

Joint statement on reprisals against individuals and groups seeking to cooperate with the United Nations, the African Commission on Human and People's Rights and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights

The Rapporteurs on Human Rights Defenders from the United Nations (UN), the African Commission on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR) and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) express their grave concern over acts of reprisals against individuals and groups seeking to cooperate with the UN and/or the regional human rights systems. These reprisals against individuals and/or groups engaging directly with the UN, the ACHPR and the IACHR, or otherwise providing information on particular countries' human rights situation, take the form of smear campaigns, harassment, intimidation, direct threats, physical attacks and killings.

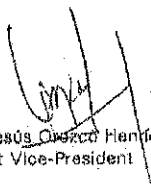
The UN, the ACHPR and the IACHR all have normative agreements and rules of procedure explicitly prohibiting acts of reprisals by States and non-State actors.¹ In an effort to safeguard the vital collaboration between civil society and the UN and regional human rights mechanisms, the Rapporteurs on human rights defenders commit to and call for enhanced monitoring and action to respect those rules, and support the recent initiative by the President of the UN Human Rights Council to call on States to immediately put an end to intimidation and harassment of individuals and groups attending the 19th session of the Human Rights Council.²

The UN and the regional human rights systems depend entirely on free and safe cooperation from civil society for its effective functioning. Therefore, as the UN Secretary General and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights have repeatedly demanded, reprisals have to cease immediately and credible investigations into pending cases of reprisals have to be carried out. The undersigned Rapporteurs are convinced that such steps towards full accountability for reprisals are an important preventive measure that should be combined with other steps facilitating, rather than deterring, civil society's safe and unimpeded access to the UN and the regional human rights institutions.

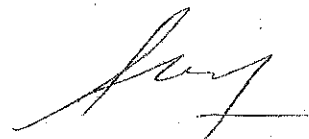
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¹ See: Human Rights Council Resolution A/HRC/RES/12/2, 12 October 2009 [http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/sdpage_e.aspx?b=10&se=100&t=11]; Human Rights Council Resolution A/HRC/RES/16/21, 12 April 2011, in particular Annex paragraph 30 [http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/RES/16/21]; Rules of Procedure of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Article 63 [<http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/mandate/Basics/rulesiachr.asp>]; and Resolution Res.196 (L) 2011 on Human Rights Defenders in Africa from the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights [http://www.achpr.org/english/resolutions/Resolution196_en.htm].

² On 5 March 2011, the President expressed her concern about reports of State and other representatives using aggressive and/or insulting language against civil society representatives, and photographing and filming them without their consent, on UN premises, including in the main chamber of the Human Rights Council, with a view to intimidate and harass them. She announced that those accusations will be investigated.