

Right Livelihood

52nd session of the Human Rights Council

Item 3: Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights Defenders

Mr. President,

We thank the Special Rapporteur for her report which recognises the fundamental role played by human rights defenders in advancing human rights. We welcome the inclusion of the successes achieved by land, environmental and indigenous defenders, despite being among those at highest risk.

All recipients of the Right Livelihood Award dedicate their lives to social change. Recently, we have been observing an increased use of sophisticated tools to silence their voices and impede their work. The worldwide surge of national laws targeting civil society is particularly worrying in this sense. On the other hand, various forms of intimidation, torture, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, and other restrictions on fundamental freedoms, continue to take place in total impunity.

Mr. President,

25 years ago, the UN General Assembly adopted the Declaration on human rights defenders. It is unacceptable that in 2023, activists in many parts of the world are working in a climate of fear. The Human Rights Council cannot just be a by-stander in face of blatant reprisals and abuses against them. Urgent action is needed to hold government and companies to account for the violence faced by defenders on the frontline.

We therefore call on the Council to guarantee the protection of human rights defenders, by acknowledging their successes and by ensuring that they can work in a conducive legal, institutional, and financial environment. Additionally, we urge the Council to adopt a strong resolution for worldwide implementation of all recommendations set in the Special Rapporteur's report.