



GANHRI 2021 ANNUAL MEETING

PROTECTING AND PROMOTING HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS AND CIVIC SPACE: CONSULTATION ON GANHRI'S GLOBAL ACTION PLAN

Online meeting on Zoom

Thursday 1 July 2021 | 16:30-18:00 CEST

Meeting Notes

Moderator: Peggy Hicks, Director, UN Human Rights Housekeeping

Welcome and opening remarks by GANHRI, EU, UN Human Rights & UNDP

- **Dr. Ali Al Marri, GANHRI Acting Chairperson** (refer to statement in One Drive)
- **Ilze Brands Kehris, Assistant Secretary General, UN Human Rights Office** (refer to statement in One Drive)
- **Eamon Gilmore, EU Special Representative for Human Rights** (refer to statement in One Drive)
- **Achim Steiner, UNDP Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme** (refer to statement in One Drive)

Michel Forst, former Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders (*see in One drive*)

Experiences from NHRIs and HRDs

- **Karen Gomez-Dumpit, Commissioner, NHRI Philippines** (refer to statement in One Drive)

- **Namizata Sangare, President, NHRI Ivory Coast did not attend** (*see the PPT in One drive*)
- **Jordan Rodas, Procurador, NHRI Guatemala**
 - Thanking words
 - Worrying about the situation about education, environment, because it is left under arbitrary decisions to the Government, we are open to an authoritarian regime; we have close experiences like Nicaragua
 - HRDs in Guatemala are harassed, criminal law is used to repress them, especially when there are mining or electric energy companies because the government supports companies more than human rights and privileges the economy
 - Journalists are in the same precarious situation; the government has attacked them as well.
 - As Ombudsman they have made me 15 anti-trials, 5 times tried to remove me from my position without justification. Because they could, then they tried restrictive economic and financial asphyxiation, it affects the entire staff, in a few months we no longer have the budget to fulfill our mandate unless the parliament unblock the funds.
 - Multiplication of victims of harassment by the state.
 - Defenders must be defended but in Guatemala they are attacked.
- **Hassan Shire, Defend Defenders** (refer to statement in One Drive)
- **Sinéad Gibney, Chief Commissioner, NHRI Ireland** (refer to statement in One Drive)

Discussion Q&A

Comments in the chatbox

NHRI Nepal

Because of the patriarchal society, many stakeholders fail to recognize women human rights defenders as Human Rights Defenders, because they challenge the existing orthodoxy of the society especially in Nepal. NHRC-Nepal has made recommendations to the government of Nepal. The ministry of home introduced the procedure to protect the guideline on human rights defenders.

NHRI Morocco

In the CNDH Morocco, we have been working to implement the Marrakech Declaration. In this regard, we have collaborated with human rights defenders, in terms of capacity building, handling complaints on environmental issues, consultations to influence draft laws and public policies. A whole chapter in our annual report was devoted to civic space and

human rights defenders. We have also this issue in a cross cutting in the report, particularly when it comes to vulnerable groups, namely migrants. I am sharing with you below the link of our annual report of 2020: https://www.cndh.org.ma/sites/default/files/cndh_-_rapport_annuel_-_cov_19_-_5_mai_1_8.pdf

NHRI Mongolia

Dear NHRI colleagues, thank you for your informative talks. Mongolia recently adopted a Law on HRDs and the law has entered into force from today, 1 July 2021. The new mechanism will be based at the Mongolian Human Rights Commission. With the establishment of NPMT with us too, the Commission is entering into a new pace of development. The implementation of the new legislation will not be easy. But we are determined to nurture an effective mechanism to protect HRDs and whistle blowers. Very timely discussion for us!

Mongolia was drafting this law since 2018, this year the law has been adopted, surprisingly quickly, now will have 7 commissioners, instead of 3 (NPM, HRDs and general commissioners) selection process will start soon.

Comments from the floor

- **NHRI Malaysia**

- Thanking words
- Time to defend the freedom of expression; Recent arrests and investigations and police against HRD with no expire date
- SUHAKAM is worrying about the definition of insult, offence, and criticism: Sedition and offence definitions are problematic, we need to defend critical discourse, positions of authority cannot be offended by criticism to them, it's time to define those "crimes" differently.
- Because police and state government can't take these 3 words and that is the new trend; unwillingness to take them as a form of expression, lead to broad restrictions

- **NHRI India**

- HRD have a positive and important role for the realization local national and international level, many states are coping with integrity issues.
- Incidents and assaults to HRD done in the name of peace, HRDs are charged with sedition laws or implicated in criminal cases
- Shrinking space for CSOs cause of concern; Article 90 of constitution of India
- 1993 since its inception, NHRC has been working with many actors both governmental and non government; regular meetings with HRD
- Core group of NGOs and HRDs work together with the NHRI.

- Due to reprisals, NHRC has designated a focal point for HRDs accessible every day round the clock through mobile to ensure atmosphere for HRDs to work freely
 - NGOs are taking cases of human rights violations to the Courts
 - Police, military forces, civil servants, etc. need training to understand and support HRDs
 - Victimization by false implication has been an important issue that we are monitoring with regards to HRDs.
 - Peggy: quick action is key, the sooner we can act the better, that's why the focal point is important
 - Chair of NHRI: during COVID, unprecedented situation, with cooperation, collaboration.
- **Henri Tiphagne - Executive Director of People's Watch, speaks to ISHR**
 - HRD undergo a difficult HRD situation, the best are from lawyers, academics, fields
 - 2 years poor health conditions of detention for some who expressed their freedom of association
 - The Global Action Plan should be able to give the power to any NHRI to follow up with any communication that go under the Special Procedure and NHRIs should be able to determine that State responds to every communication addressed from Special Procedures, very sad that state does not respond to communications, NHRIs should ensure State respond to these calls, it is time that we have in all meetings, NHRIs that are made to visit HRDs that are in detention to make sure no further lives are lost. Commends the Philippines commission for taking risks.
 - NHRIS should be able to visit HRD in detention centers and jail with a special attention to WHRD
 - Peggy: supports call to respond to communications from SRs
- **NHRI Algeria**
 - Important information shared today and thanking words
 - NHRI Algeria monitoring the situation of HRDs and especially political opponents and dissenting views
 - Attention on freedom of assembly and freedom of expression
 - I just wanted to share with you this good practice from Algeria

- **NHRI Bangladesh**

- Plan developed for protection HRDs and WHRDs in 2020, in guide with guidelines from 2018.
- NHRC also built capacity of HRDs especially in monitoring and reporting.
- Reports of HR violations during COVID were monitored.
- NHRC human rights challenges and seeks possible solutions, parliament to investigate

- **NHRI Mongolia**

- NHRI in process of drafting new laws from 2018 surprisingly quickly
- 7 commissioners all-together affected to HR thematic issues
- Looking forward to the passing of the bill and the development of the the commissioners mechanisms

- **Meha Khanduri – NGO from India**

- Situation of HRD deteriorating, a lot of charges and jailed
- Suggestion to encourage NHRI to have a focal point and also a defined role for the focal point and the mandate, they must engage with parliament to develop a real national framework for HRDs

- **Pradip - India**

- Current situation is a disaster: CSO and HRD are supplying medicine, ventilators etc.
- On 11 May NHRI India interacted with many CSO and NHRI and work for healthy and cooperative manner

- **NHRI Nepal**

- Issued guidelines in 2012, for protection and security, has mechanisms to complain especially regarding physical security
- NHRI can investigate and recommend, issue orders for protection because the current mandate is not sufficient
- HRDs with disability have a very hard situation, NHRI can introduce a separate bill for HRD, NHRC will advocate to pass the bill in parliament.
-

- **Chairperson JU**

Thanking for the successful international cooperation

- **Way forward - Katharina Rose, GANHRI Representative**
 - We have a draft that be went out for the comments
 - Inviting inputs for NGO s and UN on the draft
 - Incorporating comments and GA meeting for endorsement