**Mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders**

***Questionnaire for  
civil society organisations (CSOs), National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) and   
human rights defenders,   
by the***

***UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders***

**Challenges faced by women human rights defenders (WHRDs) working in conflict, post-conflict or crisis-affected settings**

The next report of the Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders to the General Assembly will focus on the challenges faced by women human rights defenders (WHRDs) working in conflict, post-conflict or crisis-affected settings. The Special Rapporteur is seeking to identify the specific and intersectional risks faced by WHRDs in these contexts, barriers they face in working freely, protection strategies they use to mitigate risk and recommendations for how international actors, including the UN, can make their work safer.

By women human rights defenders, the Special Rapporteur means all women and girls working on any human rights issue ("women defenders" and "girl defenders"), and any person who works to promote women’s rights and rights related to gender equality.[[1]](#footnote-1) This includes lesbian, gay, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) activists, as issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity are part of achieving gender equality. It also includes civil society actors working on the above who may not self-identify as human rights defenders, which could include, for example, journalists, health workers, environmental activists, peacebuilders, private actors, development and humanitarian actors, etc.

The report will build on the report of her predecessor to the Human Rights Council in 2020 ([A/HRC/43/51](https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/43/51)) on the situation of human rights defenders in conflict and post-conflict settings, and will also draw on the work done by the Secretary General in his annual reports on Women, Peace and Security (most recently [S/2022/740](https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-documents/document/s-2022-740.php)) presented to the Security Council.

The questionnaire is available on OHCHR website in English (original language) as well as in French and Spanish, Russian and Arabic (unofficial translations): <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-human-rights-defenders>. Please limit your responses to the questionnaire to a maximum of 2000 words and send them to the following email address: hrc-sr-defenders@un.org.

All contributions received will be published in the aforementioned website.

Deadline for submissions: **22 May 2023**

**Questionnaire**

In preparation for this report, the Special Rapporteur would be grateful to receive responses to the following questions:

1. Are you doing human rights work in a conflict, post-conflict or crisis-affected setting? Please describe the conflict context in which you work.

2. What challenges does the conflict, post-conflict or crisis situation present to your work as an activist? (This may include, for example, criminalisation, threats, harassment, sexual harassment/assault, online abuse, intimidation, disappearances, smear campaigns, office/home raids, attacks on family members, physical assault, restrictions on freedom of movement, assembly and association, killing).

3. What is the impact of your work in your view; do you believe the work you are doing, in broad terms, is contributing towards promoting and protecting human rights and/or building sustainable peace? If so, please describe how and give examples.

4. How do any of the following increase the risks you face as a WHRD working in a conflict, post-conflict or crisis-affected setting: your ethnicity, race, religion, identity, sexual orientation and gender identity, disability, gender, age, geographical location, class, social status or profession? Please give examples. If possible, also describe the gender-specific nature of attacks against WHRDs and/or their specific impact, taking into account the local context and social norms.

5. Are there particular types of work you do in this context that may increase the risk you face, for example documentation of violations; advocacy – local, national or international; supporting victims directly; being part of movements seeking accountability?

6. Have you or your colleagues been involved in, or had the opportunity to contribute to, any formal peace or political processes, from design to monitoring and implementation? If so, please outline your experiences. If not, what barriers have you faced in participating in peace processes? What steps would you recommend that would enable you to participate in the future?

7. Do WHRDs operate in a safe physical and virtual environment? What steps do you as a WHRD take to mitigate the risks that you face in your work? (Are you part of any formal or informal network that offers support when a risk escalates? Do you have measures you put in place after receiving a threat? Do you have allies in other civil society organisations, the media, the government, embassies, UN offices? Have any strategies in particular worked well?). Are there any WHRDs-specific networks and spaces in the area/country where you work?

8. What are protection gaps for women human rights defenders in the area where you work? What further protection measures would you like to see:

* from states?
* from the UN?
* from civil society?
* from your community?

In answering this question, please consider what you would need in order to continue to do your work more safely. This could relate to political support, financial support, resource support, UN-mandated support etc.

9. Have you been subjected to any intimidation or reprisals as a result of planning to interact or interacting with any UN actor or UN body, including in particular the Security Council? (This may include, for example, criminalisation, threats, harassment, sexual harassment/assault, online abuse, smear campaigns, office/home raids, attacks on family members physical assault, restrictions on freedom of movement, association and assembly, arbitrary arrest, disappearances, killing). If so, what kind of reprisal was it, for what type of interaction, and how did it affect your future engagement with the UN?

10. Have you been able to access funds and donors in general? If not, what obstacles have you been facing?

11. Do you, and WHRDs in your country in general, have access to effective remedies to human rights violations that take into account the gender-specific barriers women may face when reporting attacks and seeking justice? Are investigations of threats and attacks against WHRDs carried out promptly and exhaustively, and are they adequately prosecuted?

12. Are WHRDs denied registration/accreditation due to who they are, the collective or movement they may be part of – or not part of, and/or what they represent/work on. Are WHRDs denied legal capacity due to gender and other factors (e.g. age, disability)?

1. https://www.ohchr.org/en/women/women-human-rights-defenders [↑](#footnote-ref-1)