

## **Understanding the HRC - The Basics video transcript**

The Human Rights Council is the UN's main intergovernmental human rights forum. It's where individual States demonstrate to the rest of the world that they are committed to protecting human rights. It is also where countries discuss the most pressing human rights challenges, and seek to work together to solve them. Through the Council human rights defenders can bring about useful political pressure as a way to improve situations back at home.

The Human Rights Council was established in 2006. It meets 3 times a year, in Geneva, and is fundamental to the UN system. The Council consists of 47 states, elected by the 193 states in the General Assembly. Roughly a third of the members change each year.

The Council tackles some of the worst human rights crises in the world. That could mean looking closely at a situation in one specific country, or considering issues affecting people all over the world. It facilitates discussion, encourages education and, where necessary, holds rights violators to account.

The power to create intense scrutiny makes the Human Rights Council really important tool for defenders to use. As a whole it can adopt resolutions, or individual Members can make statements pushing for the change that is needed. Through the Council defenders can alert NGO's, the media and the world in general to human rights violations in their home countries.

Defenders can use the Council by coming to Geneva; that might mean taking an active role in sessions, delivering statements, planning side events, and meeting with representatives. But they can also shape the Council's agenda without leaving home by lobbying for action or drawing attention to a situation on the ground.

Any space in which different states come together will be unavoidably political. So human rights defenders must learn how use those politics to their advantage. Defenders can use the agendas, alliances and human rights commitments of individual States to get the Council to take action that will improve the lives of people around the world.