

# WORKBOOK ON SECURITY: PRACTICAL STEPS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS AT RISK



## APPENDIX 13

### Check list – Defamation of HRDs

This check list is not intended to be a blueprint for security. Your own context is the key determining factor. Consider the risks and threats you face, and any vulnerabilities you have in order to supplement and personalise this list.

Consider the context of the defamation. Is it a one-off occurrence? If you respond, will it increase the circulation of the defamation? Is it pervasive and increasing in intensity? What will be the impact of the defamation on you and your organisation? Depending on your analysis of these questions, you can consider how best to react.

Discuss the defamation with trusted colleagues and consider the best response - the support of your organisation is important.

Any rebuttal you disseminate should refute the allegation point by point, with facts. Do not mount a counter-attack.

Options:

- Ignore the defamation
- Inform all your colleagues, supporters, donors etc of the truth
- Get legal advice
- Rebut the defamation in the most relevant way
- If the defamer is known, discuss with them the untrue allegations, or commence a mediation process with a trusted intermediary
- Report it to the police and, if the perpetrator is known, make a case against them
- In any event, monitor the situation to check if the defamation is increasing

Here are some specific suggestions in addition to those above:

- Defamation on the internet - websites, social networking sites, blogs etc
  - request the moderator / administrator to remove the defamation
  - or respond to it on the same site, giving the facts
  - publish a statement on your website / blog etc refuting the allegations
  - consider making a legal case against the perpetrator
- Defamation in leaflets
  - produce a leaflet with the true facts and distribute it in the same places
- Public statements
  - hold a press conference, radio interview etc rebutting the allegations
  - send out a press release with the true facts signed by influential supporters of yours, eg well-respected figures, human rights organisations

Finally, consider if you need psychological support at this stressful time.