

Mitigating Risks and Reprisals Video transcript

Everyone has the right to safely access and communicate with the United Nations. This right is recognised in the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

By engaging with the UN, your work to promote and protect human rights can be amplified - this also means that human rights issues in your country are brought to the attention of the international community.

Some States, or other non-state actors, will go to great lengths to stop human rights defenders from doing this.

They may intimidate or carry out reprisals against those who attempt to engage.

Reprisals can take many forms: From travel bans, smear campaigns and surveillance; to arbitrary detention, torture and even killings.

And it's not just defenders themselves, friends and family can also be targeted.

So, how can you protect yourself and mitigate the risks?

One step you can take is to carry out a risk assessment.

A risk assessment will help you consider the different types of risk or threats you may face, your vulnerability, the likelihood of the risk happening, and your capacity to deal with those threats. You might ask yourself questions like:

- Does my government have a history of carrying out reprisals?
- Is my government sensitive to the issues I'm raising?
- Will my State know, or easily find out what I'm doing?
- Who should I tell, and what should they do if something goes wrong?

Remember to do this every time you engage with the UN!

Let's be clear; reprisals should never happen, and when they do, those responsible must be held accountable.

If, despite precautions, you still experience reprisals, you have allies you can turn to.



Each UN human rights body has its own reporting process and the power to respond. You can also report a reprisal to the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, and to the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, who is the UN senior official on reprisals.

You will always be the best placed to assess the risks you might face. But you are not alone! Reach out to others – both in your country and within the international community, including ISHR.

Together we will continue to work hard to ensure defenders like you, can safely and effectively engage with the UN and continue to promote and protect human rights around the world.