

# THE NORWEGIAN HUMAN RIGHTS FUND

*GUIDELINES ON SECURITY AND  
PROTECTION FOR GRANTEES IN THE FIELD*



NORWEGIAN  
HUMAN RIGHTS FUND

# ON THE PULSE OF MORNING

*History, despite its  
wrenching pain, cannot  
be unlived, and if faced  
with courage, need  
not be lived again.*

- Maya Angelou



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**Cover Photo:** Huda al-Sarari, 2020 Martin Ennals Award Laureate, a human rights defender from Yemen. Photo © Martin Ennals Foundation.

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The Norwegian Human Rights Fund (NHRF) works to protect and promote human rights internationally through direct support to organizations working in the first line of defense for human rights. For more information about our work and who we support, please visit our website at:

[www.nhrf.no](http://www.nhrf.no)

2nd edition, May 2020.

<sup>1</sup> [Excerpt] The Complete Collected Poems of Maya Angelou (Random House Inc., 1994)  
<https://bit.ly/2WvACr0>

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# FOREWORD

Jalila, Mohamadou, Paulo and Lita are all human rights defenders who work in difficult areas. In forgotten places, where the State does not operate anymore or where conflicts rage on. They provide support to women victims of sexual violence; they advocate for transitional justice; they visit peaceful protesters who have been arbitrarily detained. They bring human rights to the darkest, most isolated places. They are the voices for those whose voices have been stolen. Each and every day these ordinary women and men brave countless risks to be close to those they defend. Because they defend human rights they are targeted by those who benefit from human rights violations. Each day they must reinvent themselves and their most trivial routines. Jalila turns her phone off while having discussions with other defenders; Lita makes sure she travels back home while the sun is still high; and Paulo frequently changes the passwords to his social media accounts. When traveling outside his village, Mohamadou leaves instructions for his family as preparation for the possibility of being arrested and taken to jail.

Each day these four defenders feel in their own minds and bodies what it means to defend human rights in complex settings and thousands of other human rights defenders face the same situation on the ground. They cannot depend on protection from the State or constant protection from their own communities, so they bear the heavy responsibility of protecting themselves, staying safe alone. Some are fortunate to have the support of their organizations and movements but must still practice self-protection. Sometimes this individual responsibility feels like a burden and can have lasting and severe consequences on their psychological, physical and social well-being.

In recent years, a number of initiatives across the globe have contributed to support defenders and to provide them with a set of concrete tools to mitigate risks. Defenders have been building solidarity networks and strategic alliances, they have developed risks analysis and digital security trainings. Women human rights defenders and indigenous communities have helped understand the necessity to develop collective and holistic approaches to security. Some States have developed laws and mechanisms to better protect defenders as a response to the current deterioration of the situation of HRDs. Over the past five years, I have heard and learnt about many good practices on protection, and I am pleased with the efforts of the NHRF to provide these guidelines as a resource to help identify and navigate these initiatives.

Every effort is crucial and even vital for some defenders, but they must be reinforced by profound systemic changes. If we want to create a safe and enabling environment for defenders, we need to address the root causes, such as impunity for the perpetrators of human rights violations against defenders. We also need to recognize and support the great role defenders play for democracy, social justice and the rule of law. We need to do it in every possible way: politically, institutionally, privately. At schools, in the media, in the most ordinary places, as well as in the international fora.

Defenders often represent the last remaining hopes for those whose are left behind, who are excluded and despised by their societies. Defenders are those who courageously challenge the status quo to create pathways to a more equal, fair and sustainable world. Human rights defenders reconnect us to what makes the essence of humanity: solidarity, empathy and hope. As repression against human rights work has reached the deadliest point in recent history, it is imperative that we strengthen our support to these heroes. It is not only a matter of justice, it is for the sake of our common future, for our humanity. We must defend and stand and act in solidarity with these selfless, indomitable people.

- Michel Forst  
UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders  
(June 2014- May 2020)



**Top:** Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Michel Forst, with human rights defenders during a consultation on the situation in the MENA region. (Forst, second from left) Photo credit: NHRF grantee partner, Gulf Centre for Human Rights. **Bottom:** Human rights prizes and visibility can be important forms of support to Human Rights Defenders. In picture: 2020 Martin Ennals Award finalists; Huda Al-Sarari (Laureate) from Yemen (left), Norma Ledezma from Mexico (second from the right), Sizani Ngubane from South Africa (right). Photo: ©Martin Ennals Foundation.



# INTRODUCTION

Since 1988, the Norwegian Human Rights Fund (NHRF) has been working under the mandate to promote human rights internationally. We do this by providing direct economic support to grassroots organisations working in the frontline of defense for the protection and promotion of the rights of marginalised and vulnerable groups. Our support reaches across the vast field of human rights issues directly and through the interconnectedness of most human rights.

Central to the promotion of human rights work is the security, protection, and adequate working conditions for grantee organisations and human rights defenders (HRDs); a requisite for them to be able to carry out their work. The NHRF has always emphasized the importance of security and protection on an individual and organisational level and will continue to maintain this focus as a core element of our strategy. Our current strategic efforts in this area lead us to support organisations and innovative initiatives that work to increase the ability of HRDs to safeguard their own security and to connect local human rights defenders with national and international networks to gain more visibility, amplify their work, and increase their influence.

These guidelines are also a part of our strategic efforts to increase security and protection for grantees and HRDs, and as the human rights field continues to evolve and shift, so must we in order to maintain our ground, stay proactive, and respond wisely and purposefully. Therefore, we have taken the opportunity with new key partners with expertise in this area and with lessons learned since the previous version was published, to revise and update the NHRF Guidelines on security and protection for grantees in the field.

There are many well-established international organisations and actors that have valuable experience and expertise working with protection for human rights defenders and organisations; our guidelines are not meant to substitute the work of these organisations. Instead, these guidelines explain the normative framework for the NHRF's overall work on the protection for and support to you as human rights defenders or the human rights organisation you work with and provide an overview of some of the available support mechanisms for defenders at risk. Moreover, the guidelines outline the roles and responsibilities you carry as our grantees, for our local consultants, and for our own NHRF secretariat with regards to addressing and communicating issues of security. With the permission and generous assistance from Front Line Defenders, we actively refer to their work on security for human rights defenders in the chapter on personal and organisational security, and we encourage you to actively make use of Front Line Defenders' workbook in your work. <https://bit.ly/2xUmhdi><sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Workbook on Security: Practical Steps for Human Rights Defenders at Risk <https://bit.ly/2xUmhdi>

*Strengthening networks and finding **shared** meeting spaces is important for **strengthening** the work of human rights defenders and organisations.*



Group photo at 8th Asian Human Rights Defenders Forum held in Bali, 2018.





# AIMS & OBJECTIVES

The NHRF aims to be a positive contributor to the support for organisations and individuals who are at risk due to the nature of their human rights work. In particular, our support is directed towards you as our grantee partners and your immediate networks, including all the staff in the organisations, volunteers, people, and other human rights defenders involved in the work as well as family members and the local communities that are involved in the work. We want to support your capacity to carry out meaningful and effective human rights work, especially in situations where security is a present and urgent concern.

**With the objectives listed below, our work in this field aims to be both preventive and responsive. We aim to:**



Ensure that our grantees have the resources to develop security plans and proper strategies to deal with security risks.



Help our grantees establish contact with relevant national and international actors working on the protection of human rights defenders and access their support



Ensure that the NHRF's secretariat and local consultants have the capacity and network needed to respond to requests from our grantees regarding security issues.

**These guidelines have been developed as part of our increased focus on security for grantees, for which we have set the following objectives:**



Increase our grantees' awareness of security strategies' and how to mitigate security risks



Increase our grantees' knowledge of the normative framework and available support mechanisms for defenders at risk



Provide an outline of the roles of our grantees, local consultants and the NHRF's secretariat regarding security issues and protection of human rights defenders.

# WHO IS A HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER?



Non-violent methods of expression and demanding equal rights, such as protests, are central to human rights defense. Here, women human rights defenders from India are demanding justice. Photo credit: Thenmozhi Soundararajan.



Anne Lapapan Supamanta from NHRF grantee partner, Assembly of the Poor, is a human rights defender from Thailand supporting rights to land and natural resources for local communities

There is no universal definition of a human rights defender, but the term is used to describe people who, individually or with others, act to promote or protect human rights. Human rights defenders can address any human rights concerns - ranging from issues of arbitrary arrest and detention, to issues of employment, land and access to health care. Human rights defenders are active in every part of the world. The NHRF refers to all our grantees as human rights defenders due to the nature of your human rights work and the means you use in your struggle for justice while also recognizing the specific and unique risks taken by those who assume a public role as a human rights defender.

The normative framework that we base our work on protection for and support to you as human rights defenders is the Declaration on the Rights and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (1998) - often referred to as the United Nations (UN) Declaration on Human Rights Defenders <https://bit.ly/2Qu73C0>. It is the first UN instrument that affirms that everyone has the right to defend human rights and recognizes the importance and legitimacy of the work of human rights defenders, as well as their need for better protection. Although the Declaration is not legally binding, it draws together provisions from those legally binding instruments that are most relevant to human rights defenders, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESR). Moreover, the Declaration was adopted by consensus by the UN General Assembly and thereby constitutes a clear commitment made by all UN member states to respect the rights of human rights defenders at the national and international levels.

The Declaration does not create new rights. However, it articulates existing rights in a way that makes it easier to apply them to the practical role and situation of human rights defenders. The Declaration provides for specific protections to human rights defenders. Examples include the right to seek the protection and realisation of human rights at the national and international levels; to conduct human rights work individually and in association with others; to form associations and non-governmental organisations; and to solicit, receive and utilise resources for the purpose of protecting human rights, including the receipt of funds from abroad.







### UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders

Follow this link for more information about the Declaration and to access the full text in different languages:

UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders <https://bit.ly/2Qu73C0>



The Declaration states that everyone has duties towards and within the community and encourages us all to be human rights defenders. Pictured here are families and community members coming together for a signature campaign. (Photo credit: NHRF grantee partner, Human Rights Office – Kandy, Sri Lanka)

Furthermore, the Declaration outlines specific duties of States with regard to defending human rights. It states that the State has the prime responsibility to take all necessary steps to ensure the protection of those who defend human rights. Examples of the State's duties include the protection, promotion and implementation of all human rights; the adoption of such legislative, administrative and other steps as may be necessary to ensure effective implementation of rights and freedoms; conducting prompt and impartial investigations of alleged violations of human rights; and providing an effective remedy for persons who claim to have been victims of a human rights violation. The Declaration also emphasises that everyone has duties towards and within the community and encourages us all to be human rights defenders. Finally, it explains its relationship with national and international law with the aim of assuring the application of the highest possible legal standards of human rights.

According to the Declaration, human rights defenders' work must be conducted through peaceful activities. The Declaration clearly states that the act of defending human rights is a right and that everybody has the right to promote, develop and protect human rights by lawful and peaceful means. These rights are linked to the right to freedom of expression, association and movement, and the right to take part in the conduct of public affairs found in the ICCPR <https://bit.ly/2J6VrRj>.<sup>3</sup> Freedom of expression and association in particular are important rights in order to be able to conduct meaningful human rights work.

In 2000, the then UN Commission on Human Rights (the predecessor of the UN Human Rights Council) established a mandate on the situation of human rights defenders (as a Special Procedure) to support the

implementation of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. Over the years a range of resolutions have been adopted on the subject of human rights defenders, including the crucial Resolution 25/18 <https://bit.ly/2wbV9WN> that was adopted on 28 March 2014 by the UN Human Rights Council<sup>4</sup>. In this resolution, the Council expresses its concerns over the risks human rights defenders face due to threats, attacks and reprisals and calls on States to ensure that national laws and policies support and enable their work and are consistent with international human rights law. With this resolution the Human Rights Council also decided to renew the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation for human rights defenders for a period of three consecutive years (For more information see the section on Relevant UN mechanisms for human rights defenders on page 35).



Freedom of expression and association, in particular, are important rights in order to be able to conduct meaningful human rights work. Photo: Demonstration in Mexico.

<sup>3</sup> International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights <https://bit.ly/2J6VrRj>

<sup>4</sup> A/HRC/RES/25/18 <https://bit.ly/2wbV9WN>





The Declaration clearly states that the act of defending human rights is a right and that everybody has the right to promote and protect human rights by lawful and peaceful means. Photo: Human rights defender from NHRF grantee partner in Thailand.

## PERSONAL AND ORGANISATIONAL SECURITY

### Thinking about security

While it is the State's prime responsibility to protect and promote human rights, you as human rights defenders play an important role in monitoring and working to enhance the State's human rights policies and its implementation of such policies. Human rights organisations and defenders often challenge the status quo by demanding accountability and an end to impunity; fighting for the rights of marginalised and vulnerable groups and challenging well-established norms and societal structures. Working on and for such critical issues to bring institutional and societal shifts toward equality, the nature of your work as human rights defenders can leave you more exposed to risk.

The global trend of using civil space and rights as a battleground for power by suppressing alternate or dissenting positions has manifested in many dubious and violent forms. Both States and non-state actors have and can target(ed) human rights defenders through smear campaigns; restricting or banning

foreign funding; using the legal system to tie up HRDs in lengthy and baseless legal battles through arbitrary arrests and detention; restricting or banning movement; and many other human rights-violating methods. It is important to be aware of all the aspects of your work that can potentially lead you and your organization to be targeted by the State and/or other actors.

With such activity and the involvement of certain actors, some groups of human rights defenders can experience more intensified risk. This includes defenders working for the rights of indigenous peoples and marginalised communities; defenders engaged in issues involving large economic interests (such as environmental activists); defenders working for the rights of religious and/or ethnic communities; defenders in rural areas (This is due to the fact that they are often isolated and have less access to support); defenders working for the rights of sexual minorities; and women human rights defenders.



Human rights defenders are an integral part of civil society and States have an obligation to provide safe and enabling spaces and protection for all actors within this group to exercise their rights. Photo: Demonstration by domestic workers in India. – K.G.F. – W.A.

Other important resolutions include the UN General Assembly's landmark Resolution 68/181 <https://bit.ly/2xLOF11> in December 2013 on the protection of women human rights defenders and Resolution 31/32 <https://bit.ly/2U24k58> adopted by the Human Rights Council in April 2016 calling on States to fulfill their obligations to protect defenders addressing economic, social and cultural rights and to create a safe and enabling environment for them.<sup>5 6</sup> Another important source is the 2017 resolution <https://bit.ly/2Uqglel> adopted by the UN General Assembly to mark the 20th anniversary of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders in 2018 and to outline a series of activities to encourage its promotion and implementation.<sup>7</sup>

Recognizing human rights defenders as part of civil society and the need for designated and enabling spaces and protection for all actors within this group to exercise their rights, recent UN resolutions and reports have addressed this nexus by acknowledging the "fundamental contribution that civil society and human rights defenders make to the promotion of human rights, the creation of peaceful dialogue and the building of pluralistic democracies" and by calling on States to "fulfil their obligation to respect and fully protect the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of all individuals, online and offline as applicable, inter alia, the right to freedom of expression and opinion, including artistic expression and creativity, and the right to assemble peacefully and associate freely;"<sup>8 9</sup> Such local and international advocacy have brought an irrefutable awareness to States that they have legal obligations under international and, for many, domestic law to not only protect civil society actors and human rights defenders but also to promote their active participation by creating a safe environment for them.



Local communities and indigenous peoples are often left out of decision-making processes involving the use of their land and property. Working collectively and collaboratively to defend rights helps create a stronger, more resilient defense. Photos: NHRF grantee partner, Pasta de Conchos (left), supports human rights defenders in Mexico and NHRF grantee partner, FIWON (above), supports human rights defenders in Nigeria.

<sup>5</sup> GA Resolution 68/181 <https://bit.ly/2xLOF11>

<sup>6</sup> HRC Resolution 31/32 <https://bit.ly/2U24k58>

<sup>7</sup> Twentieth anniversary and promotion of the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms <https://bit.ly/2Uqglel>

<sup>8</sup> A/HRC/RES/38/12 <https://bit.ly/2Qx2G9l>

<sup>9</sup> A/HRC/32/20 <https://bit.ly/2xLOW43>



# WOMEN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS



Women human rights defenders have received increased attention in recent years, with the first ever resolution on the subject that was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2013 (mentioned above). The resolution recognises that women human rights defenders in all regions of the world are targeted due to their work as HRDs but also specifically because of their gender. The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders (see section on Relevant UN mechanisms for human rights defenders on page 35) defines women human rights defenders (WHRDs) as both female human rights defenders, and any other human rights defenders who work in defense of women's rights or on gender issues.<sup>10</sup> Women defenders are subject to the same types of risks as any human rights defender, but as women, they are also targeted for or directly exposed to gender-specific threats and gender-specific violence. WHRDs are often striving to achieve the realization of women's rights and other gender-related rights by pursuing gender equality, which is extremely controversial in many contexts where they are then targeted for this work. They may also face discrimination and targeting from within the human rights movement. Protection and support for HRDs should always be gender-sensitive, especially for WHRDs who face uniquely gendered risks. Without a gender lens in protection and security for WHRDs, the response will be inadequate and will ultimately have a compromising effect on their safety and security.



Human rights defender working with NHRF grantee partner, Confluencia de Mujeres, in Colombia.



Human rights defender from NHRF grantee partner, Women and Youth Development Institute of Indonesia



Human rights defender working with NHRF grantee partner, Beti Carino, in Mexico.

10 A/HRC/16/44 <https://bit.ly/2xLOW43>

## AWID

The Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) is a global, feminist membership association that serves to support, resource and strengthen women's rights organisations so that they in turn can be more effective in their struggle. AWID also produces relevant publications <https://bit.ly/33vH6HP> on issues such as women human rights defenders, movement building, feminist monitoring and funding.

Women have always taken the lead in the struggle and claim for their rights. Photo credit: Thenmozhi Soundararajan.

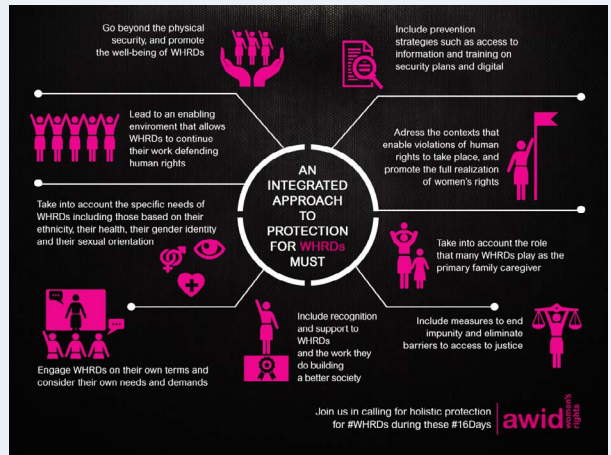


Follow this link for more information by the UN about women human rights defenders <https://bit.ly/2xU92JC>.

Follow this link for the 2019 report <https://bit.ly/2Wxl58L> on women human rights defenders by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders.

Follow this link for the Just Associates manual for women human rights defenders: Our Rights, Our Safety: Resources for women human rights defenders <https://bit.ly/33vH6HP>.

Infographics can be found here, or you can simply click on the image to be directed to the source page: <https://bit.ly/2IZQfPj> <https://bit.ly/2Ws2QTd>



11 Front Line Defenders, Workbook on Security: Practical Steps for Human Rights Defenders at Risk, 2011. <https://bit.ly/2xUmhdj>





As human rights defenders you have the responsibility to think about security as an integral part of your work. Thinking about security will enable you and your human rights organisation to develop strategies on how to manage security risks in the most effective way. In turn, this will help both you and your organisation become stronger and more resilient to ensure the continuation of your work on behalf of the individuals and communities whose rights you are promoting and protecting.

Starting the process of actively addressing security risks may be uncomfortable and even create fear as you start discussing and identifying some of the possible dangers you face due to your work. The process can make you feel vulnerable, and you might be forced to address issues which you would rather not think about in such a concrete manner. However, creating a systematic approach to security and how to mitigate risks will in the end provide you and your colleagues with a renewed sense of control. This will help strengthen your organisation, your team, and the work you are conducting.

In most fields of work there are industry standards for occupational health and safety that are based on quality control and contingency planning for worst-case scenarios and a multitude of events that could endanger workers. The human rights field, although without an industry standard of regulation, should operate in a similar manner that is adapted to the potential and immediate risks associated with this work. Planning, preparing, and integrating systems of security and protection will give you a greater sense of calm and control in your work.

It is the responsibility of all NHRF grantees to conduct appropriate risk assessments in your own context and develop strategies of how to handle these risks effectively. As mentioned earlier, the organisation, Front Line Defenders, has developed a useful manual called [Workbook on Security: Practical Steps for Human Rights Defenders at Risk](https://bit.ly/2xUmhdj.11) <https://bit.ly/2xUmhdj.11> This is a comprehensive workbook which includes advice and suggestions on how to make informed decisions about security and protection.



**The workbook will guide you through the following activities:**

- Analysing the context you're working in
- Assessing risks
- Analysing threats
- Identifying methods for maintaining your well-being and handling stress
- Producing and reviewing appropriate security plans



**Front Line Defenders' Workbook on Security:**

Practical Steps for Human Rights Defenders at Risk (2011) <https://bit.ly/3a5WcWT> is available online in several languages, including English, Spanish, French, Portuguese, Chinese, Urdu, Dari, Somali and Arabic.

The Workbook is based on, in part, Front Line Defenders' Protection Manual for Human Rights Defenders <https://bit.ly/2lYDleP>

The workbook should help raise your awareness about security issues and help you consider how to mitigate risks. The NHRF encourages all grantee organisations to make active and productive use of this security workbook in your daily human rights work.

For these guidelines, we have chosen to focus on Front Line Defenders' workbook on security. However, there are also other sources and manuals from other organisations available. We encourage you to explore the topic and consult other sources to increase your knowledge and widen your outlook on the issue of security. See the section on specialised organisations on page 46 for more information about other organisations working with human rights defenders.



Environmental human rights defenders face extreme risks in their work.



Human rights defender working for the rights of the families of the disappeared. Former NHRF grantee partner, Familiares Palacio de Justicia Colombia.



Links to protection mechanisms, such as the mandates of the Special Rapporteurs, are important for human rights defenders. Photo: Human rights defenders from Israel and Palestine meeting with Michel Forst (Photo credit: Human Rights Defenders Fund).



RISK ASSESSMENT AND THREAT ANALYSIS

The security risks that human rights defenders and human rights organisations face will vary from country to country and from context to context. These risks might be related to your person (e.g. physical and/or non-physical reprisals), your human rights work, or both. Your working situation will also vary depending on the context. While some defenders work in armed conflicts, or in countries where the freedoms of expression and association are restricted, others work in areas and fields where there are large economic and political interests at stake. Front Line Defenders lists a wide range of risks faced by human rights defenders around the world today. These include stigmatisation, interference with travel, writing or association with others, blackmail, being targeted with administrative measures, physical and sexual assaults, attacks on livelihood and property, detention, arrest or imprisonment, ill-treatment, torture, abduction, kidnap and murder.

Risk

Risk is defined by Front Line Defenders as the possibility of events that result in harm. Risk may involve everything from losing data and years of your work or not being able to renew your organisation's registration, to psychological and/or physical harm to yourself or your colleagues. According to Front Line Defenders, risk is context- and gender-specific, dynamic and changes over time. It must therefore be assessed on a regular basis. The challenge is to be able to assess the degree of risk. If the risk is high and likely to materialise, you can then identify the best actions to take in order to minimise this risk. The assessment will be based on your unique context as a human rights defender. Your understanding of this context is the prerequisite for being able to take effective security measures. Effective security measures means actions that reduce the likelihood of the risk taking place (such as getting your car serviced, and slowing down while driving to avoid an accident), and actions that reduce the impact if the risk does eventuate (such as wearing a seatbelt in case an accident does take place).

Threats

Threat is defined by Front Line as the declaration, indication or possibility that someone will harm, punish or inflict damage on someone else or their work. A threat usually means that your work is having an impact and that someone wants to prevent it and its progress. It may be a direct threat against you, your organisation or your family in the form of written or oral statements (e.g. "You will not live through the summer" or "Your organisation will not be legally registered next year" etc.), or symbolic threats such as dead animals on your doorstep. A threat could also be a possible threat, such as threats against other human rights defenders working on the same issues as you. Finally, security incidents – besides being an issue in and of itself – could also be an indication of further threats to come. Security incidents include anonymous phone calls, break-ins at your home or office, surveillance of you or your office etc.

It is important to keep in mind that situations can change quickly. Therefore, all threats must be taken seriously, and steps must be taken to manage the risk. It is also important to keep a logbook noting all threats and incidents, to have the full picture of the security situation. If threats or incidents are not reported internally, the resulting assessment may be flawed. The challenge is to be able to manage the threat to the greatest extent possible whilst continuing your work effectively. A set of questions has thus been developed by Front Line Defenders to help you analyse the threats you face. You will find the questions and additional information in the workbook.



Questions about threats that you can use in your analysis

- What exactly are the facts surrounding the threat?
- Has there been a pattern of threats over time?
- What seems to be the objective of the threat?
- Do you know who is making the threat?
- Do you think the threat will be put into action?

Vulnerabilities

Vulnerabilities refer to any factors or weakness which make it possible that a defender or a group will suffer harm or greater damage. It could be anything from an individual's medical condition to an organisation's focus on particularly sensitive issues or conducting activities in remote areas and having no mobile coverage to raise the alarm should problems arise.

Capacities

Capacities are those factors which make a defender or a group stronger and thus improve their security. Thus, the level of risk which a defender or a group faces is calculated according to the threats that have been received, the individual's or group's vulnerability, and their capacity to manage the threats. Even when you cannot reduce the threat, you can reduce the risk by reducing your vulnerabilities and/or increasing your capacities. As mentioned above, risks are context- and gender-specific and must be assessed as such.

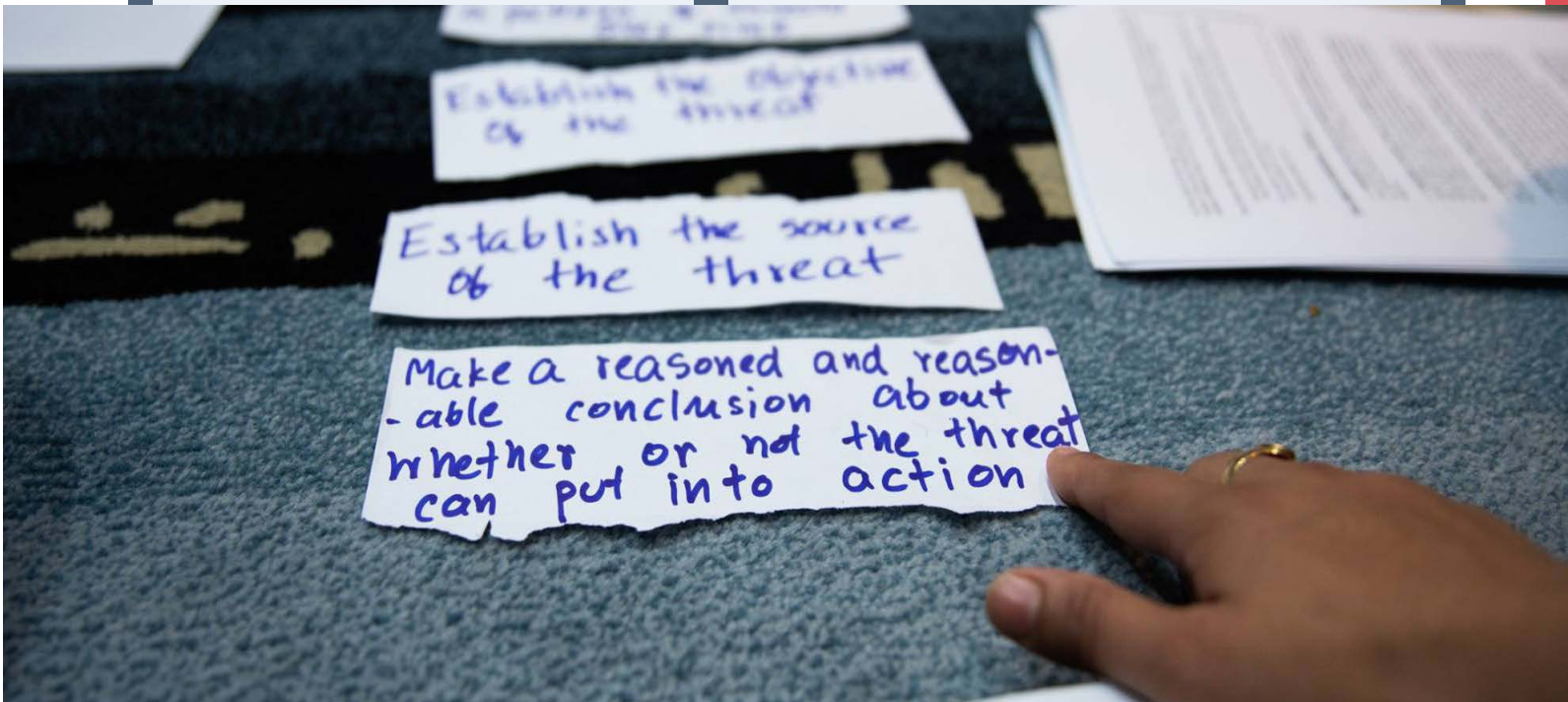


Photo from a security workshop with human rights defenders.



### Assessment and analysis

Front Line Defenders uses the risk formula  $R=TxV/C$  as a tool for risk assessment. It is first and foremost meant as a tool to help you identify the components in the risks you face. It will not lead to a mathematically calculated solution, as it is based on human knowledge and subjective assessment. One of the advantages of the risk formula is that it is versatile and can be used in almost any part of the world and in almost any situation. The tool can also provide structure and prioritisation to an amorphous process of assessing risk. Keep in mind that the risk assessment will be most challenging the first time it is done, while regular updates will prove easier with time. Front Line Defenders also uses the risk matrix, which is particularly useful for human rights defenders who have lived in a risky environment for a long time or find themselves in a situation which is deteriorating. The matrix can be used to assess the probability and impact of risks and can form the next step in developing your security plan. You will find both the risk formula and the risk matrix in the workbook.

Front Line Defenders' workbook will guide you through your context analysis, the risk formula, the risk matrix, questions for threat analysis and plans for dealing with stress so that you can start developing your own personal and organisational security plan. It is important to note that in a stressful situation you will only be able to do what you are trained to do. Practicing the security plans that you developed based on the security risks that you identified should be an important part of your work. Also remember that once a security plan is in place, you will need to review it regularly (especially after security incidents) to make sure it remains relevant. It is helpful to consider security as a process, rather than as something you do once.

### Well-being and stress management

In recent years there has been an increasing focus on the mental and psychosocial aspects of security, with a growing acknowledgement of the importance of taking care of your body and mind to be able to conduct your work as a human rights defender in an effective and responsible manner.

Human rights defenders often experience elevated levels of stress over longer periods of time due to heavy workloads, the risks involved and having limited resources. While a certain amount of stress can be positive in terms of motivation and effectiveness, exposure to intense and long-term stress can have a negative impact on your body and mind, which can potentially reduce your effectiveness as a HRD, negatively impact your decision-making, and affect you as a person and your relationships.

Stress is person-, time- and context-specific, i.e. stress is relative and factors that cause stress to one person might not affect another person in a similar situation. A person might also experience varying levels of stress by the same thing at different points in time. Furthermore, similar experiences in different contexts can change the experience of stress. For instance, supportive relationships might contribute to lessening the feeling of stress in a given situation.

*The most difficult part of my work as an HRD [...] in doing so you forget your own rights, so you might find your personal well-being and right to family, right to rest, right to peaceful existence on this planet have been compromised simply because you are focusing more on what you could do for others to stay safe, so you forget your own protocol of security, you forget your own normal life of eating a meal regularly, you forget about your social life, and you are constantly on call...the natural consequences of defending the rights of others.*

– Hassan Shire, HRD from Uganda<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> <https://bit.ly/3aa8opy>





Self-care has become central in the focus on security for HRDs. Recognizing burnout and high levels of stress as contributing to insecurity for HRDs as decision-making becomes compromised due to these factors. Group of women human rights defenders discussing strategies for self-care (photo credit: Women Human Rights Defender International Coalition).

Front Line Defenders has consulted human rights defenders who have experienced periods of deep stress and who have identified stress as one of the factors impacting their security. These defenders explained security-related aspects, such as becoming careless about danger and personal security, finding it difficult to make decisions, feeling “burnt out” and exhausted, drinking more alcohol and alienating supportive people in their network due to angry or moody behaviour.

Tools for better management of stress include daily attention to diet and dedicating time to exercise, relaxation and sleep. You and your colleagues should encourage each other to talk openly about risks and to take breaks from your work when necessary. You should also encourage each other to not work excessively as this lowers the quality of your performance over time. Your organisation could also encourage and strengthen the team spirit by organising practical and/or symbolic activities.

*[...] these young women leaders need to sustain themselves, their own energy, their own minds, their own bodies, their families and with that kind of a basic system within which they have to operate then really there is nothing that kind stop them.*

– Asha Kowtal, HRD from India<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> <https://bit.ly/3aa8zRK>

It is also necessary to ensure organisational well-being within your human rights organisations by creating a culture of openness and transparency, which are crucial components to this process. With this, we mean the importance of creating a work environment free from discrimination, abuse and harassment for your staff and volunteers. The #metoo campaign has demonstrated that sexual discrimination is pervasive in all contexts and that we need to work against and prevent these violations within our own civil society organisations. In recent years there have been scandals that have made us aware of the critical importance and need to develop

safeguarding policies and practices for staff and volunteers who work with communities and victims. Your organisation should create structures that minimise the risk of personal violations and that allow for employees or volunteers within your organisation to alert the leadership if necessary, without fear of reprisals, discrimination, or not being taken seriously. It is the responsibility of the leadership within your organisation to follow up all allegations of discrimination, abuse or harassment. We must also acknowledge that many human rights defenders are dealing with traumas and reaching out for support should be encouraged.

#### Other resources and inputs to read:

- Policy Brief on ‘Wellbeing, Risk, and Human Rights Practice’ <https://bit.ly/3bcQvGN>
- Resources for Wellbeing & Stress Management <https://bit.ly/2UH1FNx>
- Making our movements sustainable: practicing holistic security every day <https://bit.ly/3abEUB1>
- Self-care guidance from women human rights defenders in the frontlines <https://bit.ly/3dlX9fJ>



#### Symbolic and practical exercises

Stress reduction exercises can be a helpful tool in reducing stress. For instance, you could set aside a 15-minute session each week for stress reduction exercises. Although weekly sessions will not do enough to de-stress everyone, it promotes the idea of taking seriously one’s own well-being. Exercises could be relaxation and meditation practices, or other activities such as watching a hilarious online video, singing, dancing or making music. Organisations may also try to spend relaxing time outside work, such as picnics where family members are invited, football matches and music events. The organisation, Capacitar, has developed a set of different exercises which might inspire you. Capacitar focuses on the well-being of body, mind, spirit and emotions as an important aspect of stress management, and encourages people to build self-care habits as part of daily life:

**Capacitar – tools for well-being** <https://bit.ly/33vwBnE>



DIGITAL SECURITY

Digital security is an expansive topic that we will not attempt to cover in detail here. The Tactical Technology Initiative and Front Line Defenders have together developed tools and tactics for your digital security, called *Security-in-a-box*. It was created to meet the digital security and privacy needs of advocates and human rights defenders. The digital booklet addresses a number of important digital security issues, some of which are listed here:

- How to protect your computer from malware and hackers
- How to protect your information from physical threats
- How to create and maintain secure passwords
- How to protect the sensitive files on your computer
- How to recover from information loss
- How to destroy sensitive information
- How to keep your internet communication private
- How to use smartphones as securely as possible

**Security-in-a-box** will take you through these issues and advise you on how to deal with them. Let us give you a few examples:



Before worrying about private communication and secure passwords, keeping your computer healthy is a critical first step towards security. *Security-in-a-box* explains more about the specific threats of malware, how you can use different tools to protect you from these, how you can keep your computer secure by updating your software frequently and why you should use free and open source (freeware) tools to avoid the dangers of expired licenses and pirated software.



If you work with sensitive information and topics and are interested in using social networking services, it is important to be very aware of the privacy and security issues that they raise. Human rights defenders are particularly vulnerable to the dangers of social networking sites and need to be extremely careful about the information they reveal about themselves and the people they work with. It is thus important that you understand how different social networking sites make you (and your contacts) vulnerable and that you can take steps to protect yourself and the people you are working with.



Digital rights and security are also a central component to security for HRDs. Awareness and understanding of your rights in digital spaces and how to protect your digital spaces and tools is critical for HRDs. Photo: Digital Rights Foundation facilitating a workshop on digital security. (Photo credit: Digital Rights Foundation)

The digital *Security-in-a-box* also provides a collection of guides. The Tool Guides includes a particular freeware or open source software tool, as well as instructions on how you can use that tool to secure your computer or phone, protect your information or maintain the privacy of your Internet communication. The tools include anti-virus, file recovery, secure password storage, secure e-mail service etc.

The Tactics Guides also cover how to use mobile and smartphones as securely as possible. As a rule, it is important to think about issues such as which contacts you save on your phone and whether you should keep two separate phones for work and private use. Your phone can also be used to enhance your security in emergency situations, by having pre-written texts which you can easily send to your contacts if you find yourself in danger.

Questions you could ask yourself regarding digital security

- Do I run the latest version of the operating system on my phone and computer?
- Do I regularly update all the software on my phone and computer?
- Do I protect the sensitive files on my computer? How about information on my phone?
- Do I keep back-up of my work?
- Do I think about my own and others' security when sharing information and pictures on social networking sites?
- Am I familiar with the privacy settings of the social networking sites I use?
- Do I know how to communicate and share information securely?
- Do I know how to safeguard my mobile phone as securely as possible?

**Security in a box** is available online and in different languages: <https://bit.ly/2UakKZ4>

A first few practical steps

Before you have developed an entire security plan based on your organisation's risk assessment, you and your colleagues should immediately agree on some immediate and practical steps to help increase your personal and organisational security on a general basis before the security plan is in place. Advice from one protection trainer on implementing a basic framework for fast track security training is to take precautions when travelling and communicating to and from and in all your spaces, such as office, home and equipment. Specifically, we would like to emphasize and highlight the importance of being mindful and purposeful about security when departing for field work. For example, for those who document human rights violations in the field a few important points in this context could be:

- All staff should make sure their mobile phone is always charged and usable
- Always travel in pairs or groups when documenting human rights violations in the field
- Before departing for field work, always inform your colleagues of where you are going and with whom
- Make sure you have an available network of persons to contact in case of emergency

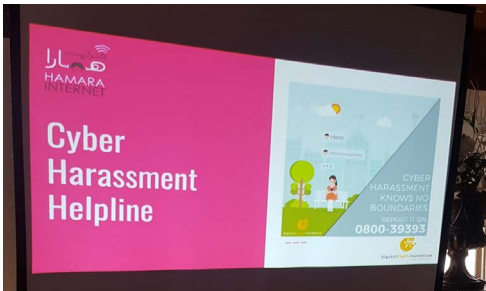
This list is of course not exhaustive and could involve other points to consider for different organisations working in various local contexts. It is important to note that such an initial list cannot substitute a proper security plan based on a comprehensive risk assessment, but it could be a good place to start before an entire security plan has been developed. Such small practical steps might make an important difference for the people and organisations involved, if similar rules are not already in place. Security thinking should be integrated to the point of habitual as part of your human rights work at all levels.



Cyber harassment and threats

Targeting human rights defenders can extend to any space they occupy physically and with a digital presence. Cyber harassment and threats can widen the base of threats in, for example, cases when public calls and messages against HRDs are shared widely, exacerbating insecurity by increasing the unpredictability in potential perpetrators. Women and LGBTQ+ persons are especially vulnerable to cyber harassment and threats, and in 2018 the former UN Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, made a statement outlining common experiences of WHRDs. These experiences are relevant to all HRDs but especially for WHRDs. He stated, "Death threats, threats of sexual and gender-based violence, and online defamation and disinformation campaigns – often of a sexualized nature, and often including the victim's real-life addresses – are used to torment and terrorize [human rights defenders] who speak out."

The consequences are and have been extreme and in many cases, fatal. Thus, this side of digital security



should be considered with much weight and as part of an overall risk assessment. The steps and recommendations discussed above can help reduce exposure to such risks, however, they are just a start of the more in-depth conversations needed on creating and maintaining a safe digital presence and engaging with social media channels.<sup>14</sup> Such critical considerations must also extend to beneficiaries, volunteers, etc. Sharing photos, quotes, and other content should be done so with full consent from those featured – beneficiaries, colleagues, volunteers, etc.

*The damage to victims' right to privacy, to freedom of expression, and to full participation in economic, social, cultural and political affairs is evident. These forms of intimidation and violence may also cripple the work of women's networks, which often use online platforms as their key form of communication and mobilization.*

- Former UN Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein

14 <https://bit.ly/3aa58us>

Gender- and ability-sensitive risk assessment

We stress the importance and necessity for all aspects covered in this section on personal and organisational security to be considered, planned, designed, and implemented with a gender- and ability-sensitive perspective. Doing so will lead to a more comprehensive risk-assessment and therefore a more effective risk mitigation and security plan that addresses the needs and specific risks of the individuals within your organisation. Applying these perspectives should not be considered as an additional burden of time or resources by the organisation because missing critical security points due to the non-application of these lenses could create heavy consequences as some members of your organisation may be left vulnerable to risk and their security thus compromised. Therefore, it is essential to begin the planning stages with the application of these lenses, so the need to backtrack and apply them retroactively does not become a consideration that is weighed against available time and resources.

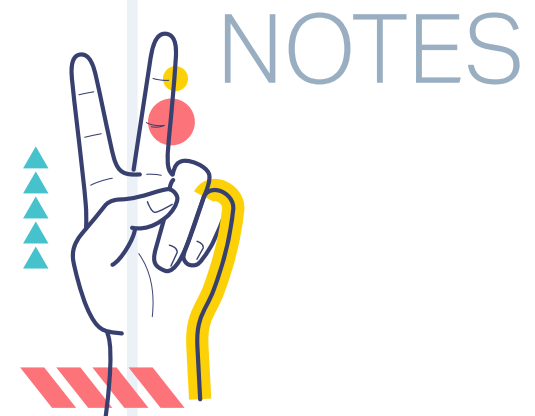


Security must be inclusive and informed by those experiencing unique and gendered risks. Photo: WHRDs working together during a workshop on security and protection (Photo credit: Safety and Risk Mitigation Organization (SRMO)).



Security and protection for WHRDs requires consideration for the specific risks they face based on their gender. Group photo of WHRDs from Mexico – I(dh)EAS.







# ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

## NHRF Grantees

As mentioned above, it is the responsibility of all NHRF grantees to conduct sufficient risk assessments in your own context and develop strategies of how to handle these risks effectively. Threats and security issues will not vanish by ignoring them and they can be a major hindrance for you and your organisation in carrying out your work. We have thus developed a set of questions regarding security which you and your colleagues should keep in mind and address on a regular basis:

- Has your organisation made and/or updated proper risk assessments and plans for risk mitigation?
- Are all relevant staff and aspects of your organisation included in these assessments and plans?
- Does your organisation have the capacity to deal with possible threats?
- Does your organisation create spaces to talk about security issues with all the staff?
- Does the organisation need capacity building or resources to make a security plan, or to take appropriate measures with regards to the current security situation?
- Is there anything in the relationship with the NHRF which makes your organisation more vulnerable? For instance, do field visits by foreign NHRF staff make the organisation more exposed and vulnerable? Should the NHRF and your organisation establish alternative ways of communication?



### In the event of actual security situations occurring, please keep in mind the following:

The NHRF would like to be informed about security incidents which have or can potentially have a negative effect on the work and working environment of your organisation and staff involved in the work

When forwarding incidents, concerns and /or reports to the NHRF about security issues concerning particular staff and/or your organisation please give a clear indication of what kind of actions your organisation would like the NHRF to take (or not take). Please be as clear as possible.

## NHRF Consultants

The NHRF has consultants in a select number of countries. The role of the consultant is to be a resource person for the secretariat and grantees. The NHRF seeks to make security and protection strategies of the organisation part of the conversation during visits and meetings. Grantees may contact the NHRF consultants for guidance and support on security- and protection-related issues.

The local consultants:

- Can help grantees make an overview of what makes them vulnerable in their work and possible steps to respond to these, if needed
- Can help establish contacts with resource people/specialised organisations to help establish a security protocol

## NHRF Secretariat

The NHRF has a secretariat in Oslo. Apart from grantmaking, the secretariat works in networks with other organisations and engages, to a certain degree, in advocacy efforts with other stakeholders on particular issues.

When it comes to the security and protection of you as grantees, the secretariat has different measures available for support. The following measures are outlined in the NHRF Operational Guidelines (2013):

- Offer to connect you with organisation working on protection
- Make joint actions with other donors and actors on behalf of our grantees
- Include resources to make security protocols, plans and training in the grant budgets
- Bring the issue of concern to the attention of diplomatic missions, in particular to the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Norwegian government, if requested by a grantee
- Forward appeals to the attention of the UN Special Rapporteurs
- Distribute information in Norway about cases that concern NHRF grantees.

The NHRF's secretariat is aware that it is difficult for some organisations to fully elaborate on risks in their applications. In order to fill the gap, we will follow up with conversations either during field visits or through other forms of communication. These efforts are intended to help us better understand the risks your organisation faces and how you plan to mitigate these risks. We hope to find good ways of communicating about security in cooperation with you.



The NHRF encourages strong and honest communication with grantees in the field to ensure there are no barriers when needing to communicate about risks and security issues in general. The NHRF conducts annual seminars that incorporate workshops and sessions on security to help build capacity for grantee partners to enhance their security and protection. Photos from NHRF grantee partner seminar in Mexico 2019.



# SUPPORT MECHANISMS

Based on the normative framework described earlier, a rather wide range of support mechanisms for human rights defenders have come into existence over the years. Here, we have chosen to focus on three relevant UN mechanisms, the existing guidelines on support to human rights defenders, and available support from a selection of specialised organisations. It is important to note that there are also national and regional support mechanisms available, such as human rights commissions and institutions, and various organisations with relevant expertise.

Furthermore, it is important that you identify and establish contact with domestic NGOs, networks and alliances working on support to human rights defenders, as well as support groups and individuals in your area who can be of help. We encourage all our grantees to obtain information and knowledge about the various support mechanisms in your region, country and local context and to actively use them, as they are there for you.

## Support Mechanisms in your Local and National Context

- Does your Government have an action plan on human rights defenders?
- Is there a national human rights defenders' focal point in your country?
- Are there human rights defender networks and alliances in your country and are you linked to them?
- Are you aware of NGOs in your country working specifically on support to human rights defenders and have you established contact with them?
- Have you approached relevant inter-governmental organisations working specifically with your country?
- Have you identified and established contact with relevant local support groups and/or individuals in your area?



## Relevant UN mechanisms for Human Rights Defenders



The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has a strong focus on human rights defenders. In this section we have chosen to highlight three UN Special Procedures' mandate holders which are particularly relevant to human rights defenders: *the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; and the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression.*

As part of their work, these Special Rapporteurs produce annual reports to the UN Human Rights Council and General Assembly and carry out country visits to investigate the situation of human rights at the national level. After their

visits, they submit a mission report to the Human Rights Council including their findings and recommendations. They can also carry out informal visits to a country, engaging with civil society and other relevant actors on the ground. Below, we have highlighted the possibility of the mandate holders taking individual cases with the States concerned. Under each section you will find the Special Rapporteur's contact information and links to the homepage and individual complaints mechanisms.

In addition to the three Special Rapporteurs mentioned below, there are other thematic mandates which focus on human rights defenders and related issues. One example is the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances (WGEID), which also has a special urgent mechanism. Others include the Special Rapporteurs on the rights of Indigenous peoples, on violence against women, and the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. We encourage you to get an overview of all the existing Special Procedures' mandate holders, as several of these might be of importance to you depending on the human rights issues with which you work.



### Procedures of the Human Rights Council

As of September 2018, there are 44 thematic and 12 country mandates under the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council. For a full overview, see the Special Procedures' home page:

Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council: <https://bit.ly/3dwnB6y>



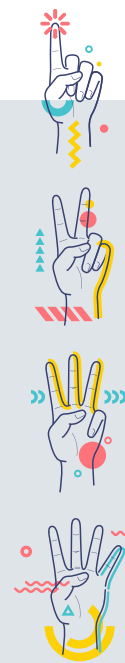
## Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders

The mandate on the situation of human rights defenders was established in 2000 by the then Commission on Human Rights (as a Special Procedure) to support the implementation of the 1998 Declaration on human rights defenders. The mandate was most recently renewed in 2017 with resolution A/HRC/RES/34/5 <https://bit.ly/2wtVjZC> for a period of three years.<sup>15</sup>

The Special Rapporteur works with States and individual cases of human rights violations committed against defenders. Information on such cases is received through a variety of sources including individual defenders, NGOs and UN agencies. If the information falls within the mandate and its probable validity is confirmed, the Special Rapporteur contacts the Government of the State where the alleged violation is thought to have occurred. Contact is usually conducted through an urgent appeal or allegation letter (called 'communications') addressed to the State's diplomatic mission with the United Nations in Geneva for transmission to capitals. With both urgent appeals and allegation letters the Special Rapporteur asks the Government to take all appropriate action to investigate and address the alleged events and to communicate the results of its investigation and actions to the Special Rapporteur. On the Special Rapporteur's website you will find the guidelines on the types of information the Special Rapporteur requires in order for him/her to take action on a case and how the information can be submitted.



Mary Lawlor, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders from May 2020 and NHRF Advisory Board member, in conversation with former Norwegian State Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Audun Halvorsen, and former UN Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, Andrew Gilmour, and former SPR on human rights defenders, Michel Forst.



**The Special Rapporteur's official website**  
<https://bit.ly/2WBXXag>

**The Special Rapporteur's individual complaints mechanism**  
<https://bit.ly/2Uwhxlx>

E-mail contact details: [urgent-action@ohchr.org](mailto:urgent-action@ohchr.org) (for allegations) or [defenders@ohchr.org](mailto:defenders@ohchr.org)  
The text of the e-mail should refer to the human rights defenders' mandate.

**The Special Rapporteur on human rights** defenders also has his/her own [website https://bit.ly/3anY9Ok](https://bit.ly/3anY9Ok) in English, French and Spanish.

## Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association

*Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association*

In October 2010, the Human Rights Council adopted resolution 15/21 <https://bit.ly/2UzHIYW> which established the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, for an initial period of three years.<sup>16</sup> The mandate holder serves for an initial period of three years, renewable once. The Council extended the mandate of the Special Rapporteur for an additional period of three years in July 2016 (resolution 32/32) <https://bit.ly/2vHkQOF>.<sup>17</sup>

Since the Special Rapporteur is mandated to promote and protect the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, the Human Rights Council has requested the Special Rapporteur to seek credible and reliable information from governments, NGOs and any other parties who have knowledge of pertinent situations and cases. Once such information is received, the Special Rapporteur sends urgent appeals or allegation letters to the concerned authorities for clarification on the allegations raised. On the Special Rapporteur's website you will find the guidelines on the types of information that the Special Rapporteur requires in order for him/her to take action on a case and how the information can be submitted.

Since 2012 there has been a debilitating increase in policies, laws and regulations on NGOs. Funding from abroad has been targeted through these measures and is hindered by governments with the goal of silencing human rights defenders. In 2013 the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association drew attention to the ability of associations to access financial resources as a vital part of the right to freedom of association. Several interesting remarks on this can be found in his thematic report of April 2013 and in the August 2018 report from the current Special Rapporteurs; demonstrating that the issue persists.<sup>18 19</sup>



**Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association**

**The Special Rapporteur's official website**  
<https://bit.ly/2U9o2vR>

**The Special Rapporteur's individual complaints mechanism**  
<https://bit.ly/39fgg7U>

E-mail contact details: [urgent-action@ohchr.org](mailto:urgent-action@ohchr.org) or [freeassembly@ohchr.org](mailto:freeassembly@ohchr.org) The text of the e-mail should refer to the mandate on freedom of peaceful assembly and association.

**Submissions can also be made using the online form**  
<https://bit.ly/3bkeu72>

<sup>16</sup> A/HRC/RES/15/21 <https://bit.ly/2UzHIYW>  
<sup>17</sup> A/HRC/RES/32/32 <https://bit.ly/2vHkQOF>  
<sup>18</sup> A/HRC/23/39 <https://bit.ly/3abGGsH>  
<sup>19</sup> A/73/279 <https://bit.ly/2U8QsWJ>



*The ability to seek, secure and use resources is essential to the existence and effective operations of any association, no matter how small. The right to freedom of association not only includes the ability of individuals or legal entities to form and join an association but also to seek, receive and use resources – human, material and financial – from domestic, foreign, and international sources.*

Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, Maina Kiai, para 8 <https://bit.ly/3abGGsH>.<sup>20</sup>

## Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression



### Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression

The Special Rapporteur's Official website  
<https://bit.ly/2wtl0bB>

The Special Rapporteur's Individual Complaints Mechanism  
<https://bit.ly/2WyULwc>

E-mail contact details: [urgent-action@ohchr.org](mailto:urgent-action@ohchr.org) or [freedex@ohchr.org](mailto:freedex@ohchr.org) for allegations). The text of the e-mail should refer to the mandate on freedom of peaceful assembly and association.

Submissions can also be made using the online form <https://bit.ly/3bkeu72>

The mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression was established in 1993. On 21 March 2017, the Human Rights Council extended the mandate of the Special Rapporteur for another period of three years (resolution 34/18) <https://bit.ly/2QB75lk>.<sup>21</sup>

The Special Rapporteur is mandated to promote and protect the freedom of opinion and expression. The Human Rights Council has requested the Special Rapporteur to seek credible and reliable information from governments, NGOs and any other parties who have knowledge of pertinent situations and cases. The Special Rapporteur then sends urgent appeals or allegation letters to the concerned authorities for clarification on the allegations raised. The activities of human rights defenders are among the issues about which the Special Rapporteur is particularly interested in receiving information. On the Special Rapporteur's website you will find the guidelines on the types of information that the Special Rapporteur requires in order for him/her to take action on a case and how the information can be submitted.

<sup>20</sup> A/HRC/23/39 <https://bit.ly/3abGGsH>

<sup>21</sup> A/HRC/RES/34/18 <https://bit.ly/2QB75lk>

## Reprisals and Intimidation

Addressing acts of intimidation and reprisal against those who seek to cooperate, cooperate or who have cooperated with the UN in the field of human rights is a priority for special procedures. They have consistently raised their concerns about this unacceptable practice individually and as a system. Special procedures not only address allegations of acts of intimidation and reprisal in relation to cooperation with them but with the wider UN system, its representatives and mechanisms in the field of human rights. As a result of the growing attention given to this and the increasing instances of intimidation and reprisals observed by mandate holders, they agreed during the 22nd Annual Meeting of Special Procedures, held in June 2015, to consolidate and enhance special procedures' response to this unacceptable practice by establishing a coherent framework for action. It is important to note here that reprisals may concern not only human rights defenders and civil society but affect any individual cooperating with the special procedures. This includes individuals or groups who met with mandate holders, including during their country visits and/or those who submitted information to special procedures, as well as those who provided legal or other assistance, relatives of victims of human rights violations and staff of national human rights institutions or national prevention mechanisms.

The ninth annual report of UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, <https://bit.ly/39dxhPK> details the level of retaliation against human rights defenders on a country-by-country basis, including allegations of killing, torture, arbitrary arrests, and public stigmatisation campaigns, which also target victims of rights abuse. The report documents allegations of reprisals and intimidation in 38 countries, some of which are members of the Human Rights Council.<sup>22</sup>



Follow this link for more information about the UN framework, for action and definition of acts of intimidation and reprisals: <https://bit.ly/3acsDmB>

*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. Punishing individuals for cooperating with the United Nations is a shameful practice that everyone must do more to stamp out.*

Report of the UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, to the UN General Assembly, Cooperation with the United Nations, its representatives and mechanisms in the field of human rights.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> UN News, Alarming level of reprisals against activists, human rights defenders, and victims – new UN report, 2018 <https://bit.ly/39dxhPK>  
<sup>23</sup> A/HRC/39/41 <https://bit.ly/2UzKaP8>



### ***OHCHR Field Presence***

Over the years, the OHCHR has increased its presence in the field with the aim of promoting and protecting human rights at the country level; helping strengthen national institutions and civil society; and mainstreaming human rights - that is, integrating a human rights perspective into the work of the UN Country Teams (UNCT). The OHCHR's field presence per 2018 includes 14 Country/Stand-alone Offices; 12 Regional Offices and Centres; and 27 expert Human Rights Advisers deployed by the OHCHR to the field to support the UNCT. The OHCHR also has a Rapid Response Unit which manages an internal roster of staff who can be rapidly deployed in human rights and humanitarian emergencies and can provide surge capacity to OHCHR field offices.



#### **OHCHR and UN Country Teams**

**More information about OHCHR's field presence**  
can be found at: OHCHR in the World: making human rights a reality on the ground <https://bit.ly/2WCGY82>

**The UN has Country Teams (UNCT)** in 131 countries, covering all of the 165 countries where there are United Nations programmes. More information about UNCTs and structure: <https://bit.ly/2WwqpdM>

**Front Line Defenders' Resource on UN field presence**  
What Protection can United Nations Field Presences Provide?  
<https://bit.ly/2WC7puu>



## NOTES



# EXISTING GUIDELINES ON SUPPORT TO HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

In this section, we want to draw attention to existing sets of guidelines on support to human rights defenders provided by the European Union (EU), the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Norway, Switzerland and Finland. Knowledge of such guidelines and contact with the relevant representatives in your country and/or region is highly relevant for all human rights defenders and might be helpful in your everyday work and future strategies.

## EU's Support to Human Rights Defenders

Support to human rights defenders is one of the major priorities of the EU's external human rights policy. The EU's support is built on the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders and is aimed at providing assistance and protection.

The EU has developed the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders <https://bit.ly/2UH5mmn> (first published in 2004 and updated in 2008), which provides an overview of the EU's role and aspirations and has been translated into local strategies for EU missions in third countries. The guidelines can have a concrete impact on human rights protection 'on the ground'. They also provide for intervention by the EU, through its presence in third countries, when human rights defenders are at risk and propose practical means of supporting and assisting these individuals and NGOs. The guidelines have confirmed that human rights defenders are natural and indispensable "allies" of the EU in the promotion of human rights and democratisation in their respective countries.<sup>24</sup>

Political support granted by the EU to defenders is backed by dedicated financial assistance granted via the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) <https://bit.ly/2J6amey>, which allows the EU to provide

HRDs with tangible means to work, to reinforce their capacities and to grant them protection. The EIDHR instrument can grant aid where no established development cooperation exists and can intervene without the agreement of the governments of third countries. It also has the ability to address sensitive political issues (such as death penalty, torture, freedom of expression in restrictive contexts, discriminations against vulnerable groups) and can respond to emerging and complex challenges, due to its high flexibility in terms of implementation modalities.<sup>25</sup> It can support groups or individuals within civil society defending democracy, as well as intergovernmental organisations that implement the international mechanisms for the protection of human rights. The EIDHR works with, for and through civil society organisations and can provide small grants to human rights defenders.

The emergency fund for human rights defenders at risk managed under the EIDHR can provide ad-hoc grants of up to 10,000 euro per grant per human rights defender, be it individuals or organisations, in need of urgent support either by headquarters or by EU Delegations.

<sup>24</sup> EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders <https://bit.ly/2UH5mmn>

<sup>25</sup> What is the EIDHR? <https://bit.ly/2J6amey>

This urgent support may take any form that is considered necessary. Examples include covering medical expenses or fees for the legal representation of defenders, purchasing security material for offices or homes, paying for the evacuation of a human rights defender to another country, or supporting the operations of a human rights organisation which finds itself in a dire financial situation.

Requests to use the small grants mechanism or emergency facility for human rights defenders should be addressed to the EU delegation in your country or to the EIDHR team, with information about the particular case to assist: name of the defender(s), background on the case(s), amount of grant requested, and for what purpose. The information received will be dealt with in confidentiality.

Additionally, a proposal for a single instrument called the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument <https://bit.ly/2Uszl1d> is in development by the European Parliament. Its first funding period is currently proposed for 2021 – 2027.<sup>26</sup> We wanted to bring this funding mechanism to your attention, although it is still being developed, as it might be relevant to your work and therefore useful to follow the process.

We encourage you to establish contact with the EU Delegation in your country and with its human rights focal point and liaison officer for human rights defenders, so that you can actively use the guidelines in relation to your work. Please note that the focal point and liaison officers are likely based at the EU Delegation, although it could be a staff member of one of the Member State embassies. On the websites of the EU Delegations, human rights defenders should be able to find the name of the human rights focal point by clicking on 'Key EU policies' on the left-hand side of the home page and then, on the right side, 'Delegation's Human Rights Focal Point'. Unfortunately, there are still many cases where the name is not indicated. Human rights defenders should therefore call the EU Delegation and ask.

Establishing a relationship, introducing or connecting yourself or your organisation to the local embassies for Member States could prove useful for gaining support and possibly add a layer of protection to you and your work.

## EU guidelines and EIDHR emergency grants

For EU guidelines and information about the EU's work with HRDs: <https://bit.ly/3dlegFV>

EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders <https://bit.ly/2UH5mmn>

For more information about the EIDHR and its emergency grants: European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights <https://bit.ly/2J6amey>




<sup>26</sup> European Parliament Think Tank, A new neighbourhood, development and international cooperation instrument: Proposal for a new regulation, 2019 <https://bit.ly/2Uszl1d>



OSCE’s Guidelines on Support to Human Rights Defenders

The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) has also adopted a set of guidelines on human rights defenders. These guidelines do not set new standards for human rights defenders but concentrate on the protection of the human rights of those who are at risk as a result of their human rights work. They call on OSCE Participating States to establish human rights defenders’ protection mechanisms both on their territories and in third countries, through their diplomatic representations.



**OSCE Guidelines**  
<https://bit.ly/3dkeEWZ>

Norway’s Guidelines on Support to Human Rights Defenders

The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) has developed a guide for its Foreign Service on support to human rights defenders. The main objective of this guide is to help the MFA and the Norwegian missions to systematise measures and intensify efforts to support human rights defenders and their work. The UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders forms the normative basis for Norway’s support to human rights defenders. The guide describes the role of diplomatic missions and the MFA in this work. It advises the missions on the following:

- Ascertaining the conditions under which human rights defenders work
- Which measures to take, such as contact and exchange of information with the human rights defenders, contact with the authorities; observation of court cases; use of the media, cooperation with national and international actors; economic support; and acute need for protection
- Risk assessment before deciding on any course of action
- Human rights defenders at particular risk
- Resources and competence-building
- Reporting routines

The guide also advises the MFA on publicity and grants, and on addressing human rights issues in meetings at the political level, during political visits and in multilateral forums.



**Norway’s Human Right Policy**  
*Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs*

Norway’s guidelines <https://bit.ly/3adxuno> on human rights policy, including support to human rights defenders (English and Spanish version)

News on the Norwegian-led resolution on uman rights defenders (2019)  
UN Consensus on Strengthening Protection of Human Rights Defenders <https://bit.ly/2JdrsQV>

Norwegian-led resolution adopted in November 2019  
A/C.3/74/L.31/Rev.1 <https://bit.ly/2UzLgue>

Switzerland’s Guidelines on Support to Human Rights Defenders

The Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) in Switzerland established its guidelines on the protection of human rights defenders in December 2013. Switzerland aims to offer human rights defenders more effective support and better protection against arbitrary treatment by state authorities.



**Switzerland’s Guidelines**  
*Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs*

Protecting Human Rights Defenders  
<https://bit.ly/33Geonn>

Finland’s Guidelines on Support to Human Rights Defenders

The objective of Finnish foreign policy is to promote the rule of law, democracy and human rights. Supporting and protecting human rights defenders is an important part of this objective. The Finnish guidelines entitled Protecting and Supporting Human Rights Defenders are the public guidelines of the Foreign Ministry of Finland on the implementation of the European Union Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders. The Finnish guidelines were developed to further strengthen the work of the Ministry in supporting human rights defenders.



**Finland’s Guidelines**  
*Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland*

Protecting and Supporting Human Rights Defenders  
<https://bit.ly/2vLmM8S>

Protecting and Supporting Human Rights Defenders: Public Guidelines of the Foreign Ministry of Finland on the implementation of European Guidelines on Human Rights Defender  
<https://bit.ly/3afwoHK>

Canada’s Guidelines on Support to Human Rights Defenders

Canada’s Guidelines on Supporting Human Rights Defenders is a clear statement of their commitment to supporting the vital work of human rights defenders. The Guidelines outline Canada’s approach and offer practical advice for officials at Canadian missions abroad and at Headquarters to promote respect for and support human rights defenders. Canada advises its missions to do their utmost to implement the Guidelines, recognizing that each approach should be tailored to local contexts and circumstances, and respond to the specific needs of individual human rights defenders. The 2016 edition of the Guidelines was updated to reflect Canada’s feminist foreign policy, including an understanding that human rights defenders—and in particular women and LGBTI human rights defenders—have intersecting identities (such as race, age, disability, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and gender identity), and experience numerous and concurring forms of discrimination, harassment and marginalization. Specific guidance was developed to better recognize the different experiences lived by human rights defenders belonging to one or more specific identifiable groups that face discrimination, in various contexts, including: women human rights defenders, LGBTI human rights defenders, Indigenous human rights defenders, land and environment rights defenders, disability rights defenders, youth human rights defenders, freedom of religion or belief human rights defenders, journalists, and human rights defenders in online and digital contexts.

The ultimate goal for Canada is to provide effective support to people around the world who work for human rights, by helping human rights defenders to be more effective advocates, ensuring they are able to carry out their work in a safe and enabled environment, and protecting them from harm.<sup>27</sup>

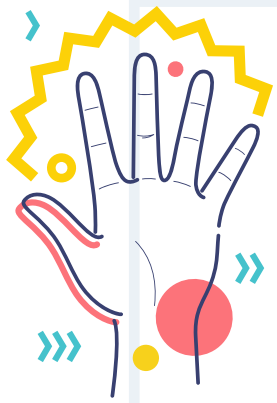


**Canada’s Guidelines**  
*Government of Canada*

Voices at Risk: Canada’s Guidelines on Supporting Human Rights Defenders <https://bit.ly/2y1t0Ci>

27 Government of Canada, Voices at Risk: Canada’s Guidelines on Supporting Human Rights Defenders, 2016 <https://bit.ly/2y1t0Ci>





NOTES



NOTES

# SPECIALISED ORGANISATIONS



Accompaniment for HRDs is a security measure that can help reduce risk for HRDs in highly visible roles and spaces (Photo credit: SweFOR).

There are several international organisations that can provide various forms of support to human rights defenders. Depending on their mandate, these organisations can provide assistance ranging from emergency grants to security training, protection and urgent interventions. There are also several organisations that are excellent sources of information and produce important documents and reports on the human rights situations in various parts of the world. Some of these are engaged in campaigns and advocacy efforts to hold governments responsible where the situation is critical, and some have a presence in certain countries. Below you will find a selection of organisations and a brief description of their mandates. We encourage you to visit their homepages and keep yourself updated on the information they provide and the kind of support they can offer. Please note that the list over the page is not exhaustive.

### Agir Ensemble pour les Droits de l'Homme

Agir Ensemble pour les Droits de l'Homme (AEDH) is an international solidarity organisation which is committed to defending human rights through partnerships with local associations from the South and East. AEDH supports field activities on the ground, strengthens the capacity of local actors and helps human rights defenders in danger. In addition to supporting organisations on the ground, AEDH can provide emergency funds for human rights defenders in danger and is engaged in advocacy and lobbying, including "urgent actions", legal actions and participation in solidarity networks. Agir Ensemble pour les Droits de l'Homme website: <https://bit.ly/2xjO7PG>

### Amnesty International

Amnesty International (AI) is an independent global movement which seeks to expose and stop human rights violations by governments, but also human rights abuses by non-governmental entities, companies and other non-state actors. AI's main focus is on campaigning to stop human rights violations and to protect individuals, but the organisation also engages in advocacy towards intergovernmental organisations and human rights organisations. AI also has some programmes offering protection for human rights defenders, but only on a limited scope. The Brave campaign by AI encourages people to speak up for the those who speak out for all of us.

### Amnesty International - Stand up for the Brave

AI also has a relief program that provides human rights defenders and victims of human rights violations in emergency situations with funding for assistance such as legal aid, emergency flights, living costs, and trial observation or security equipment.<sup>28</sup>

Amnesty International Stand up for the Brave - website: <https://bit.ly/2xdSps6>

### Asia Forum for Human Rights and Development

Asia Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) membership is open to independent, non-profit, non-partisan, non-violent and non-governmental civil society organisations working in the field of human rights and human development in Asia. FORUM-ASIA's Human Rights Defenders Programme aims to strengthen the protection of human rights defenders and women human rights defenders in Asia. The programme's objectives include the following: to provide a regional platform of exchange and ideas among defenders in Asia; to promote the role and the rights of defenders under the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders; to coordinate the engagement of defenders in the establishment or development of National Human Rights Institutions in their countries; and to provide urgent assistance and protection to defenders at risk. The programme includes a human rights defender protection plan under which defenders can apply for temporary reallocation support, other types of urgent assistance and trial observation. FORUM-ASIA convenes the biennial Asian Regional Human Rights Defenders' Forum (ARHRDF)

FORUM-ASIA - website: <https://bit.ly/2QAv0Yl>

FORUM-ASIA Human Rights Defenders Program - website: <https://bit.ly/39ajXvM>

FORUM-ASIA Protection Plan for Human Rights Defenders - website: <https://bit.ly/3afwP4Q>

<sup>28</sup> The Advocates for Human Rights, Resources for Human Rights Defenders, 2014 <https://bit.ly/2UeA873>



### Association for Women's Rights in Development

The Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) is a global, feminist membership association that works towards the realization of gender justice and women's human rights worldwide. AWID serves to support, resource and strengthen women's rights organisations to help them become more effective in their struggle and strengthen the voices and impact of women's rights advocates, organisations and movements. AWID also produces relevant publications on issues such as women human rights defenders, movement building, feminist monitoring and funding. AWID has staff working in 15 countries, and focuses on certain priority areas: economic justice, resourcing women's rights, challenging religious fundamentalisms, women human rights defenders, and young feminist activism.

AWID - website: <https://bit.ly/2y40cct>

### Freedom House

Freedom House's Emergency Assistance Program <https://bit.ly/2Ut6F83> supports threatened civil society organisations, individual human rights defenders, and survivors of religious persecution with short-term emergency grants for medical expenses, legal representation, prison visits, trial monitoring, humanitarian assistance, temporary relocation, security, equipment replacement, dependent support, and other types of urgent expenses.<sup>29</sup> To qualify for assistance, threats must have occurred within the past 3 months and be based on the applicant's human rights work (or persecution on the basis of religion/belief).

To inquire about submitting an application for assistance, please contact: [info@csolifeline.org](mailto:info@csolifeline.org)

Freedom House also leads two international consortia that offer emergency assistance, security grants, and short-term programmatic support:

#### The Lifeline Embattled CSO Assistance Fund <https://bit.ly/3aek0HY>

The Lifeline Embattled CSO Assistance Fund provides emergency financial assistance to civil society organisations (CSOs) under threat or attack and advocacy support responding to broader threats to civil society.<sup>30</sup> Lifeline supports a variety of CSOs that conduct advocacy, promote and protect human rights, and/or act in a watchdog capacity, including human rights organisations, journalist associations, student groups, labor unions, think tanks, and others. Lifeline is a consortium of seven international partners and receives contributions through an international donor pool of 17 governments and independent foundations that support democracy and human rights.

- Emergency Assistance: [How to apply https://bit.ly/2xjOARW](https://bit.ly/2xjOARW)
- Advocacy Grants: [How to apply https://bit.ly/2xfAQYw](https://bit.ly/2xfAQYw)
- Resiliency Grants: [How to apply https://bit.ly/3drVfuf](https://bit.ly/3drVfuf)

The Dignity for All: LGBTI Assistance Program provides emergency funds, advocacy support, and security assistance to human rights defenders and civil society organisations under threat or attack due to their work for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) human rights. <sup>(31)</sup> Dignity for All also supports targeted, time-bound advocacy campaigns to respond to threats or attacks on LGBTI human rights and human rights work, as well as assistance for individual victims or communities connected to funded advocacy campaigns. Security training is available to proactively assist organisations to continue their work more safely.

Contact Freedom House or a member organisation of the Dignity Consortium working in your region with a concept for any urgent, short-term advocacy or security initiative designed to have significant LGBTI human rights impact.

### Front Line Defenders

Front Line Defenders is the International Foundation for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders and has the specific aim of protecting human rights defenders at risk, people who work, non-violently, for any or all of the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Front Line Defenders provides rapid and practical support to at-risk human rights defenders, including: grants, training, international advocacy, an emergency 24 hour phone line, and temporary relocation.

Front Line Defenders - website: <https://bit.ly/3bejxpi>

### International Federation for Human Rights

The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) is an independent international NGO with more than 170 member organisations defending all civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. FIDH acts in the legal and political field for the creation and reinforcement of international instruments for the protection of human rights and for their implementation. FIDH's actions include urgent reactions (both public and confidential), international fact-finding, trial observation, defense missions, political dialogue, advocacy, litigation and public awareness campaigns.

International Federation for Human Rights - website: <https://bit.ly/3dkxCn6>

### Human Rights Watch

Human Rights Watch (HRW) is an independent, international organisation that works as part of a movement to uphold human dignity and advance the cause of human rights for all. HRW defends the rights of people worldwide by investigating abuses, exposing the facts widely, and pressuring power holders to respect rights and secure justice. HRW has researchers on the ground in various parts of the world and regularly publishes reports and news from different countries and regions.

Human Rights Watch - website: <https://bit.ly/2QEizuJ>

### International Service for Human Rights

The International Service for Human Rights (ISHR) is an independent, non-governmental organisation dedicated to promoting and protecting human rights. ISHR supports human rights defenders, strengthens human rights systems, and leads and participates in coalitions for human rights change. ISHR's support for human rights defenders includes intensive training, capacity building, advocacy advice and technical assistance.

International Service for Human Rights website: <https://bit.ly/3acuTKB>



<sup>29</sup> <https://bit.ly/2Ut6F83>

<sup>30</sup> <https://bit.ly/3aek0HY>

<sup>31</sup> <https://bit.ly/33l9erk>

### Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights

The Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights is a global women's fund that protects, strengthens and sustains women and transgender human rights defenders by intervening quickly when activists are poised to make great gains or face serious threats to their lives and work. The Urgent Action Fund uses online text and mobile funding applications to respond to requests from women's human rights defenders within 72 hours and have funds on the ground within 1-7 days. The Urgent Action Fund is also engaged in advocacy and alliance building and supports women's and girls' activism globally together with Urgent Action Fund-Africa and Urgent Action Fund-Latin America. In 2017 the sister-fund, Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights in Asia and Pacific (UAF A&P), was launched and it can also provide rapid response grants.

Urgent Action Fund - website:  
<https://bit.ly/2QCJKWS>

Urgent Action Fund Africa - website:  
<https://bit.ly/3dgE7Yd>

Urgent Action Fund – Latin America - website:  
<https://bit.ly/2QT4H03>

Urgent Action Fund - Asia and Pacific - website:  
<https://bit.ly/33Eoy82>

### Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (FIDH-OMCT)

The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders is a joint programme of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH, see above) and the World Organization Against Torture (OMCT, see below). The collaboration is based on the complementarity of the two organisations' approach and their respective NGO networks. The Observatory provides emergency protection to human rights defenders in the field (urgent interventions, international missions, material assistance, and other forms of protection); cooperates with national, regional and international intergovernmental protection mechanisms; and mobilises the international community and the media as protection agents for defenders. Every year, the Observatory publishes a global report highlighting the most serious obstacles and threats faced by human rights defenders.

World Organization Against Torture  
Human Rights Defenders - website:  
<https://bit.ly/2QBhhRc>

International Federation for Human Rights  
Human Rights Defenders - website:  
<https://bit.ly/33lh5oz>

### Peace Brigades International

Peace Brigades International (PBI) is an international NGO that promotes non-violence and protects human rights. PBI's volunteers accompany human rights defenders in conflict areas. Protective accompaniment is a strategy pioneered by PBI for protecting human rights defenders and communities whose lives and work are threatened by political violence. The organisation at risk must directly contact PBI with a request for accompaniment, after which the possibility of PBI protection is assessed. It is only if and when PBI enters into contract with the organisation concerned that PBI can provide personalised responses to requests.

Peace Brigades International - website:  
<https://bit.ly/2QCE92C>

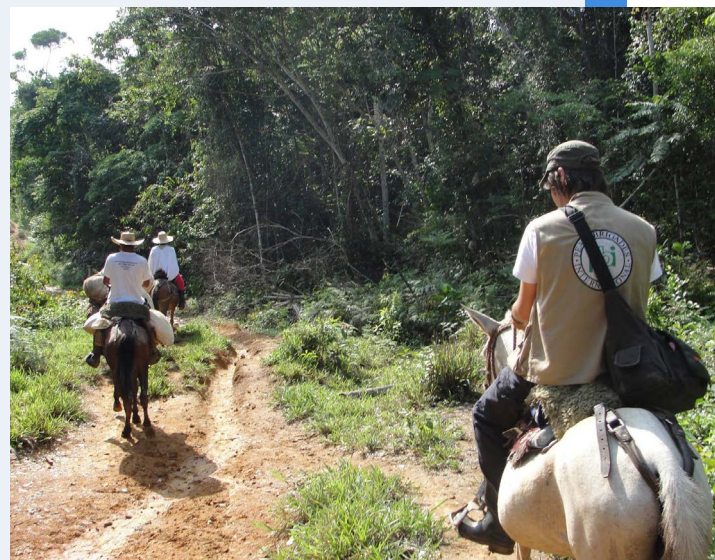


Photo: PBI in Colombia



Community mobilization and action puts forward a strong defense and demand for human rights. (Photo credit: Protection International)

### Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition

The Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition (WHRDIC) is a network that supports and protects women human rights defenders worldwide. The Coalition has 35 members from all over the world, ranging from local, grassroots organisations to large, international organisations. WHRDIC has an Executive Committee and operates through three Working Groups: Documentation and Training; Advocacy; and Urgent Responses.

Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition - website: <https://bit.ly/3acnJW>

### Protection International

Protection International (PI) supports individuals, organisations, networks, and communities whose right to defend human rights is being violated through threats, judicial harassment, stigmatisation, or other forms of repression. PI joins human rights defenders in defining protection tactics and their operationalization; sets up Protection Desks in countries or regions where defenders are at particular risk in order to accompany the processes to improve human rights defenders' capacity to manage their own security; researches good protection practice and challenges; and translates this into manuals and reports accessible to the human rights defenders' community. PI also advocates for States to fulfil their obligation to protecting human rights defenders through effective public policies using the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders and other international, regional or national standards.

Protection International - website:  
<https://bit.ly/2QFqgkx>

### World Organization Against Torture

World Organization Against Torture (OMCT) is an independent coalition of international NGOs fighting against torture, summary executions, enforced disappearances and all other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. OMCT ensures the dissemination of urgent interventions received from members of the SOS-Torture Network and other partner organisations across the world in order to prevent serious human rights violations, to protect individuals and to fight against impunity. It also submits individual communications and alternative reports to the United Nations mechanisms. OMCT provides urgent medical, legal and social assistance to victims of torture.

World Organization Against Torture website: <https://bit.ly/2xfCd9C>





## Protect Defenders.EU

ProtectDefenders.eu is implemented by a Consortium of twelve international organisations with a proven track record in the field of protection, campaigning and advocacy in favour of Human Rights Defenders. They provide 24/7 support to HRDs through the six key operating components of their mission:

1. Operating a rapid response mechanism to provide emergency support and material assistance to HRDs in danger, their families and their work
2. managing a support programme of temporary relocation for HRDs
3. supporting and coordinating an exchange platform for organisations and stakeholders working on temporary relocation for HRDs
4. providing training, support and capacity building to HRDs and local organisations
5. monitoring the situation of HRDs and advocates for a protection agenda, and
6. promoting coordination between organisations dedicated to support for HRDs, EU institutions and other relevant actors.

## ProtectDefenders.EU

**Website** <https://bit.ly/2QE2JQL>

### HOTLINE +353 (0) 1 21 00 489

<https://bit.ly/397UmUd> Follow the link for other contact options like Skype or using their secure web form.<sup>32</sup>

### Emergency Support <https://bit.ly/2UuAc17>

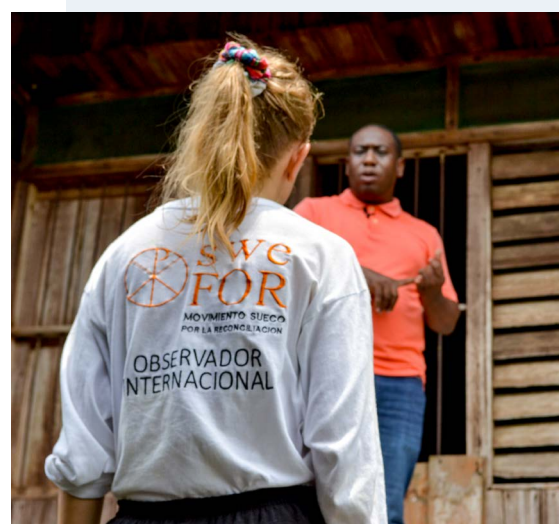
The mechanism provides 24/7 urgent support for HRDs facing imminent danger or threats. In the event of a crisis, defenders can contact ProtectDefenders.eu through the permanent emergency helpline and the secure contact form (referred to above). The emergency grants programme ensures that HRDs can access and implement urgent security measures to protect themselves, their family and their work.<sup>33</sup>

### Temporary Relocation Grant <https://bit.ly/33Fhx7h>

Grants are available for HRDs at risk to temporary relocate within their country or abroad, in case of urgent threat.<sup>34</sup>

### Trainings <https://bit.ly/2UqZQUA>

ProtectDefenders.eu implements a programme of trainings to meet the security needs of Human Rights Defenders, providing them with additional knowledge and tools. ProtectDefenders.eu develops the training and information programme through its partners: Front Line Defenders, FIDH, OMCT, RSF, Forum Asia, EHAHRDP (Defend defenders), Peace Brigades International, Protection International, ILGA and ESCR-Net.<sup>35</sup>



## Swedish Fellowship of Reconciliation (SweFOR or the Christian Peace Movement)

SweFOR's Peace Observers protect human rights defenders in violent conflicts to help increase their ability to contribute to a sustainable and just peace.

SweFOR creates protection and scope for human rights defenders through the method of international accompanying, also called preventive presence. On-site peace observers are physically present at, for example, risky trips or demonstrations, they disseminate information on the human rights defenders' situation, remind national authorities and international organizations of their obligations, and educate local organizations on how to strengthen their own security.

The peace observers are based in SweFOR's country offices in Colombia (Bogotá and Quibdó), Guatemala City, and San Cristóbal de las Casas in the state of Chiapas in southern Mexico. They often visit other parts of the countries together with accompanying human rights defenders.

SweFOR - website: <https://bit.ly/2wu0Tv2>

<sup>32</sup> <https://bit.ly/397UmUd>

<sup>33</sup> <https://bit.ly/2UuAc17>

<sup>34</sup> <https://bit.ly/33Fhx7h>

<sup>35</sup> <https://bit.ly/2UqZQUA>

## RECLAIMING THE NARRATIVE

*Snapshots from the collected stories of human rights defenders in the field*

*I defend the rights of self and others in my community, because I recognize that it is very easy for systems of oppression to deny us our dignity and given some of my own personal experiences as a lesbian living in a country that is not always the most welcoming to lesbians, gays, bisexual, people of trans experience, and women, I realized that I had to become one of the voices that would speak a little louder and act a little braver, to ensure that there is more inclusivity in the recognition of our rights as citizens of Jamaica.*

– Latoya Nugent, Human Rights Defender from Jamaica



*Sindh #HumanRightsDefenders network is going very well. Our information sharing system has improved. Now, through this network, we know what's happening in Jacobabad, what's happening in Umarkot, Mithi, and what human rights violations are there. Besides that, [we also know] what tools the state and non-state actors are using. What trends are there human rights violations there are. How we can improve security and safety of human rights defenders, through different strategies. So, this is very effective.*

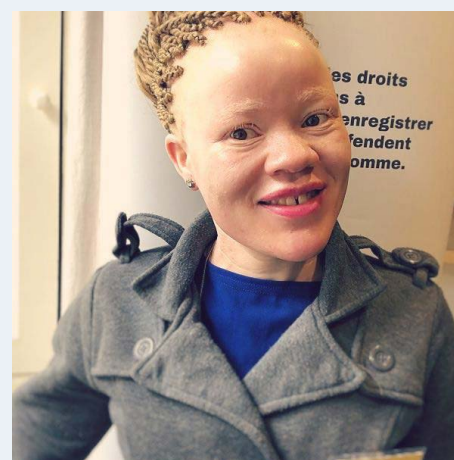
– Ali Palh, Human Rights Defender from Pakistan



*I always feel that I am not doing enough. I work a lot, but I always feel that it is not enough and it's really frustrating. And, sometimes you really feel alone because there are few people that actually support your work as a human rights defender, the government sees you as an enemy, so does the private sector and society because in Mexico, for instance, most people do not understand what human rights are. I am deeply inspired by the victims of human rights violations [who] I support, especially the mothers of missing people because, despite the adversity and despite the suffering caused by the disappearance of their loved ones, those women are standing up for their rights and demanding justice day after day.*

– Jérémy Renaux, HRD

*"Siempre siento que no estoy haciendo lo suficiente, trabajo mucho pero siempre siento que no es suficiente y es realmente frustrante, y a veces realmente te sientes solo porque hay pocas personas que realmente apoyan tu trabajo como defensor de derechos humanos, el gobierno te ve como un enemigo, igual el sector privado y la sociedad porque en México, por ejemplo, la mayoría de la gente no entiende lo que son los derechos humanos... Me inspiran profundamente las víctimas de violaciones de los derechos humanos que apoyo, especialmente las madres de las personas desaparecidas, porque a pesar de la adversidad y a pesar del sufrimiento causado por la desaparición de sus seres queridos, esas mujeres están defendiendo sus derechos y exigiendo justicia día tras día."*



*Society has a mindset in regard to disability issues. Albinism is one. If you are claiming your rights, people interpret it as if they should be feeling sorry for you because of your situation or condition. They try to give you something to improve your life. But it's not as if they should give you something but create a space in which you can prosper and not have someone feel sorry for you.*

– Tumeliwa Mphepo,  
Human Rights Defender from Malawi



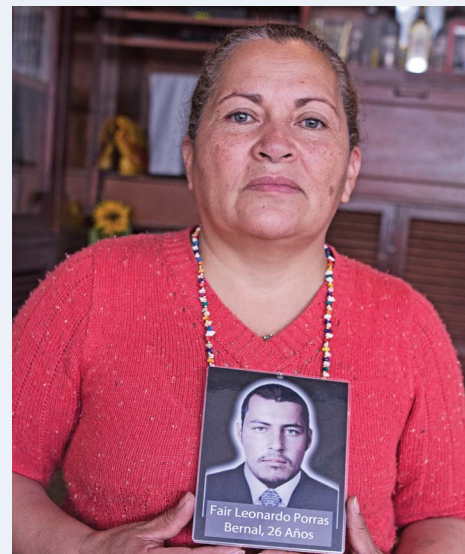
Share your story at  
I Defend Rights  
<https://bit.ly/2JcV7Rj>





*In my opinion, [...] sustaining this human rights movement, for me, would actually mean bringing in, nurturing, providing all kinds of support to young women leaders and then actually just letting it go, because they will take it as the river flows, they will take it with their energy and their passion and never let this caravan for social justice roll back.*

-Asha Kowtal, Human Rights Defender from India

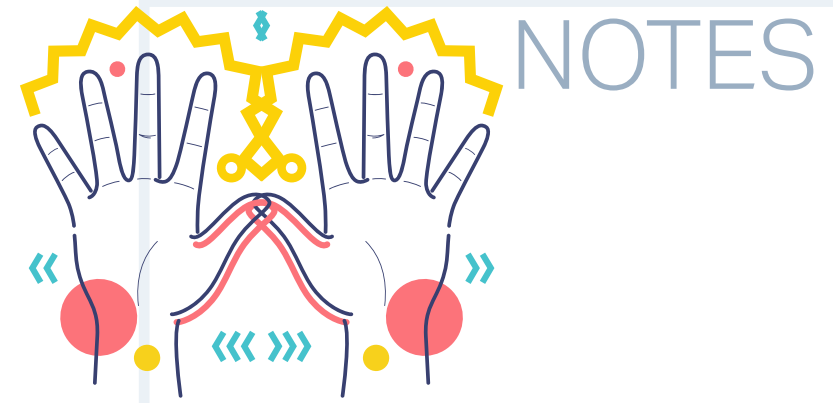
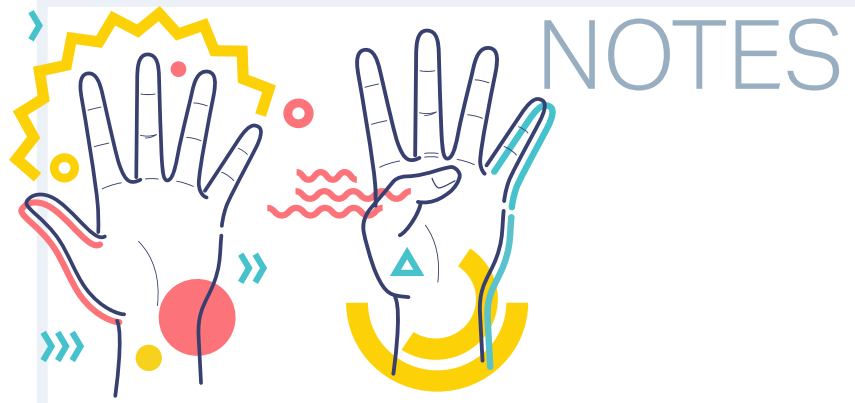


*In 2013, we finally managed to get 6 military personnel involved in my son's murder to be sentenced to 54 years in prison and to have the crime recognized as a crime against humanity. But this is not only my struggle; it is the struggle of a country, the struggle of thousands of mothers, of wives, of daughters, of sisters who are trying to really know the truth [about] why [...] their relatives were murdered. It is also to be able to begin to really weave a change for the country, to weave a long and lasting peace process for our new generations to come.*

-Luz Marina Bernal

*"En el 2013 al fin logramos que 6 militares que están implicados en el asesinato de mi hijo se condenaran a 54 años y se reconociera crimen de lesa humanidad. Pero también no es solamente mi lucha, sino es la lucha de un país, la lucha de miles de madres, de esposas, de hijas, de hermanas que están tratando de realmente saber la verdad, porqué asesinaron a cada uno de sus familiares. Pero también poder empezar a tejer un cambio realmente para el país, tejer un proceso de paz largo y duradero para nuestras nuevas generaciones que vienen."*









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