

Issue Analysis

- Human Rights Defenders - *Sessions 1-8*

Introduction

- The issue of Human Rights Defenders is not often raised within the context of the Universal Periodic Review.
- A total of 15 States posed advance questions on the issue while 39 States made recommendations.
- Out of 3533 advance questions from session 1 to 8, 117 questions concerned human rights defenders.
- Out of 12385 recommendations in total, 260 focused on human rights defenders.
- In order to facilitate further analysis of this issue, a division has been made between questions and recommendations that concern the situation of human rights defenders, questions and recommendations that concern the Special Rapporteur, and questions and recommendations that concern the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

Analysis

Situation of human rights defenders

- This category contains all questions and recommendations that relate to the general situation of the human rights defenders and any other remarks regarding the issue.
- Out of 117 questions posed on human rights defenders, 97 of these focussed on the situation of the human rights defenders.
- Out of 260 recommendations on human rights defenders, 214 recommendations focused on the situation of human rights defenders.
- Questions and recommendations include, for example “Prevent, investigate and punish the excessive use of force, arbitrary detention, threats and harassment directed against human rights defenders by security forces” and “What measures have been put in place to support the work of human rights defenders?”

Top 4 States posing advance written questions on this issue

1. Ireland (26 questions)
2. Netherlands (15 questions)
3. Sweden (11 questions)
4. United Kingdom, Norway and Czech Republic (9 questions each)

Top 4 States making recommendations on this issue

1. Norway (43 recommendations)
2. Canada (18 recommendations)
3. Ireland (16 recommendations)
4. Netherlands and Switzerland (14 recommendations each)

Special Rapporteur

- This category contains all questions and recommendations that relate to the issue of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, and other Special Rapporteurs when related to the issue of human rights defenders.
- Out of 117 advance written questions, 19 focused on Special Rapporteurs.
- Out of 260 recommendations on human rights defenders, 21 recommendations focused on the issue of Special Rapporteurs.
- Questions and recommendations include, for example, “In 2009, the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders expressed concern at the restricted environment in which human rights defenders operate. How are these concerns being addressed?” or “Follow up the recommendation of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on the situation of human rights defenders and denounce more forcefully verbal and physical attacks against human rights defenders.”

Top 3 States posing advance written questions on this issue

1. Ireland (6 questions)
2. Germany (3 questions)
3. United Kingdom and Norway (2 questions each)

Top 4 States making recommendations on this issue

1. Norway (6 recommendations)
2. Ireland (5 recommendations)
3. Hungary (3 recommendations)
4. United Kingdom (2 recommendations)

The Declaration on Human Rights Defenders

- This category contains all questions and recommendations that relate to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups, and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, as well as its dissemination.
- Out of 117 advance written questions, only 2 questions concerned the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.
- Out of 260 recommendations on human rights defenders, 25 recommendations focus on the Declaration.
- Questions and recommendations urge states to raise awareness and to disseminate the Declaration, for example, “What can be done to ensure that members of the security forces are made aware of the role of human rights defenders and of their responsibility to protect them (set out in the UN Declaration on the Rights and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups, and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms)?” or “Adopt appropriate measures to disseminate widely and ensure full observance of the Declaration of Human Rights Defenders.”

States posing advance written questions on this issue

1. Norway and Canada (1 question each)

Top 3 States making recommendations on this issue

1. Norway (16 recommendations)
2. Slovakia (6 recommendations)
3. France, United Kingdom and Germany (1 recommendation each)