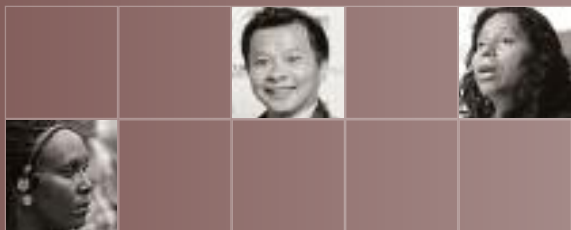




REPORT FROM THE SIXTH DUBLIN PLATFORM FOR HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS



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WHAT DOES FRONT LINE DEFENDERS DO?

Front Line Defenders 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 aims to address the protection needs identified by defenders themselves.

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

- international advocacy on behalf of human rights defenders at immediate risk;
- 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;
- rest and respite, including the Front Line Fellowship;
- 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;
- and an emergency 24 hour phone line for human rights defenders operating in Arabic, English, French, Spanish and Russian.

In emergency situations, Front Line Defenders can facilitate temporary relocation of human rights defenders.

Front Line Defenders promotes strengthened international and regional measures to protect human rights defenders including through support for the work of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders. Front Line Defenders seeks to promote 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.

Front Line Defenders has Observer Status with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.

Front Line Defenders received the 2007 King Baudouin International Prize for Development.

FRONTLINE TRUSTEES



Denis O'Brien (Chairman) Denis O'Brien is Chairman of the Digicel Group. Mr O'Brien is one of Ireland's leading entrepreneurs with extensive investments across several sectors.

He founded the Communicorp Group which has a portfolio of media and broadcasting-related companies in Ireland and seven other European countries. In 2000 he established the *Iris O'Brien Foundation* to assist disadvantaged communities in Ireland and internationally.



Mary Lawlor (Director) Mary Lawlor has been constantly inspired by the work of human rights defenders who put their vision of a civil and just world for all ahead of their

own safety. In 2001 she set up Front Line, the International Foundation for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders to provide round the clock practical support and deliver fast and effective action on behalf of human rights defenders at risk.



Hina Jilani is an internationally known human rights lawyer and advocate for human rights defenders. She was the 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.



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.



Kieran Mulvey is Chief Executive of the Irish Labour Relations Commission and Consultant with the International Labour Organisation and the European Union.



Michel Forst is Secretary General of the French National Consultative Commission on Human Rights. He was Secretary General of the Paris Summit and Director of the French section of Amnesty International.



Noeline Blackwell is Director of FLAC (Free Legal Advice Centres), an independent human rights organisation dedicated to the realisation of equal

access to justice for all.



David Sykes is Investment Director of Island Capital Ltd and worked in various banks and stockbrokers including Trinity Bank and Dolmen stockbrokers.



Maria Mulcahy was involved with "People in Need" from 1988 – 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.



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.

LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

Hanan Ashrawi Founder and Secretary General of the Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy.

Robert Badinter President of the OSCE Court of Conciliation and Arbitration and a member of the French Senate. He was previously French Minister for Justice.

Bono Founder member of the Irish rock group U2, and a prominent human rights advocate.

Desmond Tutu Anglican archbishop who rose to worldwide fame during the 1980s as an opponent of apartheid. Nobel Peace Prize winner in 1984.

Adolfo Pérez Equivel Leader of Servicio Paz y Justicia and the 1980 Nobel Peace Prize recipient.

Indai Lourdes Sajor Founder and former Executive Director of the Asian Centre for Women's Human Rights.

His Holiness The Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso Temporal and spiritual leader of the Tibetan people and Nobel Laureate.

Report: Robert Archer, Plain Sense

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Quotations have been edited for brevity and clarity. The insertion of quotations does not reflect the order in which participants spoke.

Photography by Kamil Krawczak, Alex Zarodov & Derek Speirs.

FOREWORD

The driving force behind the work of Front Line Defenders is the spirit of the human rights defenders themselves - their refusal to give up or accept injustice, their insistence that human rights and full equality are non-negotiable and their persistence in challenging governments and non-state actors alike in defence of the rights of others.

It is that spirit that is embodied in the words of Uzbek human rights defender Dilmurod Sayid, sentenced to 12 years, 6 months in prison and who is suffering from tuberculosis.

"The representatives of legal organs circumvented the law, closed their eyes to justice, protected and continue to protect the interests of those individuals, which essentially are corruption, oppression, injustice and lawlessness. In the path of the law, it was not only me who became a victim of the courts of justice, but also my family. I have lost the people dear to me, and my innocent 5-year-old daughter. I have become "guilty", though I am blameless. I am not afraid of death - I live awaiting it. I lived, worked and walked along the path of justice, caring for those around me. In spite of everything, I have always and always will be convinced that my work is right."

Dilmurod will not give up and neither should we. Justice, freedom and human rights will never come easy but neither can they be indefinitely denied when there remain those with the courage to speak out and defend the rights of others.

This is also the spirit that animates the Dublin Platform itself which this year was attended by 132 HRDs from 85 countries. The Dublin Platform enables human rights defenders at risk to share experiences, learn from each other and come up with newer and more effective strategies for their security and protection.

It is also a huge opportunity for Front Line Defenders to hear directly from the human rights defenders themselves about the challenges they face and to start the process of coming up with newer and more effective responses to those problems.

Front Line Defenders' goal is to take fast effective action on behalf of human rights defenders at risk. Everything we do links to that single objective and the Dublin Platform enables us to measure

the impact of our work by getting direct feedback.

Every human rights defender at the Dublin Platform carries within them a spark of that spirit of resistance to oppression - a spark that can become a flame to lead us all to better times and one which we will humbly follow.

**Mary Lawlor,
Executive Director,
Front Line Defenders**



Mary Lawlor with Mutabar Tadjibaeva of Fiery Hearts Club, Uzbekistan

On the 13th of September Mutabar Tadjibaeva from Uzbekistan finally arrived in Dublin after a journey that started 6 years ago. A tireless critic of the Karimov regime, Mutabar was arrested on her way to Ireland for the 2005 Dublin Platform. She was sentenced to 8 years imprisonment and was held in a psychiatric hospital and forcibly medicated drugs and denied access to family and her lawyers.

At one point the guards left a noose in her prison cell to encourage her to end her life. Front Line Defenders sent a bouquet of flowers to the prison for her birthday to remind her that she had not been forgotten. Miraculously the flowers were delivered and given pride of place in the prison common room where they became a beacon of hope for all the prisoners.

Released in 2008 and now a refugee in France, Mutabar finally received flowers in person from Front Line Defenders' Executive Director Mary Lawlor at the formal opening of the Sixth Dublin Platform.

In the
long
term
we are
irresistible

Seán Mac Bride

INTRODUCTION

This was our Sixth Dublin Platform yet each is unique because of the rich diversity of the courageous and extraordinary human rights defenders who come together to discuss and exchange, to work and relax together. This year we welcomed over 132 human rights defenders from 85 different countries.

As always the participants brought great energy and wisdom to the discussions on how to strengthen security and protection.

The formal sessions were facilitated by simultaneous interpretation in Arabic, English, French, Russian and Spanish with whispered interpretation provided in more than five other languages. But the informal discussions were also extremely rich with participants building lasting bonds across linguistic and cultural divides.

In this report we try to draw out some of the key lessons and messages.

All the HRDs who came together in Dublin Castle around the 14th to 16th September 2011 are at risk because of their non-violent work for the human rights of others. They face death threats and physical violence, denigration and loss of employment, arrest and harassment, and sometimes torture.

Examples of these threats and attacks were shared in often harrowing

testimony. But the focus was also on strengthening mechanisms for protection, engaging the international community, holding perpetrators accountable and providing support to those under attack.

The HRDs were joined by many representatives from international human rights organisations. Nobel Peace Prize winner Shirin Ebadi, Maina Kiai, the new UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Assembly and Association and Eamon Gilmore TD, Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs, gave inspiring keynote speeches. The meeting was also addressed by video by Margaret Sekaggya, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders.

A panel discussion on the specific risks facing women human rights defenders drew on expert presentations from: Lorena Cabnal, Guatemala, Julienne Lusenge, DRC, Samira Hamidi, Afghanistan and Mary Y. Conteh, Sierra Leone. Mary Lawlor chaired a panel discussion involving Yuri Melini from Guatemala, Usman Hamid from Indonesia and Isatou Touray from The Gambia on Visibility, Recognition & Legitimacy; How to get it? How to keep it?

A panel on regional mechanisms for the protection of HRDs included contributions from Santiago Canton, Executive Secretary, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, H.E. Rafendi Djamin, Representative of Indonesia and Chairperson - ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) and Benjamin Moreau, Human Rights Advisor, OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights.

Throughout the conference there were digital security help desks operating in Arabic, English, French, Russian and Spanish and some HRDs took part in a pre-Platform digital security training.

The participants enjoyed a rich cultural programme with music from an array of musical talents, including Colm Ó Snodaigh, Ross Ó Snodaigh, Eoin Dillon and Seanan Brennan from Kila as well as Keith Donald from the Irish Music Rights Organisation (IMRO). The vibrant spirit emerging from the coming together of so many exceptional human rights defenders was vividly captured in the collective Irish dancing and wonderfully chaotic conga line at the finale event in the Old Jameson Distillery.

This report highlights what HRDs said about their work, and the dangers and problems they have to confront. It is not a verbatim record. It aims rather to provide a feel of the meeting – some sense of what the HRDs who participated shared with one another and with others who were present.

Andrew Anderson
Deputy Director
Front Line Defenders



Some delegates with members of the band Kila, who performed at the opening of the Dublin Platform

SIXTH DUBLIN PLATFORM FOR HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS 14-16 SEPTEMBER 2011

Conference Rapporteur - Robert Archer, Plain Sense

“This is your space, where you can speak without fear and be listened to with respect.” **Front Line Defenders**

“We set out in Front Line Defenders ten years ago. We believed that Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) are key agents of change, and that there was a need for an international organisation that focused all its activities on your protection - to help build a safe space in which you could work. We wanted to be linked to you, to be a witness to your work, and to be fast, flexible and furious in our determination to protect you. This was and remains our moral horizon.” With these words, Mary Lawlor opened the Sixth Platform for Human Rights Defenders, held, like all its predecessors, in the historic venue of Dublin Castle.

Mary spoke of the beginnings of the movement, when the concept of human rights defenders was still new, and recalled the threats that continue to beset human rights defenders across the world. HRDs are prosecuted to silence them, on charges of terrorism, membership of extremist groups, subversion, treason, endangering national security, spreading false information, defamation, organising illegal protests, theft, fraud or tax evasion. NGO laws restrict human rights work. Elections often create moments of increased vulnerability for HRDs and journalists. HRDs working on land rights, development projects, or the



Mary Lawlor paying tribute to Bety Cariño

management of natural resources are often particularly exposed to risk because they are less connected to national mainstream groups or international organisations and less protected. Women HRDs continue to suffer on account of their human rights work, like their male counterparts, but also on account of their gender, especially when they challenge cultural stereotypes. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex HRDs are at the forefront of the campaign to ensure equality and dignity for LGBTI people throughout the world. Their work too challenges cultural norms and stereotypes, exposing them to additional risk.

Mary Lawlor recalled those who had died or been unjustly imprisoned since the last Platform:

- Floribert Chebeya, murdered in the DRC
- David Kato, beaten to death in Uganda
- Bety Cariño, killed in Mexico
- Abdulhadi Al Khawaja, beaten severely and tortured, jailed for life in Bahrain.
- Yevhgeny Zhovtis, sentenced to four years in Kazakhstan.
- Azimjan Askarov, sentenced to life imprisonment in Kyrgyzstan.
- Ales Bialiatski, in Belarus, awaiting sentence.
- Dilmurod Sayid, sentenced to 12 years in Uzbekistan, suffering from tuberculosis.
- Georges Kanuma, died of malaria for lack of medical treatment.

“All of us here carry around our own baggage of good and bad, pride and shame, compassion and bitterness. As humans, something in all our hearts is broken but it is in cold dark places that growth takes place and we find, in the words of Wendell Berry, “the peace of wild things who do not tax their lives with forethought of grief”. Dear human rights defenders, many times you have been beset with private agonies, so full of horror that you feel you can’t take any more - when despair calls out and beckons you in. Yet you refuse, you endure and you continue to spread light and life into darkness and create hope for those who must never lose hope. You are our partners on the front line and we pledge to be your shadows trying to protect and support you as you struggle.

The Irish Nobel Peace Prize winner and Human Rights Advocate Sean Mac Bride said “In the long term we are irresistible”. I say yes - those who work for the human rights of others are irresistible but you are also invincible because you are everywhere. You are invincible because the struggle for justice will always be stronger than the tyranny of oppression. You are invincible because you walk with faith in your goal and determination in your efforts. You are invincible because you generate enough courage day by day to get by, despite the smell of fear and the uncertainty of life. But most of all you are invincible because you love life and living.” *Mary Lawlor.*

“Over the last 10 years, the brutality, the torture and killings have not decreased. So today we honour all human rights defenders who have been killed. Many have become friends throughout the years. We feel their loss and our failure to protect them keenly.” **Mary Lawlor**



Azimjan Akerov



Floribert Chebeya



Abdulhadi Al Khawaja



Ales Bialiatski

“When I was arrested, I was blindfolded and interrogated for four days. I was beaten, not allowed to urinate, tortured. I did not attend my trial, and the sentence was delivered to the judge in a sealed envelope.” **HRD, Burma**

“When we remain silent it means that we agree with what is happening. An attack on one of us is an attack on us all.”

Enrique Morones, USA

“When I protested against judicial failures of procedure in China, I was disbarred as a lawyer. Since then, I have continued to work with farmers who are being evicted from their villages on the South Coast of China. Their land is beautiful and the Government expropriated it at a very low price. The villagers went to court but lost. When their houses were demolished we and other HR activists went to support the villagers and the Government was forced to stop the demolitions.” **HRD, China**

The participants stood in silence to honour them and the many other HRDs who have suffered for the people and the principles they defend.

At the same time, Mary emphasised how much has changed because dictators are more afraid and defenders are more numerous. “Despite all the resources that the repressive governments of the world pour into trying to destroy HRDs and their work, the good news is that they are failing. There is increasing repression of HRDs because there are more HRDs in more countries making more of a difference for their communities...”

In China, in the Arab world, in Africa, though many challenges remain, HRDs have shown that “courage, dogged determination and hope can make a difference in the face of the most authoritarian regimes”.

In the words of Bety Cariño, “Today we want to live another history: we are rebelling and we are saying enough is enough. Today and here, we want to say that they are afraid of us because we are not afraid of them, because despite their threats, despite their slander, despite their harassment, we continue to walk towards a sun which we think shines strongly.”



Bí i do Chrainn

Stay steady,
Unswaying,
Watching the weather
Until the right day.

Let the wind disarray,
Maker of lays,
All your outer foliage;
Your trunk don't budge.

A tree is alone
In the wood's midst,
Among people a poet
Above all is loneliest.

From *Be a Tree*,
sung solo by Colm Ó Snodaigh, Kila
(*Bí i do Chrainn* by Máirtín ó Diveáin)

PRESENTATION BY MARGARET SEKAGGYA, UN SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON THE SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Margaret Sekaggya spoke to the conference by video from Kampala, where she was recovering from an operation. Apologising for her absence, she emphasised the importance of the Human Rights Defenders Declaration, and the fact that each one of us can be a human rights defender. She spoke of the visits she had made in 2010 and 2011, wished the conference well and praised the work of HRDs across the globe. “You multiply and spread your message in spite of repression.”



Margaret Sekaggya, speaking via video from Kampala

THE ARAB SPRING Twitter, Facebook, Mobilisation and Security, with Ahmad Gharbeia

Ahmad Gharbeia discussed the role that “soft” media have played in the Arab Spring. 800,000 Egyptians used Facebook, for example, to signal their readiness to join the protest on the 25th of March 2011. At the same time, he emphasised that “change comes through courage and sacrifice, not technology”: the HRDs in Libya and Syria have stood up for their rights without the benefit of the new communications tools that were available in Egypt. Every HRD, and every human rights group, must consider their goals and the context in which they are working when they decide how to manage information, how to keep safe, and what to publish; and old methods – pen and ink, email, telephone – may be just as effective as the new ones.

SECURITY IN A BOX

Security in-a-Box, a joint project of Front Line Defenders and Tactical Technology, provides HRDs with essential information on how to protect themselves and their security. It can be obtained in nine languages including Arabic, English, French, Russian, Spanish, Farsi, Burmese, Vietnamese and Chinese from Securityinabox.org or by CD from Front Line Defenders.



Ahmed Gharbeia with Andrew Anderson, Front Line Defenders

In the question and answer session that followed, participants made a number of points and paid tribute to the HRDs who have struggled for more freedom in Bahrain, Egypt, Libya, Syria, Tunisia, Yemen, and other countries in the region:

- Will change be sustained in Egypt, or will the army retake power?
- In Manipur, HRDs' phones are tapped. What can be done to protect ourselves?
- When police shoot at unarmed demonstrators, are demonstrators entitled to seize weapons to defend themselves?
- Training in digital security is not available to everyone. Can training be arranged for small and grassroots organisations, not just large NGOs?
- How can HRDs in rural areas protect themselves from death threats and violence, if they do not have resources to travel?

In Algeria we experienced what we call the “black decade”. We have never seen such genocidal behaviour in our region but we know what our rotten regimes do in the name of counter-terrorism to suppress people’s voices. Our friend from Syria was talking about all our countries.” **Yacine Zaid, Algeria**

“As a young lawyer I tried to defend people against Ben Ali’s regime. Though the legal system was not fair ... we used modern technology and discovered the regime’s weak spot. We used social media to cover trials and tell people what was going on. And then, the next stage, we had to go on the streets. On the day Ben Ali fell, I wept, because I was so frightened that our revolution would fail, that our young people might have died in vain.” **Najet Laabidi, Tunisia**



“What makes us strong is that we seek the truth.”
Isatou Touray, The Gambia

“People in Syria are crying out for dignity... The ruling elite considers Syria its fiefdom, its own farm. The people are seen as serfs. No-one is able to defend human rights because they are seen as a vassal of that family. All human values are being ignored. People are being destroyed. We have appealed to the Security Council, we have asked for the President to be brought to justice, yet still, even in the Security Council, countries support this regime. Support the appeal of this people who are spilling their blood every day, while the world stands by, watching while these crimes are being done.”

Haitham Al Maleh, Syria

“Because of the difficulties we face in Saudi Arabia, in 2009 we formed a public NGO. We took the Ministry of the Interior to court for arbitrarily arresting young human rights activists and charging them with crimes. We forced the government to try the young men – but then they did so in a military court, using fabricated charges. So it is difficult work, because the government is ready to torture, to arrest arbitrarily. We go to court when we are threatened and this can be successful even if our courts are not perfect. We encourage people to speak out, to tell their stories in public, to give their real names – and this has had some shaming effect. The Minister of the Interior was recently sacked.”

HRD, Saudi Arabia

“If we are principled, we can inspire others and provide a model for them. We can think in the long term. Having firm principles, which we respect, gives us credibility.” **Yuri Melini, Guatemala**



Usman Hamid, human rights lawyer



Yuri Melini on the panel

VISIBILITY, RECOGNITION AND LEGITIMACY: HOW YOU GET IT, HOW YOU KEEP IT

Panel with Yuri Melina (Guatemala), Usman Hamid (Indonesia) and Isatou Touray (Gambia)

This panel looked at how HRDs build legitimacy and visibility – how they deal with attacks against their reputation and build public support for the work they do.

Isatou Touray works on sexual and women’s rights in The Gambia where women who speak out in public face many difficulties, because they are expected to remain in the home. The subject of female genital mutilation (FGM) is secret and a taboo, and raises issues of power and control. She must also take account of religious sensibilities, by carefully referencing what she says to holy texts, and combating misrepresentation of the Koran by some religious leaders. In some cases, women, who are the “custodians of the culture”, have been brought to testify against her and her colleagues.

She argued that it is wise to protect one’s reputation and security at several levels. You need to consider your profile, what you stand for, and also your competence. If you work on LGBTI, be up front about your engagement, but find ways to speak within your community in a manner that is culturally relevant. You need also to identify your institutional allies and enemies. You need, thirdly, to develop sound, evidence-based arguments. Analyse the role of religion and culture in your society, and the distribution of power, then build persuasive arguments. Having done this in The Gambia, Isatou Touray’s organisation found that communities are now coming out in support of what HRDs are saying even though no law forbids FGM. “Never forget that you are challenging the status quo, challenging power. You need to do it intelligently, taking account of the cultural environment and working with it.”

For the same reason, she said, understand your media. In The Gambia there are public, private and independent media organisations. “We work with all of them, and do not treat any journalist as an enemy, because we understand that they need the information and advice that we can provide.”

Usman Hamid is a human rights lawyer in Indonesia, who has campaigned for many years, including on the case of his friend and colleague, the murdered HRD Munir. He noted that the unusual legal privileges and status of the military in Indonesia complicate human rights work. In addition, HRDs faced threats, allegations and verbal attacks from government and military officials that did not altogether stop after Suharto fell. HRDs are often criticised for favouring foreign points of view and interests.

Usman has used the media to defend himself – although the media does not provide a complete protection, is itself flawed and may report

inaccurately. Nevertheless, when he took up the Munir case and an investigation was opened against him, media coverage stopped the Government and military from continuing it; and when he was subsequently physically attacked, media coverage caused both the military and Government to guarantee his security. Journalists have played a very important role in defending human rights in Indonesia, not only in the Munir case, but under President Suharto, when journalists worked clandestinely with the Commission for the Disappeared and Victims of Violence (Kontras) at risk of their lives.

In addition, Usman emphasised the importance of building a personal reputation. He makes a continuous effort to contribute to his community. Be respectful of others. Take care to ensure that you are perceived to be independent, but build relationships with many actors. Make yourself accountable to the public and to others. When necessary, use religious references to argue a human rights case. Always speak in a language that those listening to you can understand.

Yuri Melini works on environmental and human rights issues in Guatemala. Intolerance is high, and unfortunately very few Guatemalans are familiar with human rights. Although members of the public are entitled to participate in decisions that concern them, he and his organisation are often condemned for standing in the way of development. This argument is used politically against them whenever he and his colleagues challenge vested interests.

To defend themselves, Yuri Melini said, HRDs therefore establish clearly the principles on which their positions are based. He seeks to be transparent; to be consistent; and to be ethical. He seeks always to take positions that will secure benefits for people. He advocates for the rule of law; and for sustainable solutions.

Both Usman and Isatou noted that the support they had received at different times from EU diplomats, UN officials and international NGOs had been of critical importance. Many European MEPs took up Munir’s case – which would never have been pursued in the absence of international interest. In Isatou’s case, EU missions, the US Ambassador and UN officials defended her when she was taken to court in The Gambia.

In the question and answer session that followed, participants made a number of points:

- The media in some countries are worse than unreliable. In Pakistan, one newspaper alleged that many NGOs were funded by the private security company Blackwater, putting the lives of HRDs at risk.
- We need to give proper attention to language, because when we or those in power use language carelessly, or in a way that misrepresents, it can do great harm to our cause.
- Visibility is fundamental for minorities. As Xinca, we are told that we do not exist, that our language is extinct: invisibility is imposed upon us.



Mechanisms for the Protection of HRDs

Panel with Santiago Canton, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, HE Rafendi Djamin, The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights, and Benjamin Moreau, Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights.

Santiago Canton, Executive Secretary of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, summarised the work of the Commission. It receives some 1,700 reports of violations every year; processed cases can go on to the Inter-American Court. The work of the Commission has led to legal reforms in several countries and the development of case law. NGOs have been involved since 1970, and in the last 5 years their engagement has increased. The Commission can take Protection Measures: it can request states to provide HRDs, legal officials and other individuals with practical protection if they are at risk. A specific Unit of the secretariat focuses on HRDs. In 2006, the Unit analysed the pattern of threats against HRDs in the region. Santiago Canton emphasised that NGOs play a critical role in defining the agenda of the Commission: they, rather than states, provide intellectual leadership and innovation.

Rafendi Djamin is chairperson of ASEAN's Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights, and represents Indonesia. Established

Members of the panel; from left: James Cavallaro, Santiago Canton, HE Rafendi Djamin and Benjamin Moreau

two years ago, the Commission is still evolving. It includes a representative from each of ASEAN's ten States, two of whom (from Indonesia and Thailand) are from civil society. The others are officials. The Commission has limited powers. It can set standards and is currently drafting a Declaration on Human Rights for the region that could eventually become a binding convention. It cannot investigate individual cases. It cannot prosecute cases. Its recommendations are not binding on Member States. Rafendi Djamin nevertheless argued that it is an institution that deserves support because in time it could make a valuable contribution to human rights in the region.

Benjamin Moreau, a human rights adviser at OSCE, emphasised that, through the OSCE, 56 European and North American States accept a commitment to human rights, the rule of law and democracy. It is a policy forum, and organises annual meetings at which NGOs can register to participate. The OSCE monitors trials, produces human rights reports, and creates opportunities that NGOs can use to influence their governments or to lobby for reform. The OSCE has also developed and promotes guidance on Freedom of Assembly and more recently on Freedom of Association. It can provide HRDs with valuable support, but its services will only be effective if HRDS use them.

“All that we have heard [in these three days] reminds us how fragile is our progress, how weak are the institutions that protect us. The crisis of our institutions is that they are hampered by finance, their mandates, and the interference of national governments. We need to work together to strengthen them.”

Dmitry Makarov, Russian Federation

“As HRDs we are often said to be women who are besmirching their own nest, attacking our own culture. But it is part of our culture to question, and to question our cultural attitudes too. We are struggling against a deeply rooted patriarchal system and it is vital we continue to do so.”

Lorena Cabnal, Guatemala

“Language matters. There is no such thing as an illegal migrant. People are not illegal.” **Enrique Morones, USA**



Adolfo Gúzman Ordaz, Mexico

“I worked on Economic, Social and Cultural rights and environmental rights in Mexico, for 11 years. I was persecuted and in 2009 the Government arrested me and separated me from my wife and children. We lodged a formal complaint, after which we received death threats. Then the perpetrators abducted, tortured and raped my wife. We were provided with interim measures by the Latin America Commission, which also required an investigation and punishment. The case has not been addressed, no investigation. I am now unemployed; my wife also. We have been stigmatised. As a family we want those who have supported us to bring pressure on the Government of Guerrero, which continues to intimidate people under its jurisdiction.”

Adolfo Gúzman Ordaz

The participants then raised a number of questions:

- A Guatemalan participant noted that states in the region fail to comply with the Commission, or with findings of the Inter-American Court.
- A Syrian participant noted the failure of his country to honour the treaties it has signed; while other countries prevent action by exercising their veto in the Security Council. The power of veto should be removed.
- A Sudanese participant asked whether the OSCE cooperates with all organisations, or only a selected number.
- Rafendi Djamin was asked whether his double mandate – as National Commissioner and civil society representative – implied a conflict of interest.
- A Cuban participant noted that Cuba does not answer to the Commission, because it has been suspended.



Biram Dah Abeid, Mauritania

Each speaker was asked to identify the principal challenge facing his organisation. For the Commission, Santiago Canton mentioned a shortage of resources and failures of compliance. He agreed that it was not possible for the Commission to verify allegations with regard to Cuba, because of its status. Compliance is the great challenge: it is part of a long struggle to end impunity, but he argued that progress can be made if the Commission, other human rights bodies and civil society work together. Legislation is important; so are mechanisms (like a rapporteur) to help with follow up; NHRIs too can make a contribution, even though they have a mixed record.

Rafendi Djamin argued that the Commission is at an early stage in its life. It must start in order to grow. It is crucial to develop its processes and the quality of complaints and submissions that are brought before it; and to increase co-operation with civil society because this will determine the organisation’s eventual progress. He disagreed that his own position involves a conflict of interest, because the Commission is not currently examining country cases but broad thematic issues. Conflict of interest may need to be looked at as the organisation’s mandate evolves.

Benjamin Moreau argued that NGOs need to present well-focused evidence-based recommendations to the OSCE if it is to be as useful and effective as it should be. He indicated that the OSCE will co-operate with all NGOs and that its mandate extends to all countries of the Mediterranean region.

“We fight slavery in Mauritania, where the law against slavery exists but is not implemented, and where those who fight slavery and those who are subjugated are attacked, abused, hunted, etc. I invite all of you to take my picture, and disseminate what I say, because that is our strategy when we confront power.”

Biram Dah Abeid, Mauritania

“The international community needs to understand that the façade created by the Russian Federation that Chechnya is now peaceful, that order is restored, is a myth. Horrific crimes continue and this needs to be given close attention by the international community and all people of good will. We formed mobile groups of lawyers to investigate the activities of the police units, which are police only in name. And recently a particularly cruel perpetrator was arrested, perhaps the first result of our legal work. We have demonstrated that even here, even in these circumstances, it is possible to fight for human rights.”

Igor Kalyapin, Russian Federation



Left to right: Dmitry Titiev, Olga Tseytlina, Igor Kalyapin and Dokka Itslaev, Russia

WORKSHOPS: OUTCOMES / REPORTS

1. What are the main threats to human rights defenders?
2. What are the most effective practical measures for their protection?

- What can HRDs do themselves?
- What should international NGOs like Front Line Defenders be doing?
- What should the international community (including funders) be doing?
- Can UN field presences deliver effective protection?

The participants divided into five language groups to discuss the above questions: Arabic, English, French, Russian, and Spanish. A rapporteur in each group subsequently prepared a short report. This summary is based on those documents.

1. THE MAIN THREATS TO HRDS

- **Surveillance.** Communications, monitoring, interference with communications.
- **Hacking of email accounts.**
- **Physical violence.** Torture, beatings, accusations, assassination, poisoning.
- **Attacks by armed groups** linked to the government or local authorities
- **Sexual violence, particularly against women HRDs.** Patriarchal systems and structures that generate a climate of violence against women, especially if they challenge socio-culturally accepted norms and stereotypes.
- **Threats from armed groups.** When armed groups split and evolve, this creates many dangers for HRDs, and makes it harder to identify security risks.
- **High levels of intolerance of sexual minorities.** i.e. LGBTI.
- **Destruction of offices and homes.** Theft of information.
- **Arbitrary arrest, kidnappings, disappearances.**
- **Unjustified legal prosecution.** For example, for alleged financial irregularities.
- **Judiciary co-opted by the Executive and politicised.** Use of anti-terrorist or national security legislation against HRDs. Planting of false evidence on HRDs (for example, drugs, etc.). Prosecuting HRDs for 'attempting to overthrow the state and create chaos'.
- **Gaps in the law.** Where national law is not consistent with international human rights standards, this creates risks for HRDs.
- **Stigmatisation.** HRDs are identified with terrorists, criminals, enemies of the state, or the groups they defend. Attacks on HRDs are described as "personal disputes" or "ordinary crimes".
- **Defamation.** HRDs are falsely accused of sexual immorality, corruption, or religious crimes or irreligious acts, to destroy their reputation.

- **Use of state-controlled media to smear HRDs.**
- **Fear and mistrust of state institutions.** HRDs fail to make use of official institutions to advance their work or protect themselves because they do not trust the law or legal institutions, and fear the police and courts.
- **Economic sanctions and reprisals.** HRDs suddenly lose their jobs, or their bank accounts are frozen, forcing them to scramble for an income.
- **HRDs may be relocated,** their salaries suspended, their career compromised.
- **Infiltration and sabotage.** HRD organisations may be infiltrated, to gather information, create tensions, or manipulate the finances. GONGOs may be created to undermine HRDs' reputation and influence.
- **Obstruction of meetings and organising.** Meetings are banned, HRDs are arrested for holding illegal meetings.
- **Administrative harassment.** HRDs are prevented from registering their organisations or receiving funds, including funds from abroad. HRDs are hindered from travelling (refused travel permits etc).
- **Abuse of the law, impunity.** Files are not dealt with. Evidence is destroyed. Complaints by HRDs are not registered. Court officials are corrupted. Law enforcement agencies can never be successfully prosecuted.
- **Failure to implement protection measures provided by regional or international mechanisms.** Inter-American Commission, Special procedures, Treaty Bodies, etc.
- **Information is not made available.** Officials conceal essential information, or release it too late.

Other weaknesses and problems

- **Weak or slow diplomatic support.** Foreign Embassies play a vital protection role. When they fail to act quickly or decisively, the risks for HRDs can increase sharply.
- **Slow delivery of visas, and excessive formality,** put HRDs at risk.
- **Delay or failure to make emergency funds available** to HRDs at risk.
- **Poor access to health care.** HRDs often cannot pay for insurance, or cannot reach health facilities quickly when they are attacked or hurt.
- **Social Exclusion.** HRDs are often rejected by their own families and community because they raise sensitive or taboo issues, or question traditional values. They are therefore doubly excluded, by the state and society.
- **Family stress.** Family members may be kidnapped, hurt or threatened. Family members may find it difficult to recognise the threat they and the HRD face. This can create tension in the family. Relocation may present particular difficulties, because it is often associated with difficult living conditions.
- **Personal stress.** "We are traumatised. Our children are traumatised."

“I was officially disbarred in 2011. Vietnam does not respect legal process and lawyers are used only to burnish Vietnam’s international reputation. Independent lawyers are menaced, threatened, lose their license, and their families are also threatened.”

Attorney Dong, Vietnam

“My husband was arrested merely for trying to form a political party. I was encouraged to leave the country. I refused because I said ‘I am the person who should be ensuring he has food’. I said to the press: ‘No-one else can even give him a glass of water’. I was threatened, telephoned and so on – but I stayed.” Floride Mukarugambwa, Rwanda



I have been targeted by the security forces, threatened, and an attempt was made to poison me. Jean Elvis Ebang-Ondo, Gabon

“The law is like a snake. It only bites those with no shoes.”

Archbishop Oscar Romero

“Fear leads to silence, the poison of democracy.” HRD, Burma

“Malawi is turning into another Zimbabwe. HRDs have been physically assaulted, face death threats, are under surveillance. I was persecuted, abducted, and my vehicle was smashed up. Another his house torched. In the last few days we have been threatened with deregistration and threats to freeze our bank accounts.”

HRD, Malawi

“I have become “guilty”, though I am blameless. I am not afraid of death – I live awaiting it. I lived, worked and walked along the path of justice, caring for those around me. In spite of everything, I have always and always will be convinced that my work is right. Dilmurod Sayid

We are under such stress. We listen to others. But we don't have the means to take care of ourselves. We need to give ourselves the minimum conditions that permit us to work. But we simply cannot raise the money!” HRD, DRC.

■ **Mistrust and competitiveness.** NGOs compete for money, do not cooperate, undermine each others' reputation, hide information from each other, lack support systems.

■ **Poor understanding of digital security.**

2. EFFECTIVE MEASURES TO PROTECT HRDS

What HRDs can do themselves

“We need to know how to confront fear, how not to lose our heads”

■ **Assess the risks you face.**

- Who threatens you?
- What is the threat?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?

■ **Ensure your own security.** Make your office secure: install security system, such as CCTV, metal doors, reinforced windows, coded locks. Establish security procedures and safe travel arrangements. Take all threats seriously. Analyse security incidents with your colleagues. Always be with someone. Take quick short trips. Change your means of transportation regularly. Never follow the same routine for long. Always inform someone of your plans. Make sure the hotels you use are safe.

■ **Become digitally savvy.** Regularly change passwords (email, Facebook). Learn how to manage information of all sorts (telephone, email, other). Learn how to encrypt. Keep files locked. Keep key data in different locations.

■ **Keep a record.** Report attacks and threats to relevant institutions. Keep a register of all threats and attacks, in the form of a diary, with dates, places, people involved, type of attack.

- Use alternative media to raise the profile of cases or situations
- Engage an expert in communication and media relation to guide you on how to respond to different situations
- Be ready to go on constant duty in the office if needed.

■ **Build relations in your community.** Your community is your first line of protection.

■ **Set up alarm and early warning networks** (local, national and international) that can react instantly if there is a threat. In the DRC a network of human rights organisations and journalists responds at once if a HRD or journalist is in danger. Don't rely on yourself.

■ **Inform yourselves about organisations that can protect you.** Find out about protection mechanisms at all levels: the ombudsman, national human rights institutions, human rights lawyers, regional protection mechanisms, UN special procedures, national human rights networks, International NGOs (Front Line Defenders, Amnesty International, PBI, PI, Human Rights Watch, The Observatory, etc.). Make contact with them. Send cases to regional and universal mechanisms.

■ **Take precautions if you are likely to be detained or arrested.** For example:

- Grant a power of attorney to someone you trust.
- Grant a trusted person access to your bank account, so that you can provide for your family while detained.
- List individuals you can call in an emergency. Make sure that two or three of them can immediately inform key organisations about your arrest, enabling them to intervene effectively.
- Warn key organisations and other HRDs that you are likely to be arrested, so that they can act quickly to assist you, and also protect their own security.

■ **Make yourself visible.** Neighbours, colleagues, family members should always be aware of what HRDs are doing. (In other situations, being visible can put you at risk. In some circumstances it is vital to work covertly).

■ **Develop relations with the authorities.** Make sure they know who you are, and that the information you provide is reliable.

- Build contacts with officials, the media, politicians, religious leaders etc. *“They infiltrate our organisations. Let us infiltrate theirs.”*
- At the same time, avoid being compromised. Remain independent.
- It is often effective to carry the human rights organisation card and show it to security officials when necessary.

■ **Work closely with the media.** Become well known to journalists as a source of reliable information.

■ **Train.** Organise training seminars. Bring in HRDs who have been imprisoned to share their experience. Discuss relaxation methods and strategies to deal with stress in different situations. Bring trainers from outside, whom local HRDs can trust.

■ **Provide psychological advice and support.** Psycho-social assistance may be necessary in some circumstances: internal debriefings and information sharing among colleagues; individual sessions with counselors; or counselling sessions with family members.

■ **Secure access to legal support and advice.** Since financial support is usually necessary, establish a separate emergency budget for this.

■ **Develop a general strategy.**

- Put together a crisis plan and revise it regularly with colleagues.
- Create relations with other HRDS to increase trust and mutual support.
- Build relationships with a range of individuals and institutions (diplomats, officials, INGOs, lawyers, media) that can provide support or assistance.
- Make sure the contact addresses of these essential contacts are updated and that you and colleagues have access to them.

■ **Exercise judgment.** There is no mechanical answer to security. The media can be a useful ally but a high media profile can sometimes also endanger HRDs. Appeals to international NGOs are similar: every appeal should be assessed for risk. For some groups of people (women, criminalised groups, transgender persons) it may also be dangerous to report attacks and threats. Intersectoral alliances can be useful here, particularly with professional associations (doctors, psychologists, lawyers, etc.). In societies where it is dangerous to associate with Western groups or governments, however, links with international civil society may need to be covert.

What international NGOs can do

- Provide legal advice and the finance for it.
- Assist HRDs to move securely, including to places of temporary refuge.
- Look after the families of HRDs who are at risk or who must relocate.
- Monitor and report on the situation of HRDs in different countries.
- Send appeals to local and international authorities and the media as required.
- Provide and finance training; develop a pool of competent trainers.
- Work with partners to develop risk assessment skills and guidelines.
- Provide tools for rapid web site construction.
- Help with radio/satellite telephony.
- Help with vehicles, where it is not safe or efficient for HRDs to walk or take public transport.
- When HRDs are investigated, lobby the authority immediately responsible.
- Ensure your advocacy is equitable: treat all HRDs equally.
- Do not require or encourage your partners to run extreme risks.

What the international community, including donors, can do

- *“We need less bureaucracy and more agile institutions at international level to protect us.”* Generally, action depends too often on the individual official and his or her good will and commitment.
- Create national and global funds for protection, training and support of HRDs. Create an emergency budget for HRDs at risk. Assist HRDs to pay for health insurance (instead of funding press releases and letters of condolence).
- Insert clauses on the protection of HRDs in aid agreements. “Governments are afraid only of the reaction of donors.”
- Multiply training opportunities in digital security.
- Invest in efforts to reform and secure the independence and probity of the judicial system.
- Assist the families of HRDs, notably during relocation.
- Provide funding directly to HRDs, rather than through the government.
- UN agencies should recognise HRD organisations, even if these are not recognised by the government.
- Send lawyers from overseas to observe trials because this raises awareness and provides protection.
- Organise more awards. Awards demonstrate to the authorities that HRDs are protected. They show the public and HRDs that they have support outside.
- Meet local and regional HRDs when you make official visits. Mention HRDs in diplomatic discussions and speeches; draw attention to the work they do.

Role of the UN field presences

- When field visits are made, set time aside to meet HRDs.
- Consult HRDs in advance, about security risks and local issues.
- Make sure the authorities are not informed of HRD meetings if these might put HRDs in danger.

Presentation by Dr. Shirin Ebadi, Iranian human rights defender and Nobel Peace Prize Recipient (2003)

Dr. Ebadi outlined the situation in Iran, focusing on the arrest of lawyers who defend political cases, the exclusion from university of students, the very high number of capital executions in the country and the incoherence of arguments that are employed by the Iranian Government to discredit efforts to promote and protect human rights in Iran. She expressed her pleasure at being present at the conference, saying: “No matter what country we come from, what language we speak, or what religion we have, we all share the same objective and aspiration, and hence we are all members of one big family. I am proud to be here among my own family today”.

Examples of good practice:

■ Weekly meetings

In Guatemala, staff of embassies, some UN officials and NGOs meet regularly to monitor the position of HRDs. This spreads information, enables rapid response, and increases the protection of more isolated HRDs. The group can meet urgently if needed. In Guinea, the US Ambassador meets civil society representatives on the first Friday of every month to discuss the human rights situation privately.

■ Rapid response networks

In Niger, HRDs have access to the telephone numbers of senior staff, who will sometimes travel to provide protection. Visas are also made available quickly when needed. In DRC, HRDs and the EU have established an emergency alert system. When a HRD contacts a focal point in the network, local NGOs and officials in Switzerland, Sweden and Spain take up their case immediately. In Mauritania, HRDs have access to the telephone numbers of certain Ambassadors. If arrests are made, embassies respond rapidly.

■ UN presence

Though the UN’s record is uneven, peace keepers were credited with creating a stable environment in Uganda. UN agencies in Indonesia have helped HRDs to contact other HRDs and prepare reports to the UN Special Representatives (SRSG) on HRDs.

■ Diplomatic pressure

The French Government made participation of civil society a condition of Cameroon’s debt reduction.



Omar Rodriguez Saludes

“Since July the government’s rapid response teams have attacked people who demonstrate every Sunday in support of human rights. People are asking the Government to recognise their right to express their opinions freely. Violence is an act of weakness, and any Government that uses it has no arguments left. We need a truly free country, a free island, a single sun shining on us.*

Omar Rodriguez Saludes, Cuba



Noeline Blackwell, Front Line with Dr. Shirin Ebadi, Iranian human rights defenders and Nobel Peace Prize Recipient (2003)

Answering questions, Shirin Ebadi expressed her view that economic sanctions were not appropriate, because they would increase the suffering of Iran’s people; military intervention is even less so. Sanctions against individuals who have violated human rights could be viable: travel bans; bans on the sale of military equipment and the prohibition of financial transfers.

She emphasised the importance of respecting religious sensibilities and using Islamic reasoning. Those who want to show that human rights are compatible with Islam need to understand Islam.

Women Human Rights Defenders Panel with Lorena Cabnal (Guatemala), Mary Conteh (Sierra Leone), Samira Hamidi (Afghanistan) and Julienne Lusenge (DRC)

The four panelists spoke first about obstacles. **Mary Conteh** noted that “human rights provides a new method of talking about our issues. When I stand up and talk about lesbians, men think lesbians are not people. Women need to talk to women and stand up for what they believe. This

can bring real change.”

Samira Hamidi observed that outspoken women who know their rights are not well received. “We become targets of attack when we stand up for rights. We are isolated and excluded because we are outspoken.”

Julienne Lusenge said that women HRDs in DRC are considered prostitutes. “All sorts of things are said against us by men who contest that women should be in the public space. Husbands too are criticised, for losing control over their wives, for being poor men who sleep alone.”

“As women, we must manage the social and cultural context in which we are brought up. We run the home, we have children and we need to promote human rights. We need to harmonise all of this. When I run



Mary Conteh, Sierra Leone



Left to right: Mary Conteh, Samira Hamidi, Julienne Lusenge, Lorena Cabnal, Noeline Blackwell

into difficulties I need to think about my husband and my children, whereas my male colleagues are not going to worry about whether the children have eaten.”

“I have continued to work because my husband and children support me. But not everyone is in my position.”

Lorena Cabnal said that women HRDs in Guatemala experience risk at many levels; on a daily basis as women, at home and in the bed; as indigenous women and women of African descent, as members of minorities; and within their own communities, because they are accused of being alienated from their own culture.

In debate, the participants and panelists made a variety of points.

- Women still rarely take leadership roles. Macho attitudes still dominate. There are always “more men than women in the room”.
- Women who are able to pursue their work as HRDs often have the support of their partners and families.
- Women need to speak for themselves, because there are many issues that men do not understand, or have not experienced.
- Women need to stand up and challenge oppressive norms that men have internalised.

“Men don’t respect women’s rights. Male HRDs will often behave badly in relation to their women at home.”

- Women’s movements need to learn how to mobilise public opinion in support of their objectives.
- Donors need to review their aid systems, because many donor programmes do not match the needs of women.
- Front Line Defenders should invite women religious leaders to the next Platform.
- Religion is an issue.



Samira Hamidi, Afghanistan

“In 1990 my son was abducted. I brought a case. My case has been pending for the last twenty-one years. I have made many appeals. Many thousands of people have been abducted in Kashmir. Several hundred young men were killed last year. We live in Kashmir as if we are renting the place, not as if we were citizens.”

Parveena Ahangar, Kashmir



“My story is that I was sexually abused, and I told three men about it, who told me I was lying. I told them I would not leave the room until they believed me. I stayed nine hours. Eventually, five other disabled women told the same story, and then finally they believed me.”

Rosaleen McDonagh, Ireland



Our struggle is not against one but several systems. Against colonialism. Against neo-liberalism. Against Western and traditional patriarchal systems. In my community 2000 people marched to stop mining, but when we came out against femicide, our male colleagues did not come out with us. So is it true that your struggle is my struggle? All of us say that we need to recover our land, but we say also: we need to recover our land and our bodies.”

Lorena Cabnal, Guatemala



“At some point we are going to have to put religion in the dock, because in the end it is not in favour of women’s rights. The Catholic Church brought women out into the street to protest against abortion for raped women, despite the Maputo Protocol. How can progress occur when this happens?”

Julienne Lusenge, DRC

“Women in Afghanistan are not equal. That is to start with. We are, however, also very diverse. There is the way that I live in Kabul. There, after the war, women could stand up and talk about rights, but women in Kandahar and Herat they cannot even meet their cousin or leave their houses to work in the field.”

Samira Hamidi, Afghanistan

“You will all go forward from here today and return to your work. You will speak on behalf of the weak, the vulnerable and the disenfranchised and, while at times you will be alone and isolated, I assure you that your work will be known and appreciated through the efforts of Front Line Defenders and others, and that the debt we all owe you will never be forgotten.”

Eamon Gilmore TD, Tánaiste and Irish Minister of Foreign Affairs & Trade

Presentation by the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs & Trade, Mr. Eamon Gilmore T.D.

Mr. Gilmore praised the work of human rights defenders and Front Line Defenders, and outlined Ireland's commitments with regard to human rights. Ireland supports the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders, sponsors the annual resolution in support of the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders and is a member of the Task Force on HRDs of the European Council Human Rights Working Group, which examines how the EU can best implement the Guidelines.

Ireland's own guidelines on HRDs make provision for aid and include a protection programme that helps HRDs at risk to shelter abroad for short periods. Ireland will also chair the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 2012.

Ireland is active in international human rights fora and will stand for election to the Human Rights Council in 2013-2015. It sponsored the new mandate of UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of

peaceful assembly and of association Maina Kiai, has extended an invitation to all Special Procedures to visit Ireland and has taken up a range of key issues, including the protection and recognition of LGBTI persons, gender equality and freedom of religion and belief.

“You all come from remarkably different backgrounds, political systems, and face different issues. What binds you together as a collective is your tireless work to seek to vindicate the rights of others and your dedication to championing human rights.

I am proud to welcome you to Ireland on behalf of the Irish people and I hope that your time here has given you the opportunity to learn from others and for some much needed respite. Your work, and ongoing commitment, is invaluable in the realisation of human rights for all people across the world.”

Eamon Gilmore TD, Tánaiste and Irish Minister of Foreign Affairs & Trade



Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs & Trade, Mr. Eamon Gilmore T.D.



Maina Kiai, UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Assembly and Association

Presentation by UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Assembly and Association, Mr. Maina Kiai

Mr. Maina Kiai presented his mandate, which was recently created. He believes human rights are about speaking truth to power and enhancing human dignity. In the next three years, he will prepare a report on best (and worst) practices with regard to Freedom of Assembly and Association. He hopes this work will lead to the drafting of more formal guidelines. The UN budget permits him to make two country visits per year but he is looking to raise additional funds if possible. He emphasised that his first loyalty is to civil society, and that progress

occurs first and mainly because of the efforts that are made nationally, within countries. "International action only provides a secondary push, and it has to be like this."

In question time, the participants raised a wide range of issues:

- The UN gives very little support to HRDs (Pakistan). **The UN system is indeed imperfect, and civil society actors need to press for more, even if there will not be quick solutions.**
- Please use the work that has been done within the OSCE on freedom of association (Russian Federation).
- What can be done to protect journalists? (Indonesia).
- Will you come to India and visit problem areas there?
- Will you assist the most marginal people, like peasants and informal communities, or work only with NGOs? (Colombia). **Yes, it is important to work with informal communities, and to consider carefully who represents them.**
- Please come to Banjul to support the special resolution on Freedom of Association that was adopted at the African Commission. **I will explore this.**
- In Mauritania, people have been charged for forming an unlicensed association. We cannot get the UN to work with us on this because, like the Government, they say we are unlicensed. **I have requested to visit Mauritania. Remember that it is possible to invite Special Rapporteurs to visit informally.**
- Indigenous people face many problems. They have organised more than fifty consultations but these protests and events are ignored (Guatemala).

"We fight ritual crimes [which is] the practice of removing sexual organs, tongues, eyes, heart and skin and blood, to confer power and success and honour. I became involved after a double murder in 2005. Two nine year old boys were mutilated, killed and their bodies thrown into the sea. Afterwards we learned of 12 other killings and set up an association. Since then, I have been targeted by the security forces, threatened, and an attempt was made to poison me. The people who do these crimes run secret networks, and make money by selling body parts - fostering impunity, corruption and crime."

Jean Elvis Ebang-Ondo, Gabon

"Human rights are never achieved quickly. "The key question is always: what can the people do? That's why I'm a grassroots activist, because I got fed up with appealing to politicians who would not listen. It is all about you."Change happens slowly with a lot of work. So the small successes that we have, let us celebrate them. Give hope to the next generation. We do what we do because we are optimists, because we believe."

Maina Kiai, UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Assembly and Association

"The Platform was a very opportune experience for me, as for many reasons that you half know, I was really demotivated, but this has recharged me and given me the desire to continue with my work, I am looking for a new ways to use and share all that I was able to learn, for the most marginalised sectors of Colombia, as well as finding a way to protect so many people, who are brave and don't know where to turn."

Morelia Arias Manco, Colombia

“Sexual orientation, like skin colour, is a feature of our diversity. Is there not already too much hate in the world, without seeking to persecute those who love?” **Archbishop Desmond Tutu**

FRONT LINE DEFENDERS AND GAY AND LESBIAN EQUALITY NETWORK OF IRELAND (GLEN) HOST SPECIAL EVENT TO WELCOME LGBTI DEFENDERS TO IRELAND

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex human rights defenders from around the world, including Armenia, Guyana, Thailand, Malawi, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Honduras and Albania were able to meet Irish activists and press at a special event as part of the Dublin Platform.

Most human rights defenders cannot speak openly about their activities for fear of being targeted, so this was a unique opportunity for local LGBTI campaigners from around the world to meet their local counterparts.



Left to right: Jose Antonio Zembrano, Honduras; Ndumie Funda, South Africa; Gift Trapence, Malawi; Anton Rocke, Guyana; Paisarn Likhitpreechakul, Thailand; Mamikon Hovdepyan, Armenia; Jim Loughran, Front Line Defenders; Odhran Allen, Gay And Lesbian Equality Network, Ireland (Glen)

PRE-PLATFORM DIGITAL SECURITY TRAINING 11th – 13th SEPTEMBER

Human rights defenders increasingly rely on electronic communications such as email, facebook and twitter as key communications and advocacy tools and as a result they are correspondingly vulnerable to cyber attacks by Governments and others opposed to their work for human rights. Governments are developing the capacity to manipulate, monitor and subvert electronic information. Surveillance and censorship is growing and the lack of security for digitally stored or communicated information is becoming a major problem for human rights defenders in some countries.

To address this issue Front Line Defenders organised a special two and a half day side event to the Front Line Dublin Platform to provide in depth training in digital security to 25 human rights defenders from around the world. The group was divided into five sub-groups of five persons on the basis of language and over the two and a half days they worked to raise their awareness of digital security threats and to develop their practical skills to deal with these threats.

The workshops addressed the issues of:

- How to protect information from physical threats;
- How to protect a computer from malware (malicious software) and hackers;
- How to create and maintain secure passwords;
- How to protect sensitive files on a computer;
- How to recover from information loss;
- How to destroy sensitive information;
- How to keep Internet and mobile phone communications private;
- And how to maintain anonymity and bypass censorship on the Internet.

This Workshop was based on the Security-in-a-Box toolkit (www.security.ngoinabox.org).





BAHRAIN DEMO – INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY TO FREE ABDULHADI AL KHAWAJA

One of the key themes of the Dublin Platform was the importance of international solidarity between human rights defenders to achieve lasting change.

In that spirit of solidarity the 132 human rights defenders and over 100 other guests took to the streets of Dublin to protest outside the Saudi Embassy.

The demonstrators led by Front Line Defenders' Executive Director Mary Lawlor were calling on the Government of Saudi Arabia to use its influence with the King of Bahrain to secure the release of Abdulhadi Al Khawaja and all other HRDs currently in detention in the Kingdom.



PARTICIPANT LIST

Asia

Afghanistan: Liah Jawad – The Foundation Of Solidarity For Justice (FOSJ)
 Afghanistan: Samira Hamidi – Afghan Women's Network
 Afghanistan: Soraya Sobhrang – Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission
 Australia: Barbara Rachel Shaw – Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning
 Bangladesh: Samari Chakma – Boudhi Investigate and Research Assembly of Men (BIRAM)
 Burma: Anonymous
 Cambodia: Venerable Sovath Luon – Monk, Documentary Filmmaker, Poet & HRD
 China: Anonymous
 Fiji: Ricardo Morris – Journalist, HRD & Editor of Mai Life
 India: Epsibai Paulraj – Tamil Nadu Dalit Women's Movement
 India: Jiten Yumnam – Forum for Indigenous Perspectives and Action (FIPA) & Citizens' Concern for Dams and Development (CCDD)
 India: Parveena Ahangar – Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons (APDP)
 Indonesia: Thresje Julianty Gaspersz – The Institution of Research, Analysing & Development for Legal Aid (LP3BH)
 Indonesia: Upi Asmaradhana – Committee to Protect Journalists and Freedom of Expression
 Indonesia: Usman Hamid – Commission for the Disappeared & Victims of Violence (KontraS)
 Mongolia: Tsogzolmaa Tumor – Mongolian Gender Equality Centre
 Nepal: Radhika Sapkota – Forum for Community Upliftment System (FOCUS –Nepal) Dhading
 Pakistan: Qamar Naseem – Blue Veins
 Pakistan: Shaheen Quresh – Blue Veins
 Papua New Guinea: Mary Kini – KUP Women for Peace
 Philippines: Claire M Luczon – Women's Legal

Education, Advocacy & Defense (Women LEAD) Foundation Inc.
 Philippines: Mary Louise Dumas – Madagway Babaeyon, Kalumbay Regional Lumad Organisation (through Ethnic Groups Development Resource Centre)
 Republic of Korea: Ji-Woong Park – MINBYUN – Lawyers for a Democratic Society
 Republic of Korea: Kang-Wook Choi – MINBYUN – Lawyers for a Democratic Society
 Sri Lanka: Anonymous
 Thailand: Paisarn Likhitpreechakul – Foundation for Human Rights on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (FOR-SOGI)

Europe & Central Asia

Albania: Xheni Karaj – The Alliance Against Discrimination of LGBT
 Armenia: Mamikon Hovsepian – Public Information and Need of Knowledge NGO (PINK)
 Belarus: Nasta Loika – Весна - "Spring"
 Georgia: Ekaterine Aghdgomelashvili – Women's Initiatives Supporting Group (WISG)
 Hungary: Viktoria Mohacsi – Movement for Desegregation Foundation
 Ireland: Rosaleen Mc Donagh – Pavee Point Traveller Centre
 Kazakhstan: Askar Aktleuov – International Foundation For the Protection of Freedom of Speech "Adil Soz"
 Kosovo: Avni Zogiani – Organisation for Democracy, Anti-corruption and Dignity – COHU!
 Kyrgyzstan: Valentina Gritsenko – Jalal-Abad Regional Human Rights Organisation (OPZO) "Justice" ("Spravedlivost")
 Russian Federation: Dmitri Makarov – Youth Human Rights Movement (YHRM)
 Russian Federation: Olga Tseytlina – Human Rights Lawyer
 Russian Federation, Chechnya: Dokka Itslaev – Memorial Human Rights Centre

Russian Federation, Chechnya: Inna Ayrapetyan – "Consolation of the Soul" ("Sinte")
 Russian Federation: Igor Kalyapin – The Committee Against Torture (CAT)
 Russian Federation, Chechnya: Oyub Titiev – Memorial Human Rights Center
 Ukraine: Volodymyr Yavorsky – Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union
 Uzbekistan: Dmitry Tihonov – Human Rights Alliance of Uzbekistan & The International Society for Human Rights Defenders
 Uzbekistan: Mutabar Tadjibaeva – Fiery Hearts Club
 Uzbekistan: Anonymous – Vertae

The Americas

Argentina: Alicia Morales – The Permanent Assembly for Human Rights (APDH)
 Brazil: Repper Fiell – Visão de Favela Brazil
 Brazil: Valdênia Paulino Lanfranchi – The Oscar Romero Human Rights Center (CEDHOR)
 Colombia: Abelardo Sánchez Serrano – Regional Corporation for the Defense of Human Rights (CREDHOS)
 Colombia: Morelia Arias Manco – The Community Justice Network & Treatment of Conflicts (RJCTC)
 Cuba: José Luis García – Observatorio Cubano de Derechos Humanos
 Cuba: Omar Rodriguez Saludes – Observatorio Cubano de Derechos Humanos
 Ecuador: Joel Vicente Zhunio Samaniego – Association of Farmers of Limón Indanza (ACLI)
 El Salvador: Padre Neftali Ruiz Martínez – Environmental Committee of Cabañas in Defense of Water & Culture (CAC)
 Guatemala: Edgar Pérez – Law Offices of Human Rights
 Guatemala: Lorena Cabnal – Organización Mujeres en Superación
 Guatemala: Yanira Lisette Tobar Márquez –

Guatemala: Association of Indigenous Women of Santa María Xalapán (AMISMAXAJ)
 Yuri Melini – Centro de Acción Legal – Ambiental y Social de Guatemala (CALAS)
 Guyana: Anton Rocke – Society Against Sexual Orientation Discrimination (SASOD)
 Haiti: Jean-Phèdre Delva – Réseau Frontalier Jeannot Succès (RFJS)
 Honduras: José Antonio Zambrano – Association for a Better Life for People Infected/Affected by HIV/AIDS in Honduras (APUVIMEH)
 Honduras: Verónica Murillo Odonez – Asociación para una Sociedad más Justa (ASJ)
 Mexico: Adolfo Guzmán Ordaz – LINK Communication & Training
 Nicaragua: Claudia Surama Vargas Rodríguez – Wangki Tangni ("Flower of the River")
 Nicaragua: Dennis Antonio Baéz Orozco – Centro Nicaragüense de Derechos Humanos (CENIDH)
 Paraguay: Roque Arnaldo Orrego Orué – Coordinadora de DDHH del Paraguay (CODEHUPY)
 Peru: Elizabeth Cunya Novillo – Frente de Defensa de la Frontera Norte (ULAM)
 United States: Enrique Morones – Border Angels
 United States: Thomas Wilner – Human Rights Lawyer
 Venezuela: Raúl Cubas – Programa Venezolano de Educación-Acción en Derechos Humanos (PROVEA)

Africa

Angola: Jacinto Pio Wacussanga – Building Communities Association (ACC)
 Angola: José Patricinio – OMUNGA
 Angola: Lúcia de Silveira – Association for Justice, Peace & Democracy (AJPD)
 Angola: Zenilda Volola – Rádio Ecclésia
 Cameroon: Jean-Marc Bikoko – Centrale Syndicale du Secteur Public (CSP)
 Côte d'Ivoire: Geneviève Diallo – Réseau Paix et Sécurité pour les Femmes de l'Espace (REPSFECO-CI)

Dem. Rep. of Congo: Gègè Katana – SOFAD – Solidarity of Women's Rights & Human Rights Activists
 Dem. Rep. of Congo: Julienne Lusenge – Women Solidarity for Peace & Development (SOFEPADI)
 Dem. Rep. of Congo: Robert Ilunga Numbi – Friends of Nelson Mandela for the Defense of Human Rights (ANMDH)
 Dem. Rep. of Congo: Sylvestre Bwira – AMANI Institute
 Equatorial Guinea: Alfredo Okenve Ndóho – Centro de Estudios e Enciativas para El Desarrollo (CEID)
 Ethiopia: Anonymous – Ethiopian Lawyers Association
 Gabon: Jean Elvis Ebang-Ondo – Association to Fight Ritual Crimes (ALCR)
 Ghana: James Kofi Annan – Challenging Heights
 Guinea: Mohamed Lamine Sow – Guinea Avocats Sans Frontières (ASF Guinea)
 Malawi: Benedicto Kondowe – Civil Society Coalition for Quality Basic Education
 Malawi: Gift Trapence – Centre for the Development of People (CEDEP)
 Malawi: Undule D.K. Mwakasungula – The Centre for Human Rights and Rehabilitation (CHRR)
 Mauritania: Aminetou Mint Moctar – Association des Femmes Chefs de Famille (AFCF)
 Mauritania: Biram Dah Abeid – Initiative de Résurgence du Mouvement Abolitionniste en Mauritanie (IRA Mauritanie)
 Mozambique: Elisa Maocha – Mozambique Human Rights League (LMDH)
 Niger: Ali Idrissa – Comité de Réflexion et d'Orientation Indépendant pour la Sauvegarde des Acquis Démocratiques (CROISADE)
 Nigeria: Justine Ijoemah – Human Rights, Social Development and Environmental Foundation (HURSDEF)
 Rwanda: Floride Mukarugambwa – National Counsel of Free Trade Unions (COSYLI)
 Sierra Leone: Mary Conteh – Women's Centre For Good Governance And Human

South Africa: Rights (WOCEGAR)
 Ndumie Funda – Luleki Sizwe LBT Women's Project
 South Sudan: Biel Boutros – South Sudan Human Rights Society for Advocacy (SSHURSA)
 Sudan: Mudawi Ibrahim Adam – Sudan Social Development Organisation (SUODO)
 Sudan: Nagla Mohamed – Network Cry
 Sudan: Rasha Suraj Abdulrahman – Human Rights Organisation
 Tanzania: Adam Kuleit Ole Mwarabu Lamareka – Parakuiyo Pastoralist Indigenous Community Development Organisation (PAICODEO)
 The Gambia: Isatou Touray – GAMCOTRAP
 Uganda: Laura Kanusha – Legal Action for Persons with Disability UGANDA (LAPD)
 Zimbabwe: Farai Maguwu – Mutare Centre for Research and Development (CRD)

Middle East & North Africa

Algeria: Nassima Guettal – Algerian League for the Defence of Human Rights (LADDH)
 Algeria: Yacine Zaid – Algerian League for the Defence of Human Rights (LADDH)
 Bahrain: Abdulla Alderazi – Bahrain Human Rights Society (BHRS)
 Bahrain: Jihan Kazrooni – Bahrain Centre for Human Rights (BCHR)
 Bahrain: Fatima Al Tajir – Bahraini Medics Solidarity Group
 Egypt: Ahmad Gharbeia
 Egypt: Ahmed Ragheb – The Hisham Mubarak Law Centre
 Egypt: Rawda Aly – Arabic Network For Human Rights Information (ANHRI)
 Egypt: Mona Imam – El Nadim Centre for the Psychological Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence
 Iraq: Dina Najem – Iraqi Al-Amal Association (IAA)

contd. over >

- Iraq: Hayder Hamzoz – Iraqi Streets For Change
- Iraq: Malka Ali Kadhim Al-Haddad – Women’s Centre for Culture and Arts – Al-Najaf Al-Ashraf
- Israel: Michelle Bubis – B’Tselem – The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories
- Jordan: Salem Qubailat – Amman Center for Human Rights Studies (ACHRS)
- Kuwait: Mohammed Abdul-Qader Al-Jassem – Human Rights Lawyer
- Lebanon: Ghada Jabbour – KAFA (enough) Violence and Exploitation
- Morocco: Boutaina Almakoudi – The Moroccan Forum for Truth and Justice
- Palestine: Zainab A A Alginaimi – Centre for Research & Legal Advice for Women
- Oman: Salim Al-Tuwaiya – Human Rights Journalist / Activist / Blogger
- Qatar: Sultan Al-Khalaifi – Organisation of Justice for Human Rights in Geneva
- Saudi Arabia: Anonymous
- Syria: Catherine Altalli
- Syria: Haitham Al Maleh
- Tunisia: Najet Laabidi – Liberté Equité
- Yemen: Yasser Al Wazer – Yemeni Organisation for Defending Rights & Democratic Freedoms & the Yemeni Centre for Human Rights



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The next Dublin Platform will take place in 2013.
Front Line Defenders would welcome any input for the agenda.

Reports from the working groups that took place in this year's Sixth Dublin Platform are now available on the Front Line Defenders website.

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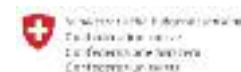


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REPORT FROM THE SIXTH DUBLIN PLATFORM FOR HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS