



Fédération internationale des ACAT – Action des chrétiens pour l'abolition de la torture
International Federation of ACATs – Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture

FIACAT oral statement

Item 3 – Interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders

52nd session of the Human Rights Council

Thank you, Mr President,

Madam Rapporteur,

FIACAT welcomes your choice to highlight the achievements of human rights defenders in your report and would like to express some concerns.

While civic space is shrinking in many countries, the protection of defenders must remain a priority. However, the proliferation of laws or bills on this subject should call for vigilance. Frequently, the definition of human rights defenders appears to be much more restricted than in the 1998 Declaration, sometimes because of a lack of understanding, and more often because of a desire to control their action.

For example, while FIACAT and ACAT Niger welcome the fact that the law on the protection of human rights defenders in Niger takes into account the specificities of women defenders or those in a situation of disability, they regret that recognition of the status of defender is conditional on action within a group, whereas many acts for the defence of human rights are the result of individual initiatives or informal groups.

FIACAT also wishes to draw your attention to the Bill in Togo. Despite the fact that civil society has been involved on several occasions, the views of defenders have not been taken into account. Beyond a restrictive definition, concepts such as a defender's card or a national register raise fears that the law will be used to control their action.

Finally, despite some positive signs, such as the release of Tony Germain Nkina on 28 December 2022, FIACAT and ACAT Burundi remain deeply concerned about the situation of human rights defenders in Burundi, as shown by the arrest of five of them on 14 February 2023.

Thank you for your attention.