reprisals Report](#), some States took the welcome step of raising specific cases of reprisals. Many more continued to condemn reprisals only rhetorically. Regrettably, many States used the dialogue to deny the allegations against them contained in the SG's report.



In her presentation of the SG's Reprisals Report, the Assistant Secretary-General deplored that acts of intimidation and reprisal were reported in similar scope and numbers as in the past, despite the considerable change in the engagement with the UN during the reporting period due to the pandemic, and the cancellation of many UN activities since March. The ASG said this is a worrisome sign that may signify that such acts are actually increasing in the wake of the pandemic.

She also expressed her serious concern about the increasing threats towards women human rights defenders, LGBTI defenders, indigenous groups, minorities, and youth who are disproportionately targeted.

The ASG also pointed out that in certain States, acts of reprisals and intimidation are not rare or isolated incidents, but reflect evolving patterns. She noted, in particular, the report's references to China, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia, where allegations indicate that arbitrary detention is a systemic problem, as well as a list of countries where shrinking civic space is leading to self censorship (Libya, Nicaragua, the Philippines, Russian Federation, Sri Lanka, United Arab Emirates, and Venezuela) and a list of repressive countries regarding which multiple UN actors have raised individual allegations (Bahrain, Burundi, China, Cuba, Egypt, India, Iran, Myanmar, Saudi Arabia, Uzbekistan, and Viet Nam, among others).

Some States raise concerns about specific cases

During the dialogue, a handful of States, including the UK, Germany, and the BENELUX countries (Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg) expressed their deep concern about ongoing reprisals and detention of HRDs. All of them cited the case of **Mohamed el-Baqer** who was involved with an NGO submission to Egypt's Universal Periodical Review in 2019 and has remained in pre-trial detention for nearly a year; and the case of **Ibrahim Metwally Hegazy**, an Egyptian lawyer who was prevented from traveling to a session of the UN Working Group on Enforced Disappearances in 2017. The BENELUX countries also cited the case of **Ramy Kamel Saied Salib** of the Maspero Youth Foundation in Cairo, who was arbitrarily arrested, detained, and tortured in connection with his human rights work, and to prevent his participation at the November 2019 UN Forum on Minority Issues in Geneva.

The BENELUX countries also denounced the cases of Burundian human rights lawyers **Armel Niyongere, Dieudonné Bashirahishize, Vital Nshimirimana and Lambert Nigarura** who were disbarred or suspended, following their cooperation with the Committee against Torture (CAT) in July 2016. In the full version of their statement, they also raised concerned about the disappearance of **Od Sayavong, a Lao refugee** living in Bangkok. He disappeared after having met the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights.

The UK also raised several cases of Chinese human rights defenders (**Li Yuhan, Chen Jianfang, Xu Yan, and Zhen Jianghua**), who have suffered reprisals related to their engagement with the UN.

Many States deny allegations

While a significant number of States engaging in the dialogue reiterated their support for the mandate of the ASG as the UN Senior Official on reprisals to varying degrees, many of the States cited in the report intervened to deny the allegations against them and question the ASG's methodology and credibility.

A group of States totally rejected the report, including Israel, Cuba, Saudi Arabia, China, Iran, Venezuela, the Philippines and Egypt. They denied the veracity of the information contained in the report and denounced the lack of objectivity of the mandate. Saudi Arabia, Iran, Israel, and Egypt claimed that victims cited in the report are in fact lawfully convicted criminals.

Other States expressed their doubts about the allegations against them, including Sri Lanka, Vietnam, or Colombia, claiming that the information they provided was not adequately reflected in the report.

ISHR delivered a [statement](#) in the debate expressing concerns about the large number of States cited in the report and questioning the effectiveness of the impact of the report for victims who have seen no resolution to their cases and for countries where patterns of reprisals and intimidation are occurring with impunity, such as for Bahrain, Burundi, China, Cuba, India, Egypt, Israel, Myanmar, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, and Venezuela. ISHR also called on the States to use the dialogue to speak up about specific cases, to push for more accountability and to end impunity for victims.

Watch our statement here:

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