

Recommendations for the implementation of the HRD Declaration

We, the present organizations and women human rights defenders, **ask Member States to implement the following recommendations regarding three specific areas:**

A. Recognition and support for the work of women defenders:

1. Grant political and legal recognition to the legitimate work of women defenders, focusing on eliminating prejudices and recognizing women defenders' contributions to society and development at the national and local level.
2. Recognise that "Women Human Rights Defenders" include not only those working for formally-established non-governmental organizations (NGOs), but also women defenders defending labour rights, land rights, cultural rights, sexual and reproductive rights, as well as collective rights and grassroots social movements.

B. Protection Mechanisms and Programs: Our cumulative experience has revealed that laws that recognize women's contributions to democracy and prevent violence against women defenders are absolutely necessary; at the same time, how the laws are implemented, how practices and attitudes are reinforced, and how cases are managed, investigated, and prosecuted are just as important for the protection of women human rights defenders and their communities.

To this end, we ask Member States to:

1. Formulate legislation, policies and programs for protection that focus on eliminating the structural causes of violence against women defenders and advocate for the adoption of specific measures to prevent, investigate and punish those responsible for the abuse and violence perpetrated against them.
2. In countries that already have legal protections for human rights defenders, ensure that provisions for protection, redress and remedy adopt intersectional approaches to implementation including by taking into account the gendered specificities and experiences of women defenders, and those charged with implementation are adequately trained in these areas.
3. Existing and new legislation and mechanisms alike must never re-victimize women defenders, which increases their vulnerability. To prevent this, and based on previous experience in certain countries:
 - Cease the militaristic approach that has dominated official protection programs that tend to contradict the non-violent proposals of women defenders and reproduce gender stereotypes and violence. This also means ensuring that programs are not implemented or enforced by State agents or hired-private security who have previously or currently surveilled or gathered State intelligence against women human rights defenders, their struggles and communities.
4. Review and repeal laws, policies and practices that are not in line with international human rights standards including the UN Declaration on HRDs and the UN resolution 68/181 on women defenders, including laws that restrict the work and functioning of civil society, that unduly label civil society as "terrorists" and "foreign agents", on the grounds of "public morality", and that censor and curb the freedom of expression, association and assembly of non-governmental organisations, social movements and human rights defenders including in online spaces.
5. Guarantee that protection programs are sustainable by prioritizing necessary funding in national and local budgets, so that the financial burden of protection does not fall on the defender herself, and ensure the institutionality necessary to implement, monitor, and

assess the impact and usefulness of the programs and mechanisms meant to protect women and their communities.

6. Domesticate the UN Declaration on HRDs, including by enacting legislation for the protection of HRDs that includes specific protection for women human rights defenders, as well as clearly articulating the budget and implementing body for the implementation of such laws.
7. Ensure official mechanisms do not contradict or hinder the holistic, spiritual, and collective protection practices and measures that women defenders -- particularly indigenous and afro-descendent -- depend on.
8. Prohibit any legislation, policy, or legal framework from using personal and privileged information (including digital communications and technologies) from or about women defenders and their organizations for the purpose of threatening, stigmatizing, or persecuting their work, their families, or their networks.

C. Access to Justice and Ending Impunity: Central to the protection and sustainability of women human rights defenders is the guarantee of truth, justice, and non-recurrence, which are only possible through independent and unbiased public institutions, impartial investigations, and ending impunity of cases involving violations against women defenders and their communities.

1. Immediately end all attacks, harassment, intimidation, and violence against women defenders and their communities and movements.
2. Stop delaying or preventing impartial investigations of crimes committed against women defenders; Guarantee that investigations are exhaustive and prompt, and prosecute those responsible -- both material and intellectual authors of the crimes committed against them.
3. Investigations should be free of sexist and misogynistic prejudices and stereotypes, and should integrate an analysis of the context in which women defenders work, the patterns of attacks targeting them, and the socio-environmental conflicts that frame their work.
4. Hold public officials, media, religious, cultural, community, and business leaders accountable for attacking, defaming, inciting violence, and stigmatizing women, their movements, organizations, and networks and their efforts to ensure human rights for all.
5. Create and enforce more strict or stringent measures against state armed forces - including at federal, local, and/or municipal level - who harm or inflict violence (including sexual and gender violence) against all human rights defenders.
6. Guarantee the independence of public human rights and judicial institutions to play a proactive role in programs that prevent and investigate violence and violations against women, women defenders, and the right to defend rights.
 - Ensure that these institutions and systems comply with due process.
7. Train officials, at all levels of government, especially those within judicial and penal systems, on how to receive, address, document, investigate, and prosecute cases of violence against women defenders, that includes a gender and intersectional approach.
8. Develop practices and create necessary mechanisms to ensure that political appointments, promotions to public office or advancement of political careers take into account officials' histories and practices in relation to women defenders and their work, to avoid their revictimization and unjust persecution.
9. Immediately suspend extractive, agro-industrial, infrastructure, and hydro-energy projects that began without the consent and approval of the affected communities and that have involved human rights violations, and initiate the corresponding investigations.

In addition, **we urge all UN entities to:**

- A. Strengthen technical assistance to national governments to implement UN recommendations on the protection of women defenders, including through effective monitoring of States' compliance;
- B. Adopt an intersectional approach to HRDs in all aspects of work, taking into account the specific nature of violence experiences by women defenders, and their needs as they relate to the multiple and intersecting discrimination they may face, for instance indigenous Afro-descendent young, trans and differently-abled women who defend human rights;
- C. Work more closely with regional human rights mechanisms to ensure effective follow-up and implementation as well as accountability for violations, including those relating to reprisals against women defenders engaging with the regional systems;
- D. Strengthen the participation of women defenders with the different UN bodies, processes, meetings, country visits and other activities;
- E. End all reprisals against women defenders engaging with international and regional human rights mechanisms by guaranteeing the safe civil society space at the UN, and denounce instances of reprisals at the highest level including through UN-mandated investigations into all such allegations.
- F. Strengthen coordination amongst UN entities in country to support the implementation of UN recommendations on the protection of WHRDs and follow-up on reprisals against those who have engaged with the UN system;
- G. Monitor states and governments that are creating or implementing laws that legitimize or legalize the 'criminalization' of WHRDs. Some current examples from our contexts include, but are not limited to: labeling women defenders as terrorists and threats to national security, restricting their freedom of movement and association, and holding them in jail or without due process to restrict their activism.
- H. Adopt a holistic approach to ensuring protection and security of HRDs, that takes into account physical, emotional, digital, and other forms of security for individual WHRDs, their organizations, networks/coalitions, movements, and their families/communities with digital security and includes attention to gender-specific threats and security needs;
- I. Urge private companies to take concrete steps to improve how they identify, address and prevent violence and abuse against human rights defenders, in particular women human rights defender, on their platforms;