



“As a human rights defender, I have come to realize that my stress levels will persist until justice is served and the rights of others are secured. The emotional toll of advocating for others, particularly those living with disabilities, can be overwhelming, as I often tap into their pain and struggles. To me, stress is normal and I will learn to live with it. Unfortunately, this emotional burden can take a significant toll on my mental health, making it challenging for me to cope. I have come to acknowledge that I require ongoing support to manage and I appreciate Front Line Defenders for availing this programme.”

HRD participant to RAPP training in Zimbabwe

Read more in page 29.

Front Cover: A Garifuna community member attends a court hearing and peacefully protests outside the court where five human rights defenders are being tried on charges of forced displacement and aggravated usurpation related to their defence of ancestral lands.

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Graphic Design by Marie Melvin www.marie-melvin.com

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SUSTAINING THE STRUGGLE TOGETHER

2025 has confronted human rights defenders — and those of us who work to protect them — with a convergence of crises unlike any we have faced in recent memory.

The global landscape for human rights has darkened considerably. Conflicts across Gaza, Sudan, Myanmar, Ukraine, and beyond have continued to devastate communities and silence the defenders who stand with them. In too many contexts, we have watched the rule of law erode not gradually, but suddenly — governments retreating from international commitments, institutions that once provided accountability rendered ineffective, and the space for civil society shrinking with alarming speed. The targeting of human rights defenders is no longer incidental to these conflicts; in many places, it is deliberate and systematic.

At the same time, the funding infrastructure that has long underpinned the protection ecosystem is collapsing. Institutional donors are withdrawing, aid budgets are being slashed, and organisations that have spent decades building trust with defenders on the ground are facing an existential reckoning. The consequences are not abstract: programmes are closing, emergency support is drying up, and defenders who once had a network to turn to are finding themselves increasingly alone. The dual pressure of escalating threat and shrinking support is placing an extraordinary burden on human rights defenders and on the organisations — including our own — that exist to protect them.

Yet in the midst of this turbulence, we cannot — and must not — lose sight of why this work matters. The defenders we support have not lost sight of it. We are continuously humbled by their resilience and their refusal to be silenced. I think, for instance, of Sharifa Madрахimova Murodovna, an Uzbekistani woman human rights defender and journalist, whose determination to continue her work despite threats to her family, as well as defamation and attacks against her, speaks to a courage that puts our own challenges in perspective. As she indicated, “I consider my activity important and necessary for society and I intend to continue it, because if everyone keeps silent then there will be no development”. I am also thinking of Arnon Nampa, a Thai lawyer facing the prospect of life imprisonment and disbarment, who has remained steadfast for two decades in his pro-democracy advocacy, refusing to let political persecution silence his voice. It is defenders like these who remind us that protection is not a luxury — it is what makes all other human rights work possible.

This report reflects Front Line Defenders' efforts throughout 2025 to stand with defenders in precisely these conditions. In the course of the year, Front Line Defenders delivered over 6,000 support activities to human rights defenders and their organisations worldwide — spanning emergency grants, physical and digital security, capacity building, advocacy, visibility, and wellbeing. In most cases, defenders received support across several areas, grounded in Front Line Defenders' understanding that effective

protection must match the full complexity of risks faced by HRDs.

We are also honest with ourselves that meeting this moment requires us to evolve. In 2025, we embarked on an organisational review to ensure that Front Line Defenders is structured, resourced, and positioned to best serve defenders in the years ahead. We are asking hard questions about how we work, where we can have the greatest impact, and how we can remain agile in an environment that is changing faster than any of us anticipated. We do not have all the answers yet, but we are committed to finding them — with defenders' needs at the centre of every decision we make.

None of this work is possible without the solidarity of our partners and the commitment of all our peers and allies. In a year when so many have faced their own pressures, your continued commitment to this cause has been a source of real strength. We are deeply grateful — not only for the support you provide, but for your belief in the fundamental importance of protecting those who defend the rights of us all. Together, we are holding a line that must not fall.

In solidarity,

Alan Glasgow
CEO, Front Line Defenders



1. PROGRESS TOWARDS ACHIEVING OUR VISION



Front Line Defenders’ vision is that *Human Rights Defenders are recognised and supported as essential actors in defending and advancing human rights, and bringing about positive change in society.*

The implementation of Front Line Defenders’ work is comprised of **three Strategic Objectives** to bring about this change and includes emergency support, preventive measures and external support. Individually and collectively these strategic elements are intended to provide stronger international protection for HRDs to enable them to better manage their security and carry out their legitimate work.

As this report shows, Front Line Defenders continues to make progress towards these Strategic Objectives despite the immense challenges and risks facing HRDs and organisations globally.

IN 2025, FRONT LINE DEFENDERS SUPPORTED:

2,572 Human Rights Defenders at Risk

And **581** Organisations

In **151** Countries

93% Of HRDs reported being able to continue their work following support from the organisation. (Compared to 89% in 2024).

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

- ▶ **RAPID RESPONSE** including a 24/7 hotline for HRDs, urgent appeals, and protection grants. Protection Grants provide rapid and practical financial support to HRDs at risk. They can be delivered in 48h in cases of emergency, and can be used for, amongst other things: emergency relocations; equipment to improve physical or digital security; and legal or medical support.
- ▶ **CAPACITY BUILDING** consultations, workshops and resource materials to promote HRDs’ holistic protection, addressing physical, digital and psychosocial security. We also offer Rest and Respite opportunities for defenders to recuperate from the challenges of their work/environment.

- ▶ **ADVOCACY** at national and international level, through UN and regional mechanisms, including tailored advocacy for HRDs and input on key regional and international policy developments.

STRATEGIC GOALS 2023-2027

As part of Front Line Defenders’ Strategic Plan 2023-2027, Front Line Defenders has developed a results framework with three goals that are key for achieving the organisational vision.

GOAL/OUTCOME **1.**

HRDs working at local/ national level have increased protection through the provision of rapid, practical and intersectional support.

GOAL/OUTCOME **2.**

HRDs, their communities and civil society have strengthened resilience and capacity to manage their protection in the longer term.

GOAL/OUTCOME **3.**

There are stronger policies and political/practical action at national, regional and international levels to protect human rights defenders at risk.

2. CONTEXT: THE WORLD FOR HRDS IN 2025



Please see [Front Line Defenders' Global Analysis report](#) for more information and analysis on the global situation for the protection of HRDs in 2025.

In 2025, support for human rights protection waned as powerful states weaponised aid and demonstrated a lack of respect and recognition for the international rules-based order, with a domination of non-compliance and insistence on abandoning a human-rights based lens to governance. Front Line Defenders has documented over €45 million in lost HRD protection funding since 2024, though total sector-wide cuts are estimated to exceed \$250 million annually. Resources for the protection of human rights defenders significantly reduced, compounding the risks and threats faced by defenders without much support to push-back.

Conflict, post-conflict and crises situations

Defenders in countries such as Sudan, Palestine, Ukraine and the DRC served at the frontlines, providing life-saving services at immense personal risks. Defenders, journalists and humanitarian workers were targeted with extreme violence.

The situation in the **DRC** continued to deteriorate as armed operations by **M23 rebels** were renewed in early 2025, leaving over 7.3 million people [internally displaced](#).

Russian occupation of eastern and southern **Ukraine** entered its fourth year, with **Russia** consolidating administrative control in many parts, with severe humanitarian consequences. **Ukrainian** defenders working on the documentation of violations, including cultural destruction were subjected to constant shelling and were at great risk of bodily harm. Russian defenders opposing the war on **Ukraine** were repressed and targeted in efforts to silence them and spread fear.

The UN has [described](#) the current civil war in **Sudan** as a “crisis of staggering proportions, with civilians paying the highest price”. Conflict and environmental instability has created difficulties for communities and defenders who have reported facing significant hindrances to provide essential support to their communities.

Israel continued its war on **Gaza**, alongside a devastating humanitarian blockade. Thousands have been killed, countless more injured, communities starving, civilian infrastructure ruined and almost the entire population displaced in the ongoing genocide perpetrated by Israel's authorities. Defenders have expressed loss of hope in the international community as settlement expansion, demolitions and increased settler violence in the West Bank [continues](#).



19 March 2024, South Sudan, Joda: A UN employee (I) stands with waiting refugees at a bus that is supposed to take women and children from Sudan from the Joda border crossing to a transit camp in the border town of Renk in South Sudan. © Eva-Maria Krafczyk/dpa

Criminalisation and Judicial Harassment

Front Line Defenders recorded several incidents of defenders who were facing targeted **criminalisation** and **judicial harassment** to limit, discredit and interfere with their human rights operations. Anti-terror, foreign agents and national security laws were used to target defenders. These laws were weaponised and exploited to criminalise human rights work. In countries such as **Hungary**, laws requiring human rights organisations receiving funding to register as ‘foreign agents’ were enacted and broadened. In **Slovakia** defenders criticised a NGO bill that held similarities to **Russia’s** foreign agent law. Under these laws human rights organisations are subjected to increased scrutiny and operational and administrative restrictions.

Land, Indigenous and Environmental Rights Defenders

Land, indigenous and environmental rights defenders continued to face significant risks including criminalisation, judicial harassment, violent threats and harassment, physical assault, abductions, torture and killings. In the **Americas**, there are systematic patterns by states aimed at silencing human rights defenders, journalists, and critical voices through persecution, criminalisation and the implementation of restrictive laws that hinder social organisations and diminish civic space.

Land, indigenous and environmental rights defenders were targeted in resource-induced conflicts.

In communities in the **Sahel**, **Central America** and **South Asia**, conflicts over dwindling water and arable land intensified as armed groups created hostile environments for pastoralists, farmers and indigenous communities who defend the land and environmental rights in the face of powerful business enterprises and criminal actors.

In 2025, there were significant efforts on the global level to strengthen policies on the protection of land, environmental and indigenous rights defenders. The implementation of international human rights principles is required to see the actualisation of state obligations to protect defenders from corporate-linked violence, as was reiterated by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights [ruling](#) in March 2025.

Women Human Rights Defenders

WHRDs faced specific-gendered risks including criminalisation, judicial harassment, arbitrary detention, physical and online sexual violence. In several countries such as **India**, **Cameroon**, **Iran**, **Syria** and **Sudan** WHRDs contend against challenging patriarchal structures and technology-based abuse designed to silence them.

In many cases, for women human rights defenders, the threat of imprisonment is used to silence them and keep them under the surveillance of authorities. This is exemplified in how the **Iranian** government [continues](#) to threaten the woman human rights defender and Nobel Peace Prize laureate, [Narges Mohammadi](#).

LGBTIQ+ Defenders

In 2025, LGBTIQ+ defenders in countries such as **Kazakhstan**, **Cameroon**, **Italy**, **Turkiye**, **Tunisia**, the **UK** and **Mexico** were targeted with criminalisation, physical violence and assault, discrimination, digital violence and other simultaneous forms of violence, such as torture and sexual violence for promoting the rights of the LGBTIQ+ community.

A [law was adopted](#) in **Hungary** restricting freedom of assembly. Consequently, events such as Pride marches have been prohibited.

Defending Rights in the Digital Space

2025 was a year where young human rights defenders increasingly led human rights movements through digital native and decentralised networks to document human rights violations and mobilize support globally.

But as new technologies present promising opportunities for human rights defenders, there are significant risks that continue to arise due to the increased accessibility and availability of the internet and emerging technologies. Human rights defenders globally have reported increased targeting through misinformation, disinformation, doxing campaigns and online violence.



Kathmandu, Bagmati, Nepal. 9th Oct. 2025. Family members of those killed in Gen-Z protest of September 8 participate in a candle light vigil outside the parliament building in Kathmandu on 09 October 2025. Nationwide protests in Nepal began on 08 September 2025, driven by youths identified as Generation Z against corruption and a government-imposed social media ban. © Credit Image: Aryan Dhimal/ZUMA Press Wire

3. GOAL 1 – RAPID RESPONSE



Under this goal, Front Line Defenders supports HRDs and organisations at risk through its rapid, practical and intersectional approach. This includes initial/rapid risk assessments, holistic support and advice, and providing urgent and emergency support to HRDs and organisations at risk. This is done through strengthening accessibility and outreach, urgent advocacy on cases, protection and emergency grants to HRDs and organisations, protection consultations, and continued development of a holistic response to the urgent needs of HRDs.

Activities implemented under this Strategic Goal are: Outreach country visits, Protection Consultations, Protection and Emergency grants (focused on legal support, medical, relocation, personal and organisational security and digital protection), Urgent Advocacy, Visibility support and response to crisis contexts.

RAPID, PRACTICAL AND INTERSECTIONAL SUPPORT RESULTS IN 2025

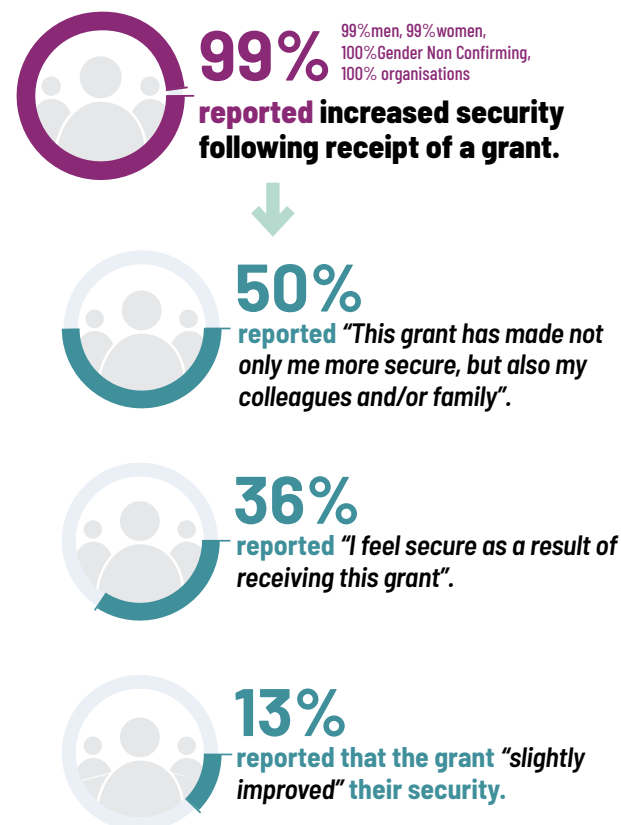
“The support and assistance you provide motivate us to continue working towards building safer and fairer societies.”

WHRD from Venezuela supported in 2025

Through its Protection Grants programme and Urgent Advocacy, FLD directly supported 1,491 HRDs and 463 organisations. FLD also reached 1,961 new HRDs and 40 organisations/groups contacts through outreach and 530 HRDs and 167 organisations were supported through Protection Consultations.

IMPROVED SECURITY

Of the Grant Recipients who responded to the follow-up survey:



89% of HRDs reporting increased security as a result of Front Line Defenders urgent support.

↔ **99%** of grants improved security.

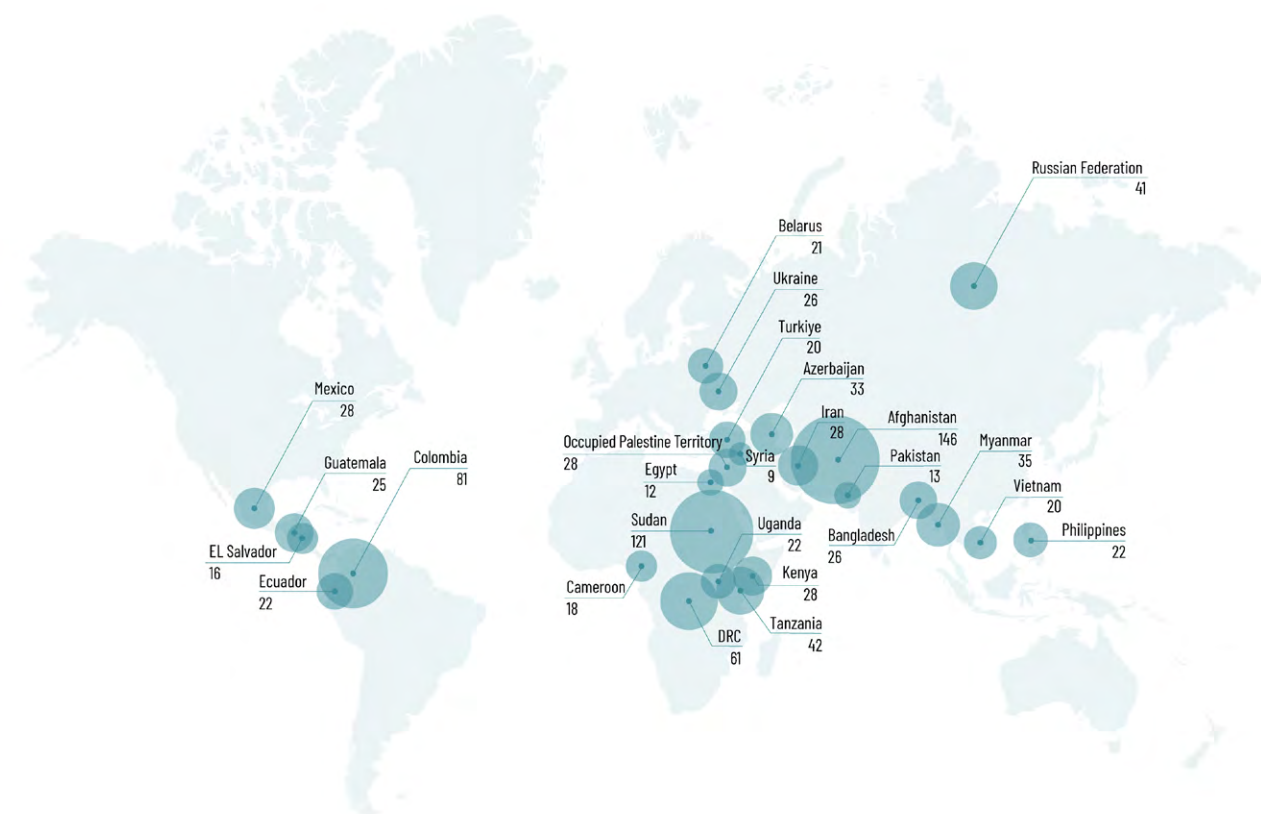
↔ **32%** of urgent advocacy led to positive outcome.

34% of Urgent advocacy/Emergency Grants being responded to within 48hrs.

Through its Protection Grants Programme, Front Line Defenders contributes to strengthening the security and capacity of human rights defenders enabling them to continue their legitimate work. This supports practical security needs including legal costs, temporary relocation, office and home security systems, psychological support and medical costs.

In 2025, FLD awarded **1,331 protection grants** to HRDs including 1,007 protection grants to individual HRDs and 324 to human rights organisations at risk in **109** countries to a total value of €3,911,964.52.

TOP 5 COUNTRIES FOR GRANT APPROVALS PER REGION



- **Europe and Central Asia** – Russian Federation (41), Azerbaijan (33), Ukraine (26), Belarus (21) and Turkiye (20)
- **Americas** – Colombia (81), Mexico (28), Guatemala (25), Ecuador (22), El Salvador (16)
- **Middle East and North Africa** – Sudan (121), Iran (28), Occupied Palestinian Territory (28), Egypt (12), Syria (9)
- **Asia** – Afghanistan (146), Myanmar (35), Bangladesh (26), Philippines (22), Vietnam (20), Pakistan (13)
- **Sub-Saharan Africa** – DRC (61), Tanzania (42), Kenya (28), Uganda (22), Cameroon (18)

In 2025, 554 men HRDs were supported (including 5 trans men HRDs), 403 women were supported (including 24 trans WHRDs), 23 grants were to gender non-conforming defenders, while 288 human rights organisations were supported. 23 HRDs did not provide information on how they identify. The disaggregation is similar to the grants provided in previous years.

TYPES OF SUPPORT PROVIDED THROUGH GRANTS

Of the 1,331 protection grants provided, 336 were provided for multiple types of support (for example temporary relocation and medical costs). As such, the statistics presented here take into account the percentage of grants that included each type of support.

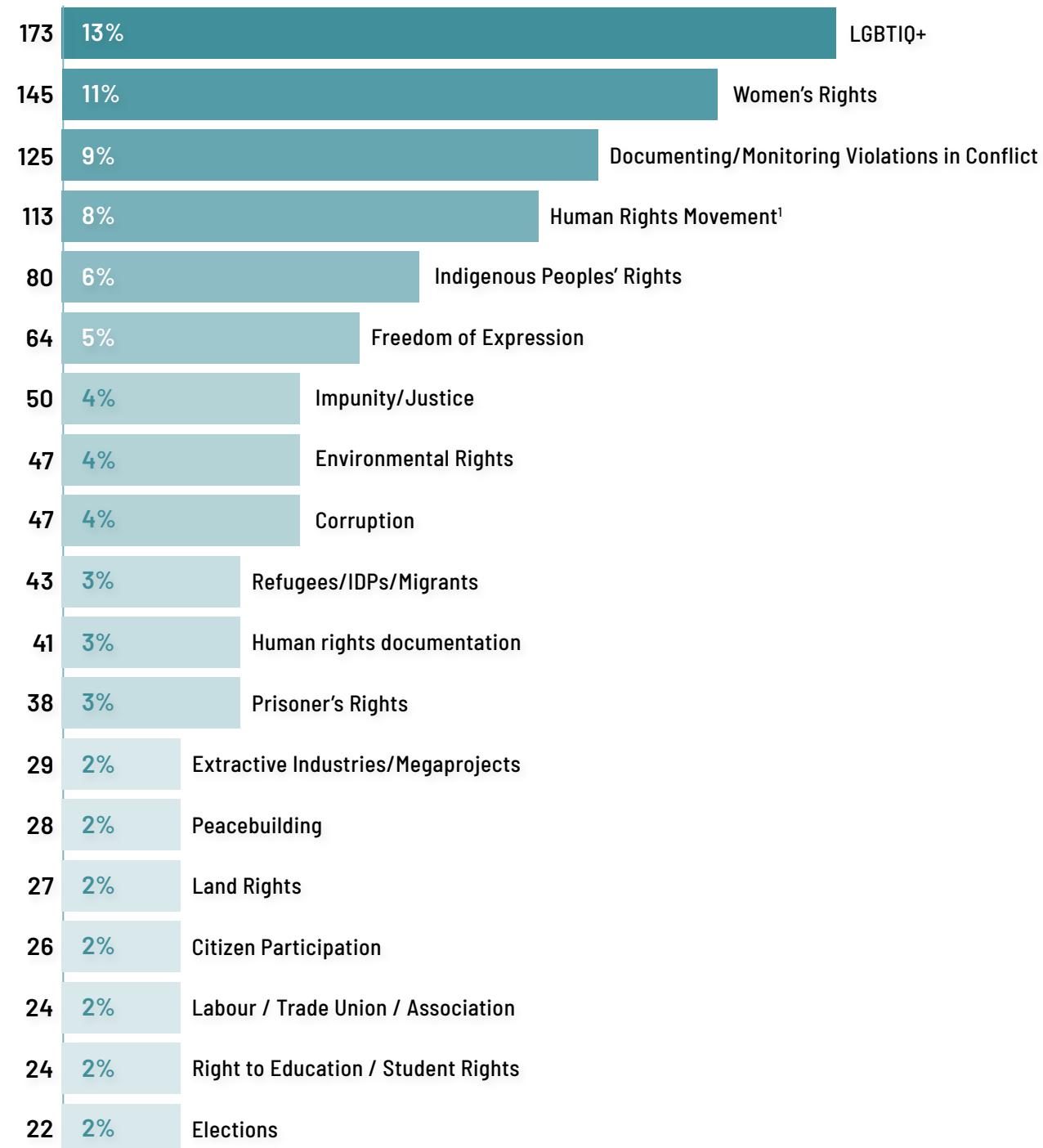


- Temporary Relocation
- Permanent Relocation
- Individual Security
- Office Security
- Medical
- Solidarity
- ICT Equipment
- Legal
- Psycho-Social
- Family Support
- Preventative Measures
- Other

Similarly to previous years, the largest proportion of grants were provided to support temporary relocation (43%) followed by individual security (20%), and ICT equipment (14%).

TOP AREAS OF HUMAN RIGHTS WORK SUPPORTED

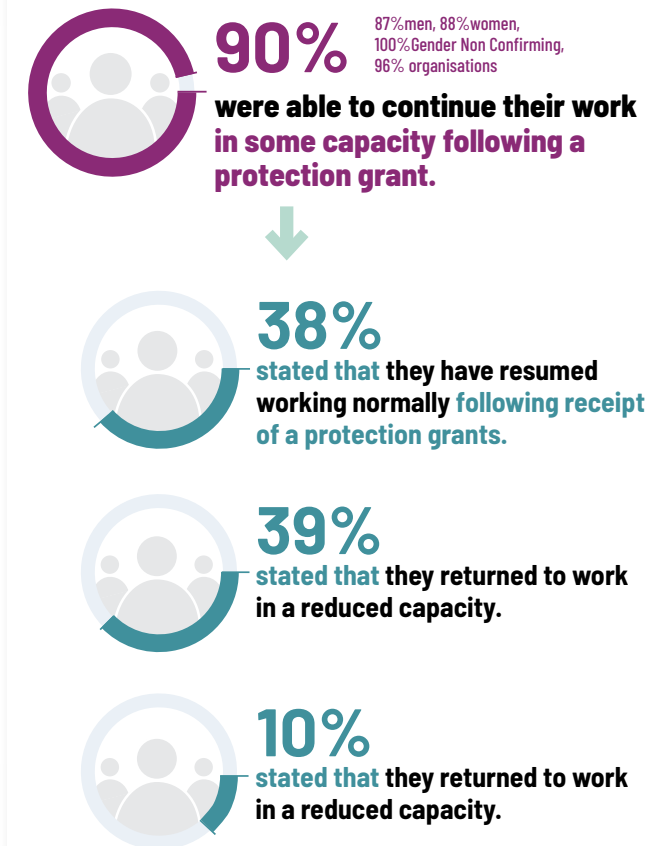
The main issues that grant recipients work on include LGBTQ+ rights (13%), Women's Rights (11%), Documenting/Monitoring Violations in Conflict (9%), Human Rights Movement (8%), Indigenous People's Rights (6%) and Freedom of Expression (5%).



¹ The recipient could be a W/HRD working on Womens' rights for example but the reason they are being targeted and requiring a grant is related to the general human rights situation in their country e.g, participation in protests against political, economic and social reforms.

RETURNED TO WORK

Of those who reported back:



"This grant [...] has had a significant impact on the sustainability of our organization's work. The security equipment has given us greater peace of mind in carrying out our activities, as it enables us to take personal measures to protect ourselves, as well as the documents and data we possess.

I realize that in the work my colleagues and I do, security and protection are the most important aspects and must remain our top priority. The reason is simple: I cannot help or protect others if I myself am not safe, at ease, and able to work effectively."

Examples of Protection Grants Support in 2025

CAMEROON, HOME SECURITY, €4,623

A grant to a HRD who works on monitoring, documenting and reporting cases of human rights violations and abuses perpetrated by the Defence and Security forces and Armed Separatists in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon. The HRD was attacked upon speaking to the media about the continuous abuses in the Anglophone regions amid government silence. The unknown assailants took his Laptop, iPad and phone. The HRD continued to face online threats after publicizing the killing of unarmed civilians during a shoot out initiated by State actors to target separatists. The grant covered CCTV cameras, reinforced doors and windows.

A grant to an organisation that protects women's and child rights in a conflict-affected region of Indonesia. Due to the prevalence of State repression in the region, the organisation sought to improve its office security, and ensure safety of its sensitive data. The grant covered an office CCTV system, secure phones, VPN subscriptions, Yubikeys and Faraday bags.

INDONESIA, OFFICE AND DIGITAL SECURITY, €1,500

URGENT ACTIONS

Of the urgent actions, **32% recorded positive outcomes** in 23 countries. Of the positive outcomes:

- ▶ 18% were cases where the HRD received a pardon, amnesty or early release.
- ▶ 11% of cases the case was dropped or investigation closed.
- ▶ 3% of cases threats ceased.

In 2025, Front Line Defenders issued **285 urgent actions** on behalf of HRDs and organisations in 60 countries. Through these urgent actions, **190 HRDs** (74 Women/92 Men/4 gender non conforming)² and **52 organisations** were supported³. Specific actions that the casework involved included Urgent Appeals, Updates, Statements and Joint Statements.

The region with the highest proportion of cases was the Middle East and North Africa (84), followed by the Americas (51), Europe and Central Asia (44), Asia-Pacific (42) and Sub-Saharan Africa (21).

Examples of Positive Outcomes from 2025

ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS DEFENDERS ACQUITTED OF FABRICATED CRIMINAL CHARGES IN PERU

On 8 April 2025, the Second Unipersonal Criminal Court of Chiclayo **dismissed the criminal case** against six environmental defenders, members of the [Frente de Defensa Salvemos Chaparri](#) The HRDs were being

criminalised based on unsubstantiated charges of "altering the environment or landscape" of the ACP Chaparri.

TWENTY-ONE LAND RIGHTS DEFENDERS ACQUITTED IN OAXACA, MEXICO

On 16 December 2025, the Criminal Control Court of Santo Domingo Tehuantepec in Oaxaca, overturned the conviction of 21 human rights defenders including Saúl Robles Aragón and [Román Sosa Miñon](#), members of the Chontal indigenous community, El Coyul. They had been sentenced to 15 years imprisonment for aggravated land dispossession against a private company, Sociedad Agrícola Ganadera el Coyul Oax, S.C.

RELEASE OF KARAKALPAK' HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER FROM PRISON

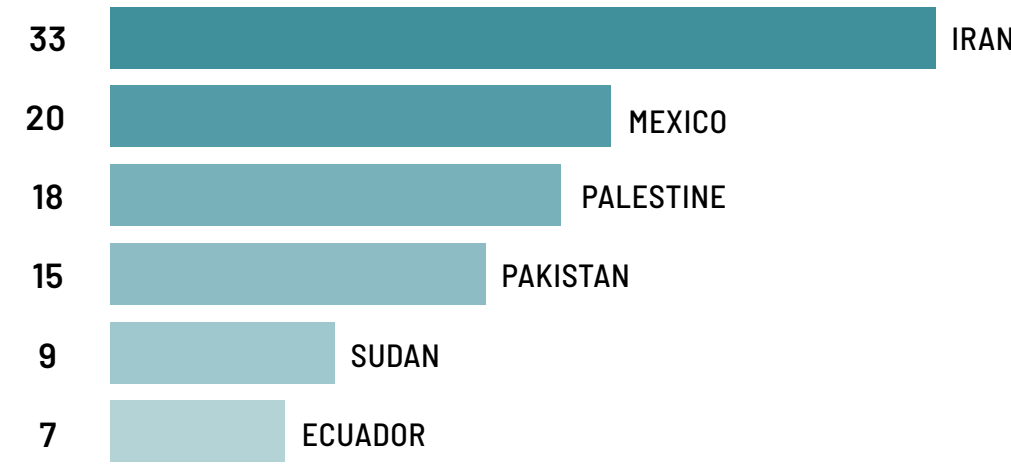
On 15 February 2025, **Kazakhstani** authorities released Karakalpak human rights defender [Aqylbek Muratbai](#). In total, Aqylbek Muratbai spent 1 year in detention.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS SAID BOUDOUR, KADDOUR CHOUICHA, AND JAMILA LOUKIL ACQUITTED OF ALL CHARGES

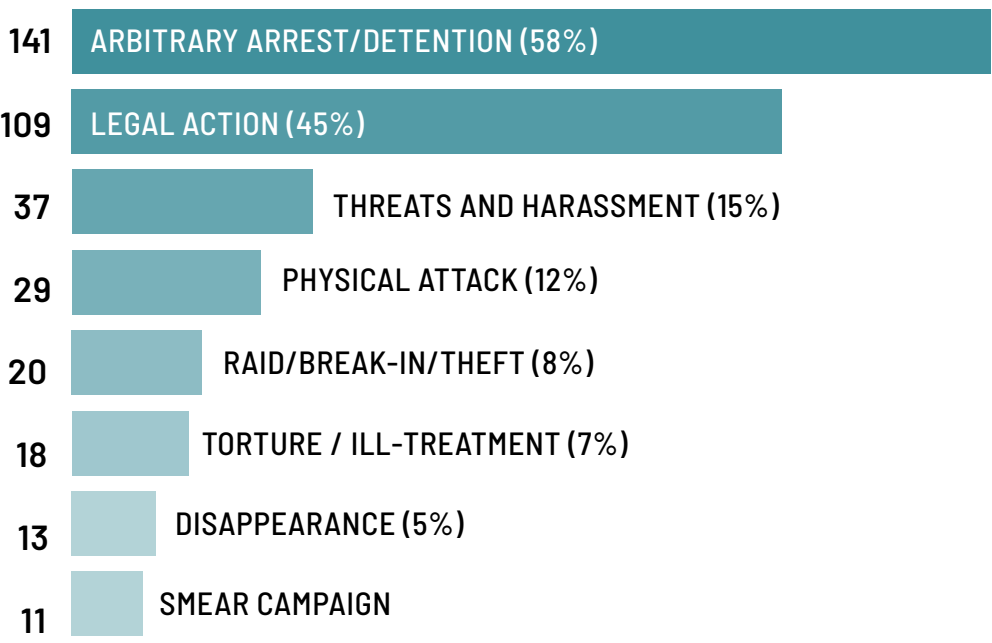
On 26 February 2025, the Criminal Court of Appeals of the Algiers Judicial Council acquitted human rights defenders [Said Boudour](#), [Kaddour Chouicha](#), and [Jamila Loukil](#) from terrorism-related criminal charges.

The urgent actions by FLD in 2025 also included **73 statements** (including joint statements).

COUNTRIES WITH HIGHEST NUMBER OF CASES



MOST COMMON REPORTED VIOLATIONS



² Not all HRDs supported shared how they identify
³ In certain cases, more than one urgent action was taken per case in 2025



18 July, 2024 -Various Amazonian indigenous groups from Ecuador gathered at the Constitutional Court in Quito to demand that it urgently issue judgment number 1296-19-JP, thereby guaranteeing their right to free, prior and informed consultation regarding their territories, in light of the threats they face on a daily basis. © Credit Image: Verónica Lombeida



Tehran, Iran. 15th June, 2025. Fire and smoke rise into the sky after an Israeli attack on an oil depot in Tehran, Iran, at dawn on Sunday, June 15, 2025. Credit Image: Ahmad Hatefi, UPI/Alamy Live News

**RAPID SUPPORT TO HRDS
IN CRISIS CONTEXTS**

In 2025, FLD issued 33 Urgent Actions on behalf of HRDs and organisations working on **Iran**. 28 Protection Grants were also provided to HRDs working on Iran.

18 Urgent Actions were taken on behalf of HRDs and organisations and 28 Protection Grants were provided to defenders working on **Palestine** in 2025.

Nine Urgent Actions were taken on behalf of HRDs and organisations from **Sudan** in 2025. In 2025, 121 grants were provided by Front Line Defenders to HRDs working on Sudan, the second highest number of grants provided in 2025.

The highest number of grants provided by in 2025

Front Line Defenders went to HRDs working on **Afghanistan** (146).

Seven Urgent Actions were taken on behalf of HRDs and organisations from **Ecuador** in 2025. 22 Protection Grants were provided to defenders working on Ecuador.

61 Protection Grants were provided to defenders working on **DRC**.

**Protection Support for
Marginalised and High-Risk HRDs**

Of the Protection Grants provided by Front Line Defenders in 2025, 410 (31%) supported WHRDs (including 23 trans WHRDs). In terms of Urgent Actions taken by Front Line Defenders, 154 were on behalf of WHRDs (including five transwomen).

Of the urgent actions taken by Front Line Defenders in 2025, 57 supported Land, Indigenous and Environmental rights defenders. Additionally, 178 Protection Grants were provided to HRDs and organisations/collectives working to defend these rights.

LGBTIQ+ defenders were the group that received the highest number of protection grants in 2025 with 173 (13%). In terms of Urgent Actions, seven were issued on behalf of LGBTIQ+ Rights Defenders.

**Urgent Advocacy / Emergency
Grants within 48hrs**

During 2025, Front Line Defenders provided 203 emergency grants, representing 15% of all grants provided. Of the emergency grants, 31% were approved within 48 hours. In terms of urgent actions

on cases, 37% of the cases were responded to within 48 hours.

**EXPANDING AND STRENGTHENED
NETWORK OF HRDS AT RISK**

In 2025, Front Line Defenders added 1,961 HRDs and 40 organisations/groups to its internal database.

Front Line Defenders continued to prioritise increasing outreach to those who are most at risk and marginalised. This included 918 cis WHRDs, 29 trans WHRDs, 8 trans men HRD, 40 HRDs who are gender non conforming, 21 HRDs living with disability, 198 Land, Environment, Indigenous Peoples’ Rights Defenders and 189 LGBTIQ+ rights defenders.

4. GOAL 2 – CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT



Front Line Defenders' resilience and capacity building approaches are built to enhance the ability of HRDs and their communities to withstand, adapt to, and recover from threats and stresses.

Activities implemented under this Strategic Goal are: **Risk Assessment and Protection Planning (RAPP) trainings** and **Physical Security Consultations**; **Digital Protection trainings** and Digital protection consultations; **Wellbeing and Resilience support** (through temporary relocation for rest and respite, wellbeing retreats, trainings); **Local protection Initiatives** and **Training of Trainers**; and **Visibility for protection**. In some cases, these aspects of protections are combined in one **Holistic Training** where multiple aspects of security are discussed, including physical security, digital security, wellbeing, visibility for protection, and advocacy.

RESILIENCE AND CAPACITY BUILDING RESULTS IN 2025

In 2025, Front Line Defenders Capacity Building, Digital Security, and Physical Security teams supported a total of **898 individual human rights defenders (412 women, 418 men, 15 gender non conforming, 11 trans women, 6 trans men)** and **235 organisations**. However, most HRDs

benefitted from multiple types of capacity building and protection advice, as the teams coordinated to hold consultations and holistic trainings integrating multiple intersecting protection areas with the same cohort of HRDs. This approach enabled more in-depth holistic protection support. The total numbers of HRDs and organisations supported by program are as follows:

- ▶ RAPP Workshops: 243 individual HRDs (114 women, 72 men, 5 gender non conforming, 4 trans women, 2 trans men) and 4 organisation
- ▶ RAPP Consultations: 47 individual HRDs (22 women, 20 men) and 12 organisations
- ▶ Digital Protection: 658 individual HRDs (293 women, 333 men, 7 gender non conforming, 4 trans women, 3 trans men) and 189 organisations
- ▶ Physical Security: 423 individual HRDs (219 women, 192 men, 6 gender non conforming, 4 trans women, 2 trans men) and 46 organisations

In 2025, Front Line Defenders sent ID cards to 228 HRDs around the world (83 men including 2 trans man, 144 women including 1 trans women, and 1 gender non conforming). ID Cards remain a vital protection initiative, giving HRDs a means of verifying their identity and enhancing their security in some contexts.

RAPP AND HOLISTIC TRAININGS AND PHYSICAL SECURITY CONSULTATIONS

In 2025, Front Line Defenders' Capacity Development team organised 132 **Risk Assessment & Protection Planning workshops** and **Holistic Trainings**. Physical security capacity building was delivered through RAPP trainings to 243 HRDs (72 men, including 2 trans men; 114 women, including 4 trans women; and 5 gender non conforming) and 4 organisations. HRDs supported came from Sub-Saharan Africa (81), followed by the Americas (61), Europe and Central Asia (54), Middle East and North Africa (44).

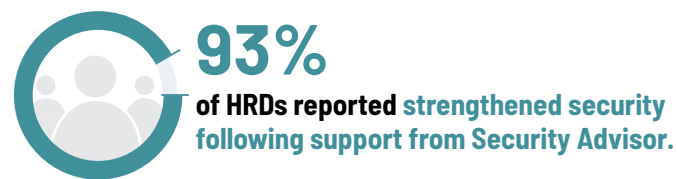
Additionally, Security Advisors provided **227 security advice consultations** to 145 individual HRDs and 46 individual organisations. HRDs who benefitted from Security advice consultations came from Africa (75), Asia (52), European and Central Asia (22), Middle East and North Africa (15), and the Americas (4).

The main issues HRDs who received physical security support were working on are: Human Rights Movement (36%), Environmental Rights (22.5%), LGBTIQ+ rights (13.5%), Women's Rights/ Feminist (9%), and Digital Rights (5.6%).

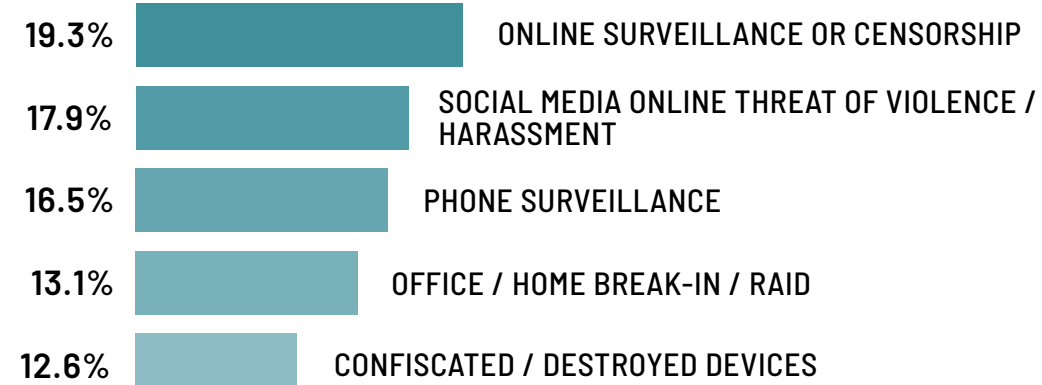
In 2025, Front Line Defenders continued to strengthen the integration of its various capacity development and support services, ensuring that protection advice is holistic, coordinated, and responsive to the specific needs of HRDs. As a result, some of Front Line Defenders capacity development trainings were integrated across a broad spectrum of areas, such as digital protection and risk and protection planning followed by the delivery of specific trainings and support.

The case study below from Zimbabwe highlights how this approach can significantly strengthen local protection networks and their capacity to respond to threats to HRDs.

THE OUTCOMES OF THIS WORK REMAINED STRONG:



THE TOP FIVE VIOLATIONS FACED BY HRDS WHO RECEIVED DIGITAL PROTECTION SUPPORT IN 2025 ARE:



Rights Con 25 Taipei 台北

The world's leading summit
on human rights in the digital age
數位時代的世界級人權盛會



Front Line Defenders organised and hosted a session at RightsCon 2026 titled "Narratives Under Siege: Social Media's Role and Responsibilities in Protecting Defenders," highlighting social media silencing of HRDs amid the ongoing genocide in Gaza and its impact on defenders' protection and security.

DIGITAL PROTECTION TRAININGS AND CONSULTATION

During 2025, the majority of the support provided was delivered through **digital protection support** (including consultations, support, assessments, assistance, mentoring, and training) **to 445 individual human rights defenders** (an increase from 360 in 2024) **and 185 human rights organisations** – indirectly reaching an additional 2,037 HRDs. Digital Protection support was also provided through **Digital Protection Trainings**, reaching an additional **155 HRDs (86 men and 67 women) and 4 organisations**. Finally, digital protection support was also provided through Online Meetings/Awareness Raising, reaching 58 HRDs. Overall, HRDs from 100 countries have been supported.

Examples of digital security support to HRDs include Front Line Defenders participation at RightsCon 2025 conference in TW Taipei, February 2025. During the event, Front Line Defenders was part of a Digital Safety Clinic, where FLD provided tools and practical recommendations, conducted device checks, and offered an introduction to preventative approaches to digital security. Front Line Defenders also created a space for practitioners to share skills and knowledge with each other and keep strengthening our ecosystem's capacity.



Participants of the advocacy and communications training for HRDs in Zimbabwe.

“As a human rights defender, I have come to realize that my stress levels will persist until justice is served and the rights of others are secured. The emotional toll of advocating for others, particularly those living with disabilities, can be overwhelming, as I often tap into their pain and struggles. To me, stress is normal and I will learn to live with it. Unfortunately, this emotional burden can take a significant toll on my mental health, making it challenging for me to cope. I have come to acknowledge that I require ongoing support to manage and I appreciate Front Line Defenders for availing this programme.”

HRD participant to RAPP training in Zimbabwe

Holistic Training – Zimbabwe, February 2025

In February 2025, Front Line Defenders organised two consecutive Holistic Trainings for HRDs from Zimbabwe. Overall, 41 HRDs joined the training (21 women HRDs, 20 men HRDs).

Human rights defenders globally face escalating threats to their security and wellbeing due to their critical work advocating for justice, accountability, and the protection of fundamental freedoms. In Zimbabwe, HRDs operate in a complex and often hostile environment, making effective security and protection planning essential for their survival and impact. Challenges experienced by HRDs range from arbitrary arrests to surveillance, abductions, legal persecution, and disinformation campaigns that harm their reputations, and forced evictions, among many others.

Despite these challenges, there has been no comprehensive and consolidated effort to provide wholesale training to HRDs on how to navigate these challenges. This has increased the risks faced by HRDs and left them vulnerable to harm. The Zimbabwe Human Rights Association (ZimRights), a grassroots organisation that works with HRDs in communities in collaboration with Frontline Defenders and the Counselling Services Unit (CSU), convened a security training workshop for human rights defenders.

The workshops aimed to strengthen the capacity of Human Rights Defenders in several key areas critical to their protection and effectiveness. First, it focused on building skills in security risk assessment and mitigation to help HRDs navigate and respond to threats more effectively. Second, it sought to improve digital security practices to enhance resilience against cyber threats. Third, the activity aimed to equip participants with innovative advocacy and visibility strategies suitable for operating in increasingly restricted civic spaces. Finally, it emphasized the importance of wellbeing and self-care as vital elements of sustainable human rights work. The workshops utilised a participatory approach that emphasised practical learning and experiential sharing among participants. Facilitators guided discussions on risk assessment and protection planning, integrating real-life case studies from Zimbabwe and diverse international contexts to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issues at hand.

To accommodate varying literacy and language levels, English and Shona were used. The curriculum was adapted to local contexts with a focus on inclusivity and cultural relevance.

WELLBEING AND RESILIENCE: RETREATS, CONSULTATIONS, AND REFERRALS

In 2025, the team also developed a **wellbeing / mental health practitioners mapping** to strengthen Front Line Defenders' capacity to support individual and group referrals for HRDs / HROs and general Front Line Defenders engagement with wellbeing practitioners to support activities (workshops, retreats etc). Front Line Defenders acknowledged the need to create a database which tracked the existing and newer relationships, store information on opportunities for engagement and practitioner profiles, and recorded the range of supports available. The mapping process included calls with practitioners, inviting contact to complete registration forms detailing their therapist profiles and experience and expertise to support specific HRDs profiles, working languages, etc. The mapping process also places significant emphasis on trust and security.

The Wellbeing and Resilience team also continued to support the **Rest and Respite Dublin programme** for hosted temporary relocation. This programme allows Front Line Defenders to support HRDs and their families in Ireland.

The WB&R team also partnered with Dublin City University to establish a new pilot partnership programme to invite an environmental rights defender to participate in a semester at the university during their stay on the Dublin Programme, attending modules at the Institute of Climate and Society as part of the MSc in Climate Change: Policy, Media and Society. Overall, Front Line Defenders continued to be influential within the ecosystem for HRD relocation

"The Dublin Programme allowed me to escape a context of constant alarm, a situation that put me at risk due to the Mexican State's stance. This experience provided support for my life in general. To be honest with myself, I think that if I hadn't left Mexico, I would be in a very bad place now, because I was already seeing the impacts of defending the territory in my body, my mind, my social relationships, and my finances. So, having this experience helped me take a break, to continue the struggle but from a safe place. Was there anything that you found particularly beneficial? The English course. Honestly, being able to study, not just English, but returning to school, having classmates and teachers, and striving to achieve a different kind of goal, represented for me a return to a very beautiful time in my life. Furthermore, English has become an opportunity for me."

Dublin Programme beneficiary 2025

programmes. Front Line Defenders is an active member of the **EU Temporary Relocation Platform**, and a staff member sat on both the ProtectDefenders.eu Temporary Relocation Committee, and the Shelter Initiatives Committee (the Temporary Relocation Programme provides financial support to a host organisation responsible for implementing the relocation of an identified HRD, and the Shelter Initiatives Programme looks to enhance local and regional Temporary Relocation Programmes for HRDs at risk). Staff members continued to sit on the Advisory Board of the Centre for Applied Human Rights at York University on their Protective Fellowships for Human Rights Defenders and the Steering Committee of the University of Dundee's Scottish Human Rights Defenders Fellowship.

LOCAL PROTECTION INITIATIVES & TRAINING OF TRAINERS (ToTs)

To further support local protection capacity, Front Line Defenders implements **Trainings of Trainers**, equipping local HRDs to directly train other organisations and individuals in their local area.

Front Line Defenders continued to increase the capacity to support protection initiatives at national level by supporting 31 HRDs (17 women, 12 men, 1 trans man) through three **Training of Trainers** workshops/sessions. This included the delivery of two ToTs in Kenya (including one for Sudanese HRDs), and one ToT in Ghana. Front Line Defenders continued to offer mentorship to those that had received training. 11 ToT participants supported in 2025 went on to support other HRDs, through facilitating training to peer HRDs.

Tools & resources

Capacity building activities continued to be supported by the development, updating, and translation of several Front Line Defenders **resources**, including **Security in a Box**. [Security in a Box](#): Several updates were made to Security in a Box, a free online resource on best practices for digital security. These include new features:

- ▶ Security in a Box has now a search engine allowing users to look up information by using key words to find the resources they are looking for.
- ▶ A new RSS feed allows users to receive updates.

- ▶ A new [Assess & Plan section](#), which includes guides on how to assess your needs and threats and get ready for protecting yourself against potential threats.

VISIBILISING HRDS THROUGH EVENTS AND PRODUCTS

Front Line Defenders supported HRDs through events, offering opportunities for cross-regional experience sharing and learning on effective protection strategies promoting the work of HRDs and organisations through visibility and communications actions.

A total of 46 Visibility Products supporting 39 HRDs and 7 human rights organisations (16 women, 21 men, 1 GNC) were developed, including:

- ▶ 35 Digital campaigns, and social media visibility,
- ▶ 11 Podcasts and videos.

Examples of activities to promote the work of HRDs and organisations through visibility and communications actions include:

Front Line Defenders held its annual award ceremony on May 2025 in Dublin. The following were recipients of the award:

AFRICA

Luc Expedit Zinsou Agblakou, (Hirondelle Club International) – Benin

Luc Agblakou is a human rights and LGBTIQ+ activist, and a human rights educator in Benin. He is the President and Founder of Hirondelle Club International, a non-governmental organisation working for integration, coexistence and acceptance of the LGBTIQ+ community in Benin.

AMERICAS

The Movement for Human Rights, Peace and Global Justice (MONDHA) – Dominican Republic / Haiti

MONDHA is a non-governmental organisation working to improve the living conditions of vulnerable communities, with a particular focus on women and the youth. Based in the Dominican Republic, MONDHA's work is particularly strong in support of people of Haitian descent through human development programmes related to community health, legal aid, human rights and education. MONDHA also monitors raids and deportations of migrants in detention centres and border areas between Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Arnon Nampa (Thai Lawyers for Human Rights) – Thailand

Arnon Nampa is a human rights lawyer and the co-founder of Thai Lawyers for Human Rights (TLHR). He is a Thai pro democracy human rights defender and has been in prison since 26 September 2023. As of 8 January 2025, Arnon has been convicted under six lèse-majesté (criticizing the monarchy) cases. His prison sentence now stands at 18 years, 10 months, and 20 days and he still faces eight other lèse-majesté cases for which courts have yet to issue verdicts.

TLHR was established in 2014 to provide legal assistance to alleged violators of lèse-majesté and human rights defenders targeted by the authorities following the military coup of 22 May 2014.



The 2025 Front Line Defenders Award Laureates were honoured at a ceremony held at Dublin City Hall in May 2025. Two laureates were unable to attend: Uzbekistani WHRD Sharifa (Sharifakhon) Madrakhimova was prevented from travelling to Dublin after her passport containing a valid visa was burned and invalidated, and the issuance of a new passport was delayed. Thai human rights lawyer Arnon Nampa was also unable to attend, as he is currently imprisoned for his human rights work. Credit: Conor McCabe

EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

Sharifakhon Madrakhimova – Uzbekistan

Sharifa Madrakhimova is an Uzbekistani woman human rights defender, journalist, blogger, and respected community leader from the Fergana region. As a freelance reporter, she collaborates with various media outlets in Uzbekistan.

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

Mhamed Hali – Western Sahara

Mhamed Hali is a Sahrawi human rights defender and the Secretary General of the Association for the Protection of Saharan Prisoners in Moroccan Prisons (LPPS). Hali is also a Professor in international humanitarian law and a lawyer.

Due to his work documenting human rights violations committed by Morocco in Western Sahara and his opinion in support of the right to self-determination for the people of Western Sahara, Moroccan authorities banned him from practising law.

Read Front Line Defenders' [press release](#) and [photo booklet](#) to read more about the laureates.

IRISH ARTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS FESTIVAL – OCTOBER 2025

Smashing Times International Centre for the Arts and Equality and Front Line Defenders, and a range of partners, presented the seventh annual [Irish Arts and Human Rights Festival](#) from the 10 to 19 October 2025. The aim of the festival is to showcase and highlight the extraordinary work of human rights defenders in Ireland and around the world, past and present, and the role of the arts and artists in promoting human rights today.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND VISIBILITY WORK

Front Line Defenders shared a total of **1,300 posts** across four social global media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and X) in 2025, with an overall **reach of 2.3 million people**.

Front Line Defenders also had **1,078 media hits** in over 90 countries across the world (including mentions on tv, in the news, in features, in open-editorials, blog posts, press releases, bulletins, and Facebook posts) in 2025.

Some examples of social media and visibility for protection include:

- ▶ [Podcast: Interview with HRD M Ravi from Singapore](#)
- ▶ **Installation of billboards in high-visibility areas of Oaxaca in August 2025**, calling for the release of imprisoned environmental HRD Pablo López Alavez
- ▶ [Madiha Abdallah interview “Life During War”](#): WHRD Journalist Madiha Abdallah on the Struggle of HRD Journalists in Sudan.” [Full youtube video](#).
- ▶ [UN statement video on Iranian WHRDs](#)
- ▶ [Georgia video statement](#)
- ▶ [Sudan – 2 year anniversary since the war broke out](#)



On the occasion of environmental HRD Pablo López Alavez's fifteenth anniversary of incarceration, Front Line Defenders displayed billboards calling for his freedom across some of the busiest streets in Oaxaca and later on a moving truck in Mexico City.

5. GOAL 3 – ADVOCACY



Under this goal, Front Line Defenders undertakes a range of interventions including case advocacy, policy advocacy, engagement with national, regional, and international stakeholders, participation in strategic events and platforms, written submissions, and research for protection.

CASE ADVOCACY

In 2025, Front Line Defenders carried out advocacy on cases involving 131 HRDs (52 women, 70 men) and two HROs across 50 countries.

This included raising individual cases and related systematic concerns through multiple formal and informal channels. **Written communications** such as urgent appeals, case summaries, advocacy briefs, joint letters, and requests for coordinated actions were regularly submitted with updates on HRD cases, including violations and risks they face, legal developments, detention conditions, contextual information and supporting evidence. In addition, FLD held **regular briefings and consultations** with UN Special Procedures and Working Groups, often before country visits or thematic reports, to ensure that HRD cases are reflected in their work and engagement with decision-makers.

Participation in **international and regional events and strategic platforms** provided an avenue for FLD to bring HRD cases to the attention of decision-makers and institutions through oral statements, interactive dialogues, and side events.

Across the year, case advocacy interventions achieved a response rate of 69%⁴, showing responsiveness from engaged advocacy targets, including diplomatic missions, EU institutions and UN mechanisms. Responses ranged from public statements, trial observations, and direct engagement with national and local authorities.

Positive Outcomes and Success Stories of Case Advocacy

Front Line Defenders recorded 39% positive outcome in cases taken up by the Global Advocacy team.

1. In Turkey, [Enes Hoccoğulları](#), a youth and LGBTIQ+ rights defender based in Ankara, has attended the 48th session of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe as a youth delegate, where he delivered several speeches, including one highlighting police violence against protesters in Turkey, such as the use of tear gas, rubber bullets, water cannons, and strip searches of detained students.

[The speech went viral on social media](#), triggering a

smear and hate campaign against him and leading to several criminal investigations.

At his first hearing on 8 September 2025, widely attended by diplomats and civil society, including embassies that Front Line Defenders reached out to, Enes Hoccoğulları was **released from pre-trial detention**. At the second hearing, on 23 February 2026, **all charges were dropped**.

This work builds on Front Line Defenders' broader advocacy on LGBTIQ+ human rights defenders in Turkey, including the case of [Defne Güzel](#), highlighting the shrinking civic space for LGBTIQ+ communities in the country.

2. In Cyprus, [Doros Polykarpou](#), a human rights defender and founding member of KISA (Action for Equality, Support and Anti-Racism), has worked for over 27 years on migration, asylum, anti-discrimination, and anti-racism in Cyprus. KISA has faced sustained criminalisation and defamation by state authorities and far-right actors.

Following the firebombing of KISA's office on 5 January 2024, Front Line Defenders engaged in sustained advocacy on behalf of Doros Polykarpou and the organisation.

Doros Polykarpou was also awarded the 2024 Front Line Defenders Award, with a ceremony held in Nicosia attended by diplomats and senior officials. These sustained efforts contributed to a

landmark development in October 2025, when the Supreme Constitutional Court overturned the Administrative Court's decision to approve KISA's deregistration from the Register of Association. The deregistration, carried out by the Ministry of Interior in 2020, was ruled unlawful.

3. Kyrgyzstan

[Azamat Ishenbekov](#), a human rights defender, journalist, and akyn was **pardoned** on 9 April. Front Line Defenders conducted extensive advocacy on his case.

4. Iran

[Maryam Karimibeigi](#) had **her prison sentence commuted to a fine** after authorities determined that she could not endure prison due to her medical condition. Front Line Defenders has been one of the very few organisations working on this case, making prison conditions and medical care central to its Iran advocacy.

[Vida \(Vahideh\) Rabbani](#), a human rights defender, social activist, journalist, and member of the Tehran Journalists Association, has worked to promote sociopolitical rights, particularly in relation to freedom of peaceful assembly, free elections, opposition to the death penalty, and compulsory hijab. Front Line Defenders has worked on her case, raised it with diplomats and in statements. During the 58th session of the Human Rights Council in March, Front Line Defenders included her case in a joint oral statement with partner organisations. She

⁴ The advocacy team standardised the way responses are captured and calculated (including lack of response) in relation to case work in 2025, which affected the overall percentage compared to last year (82%)

was **released conditionally after serving one and a half years in prison instead of seven.**

On 29 October 2025, [Sharifeh Mohammadi](#)'s lawyer announced that the Chief Justice of Iran had **commuted her death sentence to thirty years' imprisonment** following Front Line Defenders' advocacy.

5. Central Asia

Uyghur HRD Idris Hasan, detained in Morocco since 2021, was **freed** in February 2025 and resettled in the United States. Front Line Defenders conducted advocacy on his case, although it was not involved in his relocation.

6. Iraq

Ahmed Awda Aliwi Tabour, a human rights defender from Nasiriyah, who was at the forefront of the civic youth-led protest movement that erupted in 2019, was arrested on 14 April 2025 and was at risk of transfer from the Kurdistan Region to Iraq. He was **released** on 7 May after three weeks of detention, following a coordinated campaign between Front Line Defenders and partners. In addition to engagement with diplomats and a joint civil society statement, the campaign included social media visibility and outreach to media outlets.

7. Cameroon

The activities of the [Central African Network of Human Rights Defenders](#) (REDHAC), which had been suspended on arbitrary grounds, were **restored**. Although legal proceedings against its leadership continue, staff are now able to access the offices. Front Line Defenders engaged UN

Special Rapporteurs including SR on HRDs for increased visibility on the case close to the hearing time, encouraged diplomatic trial observation and bilateral follow-up with the authorities.

ENABLING DIRECT ADVOCACY BY HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Front Line Defenders delivered **advocacy trainings** in Zimbabwe, Bangladesh, Brussels, South Africa, and online, reaching 98 defenders (64 of them are WHRDs) from a wide range of countries including Ukraine, Zimbabwe, Bangladesh, South Africa, and other African countries. These trainings aimed at strengthening HRDs' understanding of EU and UN mechanisms, identifying advocacy entry points, and developing effective advocacy strategies in Geneva and Brussels. A workshop for HRDs from Africa, in partnership with ISHR, also covered engaging the African Commission for Human and People's Rights. Some of these workshops were complemented by **advocacy accompaniment**, supporting defenders to translate newly acquired knowledge and skills into concrete engagement opportunities. In total, 70 HRDs (37 women, 25 men, 1 GNC, and 1 trans woman) and 17 organisations from different countries including Ukraine (including Crimean Tatar), Iraq, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Benin, Haiti, Dominican Republic, and Uzbekistan were either accompanied to take part in advocacy rounds in Brussels or Geneva, or to attend international conferences where they were able to engage with diplomats, decision-makers, and policy makers among others.

"In our experience, this was the most successful advocacy round we have had, with meaningful and clearly defined advocacy actions. This is thanks to the advocacy training. We were able to learn about the different institutions and then meet with all of them, knowing exactly how to frame our asks. We are going back with a much clearer idea of what to do next, supported by all the connections we have made in Brussels. This week also gave a real boost to our self-confidence as a group."

Ukrainian WHRD

INFLUENCING DECISION MAKERS, INSTITUTIONS, AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT

In 2025, Front Line Defenders continued to shape **policy discussions and instruments**, and **influence key decision-makers**. The table below has some detailed examples of engaged actors. The advocacy team convened a total of **262 meetings with different governmental, regional and international representatives**. Front Line Defenders utilised these interactions to offer spaces to HRDs to engage with advocacy targets, share their lived realities, and advocate for their protection where possible; 66 of these meetings were attended by HRDs. The meetings addressed



Meeting of Ukrainian HRO Civilians in Captivity hosted by the Finnish mission to the OSCE, with Ireland and the Netherlands, in Brussels.

the challenges faced by HRDs in countries across all regions, including Iran, Bahrain, Kuwait, Sudan, Lebanon, Myanmar, China, Russia, Belarus, Thailand, India, Sri Lanka, Iraq, Tanzania, Cameroon, Western Sahara, Mozambique, Burkina Faso, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Pakistan, the Philippines, Latvia, Ukraine, Poland, Georgia, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Mexico, Vietnam, Brazil and more. Discussions covered different threats and individual HRDs cases including killings, judicial harassment, defamation campaigns, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances, and attacks on women, LGBTIQ+ and indigenous human rights defenders. They also focused on shrinking civic spaces, freedom of expression and assembly, prison conditions, and digital and transnational repression.

Specific issues included the lack of implementation and enforcement of protective laws for HRDs, the death penalty, restrictions on media and independent journalism, attacks on lawyers, the situation of civilian and human rights defenders hostages in conflict zones, repression in the context of elections, and transitional justice.

Front Line Defenders' **written submissions** throughout 2025, 58 in total, included 27 country-specific inputs and 21 policy or thematic submissions, across different UN (Human Rights Committee, UPR, CSW, SR HRDs) and EU (EUSR, DROI, EEAS, MEPs) processes and mandates. For the first time, Front Line Defenders' Global Analysis was accompanied by advocacy recommendations, circulated to key UN member

states, CSOs and donors as a white paper. A lot of positive feedback was received on these recommendations at public and private briefings, with many diplomats expressing gratitude for steering the discussions toward practical measures for member states to support HRDs.

In other cases, Front Line Defenders also contributed to different reports of the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders', including on [HRDs working on climate change](#) and the [impact of social media platforms on the right to defend human rights](#). Front Line Defenders continued to feed into other UN and EU processes where relevant, including for the EU Human Rights Dialogues with Thailand, Pakistan and Georgia; the urgency resolutions of the European Parliament



Front Line Defenders attended the United Nations Forum on Business and Human Rights in Geneva in November and co-organised a session titled 'The critical role of human rights defenders in seeking solutions to environmental and social harms in the context of business activities' to discuss the critical role of HRDs in seeking solutions to environmental and social harms linked to business activities. Pictured: Carlos Ernesto Choc Chub, Chris Owala and others.



Front Line Defenders co-organised the Advocacy Week for WHRDs in Geneva with allied organisations, creating a space for learning, exchange and solidarity among WHRDs. Alongside the training, participants delivered oral statements and met with Special Procedures, diplomats and other NGOs. © ISHR

on Haiti and Tanzania; the DROI annual report; the UPR review of Iraq and Niger; the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW70), and for the General Comment n. 38 of the Human Rights Committee, focused on Article 22 of the ICCPR (freedom of association). On another note, at the UN General Assembly, following constructive [engagement by Front Line Defenders and partner human rights organisations](#), Norway reversed its decision to triennialize its resolution on human rights defenders at the UN Third Committee and agreed to co-host a reception on HRDs with Canada and Costa Rica, with the participation of UN SR HRDs and UN SR FoAA.

Coalition Building and Collective Advocacy

Front Line Defenders prioritises coalition building with civil society organisations, bar associations, grassroots movements, and institutional actors as a core protection strategy. It remained active in key networks including the Human Rights and Democracy Network, the Zero Tolerance Initiative (ZTI), and the Coalition for Human Rights in Development, engaging through joint statements, coordinated campaigns, co-held events, and collective institutional advocacy.

Front Line Defenders engaged in **multilateral coalition advocacy in the business and human rights space**, one of its thematic priorities. This included co-signing a [joint civil society and trade union statement](#) responding to EU legislative developments, namely, the Omnibus I proposal that revised key corporate sustainability EU laws, including the recently approved CSDDD back then, eroding EU's corporate accountability commitments, human rights and environmental protections.

Front Line Defenders also engaged in **donor advocacy** to ensure stronger and more adequate resourcing to support HRD protection. Such advocacy efforts included a joint civil society call to action to donors coordinated by FLD and signed by 43 international and regional CSOs involved in HRD protection. This call to action was followed by several meetings with government and private donors, including in various capitals, at OECD and the EU.

RESEARCH FOR PROTECTION

In 2025, Front Line Defenders engaged in **research covering the HRD protection funding landscape**. This included efforts to document the impact of funding cuts on the HRD protection ecosystem, through a survey capturing the impact of funding cuts on 60 organisations involved in HRD protection (April 2025). FLD also supported the release of "[Updated Financial Analysis: The Landscape of Public International Funding for Human Rights Defenders \(2021-2023\)](#)", building on ProtectDefenders.eu previous landmark study covering 2017-2020. In addition, FLD conducted research on the

role of philanthropy in supporting Climate and Environmental Rights Defenders, focusing on risks, funding barriers, and the alignment of resourcing strategies with climate justice goals.

The Front Line Defenders **Global Analysis 2024/25** documents the situation of human rights defenders and the risks, threats and attacks they face globally. The report includes a memorial section, honoring 324 human rights defenders from 32 countries who were killed in 2024 in an attempt to silence them and their work. The Global Analysis highlights arbitrary arrest and detention, threats and harassment, legal action, surveillance and physical attacks, as well as the use of judicial harassment, counter-terrorism legislation and "foreign agent" laws to criminalise human rights work, contributing to understanding of the context in which human rights defenders operate and informing protection mechanisms and processes.

Other research initiatives included an **investigative report on the situation of Iranian LGBTQ+ rights defenders in Turkey**.

Another study assessed the availability and accessibility of mental health and wellness support for WHRDs in Kenya.

In parallel, research investigating the online harassment of HRDs in Bangladesh aimed to understand the type of threats being levelled against HRDs, to highlight the incidence of online harassment, and to map the perpetrators of these violations, their motivations and how they can be held accountable.



Front Line Defenders' team with representatives of the Irish Permanent Mission to the UN in New York following the presentation of the Global Analysis

6. ORGANISATIONAL UPDATE



Partnerships

In 2025, Front Line Defenders worked with donors and partners to set up a new initiative, the [Lighthouse Global Protection Fund](#). This new multi-donor initiative, launched in January 2026, delivers emergency assistance and sustained support to human rights defenders and civil society organizations operating in high-risk environments worldwide.



LIGHTHOUSE
GLOBAL PROTECTION FUND

Governance

Front Line Defenders has been implementing a range of updates to its governance structures to ensure increased board effectiveness. This process started in 2024 and has included improvements in board rotation, nomination processes, and risk management. Nicolas Marcoux, Clément Nyaletsossi Voule, Felogene Anumo and Gayathry S. Venkiteswaran were appointed to Front Line Defenders' [Board of Directors](#) in 2025. Maria Mulcahy, Jim Conway, Mary Jane Real and Arnold Tsunga concluded their service on the board during the same period.

Staffing

In 2025, Front Line Defenders had an average of 81 staff, excluding fellows and short term consultants (83 staff in total, 62% women). Front Line Defenders' work is carried out by staff based in offices in Dublin and Brussels, as well as staff stationed globally. At the end of 2025, 35 staff were based in Dublin, 8 in Brussels, and the remainder in 32 countries globally (22 in 2024). Front Line Defenders is an international organisation with its 83 staff representing over 42 nationalities.

Financial Update

[Audited Accounts](#) are available on Front Line Defenders' website.

EXPENDITURE

2025 total expenditure was €21.645m. This is an increase compared to 2024 restated expenditure (€19.373m). This increase reflects a general increase

in support provided to HRDs (including protection grants), strengthening of specific programme areas (incl. Protection and Operations), improvement of staff conditions (new salary scale, increased pension take-up), as well as organisational investment (including an organisational review, and development of new website).



71%

OF FRONT LINE DEFENDERS' 2025 BUDGET WAS SPENT ON DELIVERING ITS THREE MAIN OUTCOMES:

GOAL **1.**

Rapid Support amounted to **€5.439.581 (41%)**

GOAL **2.**

Capacity Building amounted to **€3.048.159 (23%)**

GOAL **3.**

Advocacy amounted to **€988.770 (7%)**

DONORS

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

American Jewish World Service
 Brot für die Welt (Bread for the World)
 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Ireland
 Dutch Postcode Lottery
 Environmental Defenders Collaborative
 European Commission
 Ford Foundation
 Global Affairs Canada
 The Goldman Environmental Foundation
 Hivos International
 Humanity United
 Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada
 International Planned Parenthood Federation
 Iris O'Brien Foundation
 Luminate
 Luxembourg Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs
 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic
 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark
 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands
 Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland
 Misereor
 Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
 Open Society Foundations
 Robert Bosch Stiftung
 Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation
 Swedish International Development Agency
 Swedish Postcode Lottery
 Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs
 UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office
 UN Women - Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund
 UNIFOR

We also wish to thank our many individual public donors whose contributions are crucial to our work.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



KIERAN MULVEY

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



PROFESSOR ROJA FAZAELI

Roja Fazaeli is Established Professor of Law and Islamic Studies at the Irish Centre for Human Rights, University of Galway. Professor Fazaeli has published widely on the subjects of women's rights in Iran, the relationship between human rights and religion, women religious authorities, and Islamic feminisms. She is currently deputy chairperson of the Front Line Defenders Board, and additionally serves as the chairperson of the board of directors of the Immigrant Council of Ireland and a member of the board of directors for Scholars at Risk Europe and Iran Academia.



GAYATHRY S. VENKITESWARAN

As Associate Professor in Media & Law at the University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus, Gayathry S. Venkiteswaran teaches among others Political Communication, Propaganda & Public Relations, and Communication Technologies. Gayathry has long been a defender of the rights to freedom of speech in the media, prior to her current appointment. She holds an MA in International Relations (Australian National University) and is completing a PhD focused on media reforms in Southeast Asia.



FELOGENE ANUMO

Felogene Anumo is a pan-African feminist and social justice leader with over 15 years of experience shaping transformative strategies for gender, economic, and climate justice. As Regional Director for Africa at Thousand Currents, Felogene champions long-term partnerships with grassroots movements working on food sovereignty, economic justice, and climate resilience. She has held leadership roles at Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) and advisory roles to the UN Women CSW Youth Dialogue, ActionAid International, and British Council's East Africa AGILE program, amplifying youth feminist voices.



CLÉMENT NYALETSOSSI VOULE

Clément Nyaletsossi Voule is an activist and jurist with over 30 years of experience. A former UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Peaceful Assembly and Association (2018 - 2024), he was also previously an Expert Member of the Working Group on Extractive Industries, Environment and Human Rights Violations of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (2011 - 2020). He was also an Advocacy Director for Africa at the International Service for Human Rights (ISHR) and served as Secretary General of Amnesty International Togo (2000 - 2006). Mr. Voule has supported State and civil society efforts to develop and adopt specific laws for the protection of human right defenders.



VERÓNICA VIDAL

Verónica Vidal is the Solidarity Tactic Lead at the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID). She is a long-term feminist activist for women's rights and human rights at the local level and internationally. She has worked as a researcher and advocate in Uruguay and Mexico with a focus on regional integration processes, international cooperation for development, the environment and civil society, as well as in building networks, documentation of attacks and developing protection approaches with Women Human Rights Defenders from a feminist perspective.



DR. NICOLAS MARCOUX

Dr. Nicolas Marcoux is the lead expert on institutional development and knowledge management for the European Commission's MELDEA project. Previously, he was a Senior Governance Specialist at the Irish Institute of Public Administration, advising Government departments and CSOs on governance and public policy. He has also managed major programmes in human rights, institution-building, economic development and reconstruction, and public administration reform for the European Commission across multiple regions. Earlier, he led the operations of the Foundation for Human Rights in South Africa (1996 - 2000), managed institution-building and democratisation programmes for the European Agency for Reconstruction (EAR), and served as Deputy Director of the MENA Unit at Ireland's Department of Foreign Affairs. He currently serves on the DFA's Audit Committee and teaches on the College of Europe's Master of Diplomacy and International Relations programme.



EAMON GILMORE

Eamon Gilmore is the former EU Special Representative for Human Rights. He is a former Deputy Prime Minister of Ireland, and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (2011- 2014). Since 2015, he has been the EU Special Envoy for the Peace Process in Colombia. He was a member of Dáil Éireann (Irish Parliament) from 1989 until 2016, and Leader of the Irish Labour Party (2007-2014). He served on the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (2004-2007) and was Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE (2012). He has received several international honours and awards for his work on Peace and his leadership on human rights issues.



DERMOT HAYES

Dermot Hayes is an Investment Director with Island Capital managing a diverse portfolio of investments in telecommunications, media, healthcare, leisure, property and many other private investments. He has completed more than 50 investments and disposals across a portfolio of companies and raised over US\$8bn in public and private market transactions with investee companies. He is a Director of Island Capital and a non-executive director of a number of portfolio companies including Island Green Power, Beacon Hospital, Actavo Group Limited and various Digicel subsidiaries. He is a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Ireland.



DUBLIN

FRONT LINE DEFENDERS

First Floor, Avoca Court
Temple Road, Blackrock
Co. Dublin A94 R7W3
Ireland
Telephone: +353-1-212-3750
Fax: +353 1 233 8695
Email: info@frontlinedefenders.org

BRUSSELS

FRONT LINE DEFENDERS – EU OFFICE

Square Marie-Louise 72
1000 Brussels
Belgium
Tel: +32 230 93 83
Fax: +32 230 00 28
Email: euoffice@frontlinedefenders.org