**How to Engage with Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council**

***(Special Rapporteurs, Independent Experts and Working Groups)***

Special Rapporteurs and Independent Experts are individuals who are appointed to monitor, investigate and advise on human rights situations in particular countries (known as country mandates) and particular categories of human rights violations that happen worldwide (known as thematic mandates). They are independent from the UN and do not receive a salary for this work. Some Special Rapporteurs can work together with each other about a particular country or issues.

* List of Special Rapporteurs on a country: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/SP/Pages/Countries.aspx>
* List of Special Rapporteurs on a thematic issue: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/SP/Pages/Themes.aspx>

**What can a Special Rapporteur do?**

* Write to governments about individual cases of human rights violations or about general human rights concerns
* Visit countries to conduct fact-finding missions and make reports about the visit with recommendations
* Raise public awareness about a case or an issue through the media
* Information about country visits: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/SP/Pages/CountryandothervisitsSP.aspx>
* Dates of upcoming country visits: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/SP/Pages/Forthcomingcountryvisits.aspx>

**How can you engage with a Special Rapporteur?**

* ***Write a letter***: You can write to a Special Rapporteur to tell them about:
  + an individual case of a human rights violation – you must include specific information about the case
  + general information and analysis about human rights concerns affecting a group of people or a place
* ***Arrange a meeting***: You can arrange to meet with a Special Rapporteur or their staff face-to-face. Before or at the meeting, it is helpful to give them a concise written report about the issues that you want to discuss.
* ***Country visits***: You can provide support to a Special Rapporteur before, during or after a country visit. You can alert a Special Rapporteur about a situation in a country and encourage them to visit the country.
* ***Governments***: You can encourage a government to invite a Special Rapporteur to visit a country

**What should you write in a letter to a Special Rapporteur?**

* Decide whether your letter is aimed at submitting broad information about a human rights situation or an individual complaint about a human rights violation. Clearly state this in the letter.
* Decide which Special Rapporteur you will write to. You may want to address the letter to more than one Special Rapporteur and ask them to work together.
* ***Questionnaire***: Each Special Rapporteur has different requirements for submitting information – check whether the Special Rapporteur has a questionnaire for submitting information: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/SP/Pages/QuestionnairesforsubmittingInfo.aspx>
* ***Template***: If there is no questionnaire, then you should write a letter that contains clear and concise information about the situation or violation that you wish to bring to the Special Rapporteur’s attention. See the template below for ideas about what to write.
* ***Confidentiality***: If you allege that a person is a victim of a human rights violation, and you would like the Special Rapporteur to write to the government responsible, then the person’s name will be included in the report to the government (except in special cases such as children or cases of sexual violence). If you do not want information to be passed onto the government, you should clearly state this in the letter. If you want your own identity to remain anonymous, you should also state this in the letter. The content of a Special Rapporteur’s communication to governments are usually confidential unless they make a public statement or media statement, or they report the communication to the Human Rights Council.
* ***Sources of information***: You should clearly state the source(s) of information that you provide. Special Rapporteurs like to receive information that is recent, credible and not based solely on media reports.

**For more information:**

* Read Chapter VII (pages 107-136) of the Handbook for Civil Society on Working with the UN Human Rights Programme: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/AboutUs/CivilSociety/Documents/Handbook_en.pdf>
* If you have any questions about Special Rapporteurs, contact [**SPDInfo@ohchr.org**](mailto:SPDInfo@ohchr.org)

**Correspondence for all Special Rapporteurs can be sent to:**

E-mail: [SPDInfo@ohchr.org](mailto:SPDInfo@ohchr.org)(for general inquiries and information)

[urgent-action@ohchr.org](mailto:urgent-action@ohchr.org)(for individual cases/complaints only)

Fax: +41 (0)22 917 90 06

Post: **Quick Response Desk**

OHCHR-UNOG

Palais des Nations

8–14, avenue de la Paix

CH–1211 Geneva 10 - Switzerland

**Write the name of the Special Rapporteur in the subject line of the e-mail, fax, or on the cover of the envelope.**

**This information has been prepared by Jemma Hollonds, based on information available from the Human Rights Council, on behalf of the Centre for Refugee Research, July 2012**

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