

Human Rights Council – 40th Session

Clustered Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders and the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment

Australian Statement

Australia thanks both Special Rapporteurs for their presentations.

We welcome the address by the **Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders** on women's crucial contribution to the advancement of human rights, and the additional and different, gendered and intersectional risks that women human rights defenders are exposed to on account of their identity and what they do.

Australia is gravely concerned by reports of killings, enforced disappearances, torture, arbitrary detention, acid attacks, sexual violence, and intimidation of women defenders, including through online abuse. As you report, the full spectrum of women defenders have been targeted – from those in conflict situations, through to sex workers, environmental defenders, journalists, lawyers and judges.

Australia is interested in your views on how we can strengthen protections for women human rights defenders from online violence, including the role of technology and social media companies.

Australia also welcomes the focus of the **Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment** on corruption and torture or ill-treatment as two concurrent effects of the failure of governance systems to prevent the abuse of unchecked power.

Drawing on the commonalities between your report and that of the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, could you please provide more detail on your recommendation in para. 73(f)? Namely, practical measures to better protect civil society representatives, human rights defenders, and whistle-blowers from violence, intimidation and reprisals.

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