

Sierra Leone | Human rights activists demand legal recognition and protection

At the request of the Sierra Leone NGOs, ISHR supported a policy dialogue between NGO and governmental actors to discuss and enrich a draft law on the protection of human rights defenders, which took place in Freetown on 30 May. The draft Sierra Leone law is substantially inspired from the [model national law](#) on the recognition and protection of human rights defenders.

On 31 May, ISHR and partners met with members of the Sierra Leone legislative and human rights parliamentary committees, to further discuss the draft law and the next stages of approval.

“We’re impressed and pleased to see the major progress made in the preparation of a draft law on the protection of human rights defenders in Sierra Leone” says ISHR’s Adélaïde Etong Kame. “But we’re also concerned by NGO regulations which are restricting freedom of association” she warned.

Sierra Leone could become [the first Commonwealth country in Africa](#) to adopt a new law on the protection and recognition of human rights defenders, and national NGOs are keen to support the process. Activists, including [those working on land rights](#), face a range of threats and challenges, as echoed by several [UN Special Procedures](#).

[UN experts](#) and Sierra Leone NGOs have also expressed concern with restrictive NGO policies which “impose severe restrictions to CSOs and impinge on the exercise of the rights to freedom of expression and freedom of association which are guaranteed under international human rights law”.

“We hope that Sierra Leone authorities will send a strong signal to the international community by adopting the new law on the protection of HRDs, and reviewing restrictive NGO policies. This would be in direct compliance with *SDG 16 –peace, justice and strong institutions*” Etong Kame concludes.

Video: ISHR on Ayvnews TV about Sierra Leone’s efforts towards a law protecting human rights defenders