



# **INTERNATIONAL MECHANISMS**

## **TO PROTECT ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENDERS**

Tbilisi – Georgia - 2025

# Defending environment: dangerous job



# What is coming at us?



Media attacks, defamation, disinformation

Growing repression of environmental activists

Political decisions to cut public funding of NGOs

Legal restrictions of environmental activism

The majority supports populist politics. Search for „enemies“ of the state.

SLAPP, criminal charges

# Repressions

- For the last 19 years (since 2006) the world has been losing freedom every year (*Freedom House*)
- Since 2012, Russia and 7 other countries of Europe and the former USSR have adopted a law on foreign agents (most recently Georgia). 130 countries around the world have introduced various restrictions.
- During a decade (2012 – 2023) 2,100 environmental activists have been murdered worldwide (*Global Witness*)

# Why?

- Triple planetary crisis (climate change, biodiversity loss, toxic pollution) is worsening
- Non-renewable natural resources are running out and the fight for them is intensifying
- Widening inequalities in the world (1% of people own 50% of the world's wealth – 20 years ago it was 40%)
- Decline in trust in institutions, science and facts
- Greenwashing, disinformation campaigns
- Mass support for populist politicians, linking politics with oligarchs and global corporations

# Environmental defenders = terrorists

**2016: Standing Rock, USA**



**2025: Just Stop Oil, UK**



# UN international law

## International Human Rights law standards:

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

**apply to all persons.**

# UN Recognition of Human Rights Defenders

- **UNGA Resolution 76/300 (2022)**. Environmental rights are human rights focused on the ability to live in a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment, which is essential for the realization of all other human rights, such as the right to life, health, and food.
- **UNGA Resolution A/RES/78/216 (2023)**. Calls on states to implement the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms by providing a safe and enabling environment for human rights defenders and ensuring their protection
- **Human Rights Council Resolution on Emerging Technologies (2025)**. Focuses on enhancing protection in the digital age, covering digital surveillance, internet shutdowns, and other trends that pose new types of risks to defenders

# Universal Periodic Review under the UN Human Rights Council

- All UN member states human rights records are assessed every 4.5 years
- States present actions taken to improve human rights
- NGOs can contribute with their inputs



**NGOs: [ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/ngos-nhris](http://ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/ngos-nhris)**

**Georgia: [ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/ge-index](http://ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/ge-index)**

# International Covenants CCPR & ESCR

- Human Rights Council receives individual complaints
- CCPR: 163 complaints in 2024
- The Committee can request the state to take „interim measures“

[ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/ccpr/individual-communications](http://ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/ccpr/individual-communications)

[ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/cescr/individual-communications](http://ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/cescr/individual-communications)

# UN special procedures



**Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders**

**Ms. Mary Lawlor**

**<https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-human-rights-defenders>**



**Special Rapporteur on climate change**

**Ms. Elisa Morgera**

**<https://www.ohchr.org/en/specialprocedures/sr-climate-change>**

# UN special procedures



**Special Rapporteur on toxics and human rights**

**Mr. Marcos A. Orellana**

**<https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-toxics-and-human-rights>**



**Special Rapporteur on the human right to a healthy environment**

**Ms. Astrid Puentes Riaño**

**<https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-environment>**

# Aarhus Convention on environmental democracy



# UN special rapporteur on environmental defenders under the Aarhus Convention



## Mr. Michel Forst

The SR takes measures to protect any person experiencing or at imminent threat of penalization, persecution, or harassment for seeking to exercise their rights under the Aarhus Convention.

- Annual thematic reports to UNGA and HRC
- Country visits
- Respond to allegations

**<https://unece.org/env/pp/aarhus-convention/special-rapporteur>**

# EU human rights defenders mechanism

<p><b>Operates</b> a permanent and rapid response mechanism to provide urgent assistance and practical support to Human Rights Defenders in danger, their families, and their work.</p>	<p><b>Manages</b> a programme of temporary relocation for Human Rights Defenders at risk to relocate inside their country, within their region, or abroad in case of an urgent threat.</p>
<p><b>Supports</b> the creation of shelters for HRDs at risk and coordinates an exchange platform for stakeholders working on temporary relocation for Human Rights Defenders</p>	<p><b>Provides</b> training, financial support, accompaniment, and capacity-building to Human Rights Defenders and local organisations</p>
<p><b>Monitors</b> the situation of human rights defenders, including in the field, and advocates for a protection agenda for them at local, regional, and international level</p>	<p><b>Promotes</b> coordination between organisations dedicated to support for Human Rights Defenders, EU institutions and other relevant actors</p>

# Guide to international mechanisms

МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЕ  
МЕХАНИЗМЫ ЗАЩИТЫ ПРАВ  
ЧЕЛОВЕКА, КОТОРЫЕ  
ВОЗМОЖНО ИСПОЛЬЗОВАТЬ  
ДЛЯ ЗАЩИТЫ  
ЭКОЛОГИЧЕСКИХ ПРАВ



2024

[Download the publication](#)

# Do not stay with your case alone

- 1 Systematically collect the evidence & testimonies
- 2 Consult your case with a human rights lawyer
- 3 Use domestic law remedies
- 4 Make your case public through the media
- 5 Report your case through the international mechanisms
- 6 Communicate with some of the Special Rapporteurs

Thank you for your attention!

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[ecoge.org](http://ecoge.org)

[arnika.org/en/countries/georgia](http://arnika.org/en/countries/georgia)



**TRANSITION**  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic

