

A Human Rights Defenders Agenda for the next United Nations Secretary-General

Human rights stand, alongside development and peace and security, as one of three pillars of the UN's work. Human rights defenders, being essential actors in the promotion and protection of human rights and the prevention of violations, should be at the core of this work. Despite this, in all regions of the world, human rights defenders face unacceptable restrictions and risks – from defamation to criminalisation, and from arbitrary detention to torture.

The next Secretary-General of the UN must urgently deal with the need to better promote and protect human rights defenders, and ensure that they can carry out their work in a safe and enabling environment. It is crucial that the new Secretary-General places human rights defenders at the heart of the UN's agenda.

The undersigned NGOs urge the next Secretary-General to embrace the following key priorities:

- Uphold the moral authority and values of the UN by speaking out strongly and consistently against attacks on defenders and restrictions on civil society space and in support of vibrant, independent civil society at the UN and at the national level. Such statements are important to show solidarity with defenders, and increase public awareness and support for their work.
- Recognise the vital role of defenders in contributing to progress on the Sustainable Development Goals and support the inclusion of human rights defenders indicators under Goal 5 on gender equality, Goal 8 on inclusive growth and decent work, Goal 10 on reduced inequality and Goal 16 on access to justice.
- Ensure that all UN staff, particularly senior staff such as resident coordinators, understand and champion the legitimate and important work of human rights defenders and provide all necessary protection and support to defenders at risk.
- Recognise that the work of human rights defenders is essential to international peace and security and that widespread and systematic attacks and restrictions on defenders may undermine international peace and security.
- Recognise that systematic attacks and restrictions on human rights defenders may be an early warning sign of more widespread gross and systematic violations and take steps to promote prevention when such signs arise, including by bringing such situations to the attention of the Security Council through Article 99 of the UN Charter.
- Designate a civil society liaison at the most senior level at the UN.
- Develop and implement strategies to ensure that human rights defenders and other civil society actors are engaged, consulted and able to meaningfully participate in and contribute to the design, implementation and evaluation of all relevant UN programmes and activities.
- Ensure that the Secretariat, including the Secretariat of the ECOSOC Committee on NGOs, takes all possible steps to support and enable civil society participation in UN bodies and processes and consistently upholds the rights to freedom of expression and association.
- Implement Human Rights Council resolution 24/24 without further delay by appointing a UN-wide senior focal point to engage with all stakeholders to promote the prevention of, protection against,

and accountability for reprisals and intimidation related to cooperation with the UN in the field of human rights.

Signatories

1. Acción Solidaria on HIV/Aids
2. ActionAid International
3. Al Khatim Adlan Centre for Enlightenment & Human Development (KACE)
4. Albanian Helsinki Committee
5. Alkarama Foundation
6. Alliance for Democracy in Laos
7. Amnesty International
8. Anti-discrimination Centre Memorial
9. Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)
10. Association Intrenationale de Soutien aux Prisonniers Politiques
11. Association of World Citizens
12. Bahrain youth society for Human Rights
13. Center for Inquiry
14. Center for Reproductive Rights
15. Centre d'études juridiques africaines (CEJA)
16. Centro Justicia y Paz - CEPAZ
17. Child Rights International Network (CRIN)
18. CIVICUS
19. CIVILIS Human Rights
20. CODEVIDA, Coalition of organizations for the rights to health and to life
21. Comisión Mexicana de Defensa y Promoción de los Derechos Humanos
22. Comité de Defensa Integral de Derechos Humanos Gobixha A.C. (CODIGO DH)
23. Community Empowerment for Progress Organization (South Sudan)
24. Community Legal Education Center (CLEC)
25. DefendDefenders (East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project)
26. Dimension Humaine
27. End Impunity Organization
28. European Centre for Democracy and Human Rights
29. Federación Nacional de Sociedades de Padres y Representantes
30. Federatie van Nederlandse Verenigingen tot Integratie Van Homoseksualiteit - COC Nederland
31. FIDH (International Federation for Human Rights)
32. Franciscans International
33. Freedom Now
34. Frente de Mujeres Defensoras de la Pachama - Ecuador
35. Function 8
36. Geneva for Human Rights - Global Training
37. Global Human Rights Clinic
38. Green Advocates
39. Gulf Centre for Human Rights

40. Hawaii Institute for Human Rights
41. Human Rights House Foundation - Geneva
42. Human Rights Watch
43. Initiatives of Change international, Caux
44. International Centre for Justice and Human Rights
45. International Commission Of Jurists
46. International Humanist and Ethical Union
47. International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA)
48. International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR)
49. International Platform against Impunity
50. International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)
51. International Women's Rights Action Watch – Asia Pacific
52. International Women's Rights Action Watch
53. International Youth Human Rights Movement (YHRM)
54. Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights
55. Justice and Peace Netherlands
56. Justice for All/Burma Task Force
57. Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law
58. Legal and Human Rights Centre
59. Nazra for Feminist Studies
60. Nonviolent Peaceforce
61. OutRight
62. Oyu Tolgoi Watch
63. Peace Brigades International
64. Polish Institute for Human Rights and Business
65. Robinson Community Development Ministries/International Full Gospel Fellowship
66. Shia Rights Watch Inc
67. Society for Threatened Peoples
68. The Egyptian Organization for Human Rights
69. Think Centre
70. Unidad de Protección a Defensoras y Defensores de Derechos Humanos - Guatemala
71. Union Latinoamericana de Mujeres - ULAM
72. Unión Patriótica de Cuba
73. Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights
74. Vivat International
75. Witness
76. Woman and Development
77. World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) - in the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders
78. World Uyghur Congress
79. Yemen Organization For Defending Rights & Democratic Freedoms
80. Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights