

WOMEN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS ADVOCACY WEEK

BIOGRAPHIES 2025



 International Service
for Human Rights

 AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL

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DEFENDERS

 IM-DEFENSORAS

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 URGENT
ACTION
FUND
FOR FEMINIST ACTIVISM



WOMEN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS
INTERNATIONAL COALITION

REGIONAL COALITION
OF WHRDs | in the
Middle East
and
North Africa

Q'EQCHI' COUNCIL , GUATEMALA

MARÍA JOSEFINA CAAL XOL



María Josefina Caal Xol is a Q'eqchi' Mayan woman, a leader and human rights defender, and a representative of the Cahabón resistance in Guatemala. Trained as a bilingual primary school teacher, María served as councillor of the Cahabón Municipality (2020-2024). She is a member of the board of directors of the Cahabón resistance and a member of the Q'eqchi' Council for the Defense of the Territory. María won a prize for environmental activism at the Canarias International Film Festival in 2023 and was featured in the documentary 'Dos Ríos'. She is the sister of Bernardo Caal, an environmental activist and former political prisoner.

EGYPT

WAFEE ASHRY



Wafaa Ashry is a Nubian human rights defender from Egypt, with over 25 years of experience working on women's rights and the rights of the Nubian community. She has extensive expertise in grassroots advocacy, community organising, and campaign development. She also works on gender justice and sexual minority rights, and currently leads outreach and mobilisation efforts within a political organisation. She believes in the power of collective action and is committed to amplifying the voices of marginalised communities through cultural and social resistance.

PORGERA RED WAR (RIVER) WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION, PAPUA NEW GUINEA

CRESSIDA KUALA



Cressida Kuala is an Indigenous Ipili-Porgera Woman who is the voice of the voiceless, the minority, and the vulnerable populations of Ipili Indigenous women, young girls, youths, disabled people, children, LGBTQIA people, and elderly people, who suffered non-economic loss and damage in the communities affected by the Porgera Gold Mine. She lives in a small gold mining town in the Highlands Region of Porgera District in the Enga Province of Papua New Guinea. In 2011, Cressida founded the Porgera Red Wara (River) Women's Association, and she started speaking out about issues such as environmental degradation, chemical waste, pollution, expropriation of land, and the impact on the local community.

BAGAICHA SOCIAL CENTRE, INDIA

DEEPTI MARY MINJ



Deepti Mary Minj is a researcher at Bagaicha Social Centre, Ranchi, where she works on the project 'Justice in Mining', to investigate the consequences of mining on the affected communities. She holds an MPhil from the University of Cambridge, where she focused on the social and environmental impacts of the Netarhat Field Firing Range, and a Master's in Development and Labour Studies from Jawaharlal Nehru University. As an Indigenous woman herself, she is passionate about the issues of Indigenous peoples and community rights. She researches and organises communities around the issues of forest and land claiming, climate justice, Indigenous rights to forests, and cultural preservation.

KARAKALPAKSTAN/UZBEKISTAN

GULYA



Gulya is a Karakalpak from Karakalpakstan, with a background in accounting and finance, now residing in a Western country. In 2022, when Uzbekistan moved to strip her homeland of its sovereignty, the Karakalpak people raised their voices through media, calls, and letters to the government of Uzbekistan, only to be met with silence. A peaceful protest was organised, but it was brutally suppressed with military-grade weapons. Despite her discomfort with public speaking, she started speaking out. Her first speech at George Washington University marked the beginning of her advocacy, followed by addresses at the OSCE/ODIHR Conference and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty.

NATIONAL NETWORK OF WOMEN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS, MEXICO

ALEIDA ALEJANDRA QUINTANA ORDAZ



Aleida Alejandra Quintana Ordaz is the general coordinator of the National Network of Women Human Rights Defenders in Mexico, a member of the Mesoamerican Initiative of Women Human Rights Defenders. She is a feminist anthropologist and human rights defender with experience in coordinating interdisciplinary teams, analysing contexts, crime, and governance. She has provided comprehensive support to individuals, organisations, and communities at risk. She is knowledgeable about gender and feminist perspectives, human rights, and uses an intercultural, intersectional, care-based, psychosocial, and comprehensive security approach.

FREE YAKUTIA FOUNDATION, REPUBLIC OF SAKHA

SARGYLANA KONDAKOVA



Sargylana Kondakova was born and raised in a remote Arctic village in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), in northeastern Russia. She is a representative of the Yukaghirs, an ethnic minority group with a current population of 1,500. She graduated from Yakutsk State University and worked in the Faculty of Foreign Languages and the International Office, as well as serving as Dean of the branch of the University of the Arctic. In 2015, after the Crimea was annexed, she with her family moved to Melbourne (Australia). After the Russian invasion of Ukraine, she organised the NGO Free Yakutia Foundation.

GUAICUY INSTITUTE, BRAZIL

PAULA DE SOUSA CONSTANTE



Paula de Sousa Constante is the Mitigation Project Advisor at the Guaicuy Institute. She holds a Ph.D. in Economic Development from the University of Campinas and is currently a Ph.D. candidate in Latin American Integration at the University of São Paulo. She also holds a Master's degree in Contemporary Latin American Integration and a Bachelor's degree in Economic Sciences. A grassroots human rights lawyer, she is a member of the Human Rights Commission of the Brazilian Bar Association – Minas Gerais Section (OAB/MG) and an active participant in the Movimento Brazil Popular (Popular Brazil Movement).

TEMEDT, MALI

RAICHATOU



Raichatou is the vice president of TEMEDT, Association for the Consolidation of Peace, Development, Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, a non-political, secular, and mixed association. Founded in 2006, TEMEDT works in the field of human rights protection and promotion, peace-building and development, and specifically on the issue of descent-based slavery in Mali. TEMEDT's approach is to inform, train, and raise awareness on all issues relating to peace, development, and the promotion and protection of human rights in all the regions of Mali.

CORDILLERA HUMAN RIGHTS ALLIANCE, PHILIPPINES

CASSELLE TON



Casselle Ton is an Indigenous Peoples Human Rights Defender (IPHRD) from the Kankana-ey tribe of the Cordillera region in the Philippines. She currently serves as the Spokesperson for the Cordillera Human Rights Alliance, where she contributes to national and regional efforts to document human rights violations, strengthen advocacy networks, and promote Indigenous rights. Casselle has been actively engaged in human rights work since 2014, with experience spanning grassroots organising, project coordination, and public advocacy. She previously served as the focal person for the Samdhana IPHRD Grant in 2022 and has represented the Cordillera region in regional IPHRD exchanges since 2022.

LUCHA, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

JUDITH MAROY



Judith Maroy is a Congolese journalist and human rights defender from Bukavu, in the South Kivu province of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Judith began her advocacy work through LUCHA, a youth-led citizen movement demanding social justice, democratic governance, and equality. She later became a journalist with La Prunelle RDC and co-founded a local organisation advocating for the rights of women, youth, and Indigenous communities (LUCHA).

NEGEV COEXISTENCE FORUM FOR CIVIL EQUALITY, NAQABN REGION, PALESTINE

HUDA ABU OBAID



Huda Abu Obaid is the newly appointed Executive Director of the Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality (NCF), transitioning from her former role as Local Advocacy Director to lead the organisation's mission for justice and equality in the Naqab/Negev region. A passionate defender of civil and human rights, Huda brings deep experience from her work with leading Palestinian-Israeli NGOs, including Sidreh and AJEEC in the Naqab/Negev, and more recently with Gisha to protect freedom of movement for Palestinians. A recognised leader within the Naqab-Bedouin community, Huda has long been at the forefront of grassroots activism. Huda holds two undergraduate degrees and is also a graduate of multiple prestigious leadership programs.