



PRESS RELEASE

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World summit brings surge of new commitments to protect human rights defenders

Human rights defenders from across all corners of the world gathered this week in Paris for the Human Rights Defenders World Summit, to develop a plan of action for how to protect and promote the work of activists fighting for rights, 20 years on from the first UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

After three days of discussions and strategy development spanning regional and global issues, environmental rights and women human rights defenders and the increasing attacks on human rights defenders everywhere, the momentum culminated in the presentation of a landmark action plan which will be presented to the UN in December.

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet, who spoke at the opening ceremony said: "What human rights defenders teach us is that all of us can stand up for our rights and for the rights of others, in our neighborhoods, in our countries and all over the world. We can change the world."

The Summit discussed calls on Governments, corporations, international financial institutions, donors and others, including the adoption of national governmental action plans, implementation of legislation to legally uphold the UN declaration, protecting defenders as a priority in foreign policy and prioritizing the protection and work of women human rights defenders, LGBT+, indigenous rights defenders and other marginalized defenders.

Kumi Naidoo, Amnesty International's Secretary General, said: "The level of danger facing activists worldwide has reached crisis point. Every day ordinary people are threatened, tortured, imprisoned and killed for what they fight for or simply for who they are. Now is the time to act and tackle the global surge in repression of human rights defenders."

The closing ceremony took place at the Palais de Chaillot, where the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was signed 70 years ago. The 150 defenders gathered together to set out the Action Plan and pay tribute to the men and women who work tirelessly to defend human rights around the world.

Among those in attendance over the last three days were Alice Mogwe, Secretary General of FIDH and the Director of Botswana Ditshwanelo; Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Matthew Caruana Galizia, who is calling for justice after his mother, Daphne Caruana Galizia, was assassinated one year ago in Malta; Anielle Franco, who is bravely campaigning on behalf of her sister, Marielle Franco, a Brazilian activist and elected councillor who was shot dead in her car seven months ago.

Hina Jilani, President of OMCT, founder of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, and the first UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders said: “States have never given us space. It is because of human rights defenders that there is space for civil society. Seeing you all here engaged in defending human rights, I am not too pessimistic. As a movement, we have never been as global as we are now. But we have to be clear to states: you need to live up to the challenge and speak out for defenders. Human rights don’t come for free.”

The 1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders

In 1998, governments adopted the [Declaration on Human Rights Defenders](#) to acknowledge the key role of human rights defenders. Despite progress in some areas, many governments are continuing to fall short of their commitments 20 years on from the first Summit and the global context in which human rights defenders operate in has become increasingly challenging. Democratic values are under threat and systemic corruption, extreme inequality and discrimination, religious fundamentalism and extremist policies are all on the rise. Alongside this, we have seen a concerted effort to undermine, discredit and kill human rights defenders. [In 2017, at least 312 human rights defenders were assassinated, twice as many as in 2015](#), almost all with impunity for the perpetrators. The Action Plan hopes to tackle these injustices and support Human Rights Defenders to continue their critical work in a safe environment.

ENDS

Notes to editors

The Human Rights Defenders World Summit 2018

The Human Rights Defenders World Summit 2018 will bring together a diverse group of 150 human rights defenders from around the world for three days of meetings, panel discussions, networking and workshopping. These activists, who are at the forefront of struggles for social, political and environmental changes in their countries, will have the opportunity to connect and engage with regional and international human rights organizations, global government leaders, the United Nations, donors and the private sector. The first Human Rights Defenders World Summit took place 20 years ago in 1998 at the Palais de Chaillot, Paris, the same location where this year’s closing ceremony will be held.

About the organizations involved:

Amnesty International

Amnesty International is a global movement of more than seven million people who take injustice personally. We are campaigning for a world where human rights are enjoyed by all. We are funded by members and people like you. We are independent of any political ideology, economic interest or religion.

Association for Women’s Rights in Development (AWID)

AWID is a global feminist organisation with over 5,000 individual and institutional members from 164 countries. We support feminist, women’s rights and gender justice movements to thrive, to be a driving force in challenging systems of oppression, and to co-create feminist realities.

FIDH

FIDH (International Federation for Human Rights) is an international human rights NGO federating 184 organisations from 112 countries. Since 1922, FIDH has been defending all civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights as set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Front Line Defenders

Front Line Defenders works for the protection, security and well-being of human rights defenders at risk around the world, providing grants, training and capacity building in physical and digital protection, advocacy and campaigning/visibility for HRDs.

International Service for Human Rights

The International Service for Human Rights is an independent, non-governmental organisation dedicated to promoting and protecting human rights. We achieve this by supporting human rights defenders, strengthening human rights systems, and leading and participating in coalitions for human rights change.

OMCT

The World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) is the world's largest coalition of non-governmental organisations fighting against arbitrary detention, torture, summary and extrajudicial executions, forced disappearances and other forms of violence and provides a comprehensive system of support and protection for human rights defenders.

ProtectDefenders.EU

ProtectDefenders.eu is the European Union Human Rights Defenders mechanism, established to protect defenders at high risk and facing the most difficult situations worldwide. Led by a consortium of 12 NGOs active in the field of human rights.

Reporters Without Borders

Reporters Without Borders, or Reporters Sans Frontières, is an international non-profit, non-governmental organization based in Paris, France, that conducts political advocacy on issues relating to freedom of information and freedom of the press.