

[ACHPR67 | Commissioners present their activity reports](#)

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During the 67th ordinary session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR or the Commission), ISHR delivered statements during the interactive dialogue regarding activity reports of the Commissioners of the Commission under item 6. The statements reminded the importance of protecting women's rights, raised concerns about the situation of human rights defenders facing intimidation, reprisals, and restriction, and noted that abuses against environmental, land, and indigenous people's defenders continue to increase across Africa.



As provided by article Articles 23 (3) and 72 of the Rules of Procedure of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, each of the 11 Commissioners presented their activity reports. These reports summarise the work accomplished by each one of them according to their mandates since the last ordinary session of the African Commission. ISHR used this opportunity to deliver a statement following the reports of the Special Rapporteur on Women, the Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders and the Chairperson of the working group on extractive industries, the environment and human rights violations.

On 21 November, Commissioner Zainabo Sylvie Kayitesi presented [her last report](#) on the work of her mandate since the 66th ordinary session of the Commission, as her term as a Commissioner is coming to an end. Indeed, she shared the numerous meetings she had with partner NGOs in order to assess the impact of COVID-19 on women's rights. She called on State Parties to prioritise the protection of women and children in the conception, planning, development and implementation of national response measures to the novel COVID-19, as well as employ gender-equality sensitive approaches to provide adequate protection of the rights of this vulnerable group as provided in the African Charter, the Maputo Protocol and other relevant human rights instruments.

"The situation of women human rights defenders is more than worrying. They are often work in an unsafe environment in which their place is devalued and unrecognised. The COVID-19 pandemic has particularly affected women whose situation of vulnerability has intensified in terms of access to health services, and the respect of their economic, social, and cultural rights" said Nadia Ruminy, ISHR Programme intern, in her [statement](#).

Watch the statement here (in French):

Reminding that women's rights are recognised and defined in numerous international and regional instruments, ISHR encouraged the Special Rapporteur to continue to call on States to domesticate and effectively implement all international and regional legal instruments relating to women's rights, particularly the Maputo Protocol.

On 23 November, Commissioner Remy Ngoy Lumbu presented his report. He highlighted the increasing thumber of violations against defenders since the beginning of the pandemic and assured that though his first report on reprisals is yet to be presented, it will be at the 68th ordinary session of the Commission. Following his presentation, ISHR delivered a [statement](#) which focused, among other things, on the importance of the work of defenders during the pandemic.

Watch the statement here (in French):

"The pandemic has been instrumentalised to legitimise unjustified restrictions on freedoms and to prevent civil society from planning and implementing its activities. These include unprecedented levels of censorship, attacks against journalists and human rights defenders, violence by police forces and widespread violations of the right to privacy" said ISHR's Africa Programme Consultant Stéphanie Wamba.

She called on the Commission and member States to pay particular attention to the increased restrictions faced by advocates to carry out their work during this health crisis. She also mentioned that ISHR is conducting a study on the impact on civil society of measures taken to combat Covid-19 in African countries, which highlights a resurgence of bans on gatherings, restrictions on freedom of movement and censorship hindering freedom of expression.

Finally, on 25 November the Chairperson of the Commission who is also the Chairperson of the Working Group on extractive industries, the environment and human rights violations, Commissioner Solomon Ayele Dersso, presented [his report](#). He mentioned the statement of the working group in response to the oil spill in the Indian Ocean, on the south east coast of the Mauritian island and its dire consequences on the environment, the appointment of new Expert members of the working group and shared the progress made on the Background Study on Extractive Industries, the Environment and Human Rights in Africa which will be published at the 68th ordinary session. In its [statement](#), ISHR reiterates the importance and usefulness of the [State reporting guidelines](#) under Articles 21 and 24 of the African Charter to guide and encourage States to report on the implementation of these articles at the national level.

Watch the statement here (in French):

“Nevertheless, since the adoption of these guidelines, only a few States provide relevant and necessary information that would allow the Commission to thoroughly assess the implementation of these articles” said ISHR Africa Programme Manager Adélaïde Etong Kame.

It also emphasised the danger environmental, land and indigenous peoples' defenders continue to face, especially with the recent death of Fikile Ntshangase, a South African environmental activist who was shot dead at her home after opposing the expansion of a coal mine and getting involved in a legal dispute with the company Tendele Coal. Finally, the Commission was reminded that points 24 and 39 of the guidelines provide that defenders speaking out to ensure respect for the human rights of people and communities affected by the exploitation of extractive industries, must be protected against any act of reprisal, harassment, restriction and intimidation from businesses or States.

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Photo: Fikile Ntshangase