

24 February 2020

To: UN Member States

Re: Support consensus renewal of the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders

Human rights defenders are people who act with humanity, serve humanity and who contribute to and bring out the best in humanity. They are key to our daily lives - they work so our governments are more transparent and accountable, our environment cleaner and safer, our schools and workplaces fairer, and our futures more sustainable. As human rights defenders confront power, privilege and prejudice, they frequently face a wide range of risks and threats, including against their organisations and their families, friends and loved ones.

Despite their vital contribution, both some governments and non-State actors are still seeking to silence defenders as they expose injustices and demand accountability for all.

The mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders is integral to their protection and recognition, globally. It gathers and responds to information on the situation of defenders around the world, engages constructively with governments and non-State actors and provides expert recommendations to promote the effective implementation of the Declaration on human rights defenders ('the Declaration').

In 2019, the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly supported the vital work of defenders. The Human Rights Council recognised the critical role of environmental human rights defenders in protecting natural ecosystems, addressing climate change, attaining the sustainable development goals (SDGs). The General Assembly passed by consensus a resolution focusing on implementation of the Declaration and some key elements of protection policy; the resolution also attracted a record number of co-sponsors.

At the 43rd session of the Council, States will consider a resolution extending the mandate of the Special Rapporteur for three years. This is a key opportunity for States and the Council to demonstrate their support and recognition for the indispensable role defenders play to ensure that all people enjoy freedom, dignity, justice and equality.

Civil society organisations* from across the world are calling on all States to support the extension of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur by:

- Participating positively in the negotiations on the resolution,
- Presenting early co-sponsorship of the text,
- Resisting any attempts to dilute the mandate or State obligations, and
- Supporting consensus renewal of the mandate.

Sincerely,

1. International Service For Human Rights (ISHR)
2. Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD)
3. Sudanese Development Initiative
4. Partnership for Justice- Nigeria
5. Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain
6. European Center for Democracy and Human Rights

7. Polish Institute for Human Rights and Business
8. Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights
9. Centro de Justicia y Paz - Cepaz
10. World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)
11. International Commission of Jurists (ICJ)
12. Vietnam Committee on Human Rights (VCHR)
13. Business & Human Rights Resource Centre
14. Coordination des Associations et des Particuliers pour la Liberté de Conscience - EU
15. Article 19
16. The Southern Africa Human Rights Defenders Network
17. Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative
18. DefendDefenders (East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project)
19. The International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association - ILGA World
20. Réseau Ouest Africain des Défenseurs des Droits Humains
21. Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies
22. Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)
23. Global Witness
24. Association for Advancement of Legal Right
25. Emony Yefwe International - Kenya
26. International Centre for Ethnic Studies- Sri Lanka
27. IFEX
28. Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada
29. Peace Brigades International
30. MENA Rights Group
31. Brot für die Welt
32. child rights connect
33. Amnesty International
34. Coalition Ivoirienne des Défenseurs des Droits Humains (CIDDH)
35. Coalition Burkinabé des Défenseurs des Droits Humains (CBDDH)
36. Dominicans for Justice and Peace
37. UPR-Info
38. International Work Group on Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA)
39. Coalition Malienne des Défenseurs des Droits Humains (COMADDH)
40. Réseau Ouest Africain des Défenseurs des Droits Humains
41. Seguridad en Democracia (SEDEM)
42. The ICCA Consortium
43. Natural Justice
44. URG (Universal Rights Group)
45. World Assembly of Youth (WAY)
46. Forest Peoples Programme
47. The Swedish Society for Nature Conservation
48. Freedom House
49. UIA-IROL (the Institute for the Rule of Law of the International Association of Lawyers)
50. FIDH
51. Rights and Accountability in Development (RAID)
52. Publish What You Pay UK
53. IMPACT
54. Publish What You Pay Australia
55. Transparency International – Initiative Madagascar
56. Witness Radio Uganda
57. Le comité de solidarité avec les victimes de violations des Droits Humains en Mauritanie
58. Protection International

59. Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
60. In Difesa Di, per i diritti umani e chi li difende - Italy
61. Terra Nuova - Italy
62. COSPE - Italy
63. The United Methodist Church – General Board of Church and Society
64. The Association for Progressive Communications (APC)
65. Save the Children
66. International Accountability Project
67. The United Church of Canada
68. Gender Action
69. Transparency Coalition for Extractive Industries - Yemen (TCEI)
70. The Liberty Community Foundation (Kazakhstan)
71. KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives
72. EarthRights International
73. Hannah youth organization (Iraq)
74. Humanium
75. Transparency International