

[DISPATCHES]

REPORTS FROM THE
FRONT LINE

fi FRONT LINE
DEFENDERS

denis o'brien, chairman of the board of trustees



Denis O'Brien, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Front Line Defenders.

IN 2017, WE COMMISSIONED AN EXTERNAL evaluation to review the impact of our work and provide input for the discussions on our next strategic plan. We were fortunate to recruit Liam Mahony, who has a distinguished track record on the security and protection of human rights defenders, to conduct the evaluation, and I would like to thank him for the thorough and thought-provoking work.

The evaluation concludes, "Overall, Front Line Defenders' persistent, professional, efficient and warm responses to human rights defenders in their moments of greatest need have earned trust and a well deserved positive reputation."

As is reflected in the evaluation, Front Line Defenders has continued to undertake remarkable work in 2017 in support of over 2,000 human rights defenders at risk in more than 100 countries. During the course of the year, our field-based staff have met with HRDs in 40 countries including Paraguay, Malaysia, Egypt, Belarus and Mali. We also developed and ran a training workshop for HRDs working on environment, indigenous and land issues in the Americas. We delivered one-to-one digital security support to 382 HRDs and 112 human rights organisations in 40 countries and launched a ground-breaking report on LGBTI HRDs in Indonesia.

We also held another very successful Dublin Platform in October in spite of the best efforts of Hurricane Ophelia. As always, it was an honour and an inspiration to meet and listen to so many courageous and committed human rights defenders who persevere in their struggles despite the risks that they face. I would like to thank Moya Brennan and band for their fantastic musical contribution and I would also like to thank the Irish Department of Justice for its support in securing visas for human rights defenders to attend the Dublin Platform and to visit Ireland for a period of rest and recuperation throughout the year. Thanks are also due to the Department of Foreign Affairs for its ongoing support and cooperation.

I would like to place on record our thanks to all those who have supported the work of Front Line Defenders in 2017 including the fantastic help we have received from our donors. Without this generous support, Front Line Defenders would not be able to undertake its work.

We completed the transition from a Trust to a Limited Company in 2017 in order to be better able to manage a growing and more complex organization and I would like to thank LK Shields which provided pro bono legal advice for this process. We remain a registered charity (Company No. 593190; Registered Charity No. 20045241; CHY 14029). You will find our audited accounts published on our website as well as a summary in this report.

We look forward to 2018 with the organisation in good shape to meet the challenges that face us. □

Denis O'Brien,
Chairman of the Board of Trustees

what does front line defenders do?

Front Line, the International Foundation for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, is an international non-governmental organisation (NGO) registered as a charity in Ireland. It was founded in Dublin in 2001 with the specific aim of protecting human rights defenders at risk, people who work, non-violently, for any or all of the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Front Line Defenders addresses the protection needs identified by defenders themselves.

Front Line Defenders provides rapid and practical support to at-risk human rights defenders including:

- grants to pay for the practical security needs of human rights defenders;
- provision of training and development of resource materials on security and protection, including digital security;
- international advocacy on behalf of human rights defenders at immediate risk;
- visibility and campaign support to HRDs to increase their recognition and legitimacy on international, national and local levels;
- rest and respite;
- opportunities for networking and exchange between human rights defenders, including at the biennial Dublin Platform;
- the annual Front Line Defenders Award for Human Rights Defenders at Risk;
- an emergency 24 hour phone line for human rights defenders operating in Arabic, English, French, Spanish and Russian;
- temporary relocation of human rights defenders in emergency situations.

Front Line Defenders promotes the protection of human rights defenders through its support for the work of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders and other international and regional mechanisms. Front Line Defenders promotes respect for the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. Front Line Defenders has special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, partnership status with the Council of Europe and observer status with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. Front Line Defenders received the 2007 King Baudouin International Prize for Development.

On the Cover



Fatouma Harber is a HRD, teacher and blogger based in Timbuktu. When the Islamist armed groups occupied Timbuktu in 2012, she started writing articles in her blog to speak out against human rights abuses committed against civilians, and particularly violence against women. Initially, Fatouma tried to remain anonymous, but after her blog was nominated for a prize, she started to use her own name and to participate in radio and TV shows. She became well-known and she started receiving death threats.

resilience & solidarity

IMAGINE BEING A HUMAN RIGHTS defender in Iran. If you are not already in jail or in exile, you most certainly have friends who are. You are probably under surveillance and will just have received warning messages as a result of the widespread protests. You know that to try to do something risks arrest, torture and a long prison sentence. And yet, as we can see in these first days of 2018, human rights defenders are documenting those killed and detained, providing practical assistance to victims and families, and organising in the struggle for justice and human rights.

It is an honour and a real privilege to lead an organisation that provides practical support for so many brilliant human rights defenders; inspirational and determined people who demonstrate courage and resilience in their work for the most vulnerable in spite of all the threats, attacks, defamation, prosecution and detention. But it is also tough to be on the receiving end of so much bad news about the latest threats, jailings or attacks, and we often receive reports of several human rights defenders who have been killed each week. At least 312 human rights defenders were killed in 2017, two-thirds of them working to defend land rights, the environment or indigenous peoples' rights. The failure of state protection mechanisms compels us to develop more effective strategies including collective protection.

Days are particularly hard when human rights defenders you know well are in prison and when all your best efforts do not seem to have had an impact. For much of 2017, our friend Dr Mudawi Ibrahim Adam languished in prison in Khartoum and we had grave concerns about his treatment because of the lack of access of his lawyers and family. Mudawi was the winner of the inaugural Front Line Defenders Award in 2005. As one of the most prominent and internationally recognised HRDs in Sudan and someone who had participated in the government's national dialogue in 2016, his arrest in December of that year was a critical moment for human rights in the country. And yet, the response of the international community was very weak. Some of

those diplomats who had depended on his information and analysis about the human rights situation in Darfur or South Kordofan or Blue Nile state prevaricated and one even said that he did not want to openly call for Mudawi's release in case it upset President Omar Bashir.

I wondered if they were suffering from Stockholm syndrome. Dr Mudawi was eventually released by presidential pardon, despite not having been convicted of any charge.

In July 2017, several other friends were detained on fabricated terrorism charges in Turkey. Ozlem Dalkiran is both a long-standing human rights defender based in Istanbul and someone who has worked to support Front Line Defenders-organised trainings and rest and respite programmes for human rights defenders from across the Middle East and the former Soviet Union. Ali Gharavi is a Swedish-Iranian holistic security trainer with whom we had worked on many projects around the world. Unlike in the Sudan case, the response of the international community was fairly strong and Amnesty International organised a very high profile campaign focused on the fact that the Director of AI Turkey, Idil Eser, was one of those charged. However, it was still only after 113 days of detention that the ten were released on bail.

I attended the hearing on 22 November, accompanying Ozlem to the court (Ali had been allowed to leave the country). One of the lawyers stated that it was difficult to summon a defence when no evidence had been presented to support absurd terror-related charges. Sadly, this has been the pattern in many trials and a large number of HRDs and journalists remain detained or tied up in protracted legal processes.

Despite the barrage of reports of repression of HRDs that we receive, it is in fulfilling our mission that the staff of Front Line Defenders is able to support resilience. Front Line



Andrew addressing the audience at the Dublin Platform.

Defenders continues to provide practical support throughout the year to HRDs at risk. We supported Graciela Pérez Rodríguez to be temporarily relocated inside Mexico in May for some weeks. It was a moment of distress and the time was used to rest, to heal and to use the opportunity to do a proper risk assessment and a plan for her activities and her safety – away from the daily emergencies and threats.

Of course, the impact of the support also had to do with having a good partner organization/place to host the relocation as well as the help of others. Graciela has told us, more than once, that the opportunity to relocate was a watershed for her, and it is impressive how much stronger Graciela has become this year, winning the Dutch Government's Tulip Award, strategising with others and coordinating a new NGO. It is a good example of what defenders can achieve if timely, appropriate and holistic assistance is provided upon their request and tailored to their specific needs.

One of the first things Ozlem said when we spoke after her release, was how pleased she had been to see a picture of Mudawi protesting outside a Turkish Embassy calling for her release, because she had previously protested outside a Sudanese Embassy for his release. The solidarity is infectious, and is one of the strongest factors behind the resilience of human rights defenders. The amazing thing is not the level of violence human rights defenders face, but that they persevere in spite of it, and make a huge difference for all of us. □

Andrew Anderson,
Executive Director

2017 AT A GLANCE

- In total, 2,225 HRDs in 102 countries were supported through our programmes in 2017.
- Front Line Defenders issued 262 Urgent Appeals on behalf of 423 individuals at risk in 66 countries and undertook advocacy with the relevant national authorities, submitted cases to the UN and regional mechanisms and advocated with the EU to take action on 75 of the cases.
- The Front Line Defenders Protection Grants Programme provided 484 grants, totalling €1,247,370 to 377 individuals and 107 organisations at risk in 76 countries. 174 grants were provided for temporary relocations. 86% of HRDs reported that they have been able to continue or return to work as a result of having received Protection Grant support.
- Front Line Defenders carried out 70 field visits to 40 countries.
- 140 HRDs from 19 countries participated in 12 trainings on personal and organisational security; 91% of HRDs reported having implemented a security plan as a result of the training.
- 70 HRDs received one-to-one security advice through 25 consultations in Mexico, the Philippines, South Africa and Zimbabwe.
- 221 HRDs from 22 countries participated in 19 digital protection trainings; 66% of HRDs reported using digital security tools as a result of training.
- 161 HRDs and 112 organisations in 40 countries received one-to-one support from Digital Protection Consultants; 99% of HRDs reported using digital security tools as a result of the consultancy.
- The Dublin Platform, held in Dublin Castle from 17 to 19 October, brought together 100 HRDs from 82 countries.
- 29 HRDs were supported through the Rest & Respite Programme.
- The Front Line Defenders Award was presented to Emil Kurbedinov, a Crimean Tatar and human rights lawyer from Ukraine who has been defending the persecuted Crimean Tatar minority, civil society activists and journalists in Crimea.
- Hauwa Ibrahim from Nigeria spoke about her work as a lawyer and human rights defender, at the Annual Front Line Defenders Lecture, held in partnership with University College Dublin and Trinity College Dublin.
- Front Line Defenders published *Attacks on LGBT Rights Defenders Escalating in Indonesia*, a report that investigates the threatening environment in which human rights defenders working on issues related to sexual orientation, gender identity and expression operate in Indonesia.

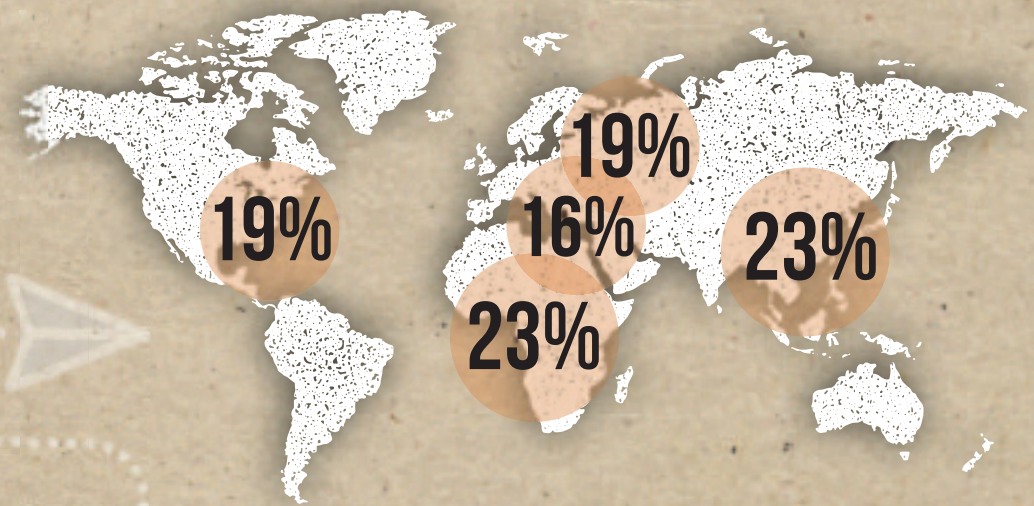
GLOBAL, FAST & FLEXIBLE

HOW FRONT LINE DEFENDERS SUPPORTS HRDS AROUND THE WORLD
HRDS ASSISTED IN **102 COUNTRIES** AROUND THE GLOBE. **262 URGENT APPEALS** WERE ISSUED, WITH **71% ISSUED WITHIN 48 HOURS**

FOCUS ON GRANTS



WHERE THE GRANTS WENT...



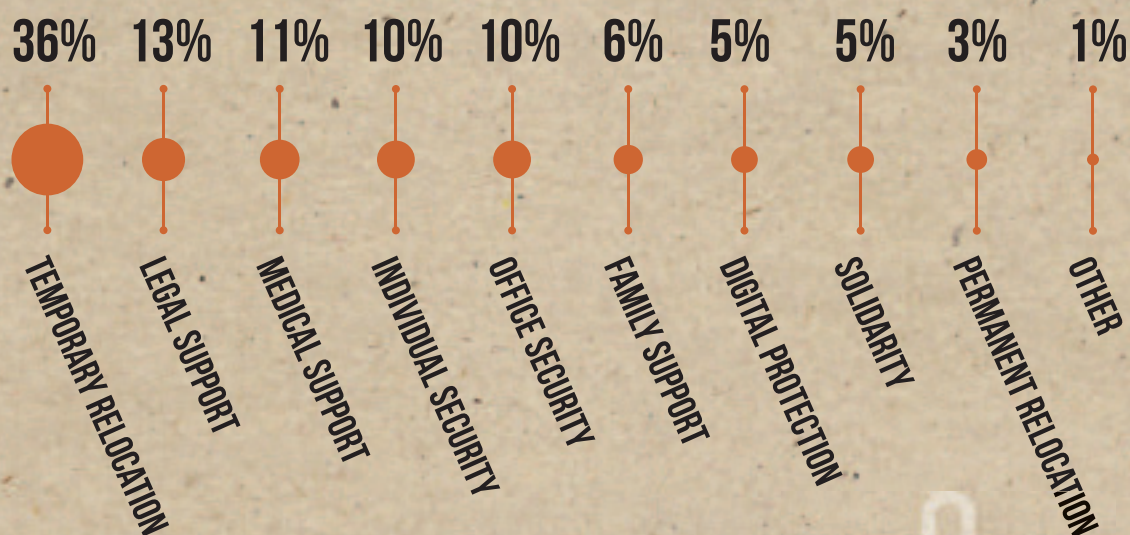
FOCUS ON DIGITAL PROTECTION

HRDS AROUND THE GLOBE FACE MANY ONLINE THREATS...



DEFAMATION TROLLING SURVEILLANCE HACKING SOCIAL MEDIA
 HARASSMENT PUBLIC THREATS ONLINE MONITORING RESTRICTIVE
 LAWS 'FAKE NEWS' DDOS ATTACK BLOCKING ACCESS TO
 INFORMATION DEFAMATION TROLLING SURVEILLANCE HACKING
 SOCIAL MEDIA HARASSMENT PUBLIC THREATS ONLINE
 MONITORING RESTRICTIVE LAWS 'FAKE NEWS' DDOS ATTACK
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 VEILLANCE HACKING SOCIAL MEDIA HARASSMENT PUBLIC
 THREATS ONLINE MONITORING RESTRICTIVE LAWS 'FAKE NEWS'
 DDOS ATTACK BLOCKING ACCESS TO INFORMATION DEFAMATION
 TROLLING SURVEILLANCE HACKING SOCIAL MEDIA HARASSMENT

TYPES OF GRANTS ISSUED...



...THIS IS OUR RESPONSE 

**DIGITAL PROTECTION
COORDINATORS
PROVIDE ONE-TO-ONE
CONSULTATION TO HRDS
AROUND THE WORLD**

44 MISSIONS TO **21** COUNTRIES

161 HRDS

112 ORGANISATIONS, WITH AT LEAST **1,000** STAFF MEMBERS

83% OF HRDS REPORTED THAT THEY IMPROVED (OR SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVED) THEIR SECURITY PRACTICES AS A RESULT OF THE SUPPORT PROVIDED

90% OF HRDS SHARED SKILLS AND TOOLS WITH OTHERS AFTER THE SUPPORT



18 FIELD VISITS TO 13 COUNTRIES

A number of unexpected political upheavals happened in 2017 in Africa, with autocratic leaders leaving their positions in The Gambia in January, in Angola in August and, most dramatically, in Zimbabwe in November. For HRDs in these countries, there is optimism that with new leaders, new opportunities for advancing human rights can develop. Yet, in many other places, HRDs remain at great risk due to civil strife – South Sudan, DRC and Cameroon; erosion of democratic governance – Tanzania and Zambia; or because of challenges to economic interests – South Africa, Madagascar and Malawi. LGBT rights defenders continue to face highly personalised attacks, unable to find institutional support in most countries in the continent. And yet, in West Africa, new legislative initiatives towards developing HRD mechanisms are progressing in Ivory Coast, Mali and Burkina Faso.

FRONT LINE DEFENDERS WELCOMED A second Protection Coordinator (PC) for Africa in 2017 in response to the need and demand from HRDs in the continent, with two PCs dividing the responsibilities geographically. The new PC took on coverage for West and Central Africa. Front Line Defenders has been responding to great need in the region for years; in the DRC alone, HRDs have received 211 protection grants (51% of which are emergency) totaling over €310,000 and 35 Urgent Appeals between 2013 and 2016 as well as significant advocacy and capacity building support.

The new PC for West and Central Africa undertook research missions to Niger, The Gambia and Nigeria, joined the visibility team for the launch of a campaign and advocacy work in Mali, and attended the NGO Forum preceding the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights in The Gambia, which was celebrating its 30th Anniversary. At the session, Commissioner **Rémy Ngoy Lumbu** from the Democratic Republic of Congo was named as the new Special Rapporteur for Human Rights Defenders, replacing Commissioner **Alapini Gansou**, who finished up a decade of service. Front Line Defenders continues to support this office by providing a research fellow to the Special Rapporteur.

Front Line Defenders closely followed the developments related to the Anglophone crisis on HRDs in Cameroon, including the detention of environmental campaigner **Nasako Besingi**, who was arrested by local police officers, gendarmes and army officers from his office. Nasako has been leading his community in protests against the development of palm oil plantations and also condemned human rights violations committed during the protests in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon. He was charged with insurrection and terrorism and denied bail. Following determined advocacy by a coalition of NGOs, a Military Judge in Buea dropped all charges and signed the release order for Nasako after two months in detention. Front Line Defenders provided emergency grant support for initial legal costs and also for medical care following his release.

On 30 October, **Abass Abdoul Aziz**, **Abdoulaye Harouna** and **Djibo Issa**, president and member, respectively, of the **Association de Défense des Droits des Consommateurs des Technologies de l'Information, de la Communication et de l'Énergie – ACTICE** (Association for the



Andrea Rocca, Deputy Director, interviewed by Ténére TV regarding the release of Abass Abdoul Aziz, Abdoulaye Harouna and Djibo Issa, detained for more than 3 weeks after voicing criticism of government corruption in Niger.

Defence of the Rights of Consumers to Information Technology, Communication and Energy) in Niger, were arrested and charged with "participation in an unauthorised protest", "armed gathering", "theft" and "complicity in theft". The next day, the Minister of the Interior issued a decree banning ACTICE from operating throughout the country. In collaboration with local NGOs, Front Line Defenders advocated for their release and continues to follow up on the overturning of the decision of the Minister of Interior outlawing the organisation. On 24 November, the three HRDs were found not guilty on all charges by the Niamey High Court and were released the same day.

In March and September, Front Line Defenders Protection Coordinator for Eastern and Southern Africa visited Kenya, before and after August presidential elections, which were determined to have been fraudulent, yielding an uncertain and contested political environment. The first visit was to Mombasa and Malindi in Coastal Kenya, where a number of human rights organisations working on social and economic rights, particularly land rights and environmental justice, are based. HRDs face extreme pressure from elite business interests in the region. During the mission, the PC audited the security preparations of one particular environmental organisation that had been experiencing a serious security crisis. The second visit was to the Rift Valley, where there were heightened concerns

about potential violence in the wake of the Supreme Court's annulment of the August elections. Meetings were held with HRDs who had previously reported threats as a result of documenting and reporting to the International Criminal Court possible crimes against humanity committed in the aftermath of the 2007-8 presidential elections.

In August, the PC visited Ethiopia, which has seen large-scale protests since 2016, even as the government uses extreme violence, including ten demonstrators killed in October. Human rights organisations remain generally weak as a result of the effective installation of a police state that seeks to maximize control over all sectors of life; and the use of at least three laws against critical voices - the law on charities, the anti-terrorism law, and the media law. While this hostile environment has resulted in many HRDs dropping activism completely and others seeking refuge abroad, a number of new groups are emerging, and Front Line Defenders has started engaging them on security and protection issues.

Visits were made to Burundi in February and November, to assess security needs of HRDs who have remained in country, and where there have been consistent reports of the national intelligence services mounting regular operations to intimidate and neutralise the few human rights defenders. In July, Front Line Defenders Head of Protection joined the regional PC for a research mission to Zimbabwe, to assess security needs in advance of the 2018 elections. Though the situation dramatically changed in November, with the resignation of President Robert Mugabe, the concerns of HRDs remain, as surveillance and intimidation have not ceased. □



Protection Coordinator Aloys Habimana (left) and Head of Protection Ed O'Donovan (right) met Zimbabwean HRD Jestina Mukoko, Director of the Zimbabwe Peace Project.



Aloys Habimana meeting with Nkosilathi (Nkosie) Moyo (r), Director of the Zimbabwe Organization For Youth In Politics (ZOYP) a community-based organisation located in the small mining town of Kwekwe.



DIGITAL PROTECTION

In December, Front Line Defenders provided a digital protection training for 11 Nigerian HRDs from various states of the North East region (Borno State, Gombe State, Bauchi, Yobe), the capital Abuja and the Niger Delta Region. Following the training, the Digital Protection Consultant arranged follow-up visits to organisations to provide more specific protection support.



In April, the Tanzanian Human Rights Defenders Coalition (THRDC) celebrated its 4th anniversary. At the commemoration ceremony, Aloys Habimana, Protection Coordinator for Eastern and Southern Africa was presented with THRDC's "International Partner of Year 2016" in recognition of Front Line Defenders work.

113
Protection
Grants

38
Urgent
Appeals on **58** HRDs

Digital Protection

In several African countries, governments are employing measures to restrict the use of digital resources with a direct and negative impact on the work of HRDs. Front Line Defenders recognises that these restrictive measures affect groups differently and that more marginalised groups such as LGBTI HRDs tend to be more impacted while having limited knowledge on how to protect themselves.

In response to this situation and requests from HRDs, Front Line Defenders Digital Protection Consultant for Africa organised a digital protection training for ten LGBTI HRDs working in east Africa, which was conducted in Entebbe, Uganda in December 2017. LGBTI HRDs reported suffering digital attacks including office raids, compromised social media accounts and posted information used for blackmail, confiscation of mobile phones and the public 'outing' of members, which put lives at risk. The four-day training workshop was also attended by the African Protection Coordinator, who consulted on general security issues and plans for follow-up implementation of security plans. □

Training

Front Line Defenders organised a Risk Assessment and Protection Planning (RAPP) workshop for HRDs and journalists in Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo in July. Congolese HRDs operate in a situation of protracted civil conflict, in which threats emanate from multiple sources.

In November, Front Line Defenders worked with a local partner to organise a RAPP training workshop for Zimbabwean HRDs, held in South Africa. With historic political events unfolding on the streets of Harare, the HRDs met to start planning for the 2018 elections, which pose extra challenges to civil society actors, making them more vulnerable to attacks by security services.

Political violence and turmoil continues to plague countries in the Americas, even where past injustices and crimes are finally meeting justice. In Venezuela and Honduras, corruption and political maneuvering have energised mass popular forces to take to the streets and demand change. In Argentina, Chile, El Salvador and Guatemala, perpetrators of crimes committed by military and security forces during years of junta-led governments face justice, in processes initiated and led by HRDs. Environmental, land rights and indigenous peoples' rights defenders continue to face intolerable violence, as megaprojects including mining and electricity generation put so-called 'development agendas' ahead of the rights of communities, even as the benefits of such projects reach relatively few. Most concerning is the fact that despite the democratic character of the great majority of countries in the region, the Americas remains the most deadly region for HRDs in the world. Narco-traffickers, private security firms, military and security forces and landowners enjoy almost total impunity.

IN JANUARY, FRONT LINE DEFENDERS visited Honduras during the launch of the Global Witness report, "Honduras: The Deadliest Country in the World for Environmental Activism". Front Line Defenders was one of the organisations consulted for the report, and many of the HRDs named in the report have received support from the organisation. During this mission, Ivi Oliveira, Americas Protection Coordinator, consulted with the family of slain WHRD **Berta Cáceres**, held meetings with government officials, and accompanied **Ana Mirian Romero**, 2016 Front Line Defenders Award winner, and some of her colleagues to meet officials from the National Protection Mechanism. In response to the Global Witness report, government officials denounced Global Witness, Front Line Defenders and Amnesty International, including smear campaigns in pro-government media.

From February to early March, FLD staff was back in Honduras for an international gathering to commemorate the anniversary of Berta's assassination. The gathering was an opportunity to review a year of unprecedented cooperation between international organisations Front Line Defenders, CEJIL, Platform Against Impunity, Amnesty International, PBI Honduras, IM-Defensoras and JASS and the first face-to-face opportunity to share strategies and strengthen the coordination to support HRDs in Honduras.

In June, Front Line Defenders Head of Protection, Ed O'Donovan, joined the PC, for a research mission in Paraguay, the first research mission to the country. Most of the HRDs met on the mission worked on land rights issues – both in rural and urban settings. In Asunción, they visited Banado Sur, a marginalised neighbourhood on the outskirts of the capital and met volunteers working with the community there, as well as victims of police violence organising for accountability. HRDs reported media stigmatisation labelling all residents as criminals.

The FLD delegation also visited **Raúl Marín**,



Paraguayan human rights lawyer Raúl Marín, reviewing documents while under house arrest.

a lawyer under house arrest, who defends the rights of landless people who had settled on the outskirts of the capital. They also met with indigenous HRD **Carlos Mareco**, one of the leaders of the Sawhoyamaya people, who has been involved with land rights issues, including a major legal victory in national and international courts allowing them to return to ancestral lands in 2014.

In October, FLD helped facilitate the visit of Michel Forst, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, to Brazil, including a formal meeting to strengthen the relationship between the Rapporteur and the Brazilian Committee on Human Rights Defenders. Testimonies from seven states of Brazil were presented by HRDs working on rights of indigenous people, quilombolas, the LGBTI community, land rights, housing and social rights of people living in Rio's favelas, among others. The Rapporteur also held meetings with the EU Head of Delegation in



16 FIELD VISITS TO 9 COUNTRIES

Brazil, convened by Front Line Defenders, and with the Brazilian Secretary of Human Rights.

In November, the PC attended a 2-day Regional Consultation convened by Universal Rights Groups and John Knox, UN Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment in Colombia. The meeting focused on the situations of indigenous and rural HRDs. She used the opportunity to meet stakeholders and organisations from Colombia and to visit Medellín and Bajo Cauca, where social movements have been affected by the construction of a major hydro-electric project. **Movimiento Rios Vivos** invited Front Line Defenders to accompany a workshop in which it presented a collective protection scheme to the Colombian Protection Unit in order to get support for the plan. □

Damian Gallardo Martinez is an indigenous Mexican HRD who has been unfairly detained since 18 May 2013. Damian is a teacher who has worked to defend the rights of indigenous communities and the right to education in the Mixe and Zapoteca regions of Oaxaca, Mexico.

In November 2014, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention issued an opinion holding the detention of **Damián Gallardo Martínez** to be arbitrary, and called for his immediate and unconditional release. He is facing false charges of organised crime and kidnapping of minors and is being held in a High Security Prison. There is no official resolution on his case yet.

Damian has a 14 year old daughter, with whom he constantly exchanges letters and who has not been able to visit him in prison.

Front Line Defenders visited with Damian's family and provided support to publish a book of Damian's poems and illustrations, in order to keep up visibility on his case.



Grants

HRDs have been at the forefront of challenging corruption and political violence in Venezuela, since before the latest round of mass protests. In 2017, however, security forces stepped up repression and targeted HRDs in order to shut down civil society. Front Line Defenders provided protection grants to individuals and organisations to cover temporary relocations, security cameras for offices, secure transportation and support for HRDs monitoring protests. Two grants were made to organisations documenting violations during protests for helmets, bullet-proof vests, cameras and gas masks so that staff members could be protected. They reported, "Between April and early August, 163 people died and thousands were wounded, including journalists and photojournalists. For our monitoring team it was very important to have received this subsidy and thus acquire the necessary equipment to be able to do our monitoring work and documentation in the field, decreasing the risk of being injured."



David Ravelo Crespo addressing a gathering to celebrate his release from prison.



David sitting with his family following his release from prison.

Good news

On 20 June 2017, Colombian HRD, **David Ravelo Crespo**, was released on parole after almost 7 years of incarceration. Front Line Defenders started working on his case upon his initial arrest and took up a number of initiatives to press for his release, including facilitating the visit of former Irish Foreign Minister Eamon Gilmore to meet Colombian officials in 2015.

David was a finalist for the Front Line Defenders Award in 2013. He is a founding member of Regional Corporation for the Defence of Human Rights (CREDHOS). **■**

46 Urgent Appeals on **95** HRDs **94** Protection Grants



WHRDs work on holistic security strategies and practices at the Regional Gathering on Protection Strategies for Land, Territory and Environmental Rights Defenders.

Training

In late May and early June, Front Line Defenders co-organised a Regional Gathering on Protection Strategies for Land, Territory and Environmental Rights Defenders, held in Mexico. Co-hosted by Amnesty International, Protection International, the Mesoamerican Initiative of Women Human Rights Defenders, Just Associates (JASS), Urgent Action Fund for Latin American and Caribbean, Bread for the World and Peace Brigades International (PBI), and in coordination with local organizations in Latin America, the gathering brought together 60 HRDs from 12 countries. Defenders of the Mapuche, Quiché, Waorinicuna, Queqchí, Yaqui, Garífuna, Lenca, Shiwilu, Cuna, Binizá, and Mizquito peoples, among others, from Argentina, Peru, Paraguay, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Panama analysed the context of violence and impunity in the region. HRDs shared and collectively constructed protection and security strategies in the framework of the defence of land, territory and the preservation of nature for their communities and their movements.



Developments across Asia were cause of great concern for human rights defenders in 2017. In the Philippines, President Duterte's continued lethal 'war on drugs' has provided cover for assaults on civil society, while martial law in Mindanao has put HRDs at grave risk. In Myanmar, former Nobel Prize winner and now de facto head of state, Aung San Suu Kyi has drawn fierce criticism for her overseeing of the ethnic cleansing of Rohingya Muslims from Rakhine State, a situation in which HRDs working with the displaced in both Myanmar and Bangladesh find themselves at risk. In China, President Xi Jinping has consolidated power in ways unseen since Chairman Mao, while the government continues to target HRDs in an effort to completely erase any potential opposition. And in a number of other countries, including Vietnam and Cambodia, HRDs are increasingly targeted by authoritarian governments, while in Indonesia, Pakistan and Afghanistan, armed groups often motivated by extreme religious ideologies continue to target HRDs.

FRONT LINE DEFENDERS PROTECTION Coordinator for Asia visited Cambodia in May and again in December, as the country witnessed a shrinking of civic space for human rights organisations and the targeting of leading HRDs. While HRDs from the 'ADHOC 5' case were released from prison in late June, following 427 days in detention, they continue to be closely surveilled. Cambodia will hold elections in 2018, and the government seems to be taking extraordinary steps to ensure victory. In December, Prime Minister Hun Sen threatened to close down the **Cambodian Centre for Human Rights (CCHR)**, which was the culmination of a year of increased pressure against the organisation. Front Line Defenders Protection Coordinator and Training Coordinator provided ongoing security consultation to the CCHR.

Malaysian HRDs have faced increased pressure in recent years, particularly following major corruption scandals involving top government officials and in the context of highly contested elections. In 2017, there was a surge of restrictive laws deployed against

HRDs including the Sedition Act (1948), the Communications and Multimedia Act (1998) and the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act (SOSMA), in particular against HRDs from the **Bersih** movement. Front Line Defenders Executive Director, Andrew Anderson, joined the regional Protection Coordinator for a mission in Malaysia, where they met with HRDs at risk working on corruption, environmental and civil society issues, as well as LGBTI and indigenous rights.

In July, Malaysian lawyer and HRD **Siti Kasim** received threats via her social media accounts, including specific calls for her to be raped, attacked with acid and murdered. Front Line Defenders Head of Visibility & Communications and Media Coordinator were in the country at the time and escorted her to a police station to file a report. As a result of the filing, two men were arrested in September by police investigating the case.

In February, the regional Protection Coordinator visited Chhattisgarh, Odisha and West Bengal, India, to meet HRDs and expand the Front Line Defenders network. In

21 FIELD VISITS TO 8 COUNTRIES

recent years, Indian civil society has faced increased bureaucratic and legal challenges as the government seems intent on restricting space. Individual HRDs have been criminalised and have been forced to defend themselves against an expanding campaign of defamation intent on undermining the credibility of HRDs in the eyes of the public.

In June, in Odisha, HRD and journalist **Akhand** received a threatening call from a man who accused him of being an agent of Pakistan and of terrorism and said he would be killed "soon" for having filed a complaint against an Indian Army officer to the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC). HRDs in Odisha, especially those based in rural areas, expressed that they are in need of increasing their capacity to communicate with central (national) and international networks, and a particular concern about digital surveillance. As a result, Front Line Defenders partnered with the **Civil Society Forum on Human Rights (CSFHR)** to organise a Digital Protection training in October. □

Grants

In January, Front Line Defenders provided a protection grant to Pakistani freelance journalist **Umer Ali** to help increase the security of his home. Umer has reported on sensitive issues in major publications in Pakistan, including blasphemy-related cases, women's rights, minorities and the transgender community. Additionally, he has reported on terrorism cases, and conducted investigative reports which have exposed corruption.

He won the Kurt Schork Memorial Award and the Frontline Club Award for his reporting under dangerous circumstances. In acknowledging his work, the panel of judges said, "tackling sensitive issues such as blasphemy law and ethnic tensions in a country where journalism is a dangerous occupation" made his writing exceptional."

As a result of his journalistic work, including reporting on human rights issues, Umer has faced death threats and other forms of harassment from a variety of sources. The grant, in cooperation with the Rory Peck Trust, enabled him to make a number of security improvements to his home and to use more secure transportation options when traveling for his work.

Umer reported: "The grant provided by Front Line Defenders ensured I could keep up with my daily life. Now that I have left those times behind, I will always be indebted to my colleagues at FLD for their support."



HRDs discuss strategy at the Activist Camp organised by the Cambodian Center for Human Rights, attended by the Front Line Defenders Regional Protection Coordinator.



Digital Protection

Front Line Defenders and **Human Rights Online Philippines** conducted a three-day training on digital security in June 2017 (photo, left). The training was designed to build capacity in digital security, including developing general protection plans and ensuring the physical protection of information.

The government of President Duterte, while dismissive of human rights concerns, has undertaken an aggressive campaign against HRDs in the country. The Philippines already is one of the most dangerous countries in the world for HRDs, and efforts to increase surveillance of HRDs, including via monitoring of social media accounts, only puts HRDs at greater risk and vulnerability without such digital protection skills and knowledge.

Training

Front Line Defenders held a Risk Assessment and Protection Planning training in Mandalay, Myanmar, with a focus on HRDs working on environmental issues. Despite the political liberalisation of the country, the issue of land rights and environment is acute, with the government undertaking the nationalisation of properties and welcoming large projects in the mining and other resource extraction sectors. In addition to HRDs concerned with the land, there were HRDs working on peacebuilding and street children. HRDs faced criminalisation, defamation and loss of livelihood as a result of their activism. □



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Urgent Appeals on

122 HRDs

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Protection Grants

"Before I attended the training, I generally knew there was a need for preparation measure for security. After the training, I can distinguish detailed aspects of a security plan. For personal security I will back up important documents and data, build stronger fence for my house, create backdoor exits and explain to my family about the worst case scenario."

- HRD, Myanmar



A Bangladeshi HRD explains the location of Rohingya refugee camps along the Bangladesh-Myanmar border.

Crisis

As Rohingya refugees fled attacks by the Burmese military in Rakhine state into neighbouring Bangladesh, the international community started to turn its attention to the humanitarian dimensions of the crisis. Front Line Defenders Media Coordinator, Erin Kilbride, went to the border area – where Rohingya refugee camps were established – for three days in September, two weeks after the refugee crisis erupted.

There she met with HRDs – both Rohingya and Bangladeshi – who were advocating for or documenting violations against Rohingya refugees, and experiencing threats / risks as a result. Erin was interviewed in the Irish media about what she witnessed, and helped bring attention to the critical work HRDs were doing in the crisis and the risks they were facing.



In Europe and Central Asia, Turkey stood out once again for an unrelenting wave of arrests and trials of HRDs, as many others left the country seeking relocation to avoid what has amounted to a purge of civil society. In 2017, the case of the 'Istanbul 10' directly impacted Front Line Defenders, as three of the 10 HRDs arrested and put on trial were periodically working with the organisation on projects to support the protection of HRDs around the world. In other parts of the region, while there have been minor positive developments in Belarus, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, HRDs generally are facing a challenging environment as Russia seeks a dominant role, while in the European Union, challenges to fundamental freedoms in Spain, Italy, Hungary and Poland demonstrate the impact of the rise of right-wing political groups in the last decade.



Police raid a meeting organised by civil society organisations preparing to observe a protest in Minsk, Belarus in March.

RUSSIAN HRDS FACE PHYSICAL ATTACKS as well as searches and inspections of their offices and homes. The human rights movement in Russia is under consistent attack and in recent years, HRDs are developing new methodologies for protection. In February, Front Line Defenders Europe and Central Asia Protection Coordinator visited St. Petersburg to hold a collective security workshop with civil society organisations sharing the same offices with **Citizen's Watch**, an NGO deemed a 'foreign agent' and targeted by the authorities because of its human rights work. A separate meeting was held in Open Space – a platform hosting

different civil society initiatives – to discuss ways for HRDs and organisations to improve security and risk assessment. HRDs from many different sectors – election monitoring, social and cultural rights and LGBTI – attended and shared strategies and assessments of potential threats.

Following a month of continuous street protests against the policies of the government in Belarus, organisers prepared for a major gathering on 25 March, known as Freedom Day. Front Line Defenders Protection Coordinator, Masha Chichtchenkova arrived in Minsk ahead of the gathering to work with HRDs involved in observation of the protests

and other HRDs who were targeted because of their work providing legal aid to detained protesters. A meeting held by the observation coordinators was raided by police on the morning of 25 March, with 58 HRDs arrested and held in police stations for over three hours, including the PC. The practice of preventive arrests of defenders is common in Belarus; many of them faced spurious administrative charges that aimed at paralysing their human rights work.

In April, the Protection Coordinator met with HRDs in the Crimean peninsula, Ukrainian territory occupied by Russia in 2014. Access for international observers to Crimea remains problematic, subject to permission by Ukrainian authorities to cross the land border and to long interrogations by Russian border guards and FSB intelligence officers from the other side of the border. HRDs in Crimea are isolated even as they face intense surveillance and monitoring by local Russian-allied authorities.

Representatives of the Crimean Tatar minority are particularly targeted as they are believed to be hostile to the Russian occupation and well-organised as a political and religious community. They are subjected to numerous and massive police raids, arrests and accusations of extremism and terrorism, and in several cases, their bank accounts were frozen and family left with no resources. **Emir Usein Kuku**, a Crimean HRD who documented enforced disappearances and defended freedom of religion, has been held in pre-trial detention since February 2016 on terrorism charges. In detention, he has been submitted to psychiatric examination. Journalists who denounce human rights violations, lawyers who dare to take up defence cases and pro-Ukrainian activists are also targeted and intimidated. As a result of the mission and a request by HRDs, Front Line Defenders organised a protection training for Crimean defenders in May. □



Webpage from Mirniy Bereg website listing missing persons as a result of the invasion and occupation of Crimea. The database kept by Mirniy Bereg can one day be used in possible war crimes proceedings.

Grants

In Ukraine, following the invasion and annexation of Crimea, human rights defenders work to support the local population in the face of an ongoing conflict. **Mirniy Bereg** (Shore of Peace) works to collect, systematise, document and analyse crimes including extrajudicial executions, forced disappearances, torture and arbitrary detention; locating individuals involved in these crimes; searching for missing persons; and the provision of such information to law enforcement agencies and international organizations.

Front Line Defenders Digital Protection Consultant for the ECA region worked with staff of Mirniy Bereg to develop preventative measures of protection for the database of information the organisation has collected, including material that can potentially be used in war crimes trials.

Following the consultation, Front Line Defenders provided a protection grant to Mirniy Bereg, allowing it to secure its office - including CCTV - to mitigate the risk of break-in, and to establish a secure remote server and hard disk to ensure that the data was more difficult to access.

According to Mirniy Bereg, "having our own webserver outside Ukraine we will be assured that nobody can destroy our online archives and database...It is expected there will be no less than 10,500 people, including victims of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine, registered in our database. This information on all cases will be shared with and used by the International Criminal Court."

front line: turkey

In August, the Protection Coordinator and Front Line Defenders Executive Director, Andrew Anderson, visited Turkey, a country in a major human rights crisis – thousands of civil servants have been purged from their positions; hundreds of signatories of two ‘Petitions for Peace’ lost their jobs with universities; more than 500 lawyers and 80 journalists have been jailed; and thousands continue to face judicial persecution. Several NGOs have been closed by State decree and HRDs have been investigated and dismissed from their jobs. Many people have been left without ID documents and unable to travel, even though they are not subjected to travel bans, while others traveling abroad were refused the right to return to the country despite having valid Turkish citizenship.

In a worrisome development, participants of a holistic security training for HRDs were arrested in July and accused of aiding “a terrorist organisation”. All of them are well-known and experienced HRDs who have been working for the promotion of human rights in Turkey for decades.

This training was organised to build HRD capacity and skills in light of the heightened risk environment, but was reported by pro-government media as a conspiratorial meeting to provoke a coup. Front Line Defenders, together with other international human rights organisations, mobilised to pressure the government on this case, as it was quickly recognised as an emblematic case and a real challenge to Turkish civil society.

In October, Front Line Defenders Deputy Director, Andrea Rocca, attended a hearing for the group of HRDs, who were given bail and released that night. Activists from Turkish civil society, international organisations and foreign diplomatic missions were present inside and outside the courtroom, and greeted the HRDs when they were released at night.

The next month, Andrew attended the first hearing in the trial of the ‘Istanbul 10’, after visiting with Ozlem Dalkiran, a long time friend and one of the HRDs on trial. At this hearing, the judicial control and travel ban imposed on Ozlem was lifted, along with two other HRDs on trial. Again, the trial drew international attention and observers from diplomatic missions. □

“From the moment we got detained, we have been able to stand strong without faltering thanks to the extraordinary solidarity of the human rights community in the country and abroad. After all, we have never lost faith in ourselves, in what we do and in our struggle for human rights.”

- Ozlem Dalkiran



Top: Supporters of the ‘Istanbul 10’ hold a press conference outside the court before one of the pre-trial hearings in the case.

Left: Ozlem Dalkiran, one of the ‘Istanbul 10’, greets a supporter after being released from detention.

35
Urgent Appeals on

50 HRDs

92
Protection Grants

Training

In November, Front Line Defenders facilitated a Risk Assessment and Protection Planning training for Tajik human rights defenders. Participants were members of a coalition against torture, uniting representatives from many different organisations working to uncover and document torture in places of detention and perpetrated by the army. Many were HRDs living in remote areas and the coalition was created with the aim of reinforcing solidarity and protection of its members.

Many of the participants had personally experienced inspections by different state institutions, detention and interrogations. HRDs in Tajikistan face a very challenging environment in which to work, with the state deploying its intelligence resources to monitor the population. Following the arrest and trial of a number of lawyers, the legal community does not dare to defend sensitive cases, leaving HRDs exposed. These conditions have served to weaken human rights work.



7 FIELD VISITS TO
4 COUNTRIES

Human rights defenders in the Middle East & North Africa continue to face immense security challenges. The crackdown on civil society and HRDs has intensified in the Gulf, Egypt, Algeria, Iran and Sudan, while domestic and international conflicts in Iraq, Libya, Syria, Sudan and Palestine put HRDs under pressure and have led many of them to leave their countries. In 2017, social protests and labour strikes driven by economic scarcity were repressed by security forces in Algeria, Egypt and Sudan.

IN APRIL, FRONT LINE DEFENDERS conducted a research mission to Qatar to meet journalists, academics, representatives of public institutions and experts on the rights of immigrant workers. In 2017, Front Line Defenders released Urgent Appeals and updates on the travel ban imposed on human rights lawyer **Najeeb Al-Nuaimi** and raised the case of Saudi human rights defender **Mohammed Al-Otaibi**, co-founder of the **Union for Human Rights** in Riyadh, who was arrested in Qatar and forcibly deported to Saudi Arabia in May to face trial.

In August, Front Line Defenders MENA Protection Coordinator Moataz El Fegieri visited Lebanon to meet Lebanese HRDs. Threats to freedom of expression on the Internet has become a major issue in Lebanon. In 2017, the Cyber Crime Bureau at the Ministry of Interior summoned and interrogated several HRDs, including bloggers, for their critical posts on Facebook and Twitter. Lebanese NGOs such as **Maharat Foundation**, **Samir Kassir Foundation** and **March Lebanon** work for the promotion of freedom of expression and struggle against censorship. Meetings were also held with Syrian and Palestinian HRDs who are based in Lebanon and face intimidation and threats for their work on human rights issues in their home countries or advocate for refugee rights in Lebanon.

In September, Front Line Defenders visited Tunisia to assess recent developments in the situation of HRDs. While Tunisia continues to achieve progress in several areas, particularly gender equality, certain challenges remain in the effort towards consolidation of democracy in the country. In 2017, Tunisian authorities passed a law which provided amnesty for those involved in corruption in the past. The government also expressed its intention to amend the NGO law, raising fears that proposed changes could restrict the work of human rights NGOs and their ability to receive foreign funding. Security forces continued their repressive response to social protests in southern provinces. Meetings were held with leaders of key LGBTI NGOs including **Shams Association**, **Chouf** and **Mawjoudin** and with women human rights defenders, including jurist **Sana Bin Achour** (photo below), a prominent figure in the feminist movement in Tunisia and a candidate to the newly established Tunisian Constitutional Court. **Najet Labidi** represents victims of torture under the rule of the former regime, yet she was tried and sentenced in May 2017 to six months in prison for her critical comments on the procedural irregularities in the military justice system.

Front Line Defenders provided support to HRDs in Libya and in exile in Tunisia, including protection grants to cover internal and

external relocation and medical rehabilitation. Front Line Defenders also collaborated with the **Defender Centre** in Tunis to raise the capacity of Libyan HRDs in digital security.

The persecution of HRDs and NGOs continues to escalate in Egypt, where leaders of NGOs, lawyers, journalists and bloggers face travel bans, judicial harassment, asset freezing and digital surveillance. In 2017, Front Line Defenders documented cases of torture and forced disappearance against HRDs. **Ibrahim Metwally Hegazy**, a co-founder and coordinator of the **League of Families of the Disappeared** in Egypt, was forcibly disappeared in September while he was on the way to attend a meeting with the UN Working Group on Enforced Disappearance in Geneva. When he 'reappeared' in detention, he had been tortured and was charged with 'establishing an illegal organisation', 'communicating with foreign entities to harm state security' and 'dissemination of false news'.

Front Line Defenders urged major international actors to pressure the Egyptian government to end its persecution of Egyptian HRDs. On the occasion of the first visit of President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi to meet President Donald Trump in Washington, DC in April, the MENA Protection Coordinator addressed the issue at a conference organised by DC-based NGOs. In May, the PC delivered a testimony before the European Parliament Human Rights Sub-Committee on Egypt alongside **Bahey Eldin Hassan**, director of **Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies** (CIHRS).

Working together with Algerian lawyer **Salah Dabouz**, Front Line Defenders sent a letter to the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention regarding imprisoned HRD **Kamal Eddin Fekhar**, the founder of **Tifawt**, a foundation that works to protect and promote the human rights of the Amazigh people, who had been arrested in July 2015. In April, the Working Group delivered an opinion calling on the Algerian authorities to release the HRD. In July, an Algerian court sentenced him to 2 years, and he was released 10 days later, on 16 July, having already effectively served the sentence. □



Front Line Defenders MENA Protection Coordinator, Moataz El Fegieri, (left) consults with Tunisian human rights defender Sana Bin Achour during a research mission to Tunisia in September.

60
Urgent
Appeals on

98 HRDs

73
Protection
Grants

nubian hrds

CONTEXT

The Nubian people are indigenous to present-day Sudan and Egypt. As with indigenous peoples all over the world, the community was bisected by borders and forced off its native land by development projects. In the early 1900s, Egypt began construction on a set of massive dams near Aswan city. By 1970, more than 50,000 Nubians had been forcibly relocated away from the Nile River, the body of water on which they had built a 4,000-year-old civilization. Some were moved into 'temporary' housing miles from the river. Decades later, their descendants are still waiting for the return they were promised. In the Aswan region, they have experienced land expropriation and forced displacement by the Egyptian government, and face cultural marginalisation and racial discrimination throughout the country. The government has targeted Nubian HRDs leading the community's peaceful struggle to return to their land.

CRACKDOWN

In November 2016, Nubian HRDs in Aswan organised a "Nubian Caravan," driving dozens of cars towards their indigenous land. As much of their territory has been placed under military control, the Nubian Caravan was caught between a series of checkpoints and forced to turn back after more than three days in the desert. By the end of the year, more than 40 Nubian human rights defenders are on trial in Aswan. Twenty-five were arrested at a peaceful march on 3 September, at which they sang traditional songs to mark Eid al-

Adha and campaign for Nubian 'right of return' as guaranteed by Article 236 of the 2014 Egyptian Constitution. In October 2017, seven more Nubian human rights defenders were arrested outside the detention centre as they peacefully protested for the release of the 25 detainees.

In November 2017, HRD **Gamal Sarour** died in detention due to medical negligence; prison authorities withheld his medication for 5 days prior to his death. Shortly after, 10 more Nubian activists were arrested for protesting in solidarity with Gamal and the ongoing detention of his colleagues.

RESPONSE

In 2017, Front Line Defenders began working with Nubian HRDs to address their security and protection concerns following months of harassment and surveillance. Producing visibility materials including articles, videos, and campaigns throughout the year, Front Line Defenders also worked with Nubian HRDs in preparation for a potential increase in the crackdown. A meeting was organised for two Nubian WHRDs with Stavros Lambrinidis, the European Union Special Representative for Human Rights - the first such meeting of a



Magdy al-Daboudy, a Nubian HRD, sitting outside his home in Nasser al-Nuba.

high-ranking EU official with Nubian rights activists in Egypt. Nubian HRDs including **Seham Osman, Ayat Osman, and Mohamed Azmy** were featured in Front Line Defenders international campaigns throughout the year, increasing their international visibility and building support for their community and struggle. As the trial against Nubian HRDs continued in December 2017, Front Line Defenders released infographic videos in Arabic and English illustrating the struggle of the Nubian people and the risks facing the community's human rights defenders, reaching more than 100,000 viewers across Egypt. As a result of this work, a number of other national and international organisations took up the cases of the Nubian HRDs. **□**

Digital Protection

Palestinian HRDs face digital security challenges from two governments, each with somewhat differing motivations for monitoring communications of HRDs. While both the government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA) are active in using technology as a counter-terrorism tool, the Israelis are using surveillance to shut down HRD work, including advancing efforts for the civil society led Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement as Palestinian efforts to share information with allies around the world. For its part, the PA has grown increasingly unpopular with Palestinians and as such has taken a more authoritarian direction, and monitors social media as a means of political control.

Front Line Defenders in partnership with Norwegian People's Aid conducted a training workshop on digital protection for Palestinian HRDs. HRDs learned how to improve online security, use encryption technology and how to protect from hackers. Another key area of concern was how to ensure information security off-site, given the frequency of office raids and device confiscation and that only 50% of the participants reported keeping a secure back-up of information. Front Line Defenders Digital Protection Consultant worked with the Palestinian HRDs to implement digital protection measures.



Ayat Osman, a Nubian HRD at home.

Grants

Since the capture of Sana'a, Yemen by Houthi forces in 2014, the country has been divided by two warring sides, while external powers have intervened on behalf of the internationally-recognised government. Complicating matters is the presence of numerous armed militant groups and tribes who often switch sides or act independently. HRDs trying to operate in this chaotic situation to document violations against civilians by all parties to the conflict face extreme danger of physical threat, including killing, detention, torture and kidnapping. Nonetheless, HRDs do continue to work.

In May, Front Line Defenders provided an emergency protection grant for five HRDs and three spouses to go into hiding, after it became known that they were being sought by one of the parties to the conflict because they had documented violations against civilians. The financial support allowed them to get to a safe house inside the country for 10 days before flying out to Egypt for safety. ProtectDefenders.eu provided additional funding for the relocation.

The Front Line Defenders EU Office in Brussels coordinates Front Line Defenders advocacy work with the European Union and individual EU Member States, as well as Norway and Switzerland. The office advocates on behalf of HRDs at risk before EU Institutions and Ministries of Foreign Affairs, and to their representations in third countries, pushing them to take quick action in line with the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders, e.g. raising cases with the authorities, contacting human rights defenders and their families, observing trials, and/or visiting detained human rights defenders.

2017 Advocacy Highlights

IN 2017, THE EU OFFICE RAISED 75 NEW HRD cases with EU and Member States institutions, covering 32 countries; and conducted follow-up advocacy activities, including letters, submissions ahead of state visits, phone calls to authorities, etc. on a number of previous cases.

Throughout the year, the EU Office prioritised increasing EU response rates to HRD cases, which rose to 97% (including 81% positive responses) compared to 60% for the previous year. Another priority was holding the EU accountable to its policy of condemning killings of HRDs.

The EU Office hosted a number of HRDs in Brussels, working with them to plan and organise strategic advocacy meetings and presentations, thus offering important opportunities for HRDs to engage in direct advocacy with key EU institutions. In May, Honduran HRD **Regina Fonseca** presented at a joint session of the Latin America/Caribbean and Human Rights Working Groups of the Council of the EU (28 Member States + representatives of EEAS, European Commission). She also met with Spanish MEP Ernest Urtasun, Vice Chair of the European Parliament's Delegation to the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly, resulting in a letter signed by 29 MEPs.

In January, the EU Office organised a series of advocacy meetings for Martin Ennals Award winner and Zone 9 Blogger (Ethiopia) **Yeterework Nigusse Kasaye**, including a presentation at the EU Council Working Group on Human Rights, and with the EEAS.

In April, the EU Office arranged for Russian HRD **Aleksandra Krylenkova** to meet with EU Council Working Groups on Human Rights

and on Eastern Europe; the European Endowment for Democracy; the Russia desk at the EEAS, and the International Partnership for HR (NGO). Aleksandra documents and reports on human rights violations in Crimea.

Advocacy training was given to HRDs from Bosnia and Herzegovina, China, Costa Rica, Egypt, Ethiopia, Georgia, Iraq, Cambodia, Pakistan, Peru, Russia, Tunisia, Turkey and Zambia.

So as to strengthen advocacy with European capitals, Front Line Defenders participated in and advised the newly created network "In Difesa Di", composed of 30 Italian NGOs with the aim of strengthening Italian policy on HRD protection. This resulted in the Chamber of Deputies approving a resolution on HRDs. In May 2017, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of HRDs, Michel Forst, was invited by the network to hold a series of consultations with the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and with business representatives.

EU Guidelines Training

Since the adoption of EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders over a decade ago, Front Line Defenders has worked to raise awareness and implementation of this EU-wide commitment to HRDs.

The Head of the EU Office carried out two EU HRD Guidelines trainings: in Khartoum, Sudan in February and in Lima, Peru in March. The training aims to create links between lesser known HRDs and EU diplomats and discuss the implementation of the EU Guidelines. Despite the security situation in Sudan, four HRDs from remote regions (out of 20 HRDs) and five EU diplomats attended. The training in Peru was organised to expand

knowledge among civil society organisations and HRDs about the Guidelines and to offer an opportunity for engagement between diplomats and the HRD community.

Training was also conducted for EU diplomats in Brussels before they deployed to field missions.



Front Line Defenders is the lead partner in the consortium of 12 international and regional NGOs implementing the EU Human Rights Defenders Mechanism: PROTECTDEFENDERS.EU

In its second year of operation, ProtectDefenders.eu has been consolidated as a successful tool to provide much needed support to human rights defenders at risk. The consortium has stepped up its practical assistance both quantitatively and qualitatively, in response to increasing demand for support.

In 2017, ProtectDefenders.eu provided 346 emergency grants, 76% of which were allocated in the most difficult countries and many of which were channelled through Front Line Defenders. It broadened the EU Temporary Relocation Platform, accompanying the creation of new host organisations and benefiting over 650 individuals. It has allocated 55 grants to local human rights groups to expand their operational capacities, and it has supported training for over 2,000 HRDs to better manage security.

In a context where the protection of HRDs becomes more difficult and attacks more frequent, it is imperative that initiatives like ProtectDefenders.eu are maintained over the long term and strengthened. **[]**



Berta Zúniga Cáceres (daughter of murdered HRD **Berta Cáceres**) briefing EU diplomats and NGOs in Brussels on 5 April on the human rights situation for indigenous people and environmental HRDs in Honduras, and on the status of the investigation into the killing of her mother.



Emma Achili, Front Line Defenders Head of EU Office, with **Yeterework Nigusse Kasaye** (above, right) and at the EU Guidelines training in Peru (above left) with HRD **Jacinta Yolanda Flores Montoro**.

rapid response advocacy

INDIA – On 12 May 2017, heavily armed Manipur police officers entered the family home of **Binalakshmi Nepram** and her elderly parents were asked several questions about her in an intimidating manner. This occurred while there was an ongoing smear campaign against the HRD. Following Front Line Defenders advocacy, the EU Delegation spoke to Binalakshmi, who was awarded an EIDHR grant and she reported being safer as a result.

BELARUS – On 26 March 2017, **Pavel Levinov** was detained by police in Vitebsk city while monitoring a peaceful assembly held against a Presidential Decree imposing fines on the unemployed. Front Line Defenders contacted the European Parliament about this case and the mass arrests conducted by the police. The EP adopted an urgent human rights resolution on 6 April on the situation in Belarus condemning the crackdown on peaceful protesters, the harassment and detention of independent journalists, opposition members, human rights activists and other protesters; and calling on the Belarusian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release and drop all judicial charges against all peaceful protesters, journalists, human rights defenders, civil society activists and opposition members. The EU Delegation also raised the case with the authorities. Pavel Levinov was released on 14 June 2017 after serving a 15-day sentence.

GUATEMALA – On 11 November 2017, journalist and indigenous rights defender, **Jerson Antonio Xitumul Morales**, was detained in El Estor, Izabal, Guatemala. The EU Office contacted the EU Delegation, as well as British and Spanish embassies, and also raised the ongoing cases of **Juan Eduardo Caal Suram** and **Abelino Chub Caal**. British officials proposed to raise the cases with the Guatemalan Ombudsman. The EU Delegation confirmed it would host a large meeting with HRDs in the country mid-December to address security issues.

VIETNAM – The EU Office participated in an European External Action Service (EEAS) civil society consultation meeting ahead of the EU-ASEAN dialogue on 14 November, and raised the issue of HRD participation in EU meetings in the region, and their safety and security as a result. On 16 November, after participating in meetings with the EU delegation in Hanoi, three HRDs – **Pham Doan Trang**, **Bui Thi Minh Hang** and **Nguyen Quang A** – were

arrested. The EU Delegation reported that it was pressuring Vietnamese authorities on the issue. The three were subsequently released, but remained under surveillance.

BURUNDI – On 3 January, the oldest human rights organisation in Burundi, the Burundi League for Human Rights – **Ligue Burundaise des Droits de l'Homme** (la Ligue Iteka) was disbanded by a ministerial decree. The EU office sent an appeal to the local EU Delegation, and on 6 January a Statement by the Spokesperson on the banning of Ligue Iteka was issued, praising the work of the organisation, crediting it with an important social role, and calling on the authorities to reverse the decision.

PHILIPPINES – On 27 October, **Julito M. Otacan** and 5 of his colleagues from the Tagdumahan Indigenous Peoples' Organization were detained by Philippine authorities. The EU Office forwarded the case to the EU Delegation, as well as German, Dutch, and Swedish embassies. The Dutch Embassy replied that it would monitor the case. In the meantime, two Members of the European Parliament Human Rights Committee, who had visited the Philippines over the summer, wrote a letter to the Philippine Ministry of Justice and Human Rights Commission, as well as the military general responsible for the arrest.

SOMALILAND – On 5 February, **Guleid Ahmed Jama** (right), chairperson and founder of the Human Rights Centre, was interrogated by the Head of the Criminal Investigation Department in Hargeisa. On 14 February, after Front Line Defenders sent information about the case, the EU Delegation talked to Guleid and raised his case with authorities in Hargeisa. He was subsequently released.

TURKEY – Human rights lawyers **Engin Gökoğlu** and **Selçuk Kozağaçlı** have been detained since 12 September, and both suffering critical health issues. Engin was

tortured on 30 October, while Selçuk was moved on November 15th to a high security prison unit and put at risk of torture. After learning that Engin was being denied medical attention, the EU Office contacted the EU delegation in Turkey to ensure all 28 EU MS embassies were alerted to the situation, and brought the case to the attention of EU Commissioners Mogherini (Foreign Affairs) and Hahn (EU Neighbourhood), and the President of the European Parliament. An open letter by MEPs to Mogherini on the cases was circulated to raise the profile of the case, and was sent before the end of November. [I]



Guleid Ahmed Jama, chairperson and founder of the Human Rights Centre, Somaliland.



Bangladeshi HRD Sultana Kamal meeting with officials from the European External Action Service (EEAS) during a visit to Brussels, at which she presented key recommendations from the Front Line Defenders report on HRDs in Bangladesh, as well as key issues facing civil society in the country.

81%

positive responses from
the EU & Member States

The recipient of the 2017 Front Line Defenders Award for Human Rights Defenders at Risk is Emil Kurbedinov from Crimea, Ukraine.

DEFENDING HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS and political prisoners is some of the most dangerous work a lawyer can do in Crimea. After years of taking on these risky cases, Crimean Tatar lawyer Emil Kurbedinov was awarded the Front Line Defenders Award for Human Rights Defenders at Risk on 26 May 2017 in a ceremony at City Hall in Dublin.

Emil Kurbedinov is a Crimean Tatar and human rights lawyer. Since the occupation of Crimea by the Russian Federation, Emil has been defending the persecuted Crimean Tatar minority, civil society activists and journalists. He also provides emergency response and documentation of rights violations during raids and searches of activists' homes. In January 2017, masked men from Crimea's Centre for Counteracting Extremism detained Emil and took him to a local directorate of the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) for interrogation. He was sentenced to 10 days in

detention for "propagandising for extremist organisations".

Michael O'Flaherty, Director of the EU Fundamental Rights Agency, presented the Award to Emil. Recognising the struggles of the five finalists for the award (see opposite page), Mr. O'Flaherty noted, "These are the heroes, and often the unsung heroes of our societies".

Accepting the Award, Emil said: "When we defend political prisoners and persecuted activists, we are going against a system in which there's no hope of a fair trial. Winning an acquittal for my clients is almost impossible – but what I can do is show them that despite the risks, I will not abandon them".

The Award helps focus international attention on the HRD's work, thus contributing to the recipient's personal security. The Award generated significant media coverage in Russian and Ukrainian media. Top English-

language media outlets in Ukraine – Hromadske International TV channel and The Kyiv Post – ran features on Emil, as did ATR Channel, a Crimean TV station popular with Crimean Tatars. The Award also garnered print, online, radio, and broadcast television coverage in seven languages (English, Russian, Ukrainian, French, Spanish, Italian, Arabic). In Ireland, national broadcaster, RTÉ, and *The Irish Times* ran feature stories on the prize and the winner.

Emil traveled to Paris following the ceremony in Dublin, and held meetings at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and with the Ukrainian Ambassador in France. He also participated in a public conference at a Ukrainian Cultural Center in the city.

Upon Emil's arrival in Ukraine, dozens of people, including journalists and activists, met him at Borispyl International Airport. "It was the warmest welcome from colleagues and friends. People who I did not even know came up to me and congratulated me," said the HRD. □

"THIS AWARD IS VERY IMPORTANT TO ME PERSONALLY; BUT IT IS IMPORTANT FOR EVERYONE IN CRIMEA, ESPECIALLY THE PERSECUTED." EMIL KURBEDINOV



Emil Kurbedinov from Crimea is presented with the Front Line Defenders Award for Human Rights Defenders at Risk by Michael O'Flaherty, Director of the EU Fundamental Rights Agency at the award ceremony in Dublin's City Hall.

Emil Kurbedinov
Human rights lawyer and defender of Crimean Tatar community



"We have and will keep working to defend the rights of Crimean Tatars, and journalists. Civil society has shown that it is alive, and that it will reach lawlessness of the authorities. We will keep working, without a doubt."

Emil Kurbedinov is a human rights lawyer and member of the Crimean community of local activists, journalists, and Crimean Tatars led by the F... to authorities.

Since the annexation of Crimea by Russia in March 2014, Crimean Tatars (approximately 300,000), have been routinely persecuted. Kurbedinov attempted to establish full political control of the Crimean Peninsula upon himself to document the human rights violations of activists' homes and to act as their legal representatives. He has drawn attention to the offences as well as scrutiny from the Russian government.

Kurbedinov was detained by a group of masked men claiming to be from the Russian Ministry of the Interior searching for equipment containing information pertaining to the Crimean Tatars. He was taken to a local directorate of the Russian Ministry of the Interior (MVD) for interrogation and the same day he was charged with "propaganda for extremist organisations" in the city of Simferopol and sentenced to ten days in prison. Kurbedinov was released after five days after his release. Emil was back at work documenting the arrest of Crimean Tatars who were arrested at Mariene Mustafayev's home in Kamenka, Crimea. He continues to express the will of the Crimean people and demand the end of the occupation of any solidarity or support".



FINALIST - Francisca Ramirez is a leader from the rural community of La Fonseca, Nicaragua, where she has coordinated Consejo por la Defensa de la Tierra, Lago y Soberanía (Council for the Defence of the Land, Lake and Sovereignty) for the past 4 years. She educates communities on their rights, campaigns against land-grabbing, and organises against a proposed canal that would displace thousands of small farmers and indigenous peoples.



FINALIST - Nonhle Mbuthuma fights for land rights and the environment in South Africa's Eastern Cape. In 2007 Nonhle founded the Amadiba Crisis Committee (ACC) to unite community members in five villages of the Amadiba Tribal Authority region in opposition to destructive mining projects. She is now the most visible leader of the campaign against the Australian corporation Mineral Commodities Mineral Ltd (MRC). Nonhle also engages the community in farming and food security workshops.



FINALIST - Abdulhakim Al-Fadhli has been detained and imprisoned more than five times for his activism on behalf of Kuwait's stateless Bedoon and other minority communities in Kuwait. He is known for raising awareness among the Bedoon about their rights and mobilising them to engage in the political process in Kuwait to secure fundamental rights that Kuwaiti citizens enjoy, including those related to education, housing, health care and political participation.



FINALIST - Pham Thanh Nghien has been a vocal critic of the authorities in Vietnam, publishing several essays online and appearing frequently on radio to detail and discuss government violations of human rights. She promotes civil engagement in human rights issues, debate on territorial sovereignty, and tackling corruption.

The 2017 Dublin Platform for Human Rights Defenders at Risk was held in Dublin Castle on 17-19 October and brought 100 HRDs from 82 countries together with over 100 representatives from Irish, international and intergovernmental institutions, making it one of the most diverse gatherings of HRDs at risk in the world.

WHILE HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS FACE risks every day because of their work and Front Line Defenders overcomes serious logistical challenges preparing for the Dublin Platform, this year's Platform will no doubt be remembered for the force majeure that was Hurricane Ophelia. The storm threatened to derail the Dublin Platform proceedings, wreaking havoc on arrival day for the travelling HRDs and international guests. However, most guests succeeded in reaching Ireland for the Dublin Platform, albeit some a little later than originally planned.

As is the case at every Dublin Platform, however, some HRDs did not manage to reach Dublin due to state repression – HRDs from Bahrain, Cameroon, China, Colombia, Cuba, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia were detained, under travel bans, denied exit

permits or intimidated and forced to remain at home.

The Platform was opened by Board Member Mary Jane Real, who welcomed the guests, acknowledging the impact of climate change on human rights work. Andrew Anderson, presiding over his first Platform as Executive Director, challenged all those in the room – HRDs, guests and government representatives – to consider how to expand the human rights community and rise to the challenges of what seems like a new world of fake news and neo-authoritarianism.

Andrew reaffirmed Front Line Defenders commitment to HRDs, and reminded the audience that “We must celebrate the universal values which inspire human rights defenders. Values that many human rights defenders feel are worth going to prison, or

worse, to defend.”

The opening day's Keynote Address was delivered by UN Assistant Secretary General for Human Rights, Andrew Gilmour. Also addressing the Platform on the opening day were EU Special Representative for Human Rights, Stavros Lambrinidis, and UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Michel Forst.

The second day of the Platform, Ireland's Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Simon Coveney, addressed the HRDs, citing their courage and committing the Irish government to maintaining its support for their protection.

An issue that emerged from many personal testimonies is the **stigmatisation** of HRDs by both state and non-state actors. Such defamation campaigns are aimed at generating the idea that human rights work is 'immoral', 'unpatriotic' and even 'terrorist' in nature. HRDs explained why protecting land, environmental and community rights does not mean being 'anti-development'; why protecting women and LGBTI rights does not mean being 'anti-family'; and why protecting civil and political rights does not mean being 'against your own country'. Over two days of testimonies and in other discussions, HRDs explained why these narratives are false and how important it is to change this discourse.



Top left: Bouhdid Belhedi, Tunisia



Middle left: Sindy Joyce, Ireland



Bottom left: Graciela Pérez Rodríguez, Mexico

Main image: Simon Coveney, Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade



2017 dublin platform



Panel on Collective Security with (from left to right): Anabela Carlon (Mexico), Ihsan Ali (Pakistan), Marusia Lopez (moderator), Sheham Osman (Egypt), and Alexandra Krylenkova (Russian Federation).



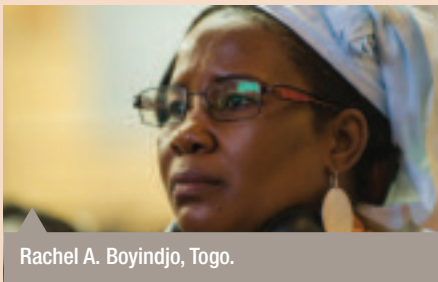
Dabledoo Music lead a participatory music session to close the Platform.



Taesun Bae (South Korea) presents testimony.



(Left to right) Amir Abd Hadi (Malaysia), Safa Shareef (Maldives) and Natasha Rather (Kashmir) at protest in support of the 'Istanbul 10' outside the Embassy of Turkey in Dublin.



Rachel A. Boyindjo, Togo.



Gertrude Kazoviyo, Burundi.



Working group of HRDs from Africa.

PANELS: Each day of the Platform, thematic panels were presented at the plenary sessions, addressing key issues confronting HRDs around the world and featuring presentations by HRDs and other key actors.

This year's Platform featured panel discussions on ways to address and end the killing of HRDs; the challenge of social media as a forum for both threats and opportunities; gender-specific strategies used by WHRDs and LGBTI rights defenders; and an exploration of collective security practices and strategies. HRD panelists were joined by Agnes Callamard, UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial killings; Sinead McSweeney, Vice President for Public Policy and Communications at Twitter (EMEA); and Marusia López, Senior Associate for Power and Protection of Women Activists at JASS/IM-Defensoras.

WORKING GROUPS: In region- and language-based working groups, HRDs

discussed the strategies they use in their countries and regions, in relation to specific risks, making practical recommendations for improving their security.

TESTIMONIES: The opportunity for HRDs to tell their truths and stories to a compassionate audience of people who can directly relate to their experiences is something profound. Testimonies were delivered from the main stage throughout the 3-day event, and brought tears, hugs and validation.

PROTEST: While the 100 HRDs and guests were meeting in Dublin, many of their colleagues and friends remained imprisoned around the world. In solidarity with all imprisoned HRDs, and specifically to protest the detention of 10 HRDs in Turkey, who had been arrested in July while attending a workshop, Platform attendees staged a demonstration outside the Embassy of Turkey

in Dublin. Many of the HRDs in attendance are restricted from protesting publicly in their home countries, so this was also an opportunity for them to express themselves freely.

CULTURAL ACTIVITIES: Participants and guests were treated to a number of Irish cultural experiences, including a unique musical performance by renowned Irish singer Moya Brennan and band, who performed a composition written by Sara Yang, daughter of detained Chinese HRD Guo Feixiong; a traditional Irish music seisiún by the Kelly family; a performance of a poem dedicated to HRDs by American-born, Ireland-based poet Erin Fornoff (please see the back cover of this publication); and a participatory musical jam led by music educators Dabledoo Music.

In addition, on the final day, the participants enjoyed a bus tour of Dublin city and an evening of traditional Irish food, music and dance at a Celtic Nights cultural event. **□**

In 2007, responding to needs identified by human rights defenders, Front Line Defenders started a training programme in protection strategies. Over 10 years, thousands of HRDs have benefitted from this training programme, which has evolved over the years based on feedback from HRDs, encounters with new and complex threat environments and in recognition of changing understandings of security and protection among HRDs, organisations and collectives.

IN 2007, FOLLOWING A NUMBER OF training collaborations with Peace Brigades International (PBI), Front Line Defenders established a full-time training programme aimed at providing HRDs with tools and resources to keep them and their organisations secure. Front Line Defenders viewed this programme as another core component, along with protection grants, to helping make HRDs more secure and enabling them to work more effectively in their communities.

From the beginning, a number of key principles were enshrined:

- the programme was for HRDs at risk in order to create or improve their personal security plan, and for an organization to generate or enhance security planning
- the methodology would be based on participatory training, adaptable to the unique circumstances facing HRDs in different contexts
- a network of local trainers would be developed in countries around the world, to reflect as much as possible the contexts and experiences of the HRDs
- training would be provided in the languages of the HRDs, as much as possible, including translation of materials
- utilise a holistic workshop methodology, including risk analysis, digital protection and physical and mental well-being
- gender sensitivity would be ensured, including participation of women human rights defenders as 50% of participants, and covering issues such as gender-based threats and mitigation.

Ten years on, there is an international network of over 50 HRDs trained as trainers from each region of the world, which receives updates on training news and resources, new methodologies and approaches.

The training programme has maintained a policy of open engagement with the HRDs, receiving feedback and adjusting accordingly, as well as constantly seeking ways to make sure that the lessons learned in training are taken back and implemented. In the early years, as many as 20 participants were registered for each training; the HRDs were from many countries, and different regional contexts; and after training, there wasn't much scope for follow up.

A decade later, a number of changes have been made to respond to the lessons learned.

Training workshops are now smaller in the number of participants – usually 12 to 15 – to allow for individual participation in a way that develops internalisation of security protocols. Workshops now are held mostly for HRDs from one or two countries at a time, which generally leads to better sharing and development of post-workshop resources and strategies.

Front Line Defenders has also developed thematic-based training workshops and resources, such as a training for journalists at risk (2015), HRDs working in conflict areas (2016), and HRDs working on environment,

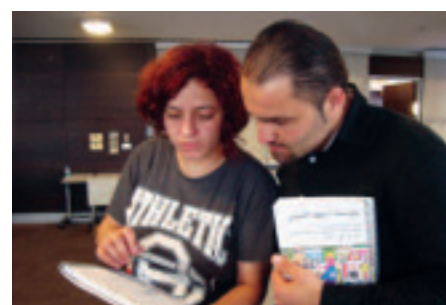
indigenous and land issues (2017). Recognising that after a workshop, HRDs may struggle to put in place organisational security plans, the organisation developed an annual security course which includes 2 introductory activities on risk analysis, followed by a basic workshop on security. After this, there is a break of 3 months during which time the participating HRDs develop security plans in their organisations, and at a second workshop share best practices, challenges and gaps, with sessions custom-made to address these.

So far, all HRDs who were able to attend the second workshops produced and implemented security plans.

Front Line Defenders has expanded its sessions on well-being at training workshops, and if possible, draws in local cultural resources. For example, at a workshop in India, Indian head massage was included; at a workshop for environment/indigenous/land HRDs, opening and closing rituals were used to situate the participants.

In recent years, there has been new interest generated in and requests for an approach with a focus on collective security. While Front Line Defenders always offered training on organisational security, it now includes sessions on improving security plans for other collective situations, such as democracy networks and communities whose territories are threatened.

At the workshops, all HRDs are strongly encouraged to connect with other Front Line Defenders programmes, such as protection grants and ID cards. □



Top left: Participants at a Security Course for Arabic and English-speaking HRDs role play violence at a protest. Later they demonstrated the security plan they prepared to deal with the protection of demonstrators. **Top right:** Russian LGBTI HRDs practice strategies for avoiding assault following a session by a self-defence expert. **Bottom left:** HRDs in Myanmar create a security plan for reducing the likelihood of a risk occurring, followed by a contingency plan for what to do if, despite their best efforts, the risk does materialise. **Bottom right:** At a Training of Trainers workshop for Arabic-speakers, HRDs discuss security strategies they are going to demonstrate.

risk analysis and protection planning

THERE ARE HUGE LOGISTICAL CHALLENGES involved in many of the workshops, including facilitating communications for remote HRDs without email, visa and travel issues. Despite this, once a defender's participation is confirmed Front Line Defenders makes every effort to ensure they can join the training, including providing extra financial resources, visa and logistic support for travel, facilitating communications for remote HRDs, etc. For example, when a workshop for HRDs working in conflict from several countries was held in East Africa, the Iraqi defenders invited needed to be supported to travel to a third country 10 days in advance of the workshop in order to obtain the mandatory yellow fever inoculations which were unavailable in Iraq.

Front Line Defenders is constantly updating tactics and best practices to deal with specific risks, for example increasing online threats and abuse which increasingly is particularly targeting particularly WHRDs.

Front Line Defenders has stabilised the number of trainings conducted each year at 12, which allows for adequate preparation and follow-up. In 2017, 140 HRDs - 54% of them women HRDs - participated in trainings held in Costa Rica, DRC, El Salvador, Mexico, Myanmar, Nepal, Nicaragua, South Africa, Tajikistan, Tunisia (2) and Ukraine. The HRDs came from 19 countries.

My experience has been enlightening at all levels: new knowledge, bonds, ways to analyse, reflect, work and share. Also, new ways of learning and unlearning.

– WHRD, Peru

Localisation

Front Line Defenders has localised its training programme by conducting training of trainer programmes, so that there is a network of trainers who can conduct workshops in local languages, supported by the organisation, and thereby reach more HRDs.

Anara Ibrayeva, a lawyer working with the **Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and the Rule of Law**, first participated in a training programme in February 2010, and subsequently became a trainer. Through her organisation, she began implementing the Front Line Defenders training programme throughout her country and the Central Asia region. Since 2011, Anara has organised 45 seminars, 7 conferences, and numerous other events focused on the security and protection of HRDs, with the participation of hundreds of HRDs.

Security Consultation

In 2017, Front Line Defenders initiated a new component to its protection training programme, offering one on one security consultations for HRDs at high risk. This involves Front Line Defenders Security Advisor meeting



Peruvian WHRDs facing fabricated charges, physical attacks, arrest and assassination as a result of the defence of their communities and environment in the face of mining projects, experience a well-being session at a workshop on risk analysis and protection planning.

with HRDs in their location advising on risk mitigation strategies and implementing security measures tailored to their context, which is followed by ongoing remote support.

HRDs at risk from Mexico, Egypt, Zimbabwe, Philippines, Crimea, Nigeria and others have sought one on one assistance. Additionally, the Security Advisor is also assisting HRDs to utilise their country's government-provided Protection Mechanism most effectively. In countries where governments provide protection mechanisms for HRDs at risk, and then offer security measures such as CCTV, fencing, panic alarms, etc., Front Line Defenders can provide specific advice on maximising the effectiveness of these tools, and also advocate to the government on the measures provided. In South Africa, Zimbabwe, Mexico (two visits) and the Philippines, Front Line Defenders conducted several one on one visits to HRDs at risk from a range of experts – a Digital Protection Consultant, Security Advisor

supporting personal and physical security, and the regional Protection Coordinator – as well as providing structured group training courses. This tailored, sustained and multifaceted support represents an augmented approach to protection by the organisation. []

128

Training Workshops

1,500+

HRDs Trained

Now we are thinking first about security before doing any work.

– HRD, Bangladesh



Front Line Defenders Security Advisor reviews area maps with HRDs in Mexico during a consultation mission.

Front Line Defenders hosted Honduran WHRD Regina Fonseca for a series of talks in several cities in Ireland and Madrid from 25 April to 4 May. Regina works to advance sexual and reproductive rights in a country where abortion is illegal and basic services for women's sexual and reproductive health are severely limited.



Front Line Defenders and Amnesty Northern Ireland host Honduran human rights defender Regina Fonseca at Queen's University Belfast.

AT QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY BELFAST, REGINA talked to journalist Amanda Ferguson about the challenges of defending reproductive rights in a country where abortion is entirely criminalised and the defence of human rights is a dangerous, sometimes deadly, occupation.

Members of the audience shared their own experiences of defending reproductive rights in Northern Ireland, where activists have been physically assaulted, and where police have refused to file complaints about the incidents as well as conducted raids on the homes of activists suspected of possessing illegal abortion pills. In Northern Ireland, as in Honduras, there is active criminalisation of abortion.

Regina spoke to academic audiences in Limerick, Cork, and Galway about the current situation in Honduras, where Congress was introducing a new Penal Code. All clauses, except that which criminalises abortion in every circumstance, were to be changed. Regina and her organisation, the Centre for Women's Rights, working within a coalition of NGOs, were fighting for this clause to also be reformed. Their arguments were heard by Congress alongside those of members of the religious establishment on the same day.

Unfortunately, this bid to protect the rights of Honduran women and girls was ultimately unsuccessful.

In Dublin on 27 April, Regina shared a stage with Irish campaigner **Anna Cosgrave**, founder of the REPEAL project, and discussed strategies for changing the legal framework that gives equal right to life to the unborn, as well as the risks that doing this work entails in Ireland and Honduras. It was a moving discussion, with Regina emphasising the astounding numbers of girls under 15 (900 every year) who are impregnated as a result of

rape, who are forced to carry through a pregnancy and who frequently become suicidal as a result. She told the audience that these girls are her motivation to continue working despite the threats against her. The discussion was moderated by **Ellen Coyne**, an Irish investigative journalist.

In Madrid on 3 May, Regina shared a panel with WHRD **Marusia López Cruz** (JASS – Justice Associates and Mesoamerican Initiative of Women Human Rights Defenders) and feminist journalist **M. Ángeles Fernández** (Pikara Magazine).

Regina explained how international solidarity between feminist movements can protect WHRDs and help advance sexual and reproductive rights in Honduras and beyond, while Marusia addressed the protection strategies WHRDs are developing in the region and the advancements in identifying and documenting attacks against WHRDs with a gender perspective.

M. Ángeles Fernández gave an overview of the recent successes of the feminist movement in Spain in advancing sexual and reproductive rights, which was followed by an open discussion on strengthening the international solidarity and support between struggles.

As part of the tour, on 2 May, the Front Line Defenders EU Office organised a presentation at a joint session of the **Latin America/Caribbean and Human Rights Working Groups** of the Council of the EU. Regina also held a meeting with Spanish MEP Ernest Urstasun, Vice Chair of the European Parliament's Delegation to the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly, which resulted in a letter signed by 29 MEPs. []

“The speaking tour helped get human rights organisations, solidarity organisations, and authorities in Spain and the EU to turn their eyes to what is happening in Honduras, specifically with regard to the denial of the right to reproductive health for women... It also made me recognise that there is an invisible thread called solidarity, uniting women from different latitudes, sustaining our struggles for the right to decide, among many other struggles. That invisible thread allows us to continue walking and to gather the strength that we all emanate and require.”

- Regina Fonseca, HRD, Honduras



Regina Fonseca speaks with Irish campaigner Anna Cosgrave and investigative journalist Ellen Coyne at a reproductive rights event in Dublin.



Regina Fonseca speaking about her work at the University of Limerick School of Law in April.

Human rights defenders working on issues related to sexual orientation, gender identity and expression (SOGIE) in Indonesia are facing more risks than they have in decades. *Attacks on LGBT Rights Defenders Escalating in Indonesia*, includes testimonies from dozens of human rights defenders interviewed by Front Line Defenders staff in four provinces – Aceh, Makassar, Yogyakarta and Jakarta – in July 2017. HRDs report that following a crackdown on LGBT rights in 2016 and amidst ongoing violent raids of LGBT gatherings, threats against community leaders are increasingly frequent, personal, and violent.

ACCORDING TO THE REPORT, 23 OUT OF 25 HRDs interviewed received multiple death threats since the start of 2016, while social media accounts known to be affiliated with Islamic extremist groups increasingly post photos or videos of activists with public calls to attack them. HRDs noted a marked increase in the use of religious terminology during threatening phone calls or online attacks, such as “your blood is halal,” meaning that to kill them is religiously sanctioned in

Islam. At least 3 rights groups were forced to move their offices in the previous two years following a raid or physical intimidation. The raids and threats were perpetrated by extremist groups, local religious police, and state police.

In several cases, state police ignored HRDs’ requests for protection when an extremist group announced in advance its intention to attack an event. Defamation in the media and violent rhetoric from high-level government

officials (such as the Minister of Defence, Minister of Higher Education and Chief of Police of West Java) is a key cause of decreased activism, as HRDs report complaints from family and friends about endangering them. Sex worker rights defenders in Yogyakarta cited increased targeting by police “at night” (while working as sex workers) due to their visibility as activists “during the day.”

Front Line Defenders launched the report at the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA) Asia Regional Conference in Phnom Penh, Cambodia in December. Following the launch, Front Line Defenders has held briefings with the EU Delegation and representatives of EU Member States in Jakarta, and is conducting ongoing advocacy at national and EU levels. □



“The word ‘kill’ appeared so many times; kill kill kill. Things like ‘When I see her I will kill her,’ ‘I will attack her if I ever see her.’ We counted throughout the day – first 100, then 200, then more than 500 violent comments. I was terrified at first, and considered never writing again... but when you get to the 15th page of death threats... you just have to start ignoring it.”

- Augustine, HRD



“Our investigation illustrates that the government’s own crackdown on LGBT rights in 2016 emboldened those who want to terrorise human rights defenders into silence. Ongoing police raids and a failure to respond to attacks against HRDs send the message that violence against peaceful activists is acceptable in Indonesia.”

- Andrew Anderson
Executive Director

As part of efforts to support the holistic security of HRDs, the Front Line Defenders Visibility and Communications Team works with HRDs to assess elements of their local, regional, and international visibility which put them at risk, and to design strategic communications interventions to mitigate those risks. In 2017, Front Line Defenders worked with HRDs in a number of countries to increase their visibility, using traditional media, social media, radio campaigning, graphic novel storytelling and other multimedia tools.



Above and right: Participants work on communications strategies in a Visibility for Protection workshop in Bangladesh.

FRONT LINE DEFENDERS UNDERSTANDS visibility to be a key element of HRD security, and increasingly important in countries where there are effective propaganda campaigns to smear and tarnish the reputation and work of HRDs by powerful actors. The Visibility for Protection (VfP) approach emphasizes the importance of local and national visibility strategies. The VfP approach to strategic

campaigning enables HRDs to recognise their power to counter defamatory or risk-enhancing narratives about them.

Front Line Defenders organised and led a full-day Visibility for Protection workshop at Friends of Earth International's 2-week Asia Summit. Working with 20 at-risk land rights defenders from Asia, the VfP day began with a session on defamation and analysis of threats posed by various forms of media and actors, with HRDs working in country groups to identify messaging about them that contributes to their existing profile in their local or national context. An afternoon session focused on the importance of identifying threats and defamation attacks as part of a protection strategy, demonstrating the pattern in previous cases in which defamation directly preceded physical attacks, arrest, and killings.

Finally, 3 case studies of visibility strategies which have protection at their core were presented – in Honduras, Bangladesh, and Thailand – and worked for the afternoon with each team of HRDs to devise protection-driven visibility strategies to implement at home. The groups each presented their work

throughout the session. Based on the interest expressed by HRDs at this workshop and in discussions with HRDs in other settings, the Visibility Team will be developing this Workshop module for delivery as part of future field missions.



Sultana Kamal – European Advocacy Tour

As part of ongoing advocacy and visibility work related to the Bangladesh report (Nov 2016) on the killings of HRDs in Dhaka, Front Line Defenders hosted prominent WHRD Sultana Kamal in Europe in February and March 2017. Together with staff from the Visibility Team and the Deputy Director, Sultana spoke at events in the Hague, Brussels, Berlin, London and Geneva.

In the Hague, Front Line Defenders was a partner in the 2017 Freedom Book Fair, hosted by the Hague Peace Project. As part of the Bangladesh report launch, Erin Kilbride spoke on a panel with Amnesty International and members of a humanist organisation based in Europe about the crackdown on activists working on freedom of religion and freedom of expression. The event featured a screening of an extended version of the Front Line Defenders Bangladesh video featuring testimonies from HRDs in Dhaka. Deutsche

Welle's Bangla service live-streamed the event on Facebook; more than 12,000 people watched the film and panel discussion live. At the Book Fair, Sultana spoke with three Bangladeshi activists on a panel about religious extremism and threats to HRDs.

In Brussels, Sultana and the Head of EU Office, Emma Achilli, met with EU and member state diplomats working on Asia and human rights, MEPs, the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the EEAS Bangladesh desk.

In Geneva, Sultana and Deputy Director Andrea Rocca presented the Bangladesh report findings and recommendations during a side event during the UN Human Rights Council session. In Berlin, Transparency International's head office hosted a meeting to discuss linkages between anti-corruption work and the protection of HRDs. In London, Sultana and Front Line Defenders held campaign strategy meetings with NGOs, as well as an advocacy meeting at the Foreign



and Commonwealth Office to discuss a UK minister's recent trip to Dhaka and his stated support for the Prime Minister's dangerous "zero-tolerance" policy, which has been used to criminalize HRDs. The FCO agreed to push for the creation of an HRD desk at the National Human Rights Commission in Dhaka, a top priority for many HRDs.



La Lucha

In April, Adam Shapiro, Head of Communications and Visibility, reached an agreement with the Educational Services of the State of Chihuahua to pilot the use of the nonfiction graphic novel, *La Lucha: The Story of Lucha Castro and Human Rights in Mexico* during the 2017-2018 school year in 19 secondary schools and a teacher training institution in Chihuahua, Mexico.

4,798 students and high school students, 60 teachers and 480 future teachers are participating in the pilot. The project is integrated into the official state curriculum and is based on a reading guide prepared by CEDEHM and Front Line Defenders, which has been reviewed by the pedagogical committees of each educational level. For each of the next two years, the number of students will be increased by 20%.

Trainee teachers at Escuela Normal de Sahucillo (Chihuahua), where 480 future teachers are being trained to use *La Lucha* in secondary schools.

In October 2017, Front Line Defenders launched the radio campaign “Support human rights, support human rights defenders”, in partnership with a group of Malian human rights defenders and Studio Tamani, a Bamako-based radio station, to support the push for adoption of a draft law on the protection of HRDs.

PROTECT MALIAN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

THE AIM OF THE CAMPAIGN was to build popular support for local HRDs, sharing a series of radio messages about their work, the risks they face and why they need to be protected. The campaign also sought to generate public awareness of and support for a new law on protection of HRDs, the draft of which was approved in January 2017 by the Council of Ministers. In December, the Malian Parliament approved the legislation, making it the second country in West Africa, after Cote d'Ivoire to introduce a legal mechanism for the protection of HRDs.

The campaign featured six human rights defenders, working on issues such as women's rights, transitional justice, land rights and freedom of expression. Studio Tamani, a local radio broadcaster set up in 2013 by Foundation Hironnelle, and which is now considered one of the most popular and reliable radio networks in the country, served as media partner for the campaign.

Twice a day for three weeks, Studio Tamani broadcast a series of six short radio announcements across its network of 56 stations, in all Malian provinces, including in rural and remote areas. Each message was recorded in French and translated into four local languages (Bambara, Peulh, Tamacheq, Sonrhai), in order to reach out to different ethnic groups.

The campaign website – www.radiohrd.org – hosts the radio announcements, updates about the HRDs and the developments with the legislation.

The campaign was officially launched with a press conference at Maison de la Presse in Bamako, on 6 October. Four human rights defenders and Front Line Defenders West and Central Africa Protection Coordinator, introduced the radio campaign and spoke about the crucial role played by human rights defenders in their communities. The HRDs

explained why it is important to approve a national law on protection of HRDs and ensure that all HRDs can carry out their work without fearing threats, reprisals and attacks, with a special focus on women human rights defenders.

Ahead of the press conference, Front Line Defenders coordinated two advocacy meetings at the National Assembly, in partnership with Malian HRD partners, civil society representatives and the International Service for Human Rights (ISHR), which had previously worked with Malian HRDs to develop the draft law. During the first meeting Front Line Defenders and its partners discussed the proposed law on protection of HRDs with the members of the Law Commission, while during the second meeting they met with members of the other commissions of the National Assembly. Approximately 70 MPs in total participated in the two meetings. The Front Line Defenders West & Central Africa Protection Coordinator and Head of EU Office also held advocacy meetings with the EU Delegation and other embassies in Bamako.



Press conference in Bamako to launch the campaign.



Front Line Defenders West & Central Africa Protection Coordinator and Head of the EU Office meet with MPs at the National Assembly in Bamako to support Malian HRD efforts to advance legislation to protect HRDs.

dublin human rights festival

The Inaugural Dublin Human Rights Festival was hosted by Front Line Defenders, The National Women's Council of Ireland, the National LGBT Federation (NXF), Amnesty International Ireland and the Irish Council for Civil Liberties (ICCL) and was sponsored by Dublin City Council.

THE DUBLIN HUMAN RIGHTS FESTIVAL took place on Saturday, 21 October, running alongside Science Gallery Dublin's exhibition In Case of Emergency. Over the course of the day the festival welcomed over 600 attendees at the array of interactive panel discussions and advocacy workshop. Topics covered in the panel discussions included defending women's rights, LGBTI rights, environmental

rights and privacy rights and included guest panelists from Egypt, Pakistan, Chile, South Africa, Nigeria, Georgia and elsewhere. The advocacy workshops were designed to engage all age groups, with Clowns Without Borders and DabbleDoo Music engaging the younger audiences and VOCALISM and a collective of protest poets performing under the title Righteous Voice engaging a wider age



range. There was also a food stall provided by Our Table volunteers from the Direct Provision Centre in Galway, information stalls from Amnesty International Ireland and Peace Brigades International, body printing with ohmydays and a digital security help desk run by Front Line Defenders. □



(clockwise from top left): audience asks questions to the LGBTI rights defenders panel; digital protection booth at the festival; over 100 audience members listen to women HRDs Hauwa Haruna (Nigeria), Baia Pataraiia (Georgia), and Seham Osman (Egypt), on a panel moderated by Orla O'Connor (Director, National Women's Council of Ireland); Sahar Ali leads a spoken word session, curated by Irish-American poet Erin Fornoff, and; Rodrigo Mundaca (I, Chile), Nohnle Mbuthuma (South Africa) and Artur Grigoryan (Armenia) address the vulnerability of environmental HRDs on a panel moderated by journalist and author Paul Cunningham.



Annual Lecture

The 2017 Annual Front Line Defenders Lecture in partnership with University College Dublin and Trinity College Dublin took place on 27 March at the Royal Irish Academy. Nigerian lawyer and HRD, Hauwa Ibrahim, presented “Mothers Without Borders: Steering Youth Away from Violent Extremism”. Hauwa is best known for her work using Sharia Law to defend women convicted unjustly under the Sharia legal system. In 2005, she was honoured with the European Parliament’s Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought. In May 2014, Hauwa was appointed a member of the fact-finding commission investigating the 219 girls kidnapped by Boko Haram from Chibok.



Solidarity with HRDs

Clockwise from above: Front Line Defenders staff acted in solidarity with Sudanese HRD Mudawi Ibrahim Adam; with Turkish HRDs and journalists being silenced through imprisonment, and; on the 600th day of detention of Nguyen Van Dai, a Vietnamese HRD.

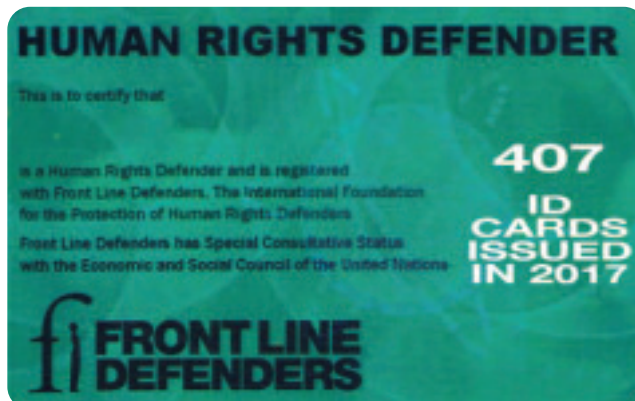
the front line defenders id card

Received with thanks the Defender ID Card... Feeling relieved and secure in this part of Indian-occupied Kashmir
– HRD, Kashmir

407

ID cards issued in 2017

The Human Rights Defender ID card from Front Line Defenders



Lottie Cunningham and her colleagues at Center for Justice and Human Rights of the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua (CEJUDHCAN) in Nicaragua face ongoing threats, harassment and defamation as they work to protect the rights of indigenous communities.

The same week the HRD ID Cards arrived at the office, one of the youngest colleagues went to a local police station to deliver documents as part of an ongoing case. The police had regularly refused to accept such documentation and would disrespect the HRDs. Upon presentation of the ID Card, the police immediately accepted the documents, giving the HRD greater confidence and a feeling of being respected.



Bauchi Human Rights Network (BAHRN) is a network of over 50 organisations working to stop torture and to prevent cruel and degrading treatment in Nigeria, particularly in prisons.

BAHRN has had difficulty accessing detention centres and has been threatened by lower-ranking police and security personnel when investigating or monitoring human rights abuses. After presenting the HRD ID Cards, BAHRN staff report greater access to detention centres and prisons, and the release of some of the detainees for whom the Network advocated.

The cards, recognised as proof of the HRDs having been verified by an international organisation, have ensured respect for the HRDs, in one case, leading to an insider in the security forces becoming a whistleblower to BAHRN about cases of abuse.



Rigoberto Lobo is the Director General of Promoción Educación Defensa En Derechos Humanos (PROMEDEHUM) in Venezuela. One night he was stopped by police, who started searching him and his vehicle. A common occurrence, it is also how police carry out petty extortion of citizens. When the police officer found Rigoberto's HRD Card in his wallet, they apologised and immediately let him go.

When the police officer found Rigoberto's HRD Card in his wallet, they apologised...

hrd memorial

In 2017, Front Line Defenders continued developing the HRD Memorial to commemorate the lives and work of human rights defenders targeted and killed because of their work to defend and advance human rights. HRDs are killed because of the complicity or indifference of national institutions and a failure of political will at the international level to hold perpetrators to account.

THE HRD MEMORIAL WORKS TO document all killings of HRDs since 1998, when the United Nations Declaration on HRDs was adopted. The HRD Memorial Network members are gathering data on killings based on their work on HRDs. In September 2017, the HRD Memorial Network met in São Paulo, Brazil to discuss future plans for the HRD Memorial and develop a strategy for the 'Stop the Killings' campaign which will be launched in 2018.

The campaign will show the true scale of the killing of HRDs, confront the perpetrators and advocate for change which will improve the security and protection of HRDs. Speaking

at a press conference following the meeting, **Alice de Marchi** of Justiça Global condemned *"the failure of the state to take effective action in most cases. Of particular concern is the lack of protection for human rights defenders or any real effort to investigate these crimes or bring the perpetrators to justice. A case in point is the massacre in Pau d'Arco in May this year (2017) where both civil and military police were involved in the killing of 10 rural workers. In many parts of Brazil the level of risk is so high that killings are almost inevitable, yet still the government fails to take action."*

In July, Front Line Defenders Media

Coordinator, Erin Kilbride presented at the launch of the **Thomson Reuters Foundation/Place** multimedia report, "The Politics of Death" about the killings of environmental HRDs. Front Line Defenders was the key research partner for the report, which cited and linked to the Front Line Defenders annual report and cases. The launch was held at the Frontline Club in London and attended by over 150 people. Thomson Reuters also set up video billboards in London's Canary Wharf and Times Square in New York to feature infographics and video shorts from the campaign in the week following the publication of the report. **□**



HRDs (from left to right) Alice De Marchi (Justiça Global, Brazil), Julia Lima (Article 19, Brazil), Maria Mello (Terra de Direitos, Brazil), Veronica Vidal (Association for Women's Rights in Development - AWID), Thays Pereira (Comissão Pastoral da Terra - CPT, Brazil), Lindomar Padilha (Conselho Indigenista Missionário - CIMI, Brazil), and Alessandra Farias (Sociedade Maranhense de Direitos Humanos - SMDH, Brazil) discuss strategy for the HRD Memorial at a partners meeting in Sao Paolo in September.



Journalists gather for the HRD Memorial Network press conference in Sao Paolo, Brazil (far left). Alice de Marchi, Justica Global), Lindomar Dias Padiha (Conselho Indigenista Missionário) and Jim Loughran, (Front Line Defenders) speak at the press conference.



Digital billboard at Canary Wharf in London featuring "The Politics of Death" multimedia report by Thomson Reuters Foundation in partnership with Front Line Defenders.

139

HRDs killed
in 2014

156

HRDs killed
in 2015

281

HRDs killed
in 2016

312

HRDs
killed
in 2017

Front Line Defenders supported 29 human rights defenders on rest and respite in 2017. Throughout the year, human rights defenders took some time out to recuperate from burnout and stress and to improve language skills, learn about security planning, expand their network and speak about their work. Eleven human rights defenders were hosted in Ireland, including activists from Kyrgyzstan, Chechnya, Palestine, a lawyer from Sudan who was charged with treason and faced the possibility of a show trial, and a Nubian rights campaigner from Egypt who has over 20 colleagues on trial for organising protests to defend their land.

SEHAM OSMAN IS A NUBIAN ACTIVIST AND founding member of Genoubia Hora, the first organised feminist group in Aswan, Egypt, which she set up in response to police violence and violence against women. She has been at the forefront of the struggle for the land rights of her community. Front Line Defenders hosted her in Dublin, where she studied English and spoke to members of the public about the challenges faced by her community and the critical intersection of indigenous rights and women's rights.

Margaret Mabiki is the Director of Musoma Social Development Organisation (MUSODEO), a community organisation advancing women's and children's rights in Tanzania. In addition to training, legal aid and human rights education, Margaret provides advice and counselling to members of the community. The MUSODEO office was broken into and the staff were attacked in December

2016. Front Line Defenders provided a grant to strengthen the security of the office and supported Margaret to take a short break in Kampala where she could have some rest and be supported to process the stress and trauma that had built up over the past 10 years. Margaret reported: "Before going for some rest I was very stressed. Now I have more energy, I'm motivated and better able to manage my security. I'm happier with my family, and do morning exercises to reduce stress."

Tasneem Elzaki (pictured below), a human rights lawyer who provides legal assistance to victims of human rights abuses, especially young people in El-Fasher, Sudan, was arrested in December 2016 in a crackdown against HRDs, peaceful protesters and journalists, held in detention for three months and charged in a criminal case against six HRDs. She received a presidential pardon in

August 2017. Front Line Defenders invited Tasneem to Dublin for some rest and to study English. Speaking of her time in Dublin she said, "I felt safe here and my family also felt safer because I was out of danger. My English is much improved, this will help me to do further studies in human rights. I was also able to work on my book and think about strategies for coordinating with partners for better protection."

Anara Ibrayeva, a lawyer working with the Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and the Rule of Law, took a short two-week break in Georgia with her mother and her daughter to prevent burnout. With the fresh air and exercise of mountain walks, daily reading and relaxation and the time spent with her family, Anara reported feeling more relaxed, better able to prioritise her work and to communicate better with family and colleagues on her return to work. **[I]**



Anara Ibrayeva, a lawyer, on a break in Georgia.



Seham and Tasneem on a break in Dublin.

228
HRDs supported
on Rest and
Respite since
2005

"I got to speak about my work at several public meetings on women's rights and with human rights students in Dublin and Galway. I improved both my English and public-speaking which will help me now when I return to Aswan. I also learned to update my phone regularly for anti-virus and how to save pictures and videos safely."

– Seham Osman

Front Line Defenders conducted two evaluations in 2017, in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Russian Federation. Additionally, the organisation underwent a full evaluation by an independent evaluator, something that Front Line Defenders undertakes every four years in advance of preparing its next 4-year strategic plan.

IN AUGUST, FRONT LINE DEFENDERS conducted an evaluation in the Russian Federation where human rights groups are facing unprecedented challenges including due to "foreign agent" legislation, as well as lack of funding, regular inspections hindering their work, individual prosecution, office raids, physical attacks, forced disappearances, arbitrary detentions and extrajudicial killings. HRDs valued the speed and flexibility of protection grants for emergency relocation, organisational security, medical and legal support. They requested more solidarity missions and opportunities for rest and respite to prevent burnout and emphasised the need to continue to apply international pressure on the Russian authorities through advocacy and the media.

In November, Front Line Defenders visited the Democratic Republic of Congo where



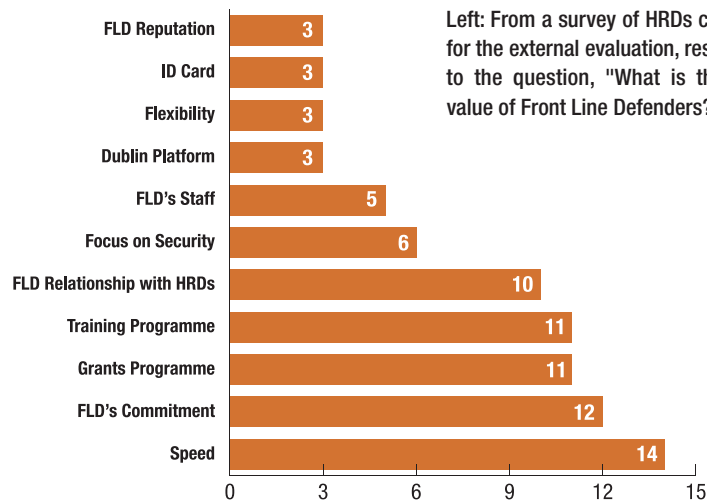
Open Space in St. Petersburg showing the Front Line Defenders delegation its CCTV system which was funded by a security grant.



Front Line Defenders delegation Epimack Kwokwo and Tara Madden with Justine Masika (centre) of the Women's Synergy for Victims of Sexual Violence (SFVS) in Goma, DRC.

human rights defenders carrying out activities such as investigating and exposing atrocities, combating sexual violence and activism with respect to the elections operate at serious personal risk in a context of instability, violence and impunity. HRDs affirmed the effectiveness of training in helping them to manage risks and the need to support more trainings and sharing of knowledge by local trainers in order for the new generation of activists and human rights defenders in rural areas to benefit from

risk assessment, security planning and digital protection skills. Grants for temporary relocation to counteract the risk of kidnapping, for medical treatment following an attack or to secure a home continue to be of utmost importance. HRDs in Kinshasa also emphasised the need to support the lawyers who respond when HRDs are arrested or beaten at peaceful protests, especially with increased attacks on citizen movements throughout the country. []



Left: From a survey of HRDs conducted for the external evaluation, responses to the question, "What is the added value of Front Line Defenders?"

Russian Federation 2015-2017

Grants: 49 grants = €118,045

Advocacy: Urgent appeals: 38 cases
Advocacy towards the EU on individual cases and NGO Laws (EU Delegation, EEAS, events)

Training: Security course for Russian-speaking HRDs (2016)

Digital Protection Training: 2016

Digital Protection Consultancy: 2015, 2016, 2017

Dublin Platform: 3 participants

ID cards: 31 issued

Missions: February 2015, August 2016, November 2016, February 2017

Rest & Respite: 6 HRDs supported in 2015, 2 in 2016, 1 in 2017

Democratic Republic of Congo 2015-2017

Grants: 113 grants = €196,434

Advocacy: Urgent appeals: 25 cases
Advocacy towards the EU on individual cases and NGO Laws (EU Delegation, EEAS, events)

Training: Risk assessment & protection planning (2016)
Risk assessment & protection planning (2017)

Digital Protection Training: 2015, 2016, 2017

Digital Protection Consultancy: 2016

Dublin Platform: 2 participants

ID cards: 15 issued

Missions: February 2015, March 2015, August 2015, April 2016, August 2016, February 2017, November 2017

Front Line Defenders is grateful for the generous support of the following donors:

€200,000+

- Anonymous
- European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights
- Irish Aid
- Lifeline Embattled CSO Assistance Fund
- Oak Foundation
- Open Society Foundations
- Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency

€100,000 - €199,000

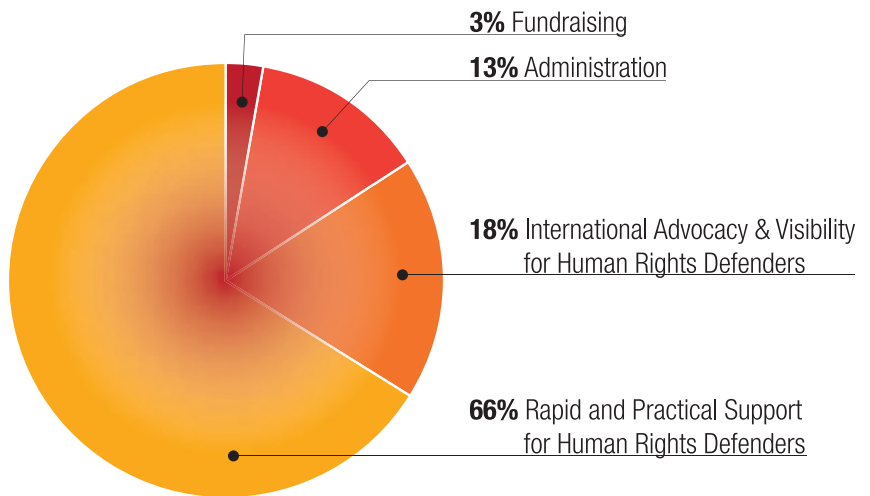
- Foundation for a Just Society
- Ford Foundation
- Hivos International
- Iris O'Brien Foundation
- Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs

€2,000 - €99,000

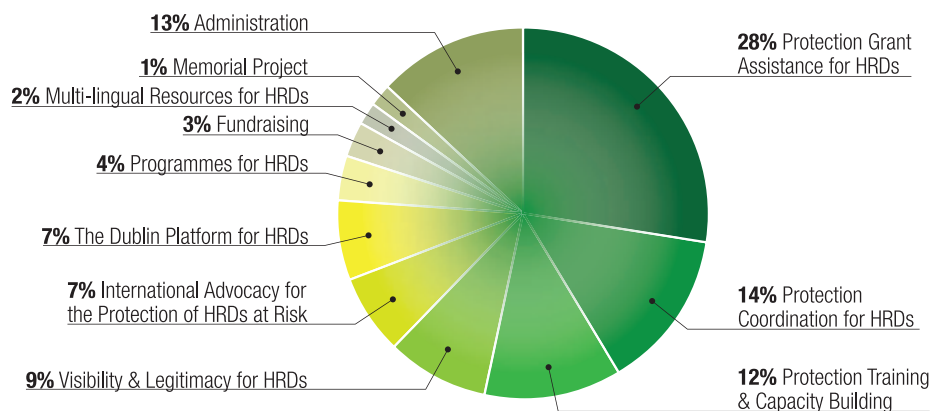
- Al-Jazeera Media Network
- American Jewish World Service
- Anonymous
- Arcus Foundation
- Bread for the World
- The Channel Foundation
- Karen Cooper and Bruce Schneier
- Dublin City Council
- Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Dublin
- Environmental Defenders Fund of RSF Social Finance
- Environmental Law Alliance Worldwide
- The Fair Wind Foundation
- Goelet Family Foundation
- Goldman Environmental Prize
- Google
- Helmsley Charitable Trust
- Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland
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- Sigrid Rausing Trust
- Silicon Valley Community Foundation
- Sudo
- Taiwan Foundation for Democracy
- Tikva Grassroots Empowerment Fund

2017 income & expenditure

EXPENDITURE OVERVIEW



EXPENDITURE BREAKDOWN



WE ALSO WISH TO THANK OUR MANY PUBLIC DONORS WHOSE CONTRIBUTIONS ARE CRUCIAL TO OUR WORK.

Please help us protect human rights defenders by donating to Front Line Defenders at: www.frontlinedefenders.org/donate

or contact Laurent Aldenhoff at: laurent@frontlinedefenders.org or +353 1 212 3750

Front Line Defenders guarantees that 100% of your donation will go directly to the protection of human rights defenders at risk.

You can also donate to Front Line USA Foundation, which is recognized in the United States as tax exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Front Line USA Foundation is a separate and independent charity and currently does not accept online donations. If you would like to make a donation, please contact Laurent Aldenhoff for further information.

WHERE FRONT LINE DEFENDERS SPENDS ITS RESOURCES

Protection Grant Assistance for HRDs	€1,363,685	.28%
Protection Coordination for HRDs	€693,458	.14%
Protection Training & Capacity Building	€603,444	.12%
Visibility & Legitimacy for HRDs	€423,289	.9%
International Advocacy for the Protection of HRDs at risk	€334,760	.7%
The Dublin Platform for Human Rights Defenders	€326,326	.7%
Programmes for HRDs	€180,183	.4%
Fundraising	€167,163	.3%
Multi-lingual Resources for HRDs	€103,339	.2%
Memorial Project	€76,255	.1%
Administration: Core Salaries, Evaluation & Overheads	€613,014	.13%
Total Expenditure	€4,884,915	
Income	€4,884,990	



TRUSTEES



Denis O'Brien (Chairman) is Chairman of the Digicel Group. He is one of Ireland's leading entrepreneurs with extensive investments across several sectors. Mr. O'Brien was voted Ireland's Entrepreneur of the Year in 1998 in the inaugural running of the worldwide competition organised and sponsored by Ernst & Young. Mr. O'Brien is also a director of a number of private companies which hold some of his other business interests including Quinta do Lago SA and Communicorp Group Limited. In 2000 he established The Iris O'Brien Foundation to assist disadvantaged communities in Ireland and internationally. He is co-founder of Front Line Defenders.



Mary Lawlor is the Founder of Front Line Defenders, and served as Executive Director from 2001 to 2016. Prior to Front Line Defenders, Mary was Director of the Irish Section of Amnesty International from 1988-2000. She became a Board member of Amnesty International in 1975 and was elected Chair from 1983-1987.



Kieran Mulvey is former Director General of the Irish Workplace Relations Commission and Consultant with the International Labour Organisation and the European Union.



Noeline Blackwell is an Irish-based lawyer specialising in refugee law and is the Chief Executive of the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre. Prior to that post, she served as the Director General of FLAC (Free Legal Advice Centres), an NGO that provides free legal advice and advocates for fairer laws to advance the public interest and achieve greater equality. She is the former Chairperson of both the International Human Rights Trust and the Irish Section of Amnesty International.



David Sykes acts as an investment advisor to Island Capital Ltd and previously held positions in banking and stockbroking which included Trinity Bank Ltd and Dolmen Stockbrokers Ltd.



Jim Conway is the founder and Chairman of the Print & Display Group, one of Ireland's largest print companies. He also has a number of other media interests in Ireland and Eastern Europe.



Maria Mulcahy is the CEO of the Iris O'Brien Foundation and the Irish-based Head of Philanthropy for the Digicel Group. She was involved with "People in Need" from 1988 to 2000. She was responsible for organising the RTE telethons, which raised €28 million. She was Director of Fundraising for the 2003 Special Olympics World Games.



Mary Jane N. Real is the Co-Director of the newly established Urgent Action Fund – Asia Pacific, the first rapid response mechanism for women human rights defenders headquartered within the Asia Pacific region. She is a founding member and former Coordinator of the Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition. Ms. Real is a long-time advocate of women's rights having worked with women's rights and human rights organisations in Asia and internationally including as Regional Coordinator of Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development.



Arnold Tsunga is Africa Director of the International Commission of Jurists. He was Executive Secretary of the Law Society of Zimbabwe and Executive Director of Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights. He was a joint winner of the Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders in 2006.



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ADVISORY COUNCIL



Michel Forst is the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders. From 2008 to 2013, Mr. Forst was the UN Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Haiti, and between 2012 and 2013 he was the Chair of the Coordination Committee of the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council. Prior to that, he was Secretary General of the Paris Summit of Human Rights Defenders and Director of the French Section of Amnesty International. He is a founding Board Member of Front Line Defenders.



Hina Jilani is an internationally known human rights lawyer and advocate for human rights defenders. She was the UN Special Representative of the Secretary General on the situation of human rights defenders from 2000 to 2008. She and her sister Asma Jahangir co-founded the first all female legal practice in Pakistan and she is also one of the founders of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan. She is a member of The Elders.



Maina Kiai completed his term as UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association in April 2017. He is now the co-director of InformAction, a community organising NGO in Kenya. A lawyer trained at Nairobi and Harvard Universities, Mr. Kiai has spent the last twenty years campaigning for human rights and constitutional reform in Kenya – notably as founder and Executive Director of the unofficial Kenya Human Rights Commission, and then as Chairman of Kenya's National Human Rights Commission.



James L. Cavallaro is the Founding Director of the International Human Rights and Conflict Resolution Clinic at Stanford Law School, where he is also a professor of law. Prior to joining Stanford, he spent nine years on the faculty at Harvard Law School, where he also served as executive director of the Human Rights Programme. In June of 2013 he was elected to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR).



Maryam Elahi is President and CEO of the Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut. For more than 25 years, she has served in positions of leadership in the international human rights community as an advocate, teacher, and grant-maker. She was previously the director of the International Women's Program at the Open Society Foundations.

BREATH OF AIR

by Erin Fornoff
@jarsofshine

When the truth is air
that your lungs cry out for
and you hear the gasps
as other people crave the breath,

When truth is oxygen denied us
and hate is smoke that fills the sky,
if we must breathe hate,
let us find a use for it:

We can hate injustice
We can hate a lie
We can hate a locked door
And the knock in the night If we must breathe in hate
let us exhale it as a warming breath:
a heat that warms cold fingers
a breath that cleans a lens to clarity

Let us exhale carbon dioxide
for the forests to breathe
If we must inhale this smoke
Let us exhale it as a powerful noise
singing from our throats when the silence of the world
feels like water in our ears.

When justice pulls us
like the moon pulls the ocean
let us float with the lightness of our breath
over the swelling tide.
And let our breath be wind.

And when our work
seems to be nothing
but a daily mourning,
and the rowdy tenants of doubt and fear
are upstairs all night in your head,
may our breath be a sigh of relief.

Let our exhalations
float like prayers over borders,
waft through the domes
of every faith.
Let us breathe until the breeze
carries nothing but seeds.

And after all of it, all this smoke,
may you have unemployment:
Nothing to fear, and nothing to fix.
The soft snores of sleep,
a long stretching morning, a window
full of sun, bread on the counter,
a slow breakfast, with whomever you love,
a whole day with nothing to do
and a full, perfect breath of air.

DUBLIN

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