

To: **All Member States of the United Nations General Assembly**

24 November 2015

SUPPORT THE DRAFT RESOLUTION ON RECOGNIZING THE ROLE OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS AND THE NEED FOR THEIR PROTECTION

Excellencies,

We write to you as a group of human rights defenders and civil society organizations located across the world working at national, regional and international levels. We write in regard to the draft resolution entitled "[Recognizing the role of human rights defenders and the need for their protection](#)" currently being advanced in the UN General Assembly's Third Committee, and due to be adopted on Wednesday 25 November 2015.

We urge your government to support the abovementioned resolution and to reject amendments, tabled by the African Group, China and Iran, designed to weaken the text.¹

Among other things, the proposed amendments remove references to the legitimacy of the work of human rights defenders, delete or weaken language regarding the need for their protection, and delete whole paragraphs related to the need to combat impunity for violations and abuses against defenders and the need to ensure adequate procedural safeguards in judicial proceedings. A call for the release of defenders detained or imprisoned in violation of international human rights law, for exercising their human rights and fundamental freedoms, is also proposed for deletion. In addition, the amendments introduce notions that States should only support and enable their work 'as appropriate', rather than in accordance with the [UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders](#) and other obligations arising under international human rights law

Human rights defenders make a vital contribution to the promotion and respect for human rights, democratic processes, securing and maintaining peace and security, and advancing development in our countries. However, in doing this work, defenders often face a range of violations and abuses at the hands of State and non-State actors. States must acknowledge the role of defenders and the specific risks they face, and commit to ensuring their protection.

Seventeen years ago, all States agreed to the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, including State obligations to protect all human rights defenders working on all human rights. This commitment has been reiterated and built upon in subsequent General Assembly and Human Rights Council resolutions. We are therefore extremely concerned to hear that the abovementioned delegations have objected to several core elements of the draft resolution.

¹ The amendments are contained in UN documents A/C.3/70/L.69 - L.107, available [here](#).

Based on consultations with over 500 defenders from 111 States, the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders found that in the vast majority of States the situation for human rights defenders is deteriorating in law and in practice. He concluded that a lack of awareness regarding their vital and legitimate work, combined with a lack of political commitment and weak institutional arrangements for their protection, is placing them, their organisations and families at elevated risk.²

The resolution as drafted reflects a number of these findings and makes a series of recommendations for States and other actors. Importantly, this year's text includes a key focus on the implementation of the resolution itself. This will hopefully prompt States and other actors to move beyond rhetoric in addressing the challenges faced by human rights defenders and take action to ensure the implementation of the calls in the resolution.

We urge all States to live up to their human rights commitments by supporting this resolution, by rejecting amendments designed to weaken it, and by taking concrete steps to protect human rights defenders.

Sincerely,

Acción Solidaria on HIV/Aids
Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights
Action Trans-Crime Uganda
ActionAid International
ADC Memorial
African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies
Alkarama Foundation
Alliance for Democracy in Laos
Amnesty International
Analytical Center for Interethnic Cooperation and Consultations
ARTICLE 19
Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development
Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)
Asian Legal Resource Centre
Assistance Mission for Africa (AMA)
Association des Victimes Parents et Amis du 28 Septembre 2009 (AVIPA)
Association for the Prevention of Torture (APT)
Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID)
Association of World Citizens
Association UMDPL

² Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders to the General Assembly, available [here](#).

Bahrain Centre for human rights
Balance Mexico
Belarus Watch
British Humanist Association
Brot für die Welt
Business & Human Rights Resource Centre
Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS)
Cambodian Center for Human Rights
CELS
Center for Civil Liberties
Center for Inquiry
Centre for Civil and Political Rights
Centre for Civil Liberties
Centre for Human Rights and Development
Centre for the Development of Democracy and Human Rights
Child Rights Connect (formerly Le Groupe des ONG pour la Convention Relative aux Droits de L'Enfant)
Child Rights International Network
CIVICUS
Civil Rights Defenders
CIVILIS Human Rights
Coalition Ivoirienne des Défenseurs des Droits Humains
Comité de ONG de América Latina y el Caribe -CoNGO- sobre la Condición de la Mujer -CSW-
Consortio para el Diálogo Parlamentario Mx
Desaparecidos - Philippines
Diaspora Action Australia
EarthRights International
Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights
Egyptian Organization for Human Rights
Equality Myanmar
Equidad de Género, Ciudadanía, Trabajo y Familia
FIDH, within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders
Fortress of Hope Africa
Foundation HELP
Freedom House
Frente de Mujeres Defensoras de la Pachamama - Ecuador
Front Line Defenders
Fundacion Arcoiris por el Respeto a la Diversidad Sexual
Geneva for Human Rights
Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect
Global Human Rights Group
Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Global Justice Center
Green Advocates
Gulf Center for Human Rights
Health and Human Rights Info
Helsinki Citizens' Assembly - Vanadzor
Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia
Helsinki Committee of Armenia
HRM "Bir Duino-Kyrgyzstan"
Human Rights Campaign in China
Human Rights Concern - Eritrea
Human Rights Defenders Alert - India
Human Rights House Foundation (HRHF)
Human Rights Information Center
Human Rights Watch (HRW)
humanrights.ch
Hustisya – Philippines
IDSN
International Center for Justice and Human Rights
International Center for Not-for-Profit Law
International Commission of Jurists Victoria
International Council of AIDS Service Organizations (ICASO)
International Helsinki Association for Human Rights
International Justice Project
International Justice Resource Center
International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR)
International Partnership for Human Rights
International Platform against Impunity
International Refugee Rights Initiative
International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT)
International Service for Human Rights
International Women's Development Agency
International Women's Health Coalition
International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific (IWRAP Asia Pacific)
International Youth Human Rights Movement (YHRM)
Ipas
Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights
Just Associates (JASS)
Justice and Peace Netherlands
Justice Connect
Karapatan Alliance for the Advancement for People's Rights - Philippines
Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law

Lawyers Committee for Human Rights (YUCOM)
Legal-informational Centre for NGOs - Slovenia
Legal Resources Centre (LRC)
LGBT Human Rights NASH MIR Center
Ligue des Électeurs - DRC
Loretto Community
Malaysian Physicians for Social Responsibility
MOLI - Burundi
Moscow Helsinki Group
Moscow regional Public Charity Foundation "Social Partnership"
National Association of Community Legal Centres - Australia
Nazra for Feminist Studies
Netherlands Helsinki Committee
Norwegian Human Rights Fund (NHRF)
OutRight Action International
Peace Brigades International
People's Watch
Promo LEX
Protection International
Public Foundation Notabene
Public Information and Need of Knowledge NGO
Public Interest Advocacy Centre
Public Union of Democracy and Human Rights Resource Centre
Public Verdict Foundation
Queensland Association of Independent Legal Services Inc
Refugee Council of Australia
Sayoni
Sexuality Policy Watch
Society of Ex-detainees Against Detention and Arrests - Philippines
Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia (SMNE)
Sri Lanka Brief
Swiss Helsinki Committee
Tanggol Bayi (Defend Women) - Philippines
The Barys Zvozkau Belarusian Human Rights House
The Czech Helsinki Committee
The International Humanist and Ethical Union
The Kosova Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims (KRCT)
The Norwegian Human Rights Fund
The Tibet Bureau
TRIAL (Track Impunity Always)
Unión Latinoamericana de Mujeres ULAM

United Nations Association - UK
Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation
Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights
West African Human Rights Defenders Network
World Federalist Movement - Institute for Global Policy (WFM-IGP)
Women Peace Network-Arakan
Women Won't Wait Campaign
Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights (WGNRR)
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
Women's Resource Center
World Movement for Democracy
World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders
World Uyghur Congress
Yemen Organization for Defending Rights & Democratic Freedoms
Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights