



Participation (P)

Enhancing participation and protecting civic space



PUBLIC MOBILIZATION



Global campaigns

10.5 million followers on social media
(across all UN Human Rights platforms, 8.2% more than in 2020)

9,400 persons from over **160** countries
expressed support (by sharing photos on social media
with a filter inspired by the Universal Declaration of
Human Rights)

374 video stories (including 175 video messages
from the High Commissioner)

110 feature stories
(UN Human Rights website and social media)



In the field

557 advocacy campaigns

2,226 press releases/statements

Data coverage in **88** countries (215% increase
compared to 41 in 2015, on global reporting on killings and
enforced disappearances of HRDs, journalists and trade
unions)

INFORMATION AND OUTREACH MATERIALS



Publications

6.99 million visits to online publications
(13% increase from 2020)

Over **298,000** publications/advocacy
materials distributed (to 85 countries)

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS



With CSOs

1,285 women's rights organizations

615 youth-led organizations

581 organizations of persons with disabilities

ENGAGEMENT WITH UN HUMAN RIGHTS MECHANISMS



HRC and UPR Voluntary Trust Funds

3 delegates of **3** States supported to attend UPR
reviews (out of a total of 41 States reviewed)

108 requests processed by the HRC
Help Desk for Small States (during regular
sessions of the HRC)



**Intimidation and reprisals against those
cooperating with the UN**

New cases/developments from **45** countries



Social Forum

Over **500** participants attended online and in
person (focusing on "good practices, success stories, lessons learned
and challenges in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic")

“To defend water is to defend life itself” (Honduras)

“I don’t understand how it is that we can be given awards abroad [for our work], while at home, in Honduras, we are persecuted [for it],” expressed a perplexed Juana Zúniga when talking about the backlash against her community.

In 2018, the Government granted a concession for the Rivers of San Pedro and of Guapinol, located in the Carlos Escaleras National Park, to the mining company, Inversiones Pinares. The concession was marked by irregularities, such as legislation that reduced the Park’s core area by 200 hectares to allow the mining company to more fully exploit its mineral rights.

When the Guapinol and other nearby communities realized that the mining activities were polluting their main water supply, they filed a lawsuit against the Government.

“The right to water and to a healthy environment are social rights and the community is very clear about this. As citizens, we have the duty to defend the environment because we all need water; humans, flora and fauna,” said Guapinol defender Kelvin Romero.

Since then, artists and human rights defenders have set up protest camps and participated in demonstrations, concerts and other events. Protests in 2018 were marred by acts of violence, which the Government blamed on protestors and community activists.

The Government’s subsequent accusations of arson and damage to private property against 31 people resulted in the detention of 12 leaders of the movement, eight of

whom remain in pretrial detention. The prosecution asserts that the activists are part of a criminal group, not HRDs.

UN Human Rights staff members visited the defenders in prison in October 2020 and November 2021. During those visits, the HRDs shared concerns about safety for themselves and their families. A Guapinol defender was murdered in suspicious circumstances outside his home.

The trial against the HRDs has been postponed several times, denying them their right to justice. During the last hearing, in December, the prosecution introduced a new charge of aggravated damages. This charge is under review by the Court of Appeals.

As a result of these delays, the HRDs have been in pretrial detention for more than two years. The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention issued an opinion that the detention is arbitrary and contrary to Honduras’ human rights obligations. Furthermore, the HRDs have

been repeatedly denied their visitation rights, including to meet with their legal representatives. Four special rapporteurs have requested the Government to immediately release the defenders.

UN Human Rights conducted advocacy and provided legal support related to international human rights standards, including on HRDs, criminalization and excessive preventive detention to judicial and prosecutorial authorities. It also provided legal support to victims and their legal representatives.

Following widespread smear campaigns that attempted to delegitimize their work as HRDs, UN Human Rights offered public support, emphasizing their roles as HRDs who are fighting for the well-being of their community and their region.

“To defend water is to defend life itself. We are fighting for the survival of our way of life and that of our community as a whole,” said Guapinol defender Arnold Alemán.



UN Human Rights Honduras Representative and team by the Guapinol River with families and community members.
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Highlights of pillar results

Participation (P)

Meaningful, inclusive and safe participation of people and communities, including those who are most underrepresented, is key to realizing the human rights for all people and advancing peace and development. When civil society engages freely and actively in policy development and implementation, policies are more informed, effective, efficient and sustainable. CSOs are instrumental in providing

legal, medical, social and financial support to victims of human rights violations, yet they face major obstacles at all levels, including at the country level and within UN forums. Legal and policy restrictions, negative narratives, attacks and intimidation, both online and offline, affect their ability to debate and mobilize. While new technologies facilitate the expansion of civil society networks, they also create

new avenues for control of their speech and activities, often under the pretext of security. UN Human Rights is uniquely placed to monitor the situation of those who speak up, open doors for effective civil society engagement and advocate for approaches that preserve and expand civic space.

PILLAR RESULTS / SHIFTS / SDGs

P1 – ENABLING NORMATIVE FRAMEWORK for civil society

Stronger laws, policies and practices protect the right to participate and civic space, including online. The environment for civil society is increasingly safe and enabling.



RESULTS / SPOTLIGHTS

Spotlights: Disabilities Women Youth

In **Colombia**, during the national strike that began on 28 April, UN Human Rights observed that dialogue between authorities, protesters and other actors constituted the most effective tool and good practice to prevent, avoid or neutralize situations of violence, including in response to roadblocks. UN Human Rights participated in seven working groups to **promote dialogue between protesters and local authorities**, specifically in the district of Bogotá and the municipality of Cali. Furthermore, after participating in capacity-building activities that were facilitated by UN Human Rights, HRDs highlighted human rights standards during their interactions with local and national authorities. On 10 December, the Ministry of the Interior presented the “Public policy on guarantees and respect for the work of human rights defenders and social leadership.” Before its publication, UN Human Rights shared with the Ministry its observations and recommendations, some of which were taken into account, especially those related to the incorporation of an HRBA.

In the **Pacific region**, UN Human Rights actively engaged with women human rights defenders, in particular with those from rural and remote areas. **A report on the situation of HRDs** was finalized and launched, highlighting the situation of WHRDs in Fiji, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. The launch was preceded by a validation workshop of findings and recommendations, based on scoping missions conducted in seven countries. The report presents recommendations for action by national institutions, regional bodies and international organizations, as well as HRDs. In 2022, UN Human Rights will work on a protection strategy for WHRDs and continue its capacity-building work.

In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, UN Human Rights focused on assessing the situation regarding civic space, including freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly and association and the right to participate in public affairs. Contacts were established with CSOs to assess the challenges they face in different parts of the country. Additionally, preliminary research on hate speech was undertaken and UN Human Rights coordinated the elaboration of a **UN Plan of Action on hate speech**, which includes monitoring, advocacy and capacity-building.

UN Human Rights contributed to ensuring that human rights perspectives were integrated into global discourses about **effective ways to moderate online content while respecting freedom of expression**. For instance, on 14 July, a **press conference** highlighted related developments in a variety of countries, including Australia, Bangladesh, Brazil, France, the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt)/Israel, Singapore, Tanzania and the United States of America. Issues covered were broadly picked up by the press and social media. For instance, one post on Internet shutdowns was viewed over 335,000 times on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

P2 – PROTECTION of CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS

The UN system and international, regional and national mechanisms provide increased, timely and effective protection to civil society organizations and individuals, including from reprisals.



In **Guatemala**, UN Human Rights launched an **online educational platform** (www.participapromueveprotege.org), which seeks to strengthen the knowledge of State institutions and civil society actors on the promotion and protection of human rights. UN Human Rights also facilitated a six-week workshop about the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders for 20 officials (14 women, six men) from the Attorney General's Office, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Energy and Mining, the National Civilian Police, the General Procurator's Office and the judiciary. Through two virtual sessions, UN Human Rights strengthened the knowledge of 16 staff members (nine women, seven men) from the Presidential Commission on Human Rights (COPADEH) regarding the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders and the right to defend human rights. At the regional level, UN Human Rights and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights worked closely to strengthen the capacities of 25 people (12 women, 13 men) from CSOs and State institutions from El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua on the protection of HRDs.

In **Bangladesh**, through training and outreach, UN Human Rights **strengthened the knowledge of civil society actors about the international human rights mechanisms**. As a result, civil society increasingly used the recommendations issued by the special procedures, human rights treaty bodies and UPR in their advocacy. They also made greater use of UN tools to monitor and report on human rights violations.

In **South Sudan**, in engaging with NHRIs, UN Human Rights provided technical support to the South Sudan Human Rights Commission (SSHRC), human rights defenders and CSOs to undertake human rights field monitoring, investigations and reporting missions. In particular, the SSHRC was supported to develop a **human rights field investigation and monitoring toolkit** with a checklist. It carried out three field investigation missions to Yei, Malakal and Rumbek and drafted the mission reports with recommendations. The reports will be shared with the Government and used as an advocacy and engagement tool for addressing the identified human rights violations and abuses, as well as raising awareness about the need for accountability of identified perpetrators. UN Human Rights will continue to support the SSHRC by strengthening its monitoring and investigation capacities.

P3 – PUBLIC SUPPORT for CIVIC SPACE

Business, policymakers and the public at large increasingly value and support civic space.



On the occasion of the launch of its **Guidance on the protection of human rights defenders**, UN Human Rights supported the UN Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises in holding two regional dialogues in Latin America, in September. One dialogue gathered 150 HRDs to discuss collaborative strategies to counter the phenomenon of legal claims against HRDs working on the issue of business and human rights. The other dialogue brought together 400 representatives of business, CSOs, communities and governments to discuss the situation of HRDs working on business and human rights. The discussion pushed for new commitments from governments and the business sector to protect the work of HRDs. The Guidance is being **integrated into CSO advocacy and government policies for the protection of human rights defenders**, notably the protection mechanism for human rights defenders in Peru, the Attorney General of Peru’s Protocol for the protection of human rights defenders and the Policy on protection of social leaders of the Ministry of Mines and Energy of Colombia.

P4 – ASSISTANCE TO VICTIMS

Civil society assistance to victims of human rights violations is strengthened.



In **Azerbaijan**, UN Human Rights launched a new three-year project with the aim of protecting the human rights of vulnerable groups. Within the framework of this project, UN Human Rights will deliver **systematic capacity-building programmes** on a wide range of human rights topics and will ensure continued support for the engagement of national actors in international and national human rights advocacy. The project will also contribute to improved access to justice for vulnerable groups by advocating for the **establishment of a civil legal aid system** in the country and the extension of free legal aid to members of vulnerable groups and other persons affected by the pandemic. Furthermore, in cooperation with the Ombudsperson and the Bar Association, UN Human Rights provided **legal assistance to members of vulnerable groups** in Baku and other regions and promoted the pro bono culture among private legal professionals. This assistance was extended to the five regions of Azerbaijan and will be available on a permanent basis. Due to these efforts, 1,549 individuals (719 women, 830 men) from vulnerable groups benefited from legal assistance in 2021. The cases primarily focused on women’s rights, housing rights, social security rights, labour rights and administrative law.

UN Human Rights engaged with **North Koreans living in the Republic of Korea (ROK)** and organized regular meetings with two core groups of North Korean civil society actors in the ROK. The meetings served as a platform for consistent interaction and engagement and facilitated the provision of **support on human rights issues, including through monitoring and documentation, victims’ protection and engagement with the UN**. Eight field missions were undertaken to provinces outside of Seoul and visits were organized to the Hanawon Resettlement Support Centres to engage with DPRK escapees who maintain contacts inside the DPRK, enabling them to receive up-to-date information on the human rights situation.

In **Syria**, UN Human Rights provided technical and financial assistance and mentoring to organizations implementing **community-level HRBA projects** in government-held areas. Selected projects addressed issues such as social cohesion, women’s rights and child protection. UN Human Rights organized a series of roundtables for CSOs on: the rights of the child and their protection; effective advocacy strategies, including social media; international human rights mechanisms and resolutions for the promotion, protection and advancement of women’s rights; and risk assessment/analysis/security training. A total of 66 individuals (49 women, 17 men) participated in the roundtables. In 2022, UN Human Rights will build on this work by organizing a new round of sub-grants to support grassroots CSO programming.

P5 – CIVIC SPACE MONITORING

More systematic monitoring of the environment for civic space, including threats to it, takes place.



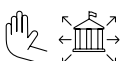
In **Honduras**, through its monitoring and reporting work, UN Human Rights brought **cases of human rights violations to the attention of relevant authorities** and advocated for them to be addressed. UN Human Rights also implemented **a monitoring and documentation protocol** to register and analyse attacks and grave violations against HRDs, journalists and demonstrators. UN Human Rights used the new system to register 362 victims of attacks during 2021, including 10 violent deaths. It also intervened in many of these cases and facilitated contact between victims or their families and the NHRI or the NPM and provided NGOs with support in bringing cases to the attention of the international human rights mechanisms.

In **Cambodia**, UN Human Rights **monitored the civic and democratic space** of at least 25 peaceful protests and gatherings. It also provided protection support and referrals in relation to 26 situations involving HRDs and CSOs and seven cases involving journalists. Further, UN Human Rights **monitored and provided protection support and referrals** in relation to 20 cases involving members and activists of the Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP), including the killing of an activist in Phnom Penh and the deportation of five Cambodian political refugees affiliated with the CNRP from Thailand. Throughout the year, regular briefings were organized with CSOs to discuss protection concerns and civic and democratic space. Moreover, UN Human Rights facilitated four virtual meetings between the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Cambodia, CSOs and at-risk HRDs.

Through the development of an internal toolbox and collaborative projects with universities to collect **real-time data on disruptions** (i.e., in Burkina Faso, Honduras, Sudan and Venezuela), UN Human Rights is taking steps to strengthen the monitoring and reporting of Internet shutdowns, with a view to raising awareness about adverse human rights impacts and how they can be prevented.

P6 – PEOPLE HAVE A VOICE

The voices of people affected by decisions, particularly victims and those who face discrimination, are more clearly heard.



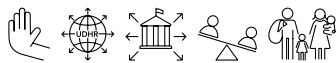
In **Mexico**, UN Human Rights advocated for the **adoption and implementation of international human rights standards on the rights of indigenous peoples** before several ministries, institutions, companies and embassies. In the emblematic case of a series of agreements on community water management that were concluded between Zapotecan communities (Oaxaca) and federal authorities, UN Human Rights played a crucial role in promoting the inclusion of relevant international standards during the dialogue process. On 24 November, the President of Mexico signed a decree recognizing the rights of indigenous communities and ensuring their access to water.

In the **Pacific region**, UN Human Rights collaborated with UNFPA, ILO and UNICEF to re-activate the UN Youth Inter-Agency Working Group, which was established to address youth development in the Pacific region. It also co-organized the commemoration of International Youth Day, on 12 August, with an event in the Federated States of Micronesia and across the region, focusing on the need for **youth inclusion and participation in the development space**, contributing to the preparation of policy and strengthening youth structures and the use of digital space. Other issues included challenges related to climate change and the impacts of COVID-19 on food security. Youth priorities and recommendations shaped the outcome statement of the event, which was presented at the World Food Systems Summit, in September.

Following technical advice and advocacy by UN Human Rights and the special procedures, in collaboration with UN **Malawi** and development partners, the Government **revised the NGO Amendment Bill** so that it complies with international standards, including by guaranteeing the protection of the rights to freedom of association, assembly, expression and opinion. In early 2021, UN Human Rights submitted to the Government a detailed human rights analysis of the NGO Act and the NGO Amendment Bill 2020. The analysis was jointly supported by the UN and seven development partners and included comments made regarding previous amendment bills by UN Human Rights and the special procedures, with an emphasis on the need for a vibrant civic space that respects and promotes human rights. In March, the Government responded positively to the joint submission and indicated that it would reflect 80 per cent of the comments in its review of the regulatory system. The remaining comments will be considered during a comprehensive review of the NGO Act by the Malawi Human Rights Commission (MHRC), as recommended in the joint UN submission. At the end of the year, the NGO Amendment Bill was presented to the Parliament for debate but it was not yet tabled. It is anticipated that the Bill will be tabled in a session in early 2022.

P7 – Human rights RESPONSE to VIOLENCE

Public recognition increases that human rights and accountability make important contributions to effective responses to violence, including terrorism and violent extremism.



In **Tunisia**, under the Memorandum of Understanding between UN Human Rights and the Ministry of Religious Affairs, UN Human Rights supported the Ministry and the Union of Imams in organizing a series of three workshops dedicated to **freedom of expression and countering hate speech** for imams and professional worship staff from across the country. The workshops aimed at reinforcing the understanding of the imams about international standards on freedom of expression and the Rabat Plan of Action on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence. It also sought to enhance their ability to identify, prevent and/or counter hate speech, thereby contributing to the **promotion of pluralism and non-discrimination** within their communities.

UN Human Rights developed and implemented a Member State **engagement action plan on counter-terrorism and human rights**. UN Human Rights tracked and documented engagement with Member States and formulated key messages for specific occasions, such as meetings with Azerbaijan, Belgium, Egypt, India, Morocco, Norway, Pakistan, Sweden and the EU. These advocacy efforts enhanced Member States' awareness of OHCHR's work on counter-terrorism and human rights.

Online course inspires participation in decision-making and the promotion of the right to development

Srruthi is a 21-year-old activist who grew up facing economic hardship in Puducherry, a small union territory in India. Motivated by concerns about injustice and human rights violations and a desire to foster social change, she decided to get involved in shaping the decisions impacting her city and came across the e-learning module, “Operationalizing the right to development in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals.”

Jamila, a young British Palestinian woman who lives in East Jerusalem with her husband and three kids, lost her job at the UNRWA Field Legal Office due to political tensions. She was the primary breadwinner and could not find other work. As her family’s financial difficulties continued, she enrolled in the same e-learning module.

The module was developed by UN Human Rights, in partnership with the University for Peace (UPEACE) in Costa Rica and the UN University’s International Institute for Global Health in Malaysia and was launched in 2018. It is based on the contributions of 10 experts from around the world with a shared commitment to advancing the right to development by providing information in an understandable format, using case studies and concrete examples of how to implement this right.

“I understood what a participatory process was, how to create one and why it was so important for sustainable development...I also realized there was a gap in that respect in my own city,” said Srruthi. “This module provided interesting case

studies and knowledge that I could use in my own projects.”

“What captured my attention was a case study from Afghanistan where students were taught negotiation and conflict resolution skills and how that helped their community to share development resources,” said Jamila. “I was facing similar problems and conflicts where I was living and I thought that I could replicate some of the success stories I learned about,” she added.

Both women founded organizations to help realize the right to development and build the capacity of their communities to claim and defend their rights.

Jamila founded an NGO known as the Women, Youth & Kids Empowerment Initiative for Sustainable Peace & Development, to teach disadvantaged children living in East Jerusalem about their rights and how they are linked to

development issues. She established partnerships with two other organizations and now works with 11 volunteers and a network of technical experts and professionals from various countries.

Srruthi set up Polity Link, an NGO working with governments and CSOs to promote the involvement of young people in developing policies to tackle issues, such as inequality and sustainable development. More than 120 students and civil society activists are now taking part in Polity Link’s activities on a biweekly basis. They are often contacted by the Puducherry local government to ensure that the voices of youth are taken into account in decision-making processes. Srruthi hopes to expand her work to other cities, primarily through capacity-building programmes that will highlight human rights and international cooperation for development.



Srruthi Lekha Raaja Elango (left) and Jamila Al-Abbasi (right). © OHCHR

Mongolia: New law to protect human rights defenders

The Mongolian Parliament recently adopted a new law for human rights defenders, making it the first country in Asia to provide a framework of protection for people who speak out on human rights concerns and violations.

The Law on the Legal Status of Human Rights Defenders entered into force on 1 July. It is the result of a years-long collective effort of UN Human Rights, CSOs and the Government, in cooperation with the UN presence in Mongolia. Under the Law, the critical voices and actions of HRDs are now legally protected and their rights are respected, promoted and fulfilled.

“This is a major achievement for Mongolia, signalling its clear commitment to human rights,” said the High Commissioner for Human Rights. “This Law will resonate within and beyond Mongolia’s borders.”

The High Commissioner added that as the eyes of the region will be watching the next steps, it will be important that the Law is implemented in compliance with international standards and overseen by an independent, effective and fully resourced mechanism.

For the last several years, UN Human Rights has been supporting Mongolia to implement the recommendations

emanating from the UPR process. As part of this process, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders provided a number of recommendations to the Government of Mongolia.

A MOVE TO A “SAFE AND ENABLING ENVIRONMENT”

Historically, although HRDs in Mongolia live in a relatively safe environment, they face numerous obstacles, such as pressure, stigmatization and hate speech on social media related to their advocacy on media freedom, climate justice, disability rights, access to housing and discrimination against LGBTI persons.

In 2019, a [visit report](#) from the Special Rapporteur highlighted cases of discrimination, harassment and intimidation. Some HRDs were reported to have died in circumstances that were not properly investigated.

“The adoption of this Law is a welcome and critical move to create a safe and enabling environment for human rights defenders...and a progressive step towards full protection for their vital work,” stated the High Commissioner. “It will serve to acknowledge their crucial work, bring the perpetrators of attacks against them to justice and end impunity.”

UN Human Rights will continue to provide technical support to Mongolia as it implements the legislation.



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Women human rights defenders at a workshop during the soft launch of the OHCHR report on the situation of human rights defenders, in Suva, Fiji. © OHCHR