

**International mechanisms join forces to strengthen the protection  
of the freedoms of peaceful assembly and of association  
amid widespread attacks against civic space**

GENEVA/WARSAW (05 December 2022) - UN and high-level representatives from regional mechanisms mandated with the protection of human rights and the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, together with civil society representatives, held a three-day strategic consultation on 28-30 November in Warsaw, Poland. The mechanisms, concerned with the serious threats and restrictions on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, affecting all world regions, discussed common challenges and avenues for collaboration to strengthen the promotion and protection of these fundamental rights.

The meeting was convened at the initiative of the [UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association](#), Clément N. Voule, and co-hosted by the [OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights \(ODIHR\)](#). It focused on enhancing joint responses to major existing and emerging trends undermining the full enjoyment of these fundamental freedoms in Africa, the Americas, Asia and Europe.

“Global challenges require global solutions. This first meeting, bringing together regional mechanisms and civil society, represents a critical step towards stronger collaboration across regions to counter the increasing restrictions and attacks on the freedoms of peaceful assembly and of association by both State and non-State actors”, said Voule. “We’ve discussed common concerns and good practices, while identifying ways to better join forces at a time where international, regional and national human rights systems are under heavy pressure.”

The UN expert and regional bodies further discussed key concerns that require urgent attention and action. These include restrictions on the holding of assemblies and the use of unlawful and excessive force by law enforcement in the context of peaceful assemblies; the arbitrary detention of demonstrators, journalists, activists and human rights defenders; the unjustified and continued use of state of emergency measures to clampdown on civic space; the proliferation of restrictive legislation, such as foreign agent and NGO laws; undue restrictions on fundamental freedoms in crisis situations; as well as the use of technology to surveil activists and opponents, and internet shutdowns to suppress assemblies and associations.

The experts finally discussed ways to address the issue of the lack of accountability for violations of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, which is key to prevent abuses against those exercising these rights and to ensure such violations are not repeated.

“We are committed to work together even more closely in the years ahead to reaffirm the universality of human rights, and more specifically of these fundamental freedoms, which are essential for the promotion and protection of all human rights”, the experts said.

The meeting builds on existing initiatives between mechanisms, such as the joint declarations, issued annually since 2020. It also builds on the bilateral roadmap adopted between the UN Special Procedures and the [African Commission on Human and People's Rights](#) (the [Addis Ababa Roadmap](#)), and the Roadmap between the UN Special Procedures and the [Inter-American Commission on Human Rights](#).

In addition to the UN Special Rapporteur and civil society representatives, the meeting was attended by the Chairperson of the [African Commission on Human and People's Rights](#) and Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders and focal point on reprisals in Africa, Rémy Ngoy Lumbu; the [Rapporteur on the Rights of Human Rights Defenders and Justice Operators](#) of the [Inter-American Commission on Human Rights](#), Commissioner Joel Hernández García; the Indonesian Representative to the [ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights](#), Yuyun Wahyuningrum; the Director of ODIHR, Matteo Mecacci and Head of ODIHR's [Human Rights Department](#), Andrea Huber, and the adviser on freedom of expression and on peaceful assembly of the [Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights](#), Stefano Montanari.

*The Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association is part of what is known as the [Special Procedures](#) of the Human Rights Council. Special Procedures, the largest body of independent experts in the UN Human Rights system, is the general name of the Council's independent fact-finding and monitoring mechanisms that address either specific country situations or thematic issues in all parts of the world. Special Procedures experts work on a voluntary basis; they are not UN staff and do not receive a salary for their work. They are independent of any government or organisation and serve in their individual capacity.*

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