

# East Africa: Human Rights Defenders and Civil Society Regional Challenges

## Side Event

UN Human Rights Council  
26th Session



► Thursday 12 June 2014, 14.30-16.30, Room VIII, Palais des Nations

Across East Africa there is a visible pattern of states sharing 'worst practices' to silence the legitimate work of human rights defenders and to narrow the space for civil society. Under the pretense of safeguarding state sovereignty and security governments throughout the region are placing unwarranted and debilitating restrictions on the human rights fundamental to civil society space, including the freedoms of assembly, association and expression. In a region where civil society plays an imperative role in ensuring the realization of civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights, the growing trend of limiting civil society space is precipitating severe democratic backsliding and raising concerns about governments' ability to ensure ability to ensure equitable and sustainable development.

and emerging regional trends. The side event will also provide a unique opportunity to examine viable entry points to increase support for Defenders in the region and address the escalating restrictions on the core civil society freedoms.

Countries of Focus: Ethiopia, Rwanda, South Sudan, Uganda.

### Panelists

**Maina Kiai** (United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association)

**Hassan Shire** (East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project, Uganda)

**Soliyana Gebremichael** (Zone 9 and Ethiopian Human Rights Project, Ethiopia)

**Patrick Mutahi** (Article 19, Kenya)

Ethiopia, Rwanda, South Sudan and Uganda are among the most challenging countries in the region for human rights defenders and civil society organizations. In a UNHRC side event organized by the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project, CIVICUS, the Ethiopian Human Rights Project, Article 19, and Human Rights Watch, panelists from these four countries will provide an overview of the challenges in each country,

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