

## Session 10:

# *International Protection Mechanisms*

TIME: 60 MINUTES

### ACTIVITIES:

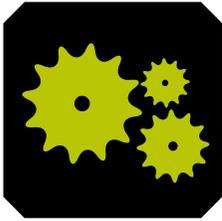
*Presentation on the international protection framework for women human rights defenders.*

### SESSION OBJECTIVES:

- to identify and develop key recommendations for organisations and movements on specific aspects of safety and well-being of women human rights defenders.

### ADAPTATION NOTES:

The recommended support groups and mechanisms will vary by region, this should be researched and the information updated for each group.



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# *International Protection Mechanisms*

TIME: 60 MIN

REQUIRED MATERIALS: FLIPCHART PAPER AND MARKER PENS; HANDOUTS.

## SUMMARY:

*This is a presentation on and discussion of the international protection mechanisms available to support the safety and well-being of women human rights defenders – how to access them and put them into practical use.*

## KEY EXPLANATION POINTS:

**Internal protection:** the first line of protection and support for any civil society organisation is always internal – that is, within your own organisations, movements, communities and family. You are the best people to assess what you need and to devise strategies for yourself.

**External protection:** the next line of support should be the international community. There are three main types of organisation/institution that can support you.

**International partners/donors:** The first type is your *existing partners and donors*. Some donors have special security response funds set aside specifically to support their partners (such as the American Jewish World Service in the United States and ICCO (an inter-church organisation for development cooperation) in the Netherlands). Most donors, though, would be responsive to supporting their partners' security if they received a specific request. In addition, you should regularly:

- include line items for security and sustainability (including training, retreats, health care, pensions) in the budgets that you submit to your donors;
- ask for separate contingency funds (or an internal rapid-response fund) to react to unexpected security and/or health crises; and

- maintain a dialogue with funders on their security concerns and challenges – the better informed funders are about the situation, the more responsive they can be in a crisis.

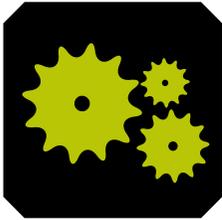
## **International organisations supporting human rights defenders:**

the second line of protection comes from an array of *international organisations* with a mandate to protect and support civil society organisations. These organisations offer a variety of services, ranging from advocacy, lobbying, capacity-building and training to fellowships and grants for protection.

Within this group of organisations, there are a number that provide rapid-response grants to individuals and organisations facing security challenges. A list of some of these organisations is included in the table below.

Each organisation has its own particular funding criteria and possibilities, so it is best to contact them directly with questions about whether a situation matches their criteria before applying for a grant.

Support for civil society actors working in the field of freedom of expression (with the media as journalists, freelance reporters, camera operators, photojournalists and writers) tends to be more widely available – there are several additional networks that are not listed here. However, it is important to note that these organisations can have a more flexible view of what constitutes a



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'journalist' than expected – for example, bloggers or civil society activists who also publish reports and articles can be included.

*Some organisations that may provide security grants are:<sup>25</sup>*

Organisation	Criteria comments (all support is global unless otherwise noted)	Website	Organisation	Criteria comments (all support is global unless otherwise noted)	Website
American Jewish World Service	Emergency support to existing partners in 36 countries in Africa, the Americas and Asia.	<a href="http://www.ajws.org/">http://www.ajws.org/</a>	International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)	The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint programme created in 1997 by the FIDH and the OMCT, has the following objectives:  1. To provide emergency protection to human rights defenders in the field (dissemination of urgent interventions, international fact-finding, solidarity or judicial observation or defence missions, material assistance to defenders).  2. To cooperate with national, regional and international mechanisms, whether existing or to be created (submissions of information to those mechanisms and participation of human rights defenders in regional and international conferences).  3. To mobilise public opinion, the international community and the media as protection agents for defenders (through press releases, annual reports, missions reports, urgent video appeals and video reporting).	<a href="http://www.fidh.org/spip.php?rubrique180">http://www.fidh.org/spip.php?rubrique180</a>  <a href="http://www.omct.org/index.php?id=OBS&amp;lang=eng">http://www.omct.org/index.php?id=OBS&amp;lang=eng</a>
Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice	Astraea funds lesbian- and trans-led organisations and cultural media projects that directly address the depth and complexities of lesbian and trans issues. In addition, it supports lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) organisations, women's organisations, and progressive organisations that have lesbians and trans people in leadership roles and in which lesbian and trans issues form an integral part of the work. Through the Emergency Fund for US and International Regions, Astraea provides rapid-response emergency grants to organisations confronting an unforeseeable organising opportunity or immediate political emergency.	<a href="http://www.astraeafoundation.org/grants/grant-applications-and-deadlines/">http://www.astraeafoundation.org/grants/grant-applications-and-deadlines/</a>	Front Line: International Foundation for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders	Grants to human rights defenders facing security challenges. Other types of support include: identification cards to fellowships, lobbying, training and a 24-hour hotline: +353 12100489	<a href="http://www.frontlinedefenders.org/guidelines-grant-applications">http://www.frontlinedefenders.org/guidelines-grant-applications</a>
The Euro-Mediterranean Foundation of Support to Human Rights Defenders (FEMDH)	Financial support is given to human rights defenders in difficult situation or under threat, with the specific objective of allowing them to continue their activities. In addition, it focuses on small structures and groups in order to reinforce their capacities to implement innovative actions in the region. The project applies to defenders who act on the human rights situations in Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, Jordan, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia and the West Bank and Gaza Strip (WBGS).	<a href="http://www.emhrf.org/">http://www.emhrf.org/</a>			



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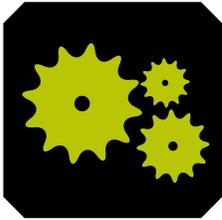
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Organisation	Criteria comments (all support is global unless otherwise noted)	Website
Fund for Global Human Rights (FGHR)	The FGHR is primarily a longer-term human rights grant-maker, but will consider supporting emergency situations on a case-by-case basis – it complements and works closely with other emergency donors on this list.	<a href="http://www.global-human-rights.org/">www.global-human-rights.org/</a>
Urgent Action Fund for Women’s Human Rights (UAF) (also UAF–Africa and UAF–Latin America)	Urgent Action Fund, as part of women’s rights movements worldwide, supports human rights defenders working to create cultures of justice, equality and peace. We provide Rapid Response Grants (RRGs) that enable strategic interventions in three categories: Situations of armed conflict, escalating violence or politically volatile environments; Precedent-setting legal or legislative action; Protection and security of threatened women’s and LGBTIQ human rights defenders.  Grant requests are accepted 365 days per year, in any language and in any format. Each request receives a response within 72 hours and funds can usually be wired within a week. While our sister funds UAF - Africa and UAF - Latin America manage RRG requests from the African continent and Spanish-speaking Latin America and the Caribbean respectively, UAF supports activists throughout the rest of the world.	<a href="http://www.urgentactionfund.org">http://www.urgentactionfund.org</a>
Reporters without Borders	Rapid responses to the protection and assistance needs of journalists and bloggers who have been arrested or threatened, families of murdered journalists, and members of local media in difficulty.	<a href="http://www.rsf.org/en-pays228-Helping_journalists.html">http://www.rsf.org/en-pays228-Helping_journalists.html</a>

Organisation	Criteria comments (all support is global unless otherwise noted)	Website
Rory Peck Trust	Direct financial support to freelance news gatherers – cameramen and women, journalists, fixers, drivers and translators – and their families, who are in crisis. This may be because of death, injury, imprisonment, kidnapping or because the freelancer is in hiding or exile as a result of their work. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moral support</li> <li>• Psycho-social Rehabilitation</li> </ul>	<a href="http://www.rorypeck-trust.org/">http://www.rorypeck-trust.org/</a>

There is a limited number of organizations that offer support in the form of safe spaces. Of particular note are:

- The International Women’s Partnership for Peace and Justice in Thailand, which runs workshops, retreats and training courses for activists that centre on the integration of feminism, social action and spirituality to achieve sustainability and transformation at the personal, community and society level.<sup>26</sup>
- FreeDimensional, which establishes ‘Creative Safe Havens for Activists in Distress’ at community art spaces around the world that offer residencies to activists.



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The third line of protection involves using existing **International Protection Mechanisms** as practical tools to report threats and to seek support.<sup>27</sup> Several examples of protection mechanisms are provided here:

## European human rights system:

*Ensuring Protection – European Union (EU) Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders*<sup>28</sup>

These guidelines (available in several languages) are a very important, practical tool for supporting human rights defenders. They are meant to be used by EU missions (embassies and consulates of EU member states and European Commission delegations) working with human rights defenders. Each embassy should have the guidelines, and have developed a 'local implementation strategy' that is specific to their country context.

Human rights defenders should contact representatives of relevant embassies and missions in their countries to ensure that the guidelines are available to all and to discuss the protection mechanisms described within them. This is an important protection strategy. In Serbia, for example, human rights defenders have worked with European embassies to facilitate access to visas for defenders, and to access funding.

The guidelines are valuable in numerous ways, such as<sup>29</sup>:

- leading to periodic meetings of embassy

personnel and human rights defenders;

- providing visible recognition of human rights defenders and their work;
- observing trials involving defenders;
- visiting defenders in jail;
- delivering emergency visas;
- elaborating local strategies for implementation of the guidelines; and
- promoting regional and international mechanisms for the protection of defenders.

## Regional Human Rights Courts:

- Inter-American Court of Human Rights: <http://www.corteidh.or.cr/index.cfm?&CFID=487586&CFTOKEN=78136649>.
- African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights: <http://www.african-court.org/en/home/>.
- European Court of Human Rights: [http://www.echr.coe.int/echr/Homepage\\_EN](http://www.echr.coe.int/echr/Homepage_EN).

## UN mechanisms:

- UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders: <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N99/770/89/PDF/N9977089.pdf?OpenElement>.
- The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights Defenders: <http://www2.ohchr.org/>

[english/issues/defenders/mandate.htm](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/defenders/mandate.htm).

- The UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/women/rapporteur/>.
- Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Committee): <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/committee.htm>.

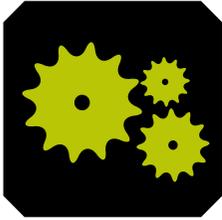
## Regional human rights bodies:

*The Inter-American human rights system*

- The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR): <http://www.cidh.oas.org/DefaultE.htm>.
- The IACHR created a Human Rights Defenders Functional Unit in 2001 (<http://www.cidh.org/defenders/defensores.htm>).
- IACHR Rapporteurship on the Rights of Women: <http://www.cidh.org/women/Default.eng.htm>.

*The African Human Rights System*

- African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR): [http://www.achpr.org/english/\\_info/news\\_en.html](http://www.achpr.org/english/_info/news_en.html).
- Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders in Africa: [http://www.achpr.org/english/\\_info/index\\_hrd\\_en.html](http://www.achpr.org/english/_info/index_hrd_en.html).
- Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in



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Africa: [http://www.achpr.org/english/\\_info/index\\_women\\_en.html](http://www.achpr.org/english/_info/index_women_en.html).

## FACILITATION NOTES:

- Although this is a presentation, it should quickly turn into a dialogue with participants, who should add resources and supportive organisations to the list.
- The system of organisations, mechanisms and institutions that support human rights defenders will change and develop over time – the information included above should serve as a starting point for discussions, and facilitators should update information as well as ensure that it is relevant to participants' regional context.
- Copy or summarise Chapter 9 of *Claiming Rights, Claiming Justice* – a useful handout.
- In addition, refer to the excellent website on the human rights defenders mechanisms for updated information on protection mechanisms within inter-governmental organisations: <http://www.humanrights-defenders.org/about/>.