



Monday 16 November
16:40 to 18:00
Room XX (Building E)

Identifying the specific challenges faced by Women Human Rights Defenders and understanding their valuable role

Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) have a very strong connection to their land and territories, which they view as a source of life. Industry-related environmental damage impacts heavily on the ability of women to provide food and clean water for their families and communities. In addition, any loss of land and displacement further impedes women's ability to provide and care for their families. As a result, many women lead the defense of their lands, territories and communities. Women are more visible in standing up for their rights in many societies and, therefore, face more risks. WHRDs who challenge the interests of powerful economic actors are often subject to threats, intimidation, criminalization, stigmatization and killings.

This session will shine a spotlight on the specific challenges faced by WHRDs who work to protect their families and communities against harms relating to business activity. The discussion will highlight some practices that WHRDs have found useful to defend their land and rights. The session offers a great opportunity to raise awareness among States, businesses and human rights mechanisms about the role that WHRDs play in this area and the specific needs of WHRDs to carry out their legitimate activities in a safe way.

Some key topics to be addressed by the speakers:

- Specific forms of violence, including gender-based violence, faced by WHRDs when they stand up to corporations contributing to human rights abuses.
- How processes of criminalization and baseless prosecutions, which often accompany these struggles, specifically impact on WHRDs.
- Exploring whether WHRDs are more exposed to prejudice, exclusion and public repudiation when they become active in their communities and involved in this type of work.
- The greater risk of violence and marginalization of certain groups of WHRDs, such as indigenous WHRDs.
- The situation facing WHRDs accused of preventing development in their communities when they confront harmful business practices, and the gender-specific consequences of these accusations.
- The challenges faced by WHRDs to participate in consultations with affected communities and other decision-making processes.
- The obstacles that WHRD face in accessing accountability and redress mechanisms for abuses committed by non-state actors.
- Practices that WHDRs have found useful in combating any of the above challenges.
- Measures that companies, Governments and other organizations should take to assist the work of WHRDs and ensure their protection.

Moderator:

Macu Barcia, Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID)

Panel:

- Michael K. Addo, UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights
- Wendy Betts, Director "eyeWitness" app, International Bar Association
- Bonita Meyerfeld, the Center for Applied Legal Studies
- María Isabel Jimenez Salinas, Asamblea Popular del Pueblo Juchiteco de Oaxaca, Mexico
- Lina Solano Ortiz, Sociologist and Founder - Ecuadorian women's organisation "Frente de Mujeres Defensoras de la Pachamama"

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