

## *Letter to Member States of the UN Human Rights Council*

### **Re: Support consensus renewal of the mandate of Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders**

7 March 2017

Your Excellency,

The undersigned 85 civil society organisations, coming from all regions, urge your delegation to **support the renewal of the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders.**

The work of human rights defenders is vital to promoting human rights, upholding the rule of law, and achieving sustainable and inclusive development. Despite this critical role, the Special Rapporteur notes that defenders are under ‘unprecedented attack’ with ‘the number killed around the world continuously rising’.

In turn, the mandate of the Special Rapporteur is key to provide visibility of the situation of defenders and highlight the need for their protection. Since the creation of the mandate in 2000, successive mandate holders have made concrete contributions to the protection of those defending human rights and the dissemination and implementation of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. The mandate has also made significant contributions to acknowledging gender specific attacks targeting women human rights defenders and the need to develop intersectional responses.

During the Human Rights Council’s 34<sup>th</sup> session, States are **considering a resolution extending the mandate for a further three years.** The proposed renewal of the Special Rapporteur’s mandate provides a key opportunity for the HRC to strengthen the recognition of the crucial role defenders play in our societies, and towards the creation of a fair, just and equal world.

We call upon all States to show their commitment to human rights, peace and sustainable development through strong and unconditional support for the renewal of the mandate. The establishment of the mandate in 2000, and all its extensions, have always enjoyed consensus in the Commission on Human Rights and the Human Rights Council.

Such strong support will lay the basis – in this resolution and the future work of the HRC, the General Assembly and the Special Rapporteur – to further strengthen the protection of defenders.

Assuming the extension of the mandate, the Special Rapporteur has foreshadowed a range of much needed and important initiatives, including expert technical assistance, to support States to ensure the full and effective implementation of human rights defender related resolutions and recommendations at the national level.

**We therefore urge your delegation to support the extension of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur by participating positively in the negotiations on the resolution, and in time co-sponsor the text.**

Civil society and human rights defenders around the world look to the HRC and its Member States for support and protection, and we hope your delegation will stand with us.

Yours sincerely,

International Service for Human Rights  
(ISHR)

Africa Network for Environment and  
Economic Justice (ANEJ), Nigeria

African Centre for Democracy and Human  
Rights Studies (ACDHRS),

Alkarama Foundation

Amnesty International, International

Article 19, International  
 Association for Advancement of Legal Right ,  
 Hong Kong  
 Association for Progressive Communications  
 (APC), International  
 Association for promotion sustainable  
 development, India  
 Association for Women's Rights in  
 Development (AWID), Global  
 Both ENDS, Netherlands  
 Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies,  
 International  
 CAN Pakistan/ Search For Justice, Pakistan  
 Canada Tibet Committee, Canada  
 Center for Inquiry, United States  
 Center for International Environmental Law,  
 United States of America  
 Centro de Análisis Forense y Ciencias  
 Aplicadas (CAFCA), Guatemala  
 Christian Development Alternative (CDA),  
 Bangladesh  
 CIVICUS  
 Coalition Burkinabè des Défenseurs des Droits  
 Humains, Burkina Faso  
 Coalition Togolaise desv Défenseurs des  
 Droits Humains , Togo  
 CODDDHD, Niger  
 Conectas Direitos Humanos, Brazil  
 DefendDefenders (East and Horn of Africa  
 Human Rights Defenders Project), Uganda  
 Earth and Human Rights of Mato Grosso,  
 Brazil, Brasil  
 East Timor and Indonesia Action Network  
 (ETAN), USA  
 Edmund Rice International, International  
 Environmental Management for Livelihood  
 Improvement Bwaise Facility (EMLI), Uganda  
 Euiipo de Estudios Comunitarios y Acción  
 Psicosocial, Guatemala  
 Evt sain khursh Foundation , Mongolia  
 EXCUBITUS - Derechos Humanos en  
 Educacion, Venezuela  
 Executive Director, Argentina  
 Facilitate Global, England  
 FIDH, in the framework of the Observatory for  
 the Protection of Human Rights Defenders,  
 France  
 Frente de Mujeres Defensoras de la  
 Pachamama - Ecuador, Ecuador  
 Front Line Defenders, International  
 Global Initiative for Economic, Social &  
 Cultural Rights,  
 Global Witness, International  
 Heartland Alliance Global Initiatives for  
 Human Rights, Argentina  
 Help & Shelter, Guyana  
 Human Concern, Inc/HUCON, Liberia  
 Human Rights First, United States  
 Human Rights House Foundation, Geneva  
 Human Rights Mouvement "Bir Duino-  
 Kyrgyzstan", Kyrgyzstan  
 Human Rights Watch, International  
 Iniciativa Mesoamericana de Mujeres  
 Defensoras de Derechos Humanos (IM-  
 Defensoras), Región Mesoamericana  
 Instituto Venezolano de Estudios Sociales y  
 Politicos (INVESP), Venezuela  
 International Accountability Project,  
 International  
 International Commission of Jurists,  
 International  
 International Humanist and Ethical Union,  
 Belgium  
 International Rivers, International  
 Convergencia por los Derechos Humanos,  
 Guatemala  
 JASS (Just Associates)  
 Justiça Global, Brazil  
 Justice Connect, Australia  
 Justice for All/Burma Task Force, USA  
 Labour, Health and Human Rights  
 Development Centree, Nigeria  
 Mini Global Hetavad Skills Networks, Nigeria  
 MiningWatch Canada, Canada  
 Mongolian Women's Employment Supporting  
 Federation, Mongolia  
 Muslims for Human Rights (MUHURI),  
 Kenya  
 Omega Research Foundation, United Kingdom  
 One World Platform, Bosnia Herzegovina  
 Oyu Tolgoi Watch, Mongolia  
 Partnership For Justice Nigeria, Nigeria  
 Peace Brigades International, International  
 Plataforma Colombiana De Derechos  
 Humanos Democracia y Desarrollo, Colombia  
 Plataforma Internacional contra la Impunidad,  
 Central America  
 Proyecto de Derechos Económicos, Sociales y  
 Culturales (ProDESC), Mexico  
 RFSL, the Swedish Federation for LGBTQ  
 Rights, Sweden

Rivers without Boundaries International  
Coalition, International

Rivers without Boundaries Mongolia,  
Mongolia

Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights, United  
States

Salesian Missions, International

Seguridad en Democracia (SEDEM),  
Guatemala

Social Justice Connection, Canada

Unidad de Protección a Defensoras y  
Defensores de Derechos Humanos -  
Guatemala, Guatemala

Union Internationale des Avocats (UIA -  
International Association of Lawyers),  
International

Unión Latinoamericana de Mujeres - ULAM,  
Perú

Unión Nacional de Instituciones para el  
Trabajo de Acción Social-UNITAS, Bolivia

Urgewald, Germany

We Women Lanka, Sri Lanka

World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT),  
in the framework of the Observatory for the  
Protection of Human Rights Defenders,  
International

Yemen organization for Defending Rights &  
Democratic Freedoms, Yemen

Zo Indigenous Forum, India