THE DECLARATION ON HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS



AND OTHER RESOURCES

A BOOKLET FOR DEFENDERS



FORUM-ASIA recognises the need to address the ongoing trends of violations against human rights defenders (HRDs) in Asia, and their key role in ensuring that everyone's human rights are protected and fulfilled.

To this end, FORUM-ASIA has produced a booklet explanatory 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 Freedom, commonly referred to as the Declaration on human rights defenders.

This booklet aims to emphasise the role and rights of human rights defenders as well as the responsibilities of others towards them, and to provide practical information to enhance their security.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABOUT THE DECLARATION	.1
TIMELINE OF THE DECLARATION	.2
WHO ARE HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS?	.3
WHO CAN BE A HRD?	.3
WHY SUPPORT HRDs?	.4
RIGHTS OF HRDs	4
STATE OBLIGATIONS	.7
NON-STATE ACTORS	.8
2020: THE UN DECLARATION IN ASIA AT GLANCE	
SUPPORT MECHANISMS FOR HRDs	13
United Nations Special Procedures	13
Guidelines on HRDs for diplomatic missions	16
ADDITIONAL PROTECTION MECHANISMS FOR HRDs AT RISK	19
TOOLS AND RESOURCES FOR HRDs SECURITY	20
LISEFUL LINKS AND TIPS	22

ABOUT THE DECLARATION

The PURPOSE of the Declaration is to provide SUPPORT AND PROTECTION to human rights defenders, who are actors in defending human rights through peaceful means.

The Declaration does not create new obligations to States, but each article comes from human rights instruments that States are OBLIGED TO COMPLY.





It adapts the existing INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS to human rights defenders and their work, and highlights state and non-state actors' responsibilities in defending human rights defenders' rights.

The Declaration was adopted by ALL UNITED NATIONS MEMBER STATES, reflecting a States' strong commitment to recognising and supporting human rights defenders.





The Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR) is adopted

1948

1966

The Two International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights, and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICCPR and ICESCR) are adopted*

The United Nations Commission on Human Rights calls on all States to respect actors defending human rights, and later condemns all abuses against these actors

1980

1985

The United Nations Commission on Human Rights establishes a working group to draft a Declaration on human rights defenders

After 13 years, the Declaration is adopted by consensus on 9 December, in conjunction with the 50th anniversary of the UDHR

1998

2020

22 years after the Declaration was adopted, abuses against human rights defenders grow more rampant. The need to implement the Declaration is more crucial than ever.

^{*} Together with the UDHR, the two Covenants (and their Protocols) form the so-called International Bill of Human Rights, the main reference with regard to the international human rights standards.

WHO ARE HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS?



Human rights defenders (HRDs) are INDIVIDUALS OR GROUPS who act peacefully to protect and promote their rights and the rights of others.



HRDs can ADDRESS ANY HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE IN VARIOUS WAYS. This can include reporting on violations, monitoring the environment, providing support to victims, advocating for the rights of minority groups, or any other form of action aimed at the promotion and protection of human rights.

In defending human rights, HRDs must:

Adopt PEACEFUL MEANS – they cannot use or engage in any form of violence to achieve their goals.



Accept the UNIVERSALITY OF HUMAN RIGHTS – all rights are inherent and indivisible, applicable to everyone, everywhere and at any time. It means that HRDs should not discriminate against certain rights or persons.



WHO CAN BE A HRD?

ANYONE, from any part of the world and REGARDLESS of their age, gender, sexual orientation, religion/belief, race, ethnicity, class or any other social category.

IRRESPECTIVE of one's **PROFESSION** – whether a person is working for a human rights organisation, or is a volunteer, a journalist, a lawyer, a student, a street vendor, a farmer, a community member, or a mother – that person can be a HRD.

The most important factor in defining a HRD is the ACTION TAKEN in promoting and protecting human rights. HRDs are primarily identified by WHATTHEY DO.

It is crucial to recognise the key contributions of women human rights defenders (WHRDs), LGBTIQ rights defenders, and land and environmental HRDs - who are among the most marginalised groups of defenders in the realisation of human rights.



WHY SUPPORT HRDs?

HRDs PLAY A VITAL ROLE in fighting against human rights violations, central for TACKLING DISCRIMINATION AND INJUSTICE.

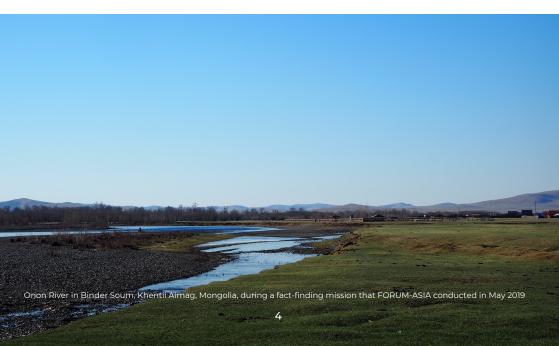
HRDs are often SEEN OR DEPICTED NEGATIVELY for relentlessly demanding both state and non-state actors to respect and protect human rights. This exposes them to VARIOUS FORMS OF ABUSES.

RIGHTS OF HRDS

The Declaration emphasises that everyone HAS THE RIGHT to work on or engage in PEACEFUL ACTIVITIES aimed at the PROTECTION AND PROMOTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS. (Articles 1, 11)

This means that any peaceful activity carried out by the HRDs IN SUPPORT OF HUMAN RIGHTS is considered LEGITIMATE.

This includes cases where, for example, a HRD peacefully protests against a business for violating indigenous peoples' rights by evicting them from their ancestral lands, even though this act may be seen to go against private economic interests.





KNOWING YOUR RIGHTS

KNOWING YOUR RIGHTS AS A HRD IS CRUCIAL. By knowing them, you can take action to protect yourself and your community from human rights violations and abuses.

COMMON FORMS OF HARASSMENTS AGAINST HRDs IN ASIA AND THE ARTICLES IN THE DECLARATION THAT HRDs CAN USE TO PROTECT THEIR RIGHTS

TRENDS OF HARASSMENT

Some States arbitrarily arrest people for joining and/or organising peaceful protests

Some States impose lengthy registration processes for NGOs, by delaying their renewal arbitrarily revoking their licences

Certain States target people simply for discussing human rights issues publicly

A few States restrict HRDs' access to resources that enable them to pursue their human rights work

YOUR RIGHTS

Right to assemble peacefully in order to address human rights violations (Articles 5, 12.1)

Right to participate organisations or groups working on human rights (Article 5)

Right to develop, discuss promote human rights ideas and principles (Article 7)

Right to receive and use resources to support human rights work (Article 13)

RECLAIMING YOUR RIGHTS

State and non-state actors have persistently deterred HRDs from claiming their fundamental rights. However, it is important to know that as a HRD you have the RIGHT TO BE PROTECTED from human rights violations and TO BENEFIT FROM **EFFECTIVE REMEDIES.** (Article 9.1)

Everyone whose rights are violated has the RIGHT TO COMPLAIN to an independent, impartial and competent judicial or other public authority, to access APPROPRIATE REMEDY including any compensation, as well as to have that complaint reviewed without unnecessary delay. (Article 9.2)

COMMON PRACTICES USED TO DISCOURAGE HRDs IN ASIA FROM CLAIMING THEIR RIGHTS, AND THE ARTICLES IN THE DECLARATION HRDs CAN USE TO CHALLENGE THESE REPRESSIVE ACTIONS

TRENDS OF REPRESSIVE ACTION

YOUR RIGHTS

Some States impose travel bans on HRDs to discourage them from meeting and engaging with human rights organisations

Right to communicate with any international human rights mechanisms such as the United Nations (Articles 5c, 9.4)

Some HRDs who seek or reveal information about human rights violations often face threats to their lives

Right to seek, receive and share information on human rights issues (Articles 6a & b, 9.3b)

A few States disregard complaints submitted by HRDs on the State's inadequate action in addressing human rights issues Right to submit complaints about authorities' compliance with international human rights instruments (Articles 8.2, 9.3)

Some States do not accept complaints about human rights violations or provide the necessary support for victims to get justice Right to file legal complaints, seek legal advice, and be fairly treated by the judicial system in addressing human rights violations (Articles 2, 9.3a & c)

In many States, threats and violence are among the most common forms of violations against HRDs

Right to be protected in peacefully reacting against acts of violence or that result in violations of human rights (Article 12.3)

STATE OBLIGATIONS

States have the PRIME RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT, PROMOTE AND IMPLEMENT ALL HUMAN RIGHTS. It is their DUTY TO TAKE ALL THE NECESSARY MEASURES to ensure that everyone, including HRDs, can exercise and enjoy their human rights. (*Article 2*)

DOMESTIC LAW MUST BE CONSISTENT WITH THE STATE'S INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS OBLIGATIONS, to ensure that fundamental freedoms are enjoyed. (Article 3)





EXAMPLES OF STATE GOOD PRACTICES



TO INVESTIGATE AND ADDRESS human rights violations promptly and impartially (Article 9.5)

To ensure that NATIONAL LAWS AND STATE AUTHORITIES PROTECT the peaceful work of HRDs (Article 12.2)

TO SPREAD AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING of human rights, and ensure access to information on human rights (Articles 14.1, 14.2)

To make human rights a PART OF EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS (Article 15)

To ensure that there is an independent INSTITUTION THAT PROTECTS AND PROMOTES HUMAN RIGHTS AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

To PROVIDE SUPPORT to national institutions defending human rights (Article 14.3)

The need to support HRDs is now reflected in national laws and policies of some Asian countries.

Discussions at the institutional level on ENACTING A LAW to ensure HRDs' protection are ongoing in a few countries and include the provision of a committee on the protection of HRDs, to facilitate complaints of violations.

A rising number of Asian countries is in the process of adopting a NATIONAL ACTION PLAN (NAP) ON BUSINESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS.

Through the NAPs, governments will be responsible for raising awareness and disseminating knowledge on HUMAN RIGHT STANDARDS related to businesses.

Independent NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS (NHRIs), responsible for monitoring, protecting and promoting human rights in the country, have been established in several Asian countries.



7

NON-STATE ACTORS

The Declaration emphasises that everyone, including NON-STATE ACTORS, is responsible for the promotion and protection of the rights of HRDs.

Everyone has DUTIES TOWARDS AND WITHIN THE COMMUNITY. (*Article 18.1*) There are two common types of duties:



DUTY TO ACT (also called positive obligations) such as developing measures to employees' personal safety in the workplace; and



DUTY NOT TO ACT (also called *negative obligations*), such as not obstructing others' rights to hold a peaceful assembly.

NON-GOVERNMENTAL INSTITUTIONS

(Civil society organisations, think tanks)

GROUPS/COMMUNITIES

(Local communities, indigenous groups, advocacy groups)

ARMED GROUPS

DONORS

BANKS AND FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS



ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS

INDIVIDUALS

(Artists, academics, social influencers)

MEDIA

RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS

NATIONAL AND TRANSNATIONAL CORPORATIONS

(Mining companies, manufacturers)

Non-state actors have a RESPONSIBILITY IN PROMOTING THE RIGHTS of everyone.

HRDs have the right to HOLD NON-STATE ACTORS ACCOUNTABLE for any violations by using various mechanisms at the national, regional, and international level.

NON-VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

NO ONE shall be PUNISHED FOR REFUSING TO ENGAGE IN HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS. (Article 10) NO ONE shall participate in VIOLATING HUMAN RIGHTS, engage in activities aimed at the destruction of rights and/or promote activities that are contrary to international human rights

standards. (Articles 10. 19 and 20)

SAFEGUARDING HUMAN RIGHTS

Everyone has an important role in CREATING AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT where the human rights of all can be fulfilled. (*Article 18*) Everyone who, as a result of their profession, CAN AFFECT the HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS of others, should RESPECT those rights and freedoms, and follow the relevant national and international standards to ensure this. (Article 11)

🗷 2020: THE DECLARATION IN ASIA AT A GLANCE 🍰



There are some States that now RECOGNISE AND PROVIDE SUPPORT TO HRDs.



Some progress in protecting HRDs in Asia has been made.



Discussions about DRAFTING AND IMPLEMENTING LAWS AND POLICIES to ensure the protection of HRDs are being held in a few Asian countries.



This progress has been possible through the work of HRDs, who have tirelessly defended and promoted human rights in Asia and beyond.

Despite these positive developments, THE VIOLATION OF HRDs' RIGHTS REMAINS RAMPANT AND MUCH WORK IS TO BE DONE IN IMPLEMENTING THE DECLARATION. Many HRDs in Asia continue to be TARGETED, HARASSED, INTIMIDATED, and even KILLED as a result of their peaceful human rights work.

STATISTICS

Between 1 January 2018 and 31 December 2019, FORUM-ASIA had documented:*

A total of 787 cases of rights violation against HRDs across 20 Asian countries:

At least 5,602 HRDs, including NGOs and family members were affected as a result.

COUNTRY COVERAGE



COMMON FORMS OF VIOLATIONS COMMITTED AGAINST HRDS**



^{*} The data may not represent all violation against HRDs happening in Asia.

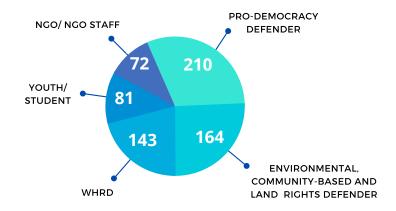
^{**} The graph refers to the number of cases recorded, which may not be equal to the number of HRDs affected.

JUDICIAL HARASSMENT is the most common form of violation against HRDs, who are often charged based on fabricated accusations. In many cases, the absence of a fair trial is coupled with defenders' ARREST and DETENTION.

INTIMIDATION and THREATS emerged as a main trend of violation, while the use of SMEAR CAMPAIGNS to spread false information on HRDs and damage their reputation is a common tactic employed to intimidate defenders.

PHYSICAL VIOLENCE also remains rampant across the region.

CATEGORIES OF DEFENDERS MOST AFFECTED





PRO-DEMOCRACY DEFENDERS are the most common victims of violations.



NGOs and their STAFF are increasingly targeted, particularly by legislations that cause restrictions to funding and require them to undergo burdensome procedures to register and operate.

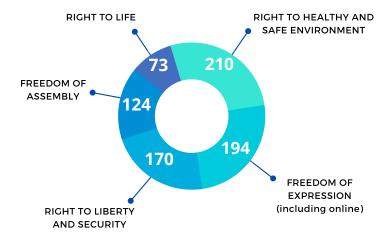


Categories of defenders such as WHRDs, COMMUNITY-BASED, LAND and ENVIRONMENTAL HRDs are MORE TARGETED by attacks yet have limited access to the existing protection systems. Violations committed against these group of HRDs also tend to be underreported.



MEDIA WORKERS, such as journalists, covering human rightsrelated issues are particularly exposed to attacks.

TYPES OF RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS VIOLATED



HRDs are constantly challenged by SHRINKING CIVIC SPACES that affect both physical and digital spheres.

The repression of defenders' work by violent means, which include intimidation and threats, constitutes a violation of their RIGHT TO A HEALTHY AND SAFE ENVIRONMENT.

STATE ACTORS WERE
PERPETRATOR IN 92% OF THE
RECORDED CASES.

RIGHT TO LIBERTY AND SECURITY and RIGHT TO FAIR TRIAL are among the most violated rights, largely due to the widespread judicial harassment of defenders.

HRDs exercising FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION ONLINE and OFFLINE, and OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY and ASSOCIATION are often obstructed through the enforcement of repressive legislations.

Perpetrators include non-state actors who often operate in a CLIMATE OF IMPUNITY, where authorities are either complicit or do not take action to protect HRDs.

HOW CAN WE USE THE DECLARATION TO STRENGHTEN THE PROTECTION OF HRDS?



URGE STATES TO RESPECT and COMPLY WITH international human rights laws and standards.



Continue to STRENGTHEN and BUILD upon the work others have done in pushing for the implementation of the Declaration.



Play an ACTIVE ROLE in collaboration with other HRD communities, to POPULARISE the Declaration, HIGHLIGHT the importance of the work of HRDs, and the challenges they face.



DEMAND STATES TO ESTABLISH NECESSARY MECHANISMS for the effective protection of HRDs.



UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL PROCEDURES

SPECIAL PROCEDURES are established within the United Nations Human Rights Council. Their main function is to REPORT and ADVISE ON HUMAN RIGHTS, with a focus on a specific ISSUE or COUNTRY.

Special Procedures cover all human rights and include *Special Rapporteurs* and *Independent Experts* – who work individually, and *Working Groups* – who operate in a team of five. Overall, they are called *Special Procedures Mandate Holders (SPMHs)*.

The most relevant Special Procedure for HRDs is the Special Rapporteur on the SITUATION OF HRDs, which was created to SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 1998 DECLARATION.

Other thematic Special Procedures are relevant to HRDs and their work, such as:



Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF OPINION AND EXPRESSION;



Special Rapporteur on the RIGHTS TO PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY AND OF ASSOCIATION:



Special Rapporteur on VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, ITS CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES:



Special Rapporteur on the RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES:



Working Group on the issue of HUMAN RIGHTS AND TRANSNATIONAL CORPORATIONS AND OTHER BUSINESS ENTERPRISES.

Full list of the Special Procedures' thematic mandates: https://spinternet.ohchr.org/viewAllCountryMandates.aspx?Type=TM&lang=en.

Web page of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of HRDs: https://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/srhrdefenders/pages/srhrdefendersindex.aspx.

With regard to *country* mandates, Special Procedures include the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in CAMBODIA and MYANMAR.

ENGAGING WITH THE AFFECTED RIGHTS-HOLDERS, either individuals or groups, is a key component of SMPHs' work.

The activities that they conduct include submitting an ANNUAL REPORT to the United Nations Human Rights Council, highlighting general trends and developments, as well as recommendations, based on the information gathered in the past year.

Additionally, they also conduct COUNTRY VISITS, RECEIVE INFORMATION on violations of human rights relevant to mandate, and SEND COMMUNICATIONS to the alleged authors of human rights violations. These are discussed further below.

COUNTRY VISITS



Country visits aim to examine the SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AT NATIONAL LEVEL, identifying the CHALLENGES - such as the trends of violations against HRDs, and analysing the ENVIRONMENT where they work, including existing laws and policies.



A few months before the mission, the SPMHs launch a CALL FOR INPUTS. Whoever is interested can share information on places to visit, or authorities, organisations and individuals to meet during the mission. Submitted information are kept confidential.



In the months following the country visit, the SPMHs issue an impartial and independent REPORT that contains the main FINDINGS from the mission, and provides RECOMMENDATIONS to the Government and other relevant actors.



During the visit, SPMHs MEET WITH A RANGE OF ACTORS, including representatives of the institutions (e.g. central and local Governments, the judiciary, national human rights commissions) and rights-holders – HRDs and members of civil society organisations (CSOs), as well as victims of violations.



Governments should always COLLABORATE with the SPMHs during country visits, ensuring their freedom of movement and inquiry, as well as the ability to hold confidential meetings with all sectors of civil society.

Webpage of SPMHS' country visits: https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/SP/Pages/CountryandothervisitsSP.aspx.

COMMUNICATIONS



The SPMHs COMMUNICATE with Governments, addressing cases of HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS, INCLUDING AGAINST HRDs, that are brought to their attention.



Communications may refer to a violation that is ONGOING or AT RISK OF TAKING PLACE, or to a case that HAS ALREADY OCCURRED. Communications can be sent also to NON-STATE ACTORS, if they are considered alleged perpetrators.

Individuals, groups and organisations can SUBMIT A COMPLAINT to the SPMHs, providing the following information:

- The IDENTITY OF THE VICTIM(S) and, if different, of who is submitting the information;
- The IDENTITY OF THE ALLEGED PERPETRATOR(S);
- The HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVITY conducted by the victim and the TYPE OF VIOLATION suffered;
- A DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INCIDENT including date, place, and other relevant information of the context of the violation, highlighting possible trends of violations; and
- The ACTIONS TAKEN by the victim and by competent authorities after the violation occurred.

Complaints can be submitted by filling in an ONLINE FORM at: https://spsubmission.ohchr.org/en.*

If the submission is accepted, the SPMHs will send a WRITTEN COMMUNICATION to alert the Government (or other relevant actors) about the violation.**

The communication contains:

- The FACT(S) of the submission, including the events and details of the victim(s);
- The INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS norms and standards that apply to the case;
- A REQUEST to take any appropriate measures to stop or prevent the violation. SPMHs may request also to investigate the violation and bring those responsible to justice.



^{*} Authors of the submissions are invited to share with the SMPHs any updates related to the event, such as new harassment or attacks.

^{**} SPMHs send communications to Governments based on the relevance of the submission to their mandate, and the credibility of the sources and information provided.



The communication sent IS NOT LEGALLY BINDING and the Government is not obliged to reply, but it does however create INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE for the Government to take action.



It is necessary to obtain CONSENT from the victims as their name will be included in said communications with Governments. The SPMHs are UNABLE TO PROVIDE PROTECTION to victims.



It is possible to send a submission to MULTIPLE SPMHs when the case of violence covers more than just one mandate. SPMHs can issue a JOINT LETTER addressing the case to the Governments or other relevant actors.

Webpage of SPMHs' communication with Governments: https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/SP/Pages/Communications.aspx.

Archive of the communications sent, to Governments, and their responses: https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/Tmsearch/TMDocuments.

GUIDELINES ON HRDs FOR DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS

THE EU GUIDELINES ON HRDs

The European Union (EU) has adopted its Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders, which define PROACTIVE POLICIES and LOCAL STRATEGIES IN SUPPORT OF HRDs for the EU Missions in third countries.

The EU Missions include EU DELEGATIONS and the EU MEMBER STATES' DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS (Embassies and Consulates) TO THIRD COUNTRIES and represent the primary point of contact between the EU and HRDs.

NATIONAL GUIDELINES

The Netherlands, Finland, Norway, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom have identified the support of HRDs as a PRIORITY OF THEIR FOREIGN POLICY RELATED TO HUMAN RIGHTS.

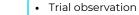
These countries have developed own national guidelines with the aim to provide ASSISTANCE and PROTECTION to HRDs efficiently and effectively. The national guidelines apply to the COUNTRIES' DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS TO THIRD COUNTRIES.

GUIDELINES SUPPORTING HRDs

TYPES OF SUPPORT PROVIDED

EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders





- Advocacy (raising individual cases in bilateral and multilateral meetings, issuing public statements)
- Maintaining constant contact with HRDs, periodically reporting on their situation
- Assisting the issuing of humanitarian visa (based on the initiative of EU Member States)

Dutch Action Plan for Human Rights Defenders





- Advocacy (raising cases in multilateral meetings, issuing public statements)
- Maintaining regular contacts with HRDs and providing them visibility
- Assisting the fast issuing of Schengen short-stay visas for HRDs at risk (Minister of Foreign Affairs)

Guidelines of the Foreign Ministry of Finland on the implementation of the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders



- Advocacy (communicating with the Government on cases of HRDs at risk)
- Regular monitoring and reporting on the situation of HRDs
- Financial support to HRDs and NGOs through Local Cooperation Funds



Norway's Efforts to Support Human Rights Defenders





- Formal meetings with the Government or official statements in cases of violations against HRDs
- Use of media to show support and provide visibility to HRDs
- Financial support or practical assistance for capacity-building trainings and other activities, and for temporary relocation of HRDs at risk
- Exceptionally assisting HRDs at risk in the asylum process to Norway

Swiss Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders





- Trial observation and prison visit
- Advocacy (calling for respect of international law, issuing public statements on individual cases)
- Meeting HRDs in person, monitoring and periodically reporting on their situation
- Supporting psychosocial well-being measures, providing exceptional temporary protection in Embassies' buildings
- Assisting in visa process (for attending UN events in Geneva and for HRDs at risk)

UK Support for Human Rights Defenders





- Trial observation and prison visit
- Advocacy (raising individual cases with Government and UK companies, when involved, and issuing public statements)
- Maintaining regular contacts with HRDs and providing them visibility
- Connecting HRDs to NGOs able to provide emergency assistance
- Financial support to local CSOs and NGOs

ADDITIONAL PROTECTION MECHANISMS FOR HRDs AT RISK





The Protection Plan is a support mechanism for HRDs at risk in Asia that provides timely and efficient assistance in the form of temporary relocation and through other types of urgent assistance.

It also provides support for trial observation missions. The assistance offered by FORUM-ASIA under the Protection Plan is temporary in nature.

More information on the types of assistance provided, limits and criteria to apply is available at: https://www.forum-asia.org/?p=7302.





Urgent Action Fund for women's human rights Asia & Pacific (UAF A&P) provides support to WHRDs and non-binary HRDs facing immediate risks through a rapid response mechanism consisting of a fund aimed at fostering their resilience.

It also supports advocacy-related activities when opportunities emerge to set new legal or policy precedents.

To learn more about the application requirements and process, please consult: https://www.uafanp.org/rapid-response-grant-making.





ProtectDefenders.eu is the EU's mechanism established to protect HRDs at risk from all over the world, and is led by a consortium of 12 NGOs including FORUM-ASIA.

The main type of support offered is a 24/7 helpline for HRDs facing immediate risk, that can be reached via phone or Skype call, or secure web form. ProtectDefenders.eu provides also emergency and temporary relocation grants.

More information about the types of support offered is available at: https://www.protectdefenders.eu/en/supporting-defenders.html.





Freedom House provides emergency financial assistance to HRDs and CSOs under threat or attack; CSOs can also require rapid response advocacy and resiliency grants.

The same measures, with additional security assistance, are offered to HRDs and CSOs facing threat or attack due to their work for LGBTIQ rights.

More information is available at: https://freedomhouse.org/program/emergency-assistance-programs.



DIRECTORY OF OTHER PROTECTION MEASURES FOR HRDs



There are many emergency funds, fellowships and training opportunities for HRDs. In particular, HRDs can apply for fellowships to temporarily relocate abroad to seek rest and respite, while enhancing their skills and network.

This kind of opportunities include the Protective Fellowship Scheme of the Centre for Applied Human Rights (University of York), and the Shelter City Initiative by the Dutch NGO Justice and Peace.

More information at: https://www.humanrightsfirst.org/sites/default/files/HRF-Defenders-Resources.pdf.



TOOLS AND RESOURCES FOR HRDs SECURITY



DIGITAL SECURITY HELPLINE



Access Now has designed the Digital Security Helpline to improve the digital security of individuals and organisations, especially when at risk.

Digitals Security Helpline is available 24/7 and can be reached in a secure way. The tool includes rapid-response emergency assistance in case of digital attack, recommendations, risk assessment and educational materials

Here is the link to the Access Now website: https://www.accessnow.org/help/.





After responding to few online questions on digital security issues or concerns, Security Planner will provide tailored recommendations to step up your online safety.

Visit Security Planner website at: https://www.securityplanner.org/#/.



RED PANIC BUTTON APP



To improve your physical security in a situation of risk, it might be useful to install Red Panic button app on your mobile phone. When activated, Red Panic button will automatically send an SMS and email with your GPS coordinates to the selected emergency contacts.

To download and for more information about Red Panic button, please consult: http://redpanicbutton.com/.



CIVICUS PROTEST RESILIENCE TOOLKIT



This online toolkit provided by CIVICUS shares good practices and other useful materials to help exercising fully and securely the right to freedom of peaceful assembly.

Check CIVICUS resilience toolkit at: https://civicus.org/protest-resilience-toolkit/.



HOLISTIC SECURITY MANUAL



Tactical Tech has developed 'Holistic Security', a strategy manual to help HRDs maintain their "well-being in action". The holistic approach integrates self-care, well-being, digital security, and security management practices.

The Holistic Manual is available at: https://holistic-security.tacticaltech.org/index.html.





FORUM-ASIA has recently renewed its HRDs portal, featuring some key normative on HRDs, including the EU and national guidelines for their protection, as well as other useful resource materials.

This portal also contains a record of violations committed against HRDs in Asia, and a case submission function, allowing visitors to report cases of violations against HRDs.

Please visit FORUM-ASIA HRD Portal at: https://asianhrds.forum-asia.org/.

USEFUL LINKS AND TIPS

Security is an important aspect when doing work as defenders. Most of the HRDs are aware about security practices, but often times it is overlooked. Below are some examples of security practices that you can apply on a daily basis.



- Avoid carrying physical copy of documents containing sensitive information, unless it is really necessary.
- Equip yourself/your office with necessary security equipment such as padlocks, CCTV, security guard.
- Take notice of visitors visiting your office/meetings/activities.

 Make sure that all visitors are registered.

- Be aware of what is happening around you; make sure that you know the location of nearby important places such as hospitals and police stations. Never fully trust strangers that you just met at a public place.
- Have emergency contact number(s) ready on your mobile devices and make it easy to access; or memorise the number if possible.
- Prior to conducting activity or travel, always conduct a risk assessment to map the potential risk. This will enable you to respond in case of an emergency or an incident.



Password is the key to all your digital information and online accounts. Make sure that you have a strong password and do not use the same password for all your accounts in different websites/platforms. A strong password comprises of at least 15 characters, has combination of upper and lower case letters, number, and symbols.

Use a password management tool to easily manage your passwords. For example, KeePass (https://keepass.info/) is a good tool that you can consider to use.

Use a secure communication channel (end-to-end encryption). Some of the recommended communication tools for HRDs are (available in both desktop and mobile – android/apple):

Email:
Protonmail
(https://protonmail.com/),
Tutanota
(https://tutanota.com/),

Messaging:
Signal
(https://signal.org/),
Wire
(https://wire.com/en/).

Always use Virtual Private
Network (VPN) if possible, or use
VPN when you are accessing
sensitive information. Some
recommended free VPN
providers are:

WindScribe (https://windscribe.com/),

RiseUp VPN (https://riseup.net/en/vpn),

Tunnel Bear (https://www.tunnelbear.com/).

Categorise the data stored in your device and determine its level of sensitivity.

Always backup your data periodically. When it comes to sensitive information, you can encrypt your data and set a strong password to it.

Recommended data encryption application (offline):

VeraCrypt (https://www.veracrypt.fr/en/Beginner%27s%20Tutorial.html).

Use a secure platform for your online conference and group call:

Jitsi (https://meet.jit.si/),
BlueJeans (https://www.bluejeans.com/).

ABOUT FORUM-ASIA

The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) is the largest membership-based human rights and development organisation in Asia with a network of 81 members in 21 countries across the region. FORUM-ASIA works to promote and protect all human rights for all, including the right to development, through collaboration and cooperation among human rights organisations and defenders in Asia and beyond. FORUM-ASIA seeks to strengthen international solidarity in partnership with organisations and networks in the global South.

FORUM-ASIA was founded in 1991, and established its Secretariat in Bangkok in 1992. Since then, other offices have been opened in Geneva, Jakarta, and Kathmandu. FORUM-ASIA has consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC Status) and a consultative relationship with the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR).

This publication has been made possible with the generous support of the European Union, and the European Instrument for Democracy & Human Rights. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of FORUM-ASIA and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the donors.



