

Letter to Member States of the UN Human Rights Council

Re: Support consensus renewal of the mandate of Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders

7 March 2017

Your Excellency,

The undersigned 93 civil society organisations, coming from all regions, urge your delegation to **support the renewal of the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders.**

The work of human rights defenders is vital to promoting human rights, upholding the rule of law, and achieving sustainable and inclusive development. Despite this critical role, the Special Rapporteur notes that defenders are under ‘unprecedented attack’ with ‘the number killed around the world continuously rising’.

In turn, the mandate of the Special Rapporteur is key to provide visibility of the situation of defenders and highlight the need for their protection. Since the creation of the mandate in 2000, successive mandate holders have made concrete contributions to the protection of those defending human rights and the dissemination and implementation of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. The mandate has also made significant contributions to acknowledging gender specific attacks targeting women human rights defenders and the need to develop intersectional responses.

During the Human Rights Council’s 34th session, States are **considering a resolution extending the mandate for a further three years.** The proposed renewal of the Special Rapporteur’s mandate provides a key opportunity for the HRC to strengthen the recognition of the crucial role defenders play in our societies, and towards the creation of a fair, just and equal world.

We call upon all States to show their commitment to human rights, peace and sustainable development through strong and unconditional support for the renewal of the mandate. The establishment of the mandate in 2000, and all its extensions, have always enjoyed consensus in the Commission on Human Rights and the Human Rights Council.

Such strong support will lay the basis – in this resolution and the future work of the HRC, the General Assembly and the Special Rapporteur – to further strengthen the protection of defenders.

Assuming the extension of the mandate, the Special Rapporteur has foreshadowed a range of much needed and important initiatives, including expert technical assistance, to support States to ensure the full and effective implementation of human rights defender related resolutions and recommendations at the national level.

We therefore urge your delegation to support the extension of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur by participating positively in the negotiations on the resolution, and in time co-sponsor the text.

Civil society and human rights defenders around the world look to the HRC and its Member States for support and protection, and we hope your delegation will stand with us.

Yours sincerely,

1. International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)
2. Africa Network for Environment and Economic Justice (ANEEJ), Nigeria
3. African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies (ACDHRS),
4. Alkarama Foundation
5. Amnesty International, International
6. Article 19, International

7. Association for Advancement of Legal Right , Hong Kong
8. Association for Progressive Communications (APC), International
9. Association for promotion sustainable development, India
10. AVAM - muva eej NGO, Mongolia
11. Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID), Global
12. Both ENDS, Netherlands
13. Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, International
14. CAN Pakistan/ Search For Justice, Pakistan
15. Canada Tibet Committee, Canada
16. Center for Inquiry, United States
17. Center for International Environmental Law, United States of America
18. Centro de Análisis Forense y Ciencias Aplicadas (CAFCA), Guatemala
19. Christian Development Alternative (CDA), Bangladesh
20. CIVICUS
21. Coalition Burkinabè des Défenseurs des Droits Humains, Burkina Faso
22. Coalition Togolaise desv Défenseurs des Droits Humains , Togo
23. CODDDHD, Niger
24. Comisión Mexicana De Defensa Y Promoción De Los Derechos Humanos, Mexico
25. Conectas Direitos Humanos, Brazil
26. DefendDefenders (East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project), Uganda
27. Earth and Human Rights of Mato Grosso, Brazil, Brasil
28. East Timor and Indonesia Action Network (ETAN), USA
29. Edmund Rice International, International
30. Environmental Management for Livelihood Improvement Bwaise Facility (EMLI), Uganda
31. Euipo de Estudios Comunitarios y Acción Psicosocial, Guatemala
32. Evt sain khursh Foundation , Mongolia
33. EXCUBITUS - Derechos Humanos en Educacion, Venezuela
34. Executive Director, Argentina
35. Facilitate Global, England
36. FIDH, in the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, France
37. Freedom House, United States
38. Frente de Mujeres Defensoras de la Pachamama - Ecuador, Ecuador
39. Front Line Defenders, International
40. Global Initiative for Economic, Social & Cultural Rights,
41. Global Witness, International
42. Heartland Alliance Global Initiatives for Human Rights, Argentina
43. Help & Shelter, Guyana
44. Human Concern, Inc/HUCON, Liberia
45. Human Rights First, United States
46. Human Rights House Foundation, Geneva
47. Human Rights Mouvement "Bir Duino-Kyrgyzstan", Kyrgyzstan
48. Human Rights Watch, International
49. Iniciativa Mesoamericana de Mujeres Defensoras de Derechos Humanos (IM-Defensoras), Región Mesoamericana
50. Instituto Venezolano de Estudios Sociales y Politicos (INVESP), Venezuela
51. International Accountability Project, International
52. International Alliance on Natural Resources in Africa, South Africa/International
53. International Commission of Jurists, International
54. International Humanist and Ethical Union, Belgium
55. International Rivers, International
56. International Women's Development Agency, Australia
57. Ireeduin Bosgo NGO, MONGOLIA
58. Convergencia por los Derechos Humanos, Guatemala
59. JASS (Just Associates)
60. Justiça Global, Brazil
61. Justice Connect, Australia
62. Justice for All/Burma Task Force, USA
63. Labour, Health and Human Rights Development Centree, Nigeria
64. Mini Global Hetavad Skills Networks, Nigeria
65. MiningWatch Canada, Canada
66. Mongolian Women's Employment Supporting Federation, Mongolia
67. Muslims for Human Rights (MUHURI), Kenya
68. Omega Research Foundation, United Kingdom
69. One World Platform, Bosnia Herzegovina
70. Oyu Tolgoi Watch, Mongolia
71. Partnership For Justice Nigeria, Nigeria
72. Peace Brigades International, International

73. Plataforma Colombiana De Derechos Humanos Democracia y Desarrollo, Colombia
74. Plataforma Internacional contra la Impunidad, Central America
75. Proyecto de Derechos Económicos, Sociales y Culturales (ProDESC), Mexico
76. Réseau Ouest Africain des Défenseurs des Droits Humains/West African HumanRights defendersNetwork, Togo
77. RFSL, the Swedish Federation for LGBTQ Rights, Sweden
78. Rivers without Boundaries International Coalition, International
79. Rivers without Boundaries Mongolia, Mongolia
80. Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights, United States
81. Salesian Missions, International
82. Seguridad en Democracia (SEDEM), Guatemala
83. Social Justice Connection, Canada
84. Unidad de Protección a Defensoras y Defensores de Derechos Humanos - Guatemala, Guatemala
85. Union Internationale des Avocats (UIA - International Association of Lawyers), International
86. Unión Latinoamericana de Mujeres - ULAM, Perú
87. Unión Nacional de Instituciones para el Trabajo de Acción Social-UNITAS, Bolivia
88. Urgewald, Germany
89. We Women Lanka, Sri Lanka
90. World Assembly of Youth, Malaysia
91. World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), in the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, International
92. Yemen organization for Defending Rights & Democratic Freedoms, Yemen
93. Zo Indigenous Forum, India