



Statement of Ireland

76th session of the United Nations General Assembly

Third Committee

Interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Ms Mary Lawlor

14 October 2021

Madame Chair,

Ireland aligns itself with the statement of the European Union and wishes to thank the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Ms Mary Lawlor, for her report to the General Assembly, and for her presentation today.

Hundreds of human rights defenders (HRDs) across the world are serving long prison sentences after being convicted on fabricated charges, often relating to treason, subversion or terrorism. Many were denied adequate legal representation and faced unfair trials. Ireland therefore thanks the Special Rapporteur for the important work she has carried out to highlight the long-term detention of HRDs, the harsh conditions they endure, and on the unacceptable killing of increased numbers of HRDs in recent years.

Ireland is concerned that States are orchestrating the jailing of human rights defenders by passing vague laws, often in the name of national security or countering terrorism. A shocking 77% of cases addressed by this report are of HRDs detained under such laws. The Special Rapporteur's report further outlines how certain States are not adhering to their international obligations in respect of the detention of HRDs, and Ireland therefore urges States to take concrete steps to prevent all acts of reprisal and intimidation against HRDs, and to ensure that all allegations are thoroughly investigated.

The report notes that targeting human rights defenders with long jail terms destroys lives, families and communities. All States need to work together to ensure that we advocate for the protection of marginalised and vulnerable HRDs, including LGBTQI HRDs. It is deeply concerning that women human rights defenders remain at high risk, and are subjected to sexual harassment and physical attacks while in detention.

Special Rapporteur, your report urges more coordinated action by NGOs and others working on the release of defenders in prison. Have you seen any change in levels of collaboration since you started your work and what recommendations would you give to increase this coordination?

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