

**We've Had Enough:  
A Call to Action to Protect Women Human Rights Defenders & their Communities**

On the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UN adoption of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders and the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UN Resolution on the Protection of Women Defenders, we -women human rights defenders (WHRDs) from 19 countries around the world who gathered together during the 22<sup>nd</sup> sessions of the UN Working Group on discrimination against women - demand an end to the violence and discrimination that continue to put our lives, our rights and our indispensable work for justice and equality at risk.

In the 20 years since the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, we, women human rights defenders, have contributed our participation, voice, and leadership to all social movements, strengthening efforts for justice, equality, and peace around the world.

Yet, we face a climate of increasing repression, violence, and impunity despite broad State commitments to human rights resolutions and the obligation to respect and guarantee human rights without discrimination:

- Governments in both the global North and South are not only failing in upholding those commitments and obligations, but in many cases, are themselves closing down the much-needed space for civic participation, dissent, and freedom of expression. Many are also engaging in direct attacks against women defenders such as illegal arrests and detention, trumped up charges, torture, threat and harassment, surveillance, murder, extra judicial killing, among others.
- Private corporate interests, organized crime, fundamentalist groups and other shadow powers wield growing power over public institutions and resources, and use this clout to pursue their objectives and suppress opposition, often violently. Extractive industries and other mega-projects, in particular, with their accompanying land grabs and community displacement, are driving extreme levels of human rights abuses and violence.
- Gender violence and discrimination against women human rights defenders are commonly used to instill fear, silence dissenting voices, destroy the social fabric of communities, and undermine social movements. The systemic nature of gender discrimination and violence – and its intersection with other forms of oppression (on the basis of race, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc.) is an everyday reality in the lives and history of women that compounds risks for women's activism and leadership even within their families, communities and organizations.

**We Demand Respect, Safety and to be Heard**

**We don't want another anniversary** of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders marked by violence, criminalization and the murder of women human rights defenders. We don't want more speeches that are soft on the governments and private interests that are devastating our land, territories, and bodies. We demand respect, integral/ holistic security and safety, and our right to defend human rights without fear. Our legitimate voices should no longer be silenced and ignored.

**To States, we demand:** live up to your responsibility to guarantee all rights for all people and the freedom to exercise those rights safely; take a firm stand against all state and non-state actors who

violate these rights and liberties. Cease all forms of attacks and threats against human rights defenders. Implement exhaustive, diligent, and independent investigations of the attacks against women defenders and adopt the fight against impunity as a matter of public policy.

No protection mechanism for human rights defenders will work while impunity and lack of access to justice for women, communities, and defenders are maintained, while governments continue protecting private interests, and while structural causes of violence and inequality are not eradicated.

Any policy, action, or practice that weakens or fractures the social fabric of communities and the space for citizen dissent and participation is a direct attack on the sustainability of the work led by women human rights defenders around the world.

**To the United Nations and all multilateral spaces**, we demand to reaffirm your commitment to peace and justice and renew your efforts to guarantee the protection and well-being of women human rights defenders. Ensure effective follow-up, implementation, and accountability to UN recommendations in collaboration with regional human rights mechanisms, and strengthen the integration of women defenders' voices in all UN bodies and processes. In your language and actions, recognize, support, and sustain women's integrity and agency, and demand that Member States refrain from protect private interests who violate people's rights and liberties. Ensure that women human rights defenders who engage in good faith with the UN mechanisms and bodies can do so without fear of persecution or violence, and that any allegations or instances of reprisals are promptly investigated.

**To our own movements and international human rights community we say:** we must strengthen our commitment and efforts to end discrimination and violence against women defenders, even within our own ranks; prioritize alignment and support for locally-led strategies and more coordination at regional and international levels; recognize the voice and collective power of women human rights defenders and feminist perspectives; strengthen our self-protection strategies and networks; promote community-based and collective strategies that enable organizations and communities to be stronger, more resilient, more cohesive and inclusive.

**It's time to listen to women in all our diversity** and heed our demands to end the racist and patriarchal system oppresses us, violates us, and excludes us; and to respect our rights and lives and the opportunity to build a better future.

### **Together We Stand**

Women activists and human rights defenders from Brazil, Cambodia, Catalonia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Indonesia, India, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, Philippines, Uganda, Togo, Zimbabwe, USA, and gathered at the UN Headquarters in New York in July 2018:

### **SIGNATURES**

Asociación Mujeres de Aq'ab'al (Guatemala)

Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID)

Amnesty International

Article 19

Comité Brasileiro de Defensoras y Defensores de Direitos Humanos (Brasil)

CFEMEA (Brasil)

Consejo de Pueblos Kiché (Guatemala)

Consortio para el Diálogo Parlamentario y la Equidad Oaxaca (México)

Defender a Quien Defiende (Estado Español)  
GABRIELA (Philippines)  
International Service for Human Rights  
JASS (Just Associates)  
Justiça Global (Brasil)  
Honduras WHRD Network  
Madre  
Mesoamerican WHRD Initiative  
National Council for Dalit Human Rights (India)  
Nicaraguan WHRD Initiative  
Organización Fraternal Negra Hondureña  
Red Mariposas de Alas Nuevas Construyendo Futuro (Colombia)  
WHRDs Uganda Network  
Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights  
Urgent Action Fund Latin-America