

Gratitude, impact and a new strategy

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Dear friends and supporters,

Creativity. Solidarity. Resilience. Throughout 2020 these values sustained us. And as we enter 2021, perhaps not rejuvenated but with a renewed appreciation of the fragility and indispensability of human rights and those who defend them, these are the values inspiring us.

As we reflect, we'd like to express our heartfelt gratitude to our trusted partners, supporters and donors for your contribution to ISHR's impact in 2020 and for your investment in our work in 2021.

Here are some of the things we are most proud of; impacts that reflect and were made possible thanks to the creativity, solidarity and resilience of our partners, our staff and the human rights defenders we collectively serve.

- Working with UN experts, governments from all regions, and major investors to issue public statements of concern regarding [human rights in China](#) and to call for independent investigation and monitoring of widespread and systematic violations in Xinjiang and Hong Kong
- Partnering with family members, human rights defenders and civil society partners to secure an urgent debate at the UN on the issue of [police violence and systemic racism](#) and to mandate the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights to investigate and report on this issue in the US and globally
- Partnering with civil society in Mongolia to draft a [national law on the recognition and protection of human rights defenders](#) now under consideration in the Mongolian parliament
- Ensuring that UN human rights bodies continued to fulfil their vital functions monitoring and promoting human rights throughout the coronavirus pandemic, and remained accessible and effective for human rights defenders, e.g. [treaty bodies](#)
- Working with civil society partners to ensure that key international [principles on equality and justice for LGBTI persons](#) are reflected in laws, policies, practices and jurisprudence at the national, regional and



international levels

- Developing a [bold, ambitious and dynamic new strategy](#) - in close consultation with human rights defenders and key partners - to ensure that ISHR faithfully and effectively pursues its vision that all people enjoy all human rights, in communities that are diverse and inclusive, in a world that is fair, just, sustainable and peaceful.

- Working with family members, civil society partners, UN experts and States to [increase pressure on Saudi Arabia for the release of detained women human rights defenders](#)
- Creating, innovating and adapting [training, tools and resources](#) for human rights defenders to make them even more influential and effective in achieving national-level change
- Conducting our first ever [fully virtual Human Rights Defender Advocacy Programme](#) (HRDAP) – providing training, strategic advice and advocacy support to 19 defenders over a 12 week period. 100% of participants reported that they were satisfied with the programme, with over 70% saying they were ‘very satisfied’. In the words of one defender: ‘My experience with HRDAP during the pandemic was fruitful and rewarding. I think that besides the excellent content of training it taught me how we have to improvise when the environment is not in our favour. The ISHR team led by example how we get human rights work done during challenging times.’
- Contributing to a UN wide policy on the [participation and protection of civil society](#) at the national and international levels
- Supporting and enabling national-level human rights defenders to deliver powerful statements and personal testimony at the UN, including the [wife of a detained defender in China](#), defenders working on [accountability for crimes against humanity in Venezuela](#), defenders subject to [reprisals in Egypt](#), [partners in Guinea](#), and [anti-racism defenders from France](#) and [Switzerland](#)
- Working with the African Commission on Human & Peoples’ Rights to conduct its [first ever virtual session and to develop and adopt a landmark resolution](#) on a human rights-based approach to COVID-19 in Africa
- Contributing to the UN Security Council’s first ever [dedicated discussion on reprisals and intimidation](#) against women human rights defenders and peacebuilders
- Being [independently evaluated](#) as ‘the ‘go-to’ organisation when civil society is engaging with the UN human rights system’, as having collaboration and coalition building ‘as part of our DNA’, and as ‘an effective and influential organisation which is strengthening the work of human rights defenders by providing training, capacity-building, collaborative advocacy initiatives and access to international and regional mechanisms and policymakers.’
- Strengthening our own governance, transparency, accountability and sustainability, including through the establishment of a Working Group on Wellbeing and a Working Group on Non-Discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion which reports both to the Director and directly to the Board.

Thank you again for your support in 2020, and here is to a healthy, impactful 2021 where human rights defenders are properly recognised as humanity’s problem solvers, changemakers and essential workers, and have a seat at the table to create transformative change.

In solidarity,

Phil Lynch
Executive Director
International Service for Human Rights

Illustration: Unsplash, ISHR