

Russia Named by UN Among Countries Harassing Human Rights Workers

By [Reuters](#)

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Justin Lane / EPA / TASS

The United Nations listed 38 "shameful" countries including Russia on Wednesday which it said had carried out reprisals or intimidation against people cooperating with it on human rights, through killings, torture and arbitrary arrests.

The annual report from U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres also included allegations of ill-treatment, surveillance, criminalisation, and public stigmatisation campaigns targeting victims and human rights defenders.

"The world owes it to those brave people standing up for human rights, who have responded to requests to provide information to and engage with the United Nations, to ensure their right to participate is respected," Guterres wrote.

"Punishing individuals for cooperating with the United Nations is a shameful practice that

everyone must do more to stamp out."

The 38 countries included 29 countries with new cases, and 19 with ongoing or continuing cases.

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Governments frequently charged human rights activists with terrorism or blamed them for cooperating with foreign entities or damaging the state's reputation or security, it said.

"(There is a) disturbing trend in the use of national security arguments and counter-terrorism strategies by states as justification for blocking access by communities and civil society organisations to the United Nations," the report said.

Women cooperating with the U.N. had reported threats of rape and being subject to online smear campaigns, and U.N. staff often encountered people who were too afraid to speak to them, even at U.N. headquarters in New York and Geneva.

U.N. Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights Andrew Gilmour, who will present the report to the Human Rights Council next week, said in a statement that the cases in the report were the tip of the iceberg.

"We are also increasingly seeing legal, political and administrative hurdles used to intimidate — and silence — civil society," he said.

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