

Reprisals guidelines for participants of the *UPR Info* Pre-sessions

Safety of the human rights defenders is a priority for the UPR. The purpose of this handbook is to share information to make sure that human rights defenders will understand the risks they could face due their engagement in the promotion of human rights, and what means are available to protect themselves in case of intimidation and reprisals.

A number of international instruments are available as well as information and contacts and many international NGOs are working and are engaged in the protection of the defenders: Increasing attention has been dedicated to acts of reprisals and to the protection and promotion of human rights and of human rights defenders.

Reprisals, threats and intimidation can take place at a national but also international level. Participating to an event, a seminar, joining a protest on the streets, talking to the media, submitting information to a UN body, holding an assembly or trying to promote basic rights in your country can all lead to acts of reprisals.

You have to take in consideration that whenever you decide to step up and discuss human rights violations occurring in your country, you might be facing reprisals, threats and act of intimidation. Working with international mechanisms and institutions such as the UN, or any regional body will increase your exposure and the risks involved with your cooperation with these mechanisms.

Engaging with the UPR process means engaging with a UN mechanism thus it could lead to acts of intimidation, threats and harassment, also at a national level meaning in your own country.

Participating in the *UPR Info* pre-sessions is also not risk-free. You have to be aware that the meetings are:

- Public: the State under Review, or any other State, could and will possibly be in the room.
- Other national and international organisations will be in the room as well. You will be sharing the panel with other speakers working for different organisations that you might not know.
- We will share the name of the organisations you are representing but not your family name, though you will still be showing your face meaning you will be recognisable.
- Pictures or videos are not allowed in the conference room but, being a public meeting, we are not in a position to guarantee that no pictures at all will be taken.

You are in the best position to assess the risk you would be taking by participating in the pre-session, as you know the reality of your country and you know how the different actors would react to your participation in a public forum. *UPR Info* always tries to make sure that the organisations that are participating in the pre-session are well aware of the risks they could face and we take all the necessary measure to ensure a safe participation of the human rights defenders, however the prime responsibility lies on you.

1. What to do to prevent reprisals and what to do in case you become the target of a reprisal

All the steps and action listed below, are valid and should be taken into consideration for cases of reprisals that are not necessarily linked with the UN system.

There are different actions that Human Rights Defenders can take in order to protect themselves from reprisals and threats in the framework of their participation in the pre-sessions:

- Have good contact with local embassies in your country of origins: make yourself visible and known. Establish relationships with several embassies that may be interested in your work and do not wait until you need something from them. Among others the Swiss, Dutch and Norwegian embassies offer specific support to human rights defenders. In particular cases they might also provide the person in need with a short stay Schengen visa or they could shelter him/her in the embassy until another solution is found.

There is always a human rights attaché at the embassy, he/she is the best person to contact. Some embassies have also a staff member who is responsible for the relationships with the civil society of the country. Ask for a meeting with the person that best suits your need and keep him/her updated on the work of your organisation, invite him/her to your events and include them in your mailing lists. The more they know about your work the easier will be for them to help you in case needed. You need to build a trustworthy relationship with the Embassy staff.

- Have good contact with the OHCHR office, if there is one, or with the UN representative in the region: the UN presence in the field could be a very good contact in case you face threats or intimidations. Just like for the embassies, do not wait to get in touch with them, especially with the desk officer or the human rights attaché of the embassy. Have contacts on a regular basis, update them on your work and engage them in your events.
- Cooperate with national and international organisations: they can be a great support for your work in your country but also to make your issues visible at an international level. Create coalitions and engage with different local and international NGOs as they can strengthen and support your activities and provide you with expertise you may be lacking.

- Have good contact and relations with the media. They can be a great ally to your work, they can give you visibility and help you raising awareness and sharing information with the public opinion. Involve them in your work and invite them to your events. Engage not only with the print, but also radio and tv as some regions of your countries may only be reached by one of them.
- If you find yourself in danger there are emergency funds that are available and accessible for human rights defenders that find themselves in danger and in need to flee their country of origin. You have to match several criteria in order to access these emergency funds but these are a great resource for human rights defenders. A list of these funds can be found below.
- Make sure that someone close to you (family, friends etc.) knows your itinerary and knows where you are at all time: share your working schedule, if you are travelling tell your family, friends or colleagues so that someone knows where you are or going to be at all time.

The actions listed above are general suggestions should you find yourself in danger. Remember that building links and network is very important. You should not wait until you find yourself in danger to build bridges with the local and international community and with the UN presence in your country. Make yourself visible and known and try to get in touch with as many organisations and institutions as possible: the more allies you have the better and safer it will be for you and your work.

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3. Cooperation with the UN

In the case of cooperation with the United Nations specific guidelines are available if facing reprisals. In order to fall within the category of “reprisals in the case of cooperation with the

UN”, a human rights defender must comply with very specific criteria and follow the rules that regulate what is considered as cooperation with the different UN mechanisms. More in details in the case of the UN, victims have to match one of the following categories, as stated in Resolution 12/2.¹

The persons referred to in Human Rights Council Resolution 12/2 (paragraph 1) are those who:

- Seek to cooperate or have cooperated with the United Nations, its representatives and mechanisms in the field of human rights, or who have provided testimony or information to them;
- Avail or have availed themselves of procedures established under the auspices of the United Nations for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and all those who have provided legal or other assistance to them for this purpose;
- Submit or have submitted communications under procedures established by human rights instruments, and all those who have provided legal or other assistance to them for this purpose;
- Are relatives of victims of human rights violations or of those who have provided legal or other assistance to victims.

In case of reprisals for cooperation with the UN there are few steps that could be taken:

- Denounce case of reprisals to the Secretary General: Information can and should also be submitted to OHCHR at reprisals@ohchr.org
- Those cases of reprisals might then be included in the annual report presented by the Secretary General at the UN;
- Denounce case of reprisals to the UN Special Procedure branch and to Special Rapporteur; the contacts and the guidelines to get in touch with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights Defenders can be found at this link: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/SRHRDefenders/Pages/Complaints.aspx>. You can send information and complaints at urgent-action@ohchr.org;
- Send out to all your partners and to UN Agencies and Embassies urgent appeals and information on the specific cases;

When contacting the UN, you should make sure that you clearly referenced your case.

¹ http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/E/HRC/resolutions/A_HRC_RES_12_2.pdf

4. Existing Guidelines for Human Rights Defenders

European Union Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders:

<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/16332-re02.en08.pdf>

Swiss Guidelines on the protection of Human Rights Defenders:

<http://www.eda.admin.ch/etc/medialib/downloads/edazen/doc/publi/ppese.Par.0019.File.tmp/Leitlinien%20zum%20Schutz%20von%20HRD%20EN%20131115%20Mail.pdf>

Norway's efforts to support human rights defenders:

<http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/UD/Vedlegg/Menneskerettigheter/Menneskerettighetsforkjaempere/VeiledningMRforkjengelskFIN.pdf>

ISHR Reprisals Handbook:

http://www.ishr.ch/sites/default/files/article/files/ishr_reprisals_handbook_web.pdf

Front Line Defenders:

<https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/resource-publication/protection-handbook-human-rights-defenders>

Protection International: Protection Manual for defenders:

<http://protectioninternational.org/publication/new-protection-manual-for-human-rights-defenders-3rd-edition/>

4.1. Emergency funds for human rights defenders

We have discussed above all the steps and actions you can take if you ever find yourself in a difficult situation, listed below are links to emergency funds and organisations that provide emergency support to human rights defenders in danger.

- **Front Line Defenders** emergency line active 24/7 and they also have an emergency fund available for human rights defenders at risk:
<http://www.frontlinedefenders.org/security-grants-programme>
<http://www.frontlinedefenders.org/emergency>
- **European Commission** emergency fund:
<http://www.eidhr.eu/side-panels/human-rights-defenders/small-grants>
- **Lifeline** Embattled CSO Assistance Fund:
<http://www.freedomhouse.org/program/lifeline#.U8kdtLFkyAZ>
- **Urgent Action Fund** for women human rights defenders - Emergency funds for women human rights defenders:
<http://urgentactionfund.org/apply-for-a-grant/>

- **Euro-Mediterranean Foundation of Support to Human Rights Defenders**
Emergency funds for human rights defenders working and living in the Euro-Mediterranean Region:
<http://www.emhrf.org/en/grants.php>
- **Defend Defenders** emergency assistance for human rights defenders from East Africa:
<https://www.defenddefenders.org/>
- **Dignity for All** is a programme that provides emergency funds, advocacy support, and security assistance to human rights defenders and civil society organisations under threat or attack due to their work for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) human rights.
<http://www.freedomhouse.org/program/dignity-all-lgbti-assistance-program>
- **Justice & Peace** the Shelter City Programme offers a human rights defender the possibility to spend three months in The Netherlands
<http://www.sheltercity.org/index.php/en/>
- *Agir ensemble pour les droits de l'homme*: Emergency funds available for human rights defenders in danger
<http://www.aedh.org/fr/accueil/nos-actions/fonds-d-urgence-pour-les-defenseurs>

4.2. Practical tools for human rights defenders:

This tools are available and easy accessible should you find yourself in danger or in a difficult position.

- The “red panic button” app: This application for smart phones allows you to send an emergency SMS and EMAIL, which includes a Google maps location of where you are at the moment you press this emergency button, to a list of emergency contacts that will know straight away that something is happening and can take the necessary actions.
<http://www.redpanicbutton.com/>
- The Natalia Project: it is the world’s first alarm and positioning system for human rights defenders at risk. Those at high risk of kidnapping wear the Natalia Project alarm on their wrists. In the case of an attack, they activate the alarm by a simple pull of the wristband and a distress signal goes off.
<http://natalia.civilrightsdefenders.org/>
- In terms of cyber security, you can consider using a secure email encryption such as a programme called Virtru (<https://www.virtru.com/>). Virtruis a free-to- download, user-friendly email extension recommended amongst human rights defenders for secure, encrypted correspondence.

5. Useful contacts:

OHCHR: All cases concerning reprisals for collaboration with the UN should be sent to this address: reprisals@ohchr.org. It is the official mail address of the focal point for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

OHCHR Special Procedure Branch: You can contact Ms Nathalie Rondeaux by sending an email to nrondeux@ohchr.org

UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders: www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/SRHRDefenders/Pages/SRHRDefendersIndex.aspx

International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH): Publishes annual report on the situation of human rights defenders worldwide and also conducts campaigns, issues urgent appeals and protect human right defenders. www.fidh.org

Front Line Defenders: An Irish organisation engaged in the promotion and protection of human rights, emergency funds available, issues urgent appeals and guidelines for human rights defenders. www.frontlinedefenders.org

International Service for Human Rights (ISHR): Protection of human rights defenders, training and capacity building, issues urgent appeals and conduct campaigns. www.ishr.ch

World Organisation against Torture (OMCT): Working worldwide, provides emergency support, has a human rights appeals desk and conducts campaigns. www.omct.org

Human Rights House Network (HRHF): Provides support and conducts advocacy and campaigns in Eastern Europe. www.humanrightshouse.org

PEN International: Provides support, issues urgent appeals and conducts campaigns to protect human rights defenders. <http://www.pen-international.org/>

Amnesty International: Provides supports, conducts campaigns and advocacy activities. <http://www.amnesty.org>

Peace Brigades International: Emergency response and funds for human rights defenders. www.peacebrigades.org

Agir ensemble pour les droits de l'homme: Emergency funds for human rights defenders in danger, conducts campaigns to protect human rights defenders. <http://www.aedh.org/en/home/what-we-do/emergency-fund-for-human-rights-defenders>



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