To: All Member States of the United Nations General Assembly

French and Arabic versions also supplied

9 December 2015

VOTE IN FAVOUR OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS RESOLUTION IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY PLENARY

Excellencies,

We are a group of human rights defenders and civil society organizations located across the world working at national, regional and international levels. We seek your clear support for the resolution entitled “Human Rights Defenders in the context of the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms” adopted by the UN General Assembly Third Committee on 25 November 2015. The resolution is due to be considered by the Plenary of the General Assembly on 17 December 2015.

We urge your government to support the abovementioned resolution when the plenary of the General Assembly considers the text.

Despite the resolution being put to a vote for the first time in its 16 year history, the adoption of the text by a clear majority of States is a welcome recognition of the need to protect those who face risks and attacks for their work to defend human rights. We congratulate and thank the 117 delegations that voted in favour of the resolution and stood with human rights defenders by resisting attempts to undermine and delegitimise their important work. We urge those delegations to maintain their supportive position during the plenary vote, and thereby demonstrate their continued commitment to protecting human rights defenders and enabling their work. We also call on all delegations who were absent during the Third Committee deliberations to vote in favour of the resolution when it is considered in the General Assembly Plenary.

We are extremely disappointed that 14 States voted against the text that a further 40 States abstained. We see both votes against the resolution and abstentions as a failure to recognize the important role of defenders and the need for their protection. We strongly urge those who abstained or voted against to support the resolution during the Plenary vote.

Human rights defenders make a vital contribution to the promotion and respect for human rights, democratic processes, securing and maintaining peace and security, and advancing development in our countries. However, in doing this work, defenders often face a range of violations and abuses at the hands of State and non-State actors. States must acknowledge the role of defenders and the specific risks they face, and commit to ensuring their protection.

Seventeen years ago, all States agreed to the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, including State obligations to protect all human rights defenders working on all human rights. This commitment
has been reiterated and built upon in subsequent General Assembly and Human Rights Council resolutions. We are therefore extremely concerned that 14 States voted against the text and that a further 40 States abstained.

We urge all States to live up to their human rights commitments by supporting this resolution during the Plenary vote, and by taking concrete steps to protect human rights defenders.

Sincerely,

Accion Solidaria on HIV/Aids
Accountability and justice for victims of the genocide of Tamil Nation in Sri Lanka
ACDHRs
Action Trans-Crime Uganda
Alkarama Foundation
All India Network of Individuals and Organizations working with National and State Human Rights Institutions (AINNI)
Alliance for Democracy in Laos
Amnesty International
Anti-discrimination Centre Memorial
Anuak Justice Council, Ethiopia/South Sudan
ARC International
ARTICLE 19
Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development
Asian Legal Resource Centre
Assistance Mission for Africa
Association for Progressive Communications (APC)
Association for the Prevention of Torture (APT)
Association of World Citizens
Austrian Solidarity for Guatemala (Guatemala Solidarität Österreich)

AWID
Bahrain Centre for Human Rights
Bahrain youth society for human rights
Battsengel
Belarus Watch
British Humanist Association
Brot fuer die Welt
Business & Human Rights Resource Centre
Bytes for All, Pakistan
Cambodian Center for Human Rights
CEFoRD-South Sudan
Center for Civil Liberties
Center for Development of International Law
Center for Egyptian Women's Legal Assistance (CEWL)
Center for Inquiry
Center for Reproductive Rights
Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL)
Centre for Civil and Political Rights
Centre for Human Rights and Development
Centre for the Development of Democracy and Human Rights
Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales (CELS)
Child Rights Connect (formerly Le Groupe des ONG pour la Convention relative aux droits de l'enfant)
Child Rights International Network CRIN
Christian Solidarity Worldwide
Church of The Brethren
Citizens for Justice and Peace
CIVICUS
Civil Rights Defenders
Civil Rights Defenders, Sweden
CIVILIS Human Rights
Coalition for the International Criminal Court
COC Netherlands
CODAP - Youth resource center on human rights
CODEVIDA, Coalition of Organizations for the rights to Health and to Life
Collectif Guatemala
Computer Aid International
Comisión Mexicana de Defensa y Promoción de los Derechos Humanos
Consortio para el Diálogo Parlamentario MX
Czech Helsinki Committee
Development Alliance
Diaspora Action Australia
East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project (EHAHRDP)
Ecology center in western Mongolia
E-Education center, Mongolia
Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights
FIDH, within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders
Foundation for Media Alternatives (FMA)
Foundation HELP
Freedom House
Freelance Journalist / Human Rights Defender
Frente de Mujeres Defensoras de la Pachamama - Ecuador
Front Line Defenders
Geneva for Human Rights
Global Bersih
Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect
Global Forum for Media Development
Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
Global Justice Center
Global meridian
Government-Citizen Partnership NGO
GreenNet
Gulf Center for Human Rights
Helsinki Citizens' Assembly -Vanadzor
Helsinki Committee of Armenia
Human Rights Campaign in China
Human Rights Concern - Eritrea
Human Rights Defenders' Alert - India
Human Rights House Foundation (HRHF)
Human Rights Information Center
Human Rights Watch
ILGA - The International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association
Inst.DEMOS
International Campaign for Human Rights in...
Iran
International Catholic Child Bureau
International Center for Justice and Human Rights
International Center for Not-for-Profit Law
International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect
International Commission of Jurists
International Commission of Jurists Victoria
International Council of AIDS Service Organizations (ICASO)
International Dalit Solidarity Network
International Helsinki Association for Human Rights
International Justice Resource Center
International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR)
International Partnership for Human Rights (IPHR)
International Platform against Impunity
International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT)
International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)
International Women's Health Coalition
International Women's Rights Action Watch
International Youth Human Rights Movement (YHRM)
Ipas
Iranian Queer Organization, IRQO
Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights
JASS (Just Associates)
Justice and Peace
Justice Connect
Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law
Kharkiv Regional Foundation "Public Alternative", Ukraine
Legal Resources Centre
Legal-Informational Centre for NGOs, Slovenia
Loretto Community
MAIN Maloca Internationale
Men's Association
Mitchell foundation-NGO,Mongolia
MonAme Research Center-NGO, Mongolia
Mongolian Gender Equality Center
Mongolian Women's Employment Supporting Federation
Nazra for Feminist Studies
Netherlands Helsinki Committee
No Peace Without Justice
One World Platform Foundation
OT Watch
OutRight Action International
Peace Brigades International
Peace Watch Switzerland
People's Watch, India
Princess center
Project on Organizing, Development, Education, and Research (PODER)
Promo LEX Association Moldova
Provea, Venezuelan Education-Action Program on Human Rights
Psychological Responsiveness NGO
Public Interest Advocacy Centre
Public Union of Democracy and Human Rights Resource Centre
Public Verdict Foundation
Queensland Association of Independent Legal Services Inc.
Red Internacional de Derechos Humanos RIDH
Refugee Council of Australia
RFSL, the Swedish Federation for LGBTQ Rights
Rivers Without Boundaries
Russian LGBT Network
Schweizer Forum für Menschenrechte und Frieden in Guatemala
Sinergia, Venezuelan Association of Civil Society Organizations
Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia (SMNE)
Sova Center for Information and Analysis
Spanish Society for IHRL
Swiss Helsinki Committee
Swiss Working Group on Colombia
The Association for Women’s Rights in Development (AWID)
The Kosova Rehabilitation Center for Torture Victims (KRCT)
The Norwegian Human Rights Fund

The Tibet Bureau
TRIAL
UNA-USA
Unidad de Protección a Defensoras y Defensores de Derechos Humanos - Guatemala (UDEFEGUA)
Unión Latinoamericana de Mujeres - ULAM
United Nations Association - UK
UNITED SIKHS
Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights
West African Human Rights Defenders' Network
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)
Women's Refugee Commission
World Federalist Movement - Institute for Global Policy
World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) - within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders
World Uyghur Congress
Yemen Organization for Defending Rights & democratic freedoms
Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN)
Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum
Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights