

# [ DISPATCHES ]



REPORTS FROM THE  
**FRONT LINE**

*fi* FRONT LINE  
DEFENDERS

## denis o'brien, chairman of the board of trustees

In difficult political and security contexts, Front Line Defenders has continued to undertake remarkable work in support of over one thousand human rights defenders at risk in over eighty countries. We are inspired by the courage of those who continue to work peacefully for human rights in spite of the many risks they face. The quality and effectiveness of our work to support them is a tribute to the professionalism and commitment of our staff.

As a Board of Trustees we have continued to give priority to the provision of rapid and practical support to those HRDs facing the

greatest risks. During the course of the year our field-based staff have met with human rights defenders in more than 40 countries including South Sudan, Madagascar, Kuwait, Ukraine (Crimea) and the Dominican Republic. We also developed and ran a training workshop for HRDs working in the context of armed conflict with participants from Egypt, Iraq, Nigeria, Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan. We delivered one-to-one digital protection support to 112 HRDs and 168 organisations (supporting 725 HRDs) and launched a report on the broader impact of killings of HRDs in Bangladesh.

I would like to place on record our thanks to all those who have supported the work of Front Line Defenders in 2016, notably the fantastic support we have received from our donors including the Dutch, Irish, German, Norwegian, Swedish, and Swiss Governments, the European Union, the Lifeline Embattled CSO Fund, Bread for the World, the Foundation for a Just Society, the Oak Foundation, the Open Society Foundations, the Sigrid Rausing Trust and many others. We are also very much looking forward to working with our new partners who decided to support us in 2016, such as the Goelet Family Foundation, the Marisla Foundation, the Mize Foundation, the Silicon Valley Community Foundation and Protectors Fund of RSF Social Finance. Without this generous support Front Line Defenders would not be able to undertake its work.

At a challenging time for the charitable sector, the Board has reinforced its governance structures in accordance with the Dochas Code on Corporate Governance and you will find our audited accounts published on our website at [www.frontlinedefenders.org](http://www.frontlinedefenders.org), as well as a summary in this report.

In 2016, our inspirational founding Executive Director Mary Lawlor retired from that role and we are indebted to her for her dedication, commitment and singular contribution to the cause, advocacy and personal protection of human rights defenders. After an extensive international recruitment process, the Board was unanimous in its decision to appoint Andrew Anderson as new Executive Director. Andrew has worked for the international protection of HRDs for more than twenty years, and has played a key leadership role in building Front Line Defenders into an effective force fighting for those most at risk.

We look forward to 2017 and to meet the challenges which face us and HRDs around the world. □



Denis O'Brien, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Front Line Defenders.

## what does front line defenders do?

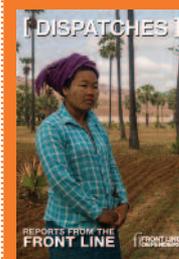
Front Line, the International Foundation for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, is an international non-governmental organisation (NGO) established by charitable deed trust. It was founded in Dublin in 2001 with the specific aim of protecting human rights defenders at risk, people who work, non-violently, for any or all of the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Front Line Defenders addresses the protection needs identified by defenders themselves.

Front Line Defenders provides rapid and practical support to at-risk human rights defenders including:

- grants to pay for the practical security needs of human rights defenders;
- provision of training and development of resource materials on security and protection, including digital security;
- international advocacy on behalf of human rights defenders at immediate risk;
- visibility and campaign support to HRDs to increase their recognition and legitimacy on international, national and local levels
- rest and respite, including the Front Line Defenders Fellowship;
- opportunities for networking and exchange between human rights defenders, including at the biennial Dublin Platform;
- the annual Front Line Defenders Award for Human Rights Defenders at Risk;
- an emergency 24 hour phone line for human rights defenders operating in Arabic, English, French, Spanish and Russian;
- temporary relocation of human rights defenders in emergency situations.

Front Line Defenders promotes the protection of human rights defenders through its support for the work of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders and other international and regional mechanisms. Front Line Defenders promotes respect for the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. Front Line Defenders has special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, partnership status with the Council of Europe and observer status with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. Front Line Defenders received the 2007 King Baudouin International Prize for Development.

### On the Cover



Burmese HRD Thwet Thwet Win leads a struggle against Chinese-owned Lepadaung copper mine in Myanmar's Sagaing Province.

In August, she was hit by a truck owned by the company, leaving her in pain. In addition to the physical intimidation, she is facing a number of trumped-up charges by the company in an effort to silence her and end her campaign leading local villagers to demand respect for their rights from the company and the government.

Credit: Lauren DeCicca

Andrew Anderson became Executive Director in November 2016, following the retirement of Mary Lawlor. Mary continues her service as a member of the Board of Trustees.

## next phase for front line defenders

I once asked Palestinian human rights defender Raji Sourani, as we walked through the rubble of a bombed hospital in Gaza, whether there were any grounds for optimism. He replied “optimism is a strategic imperative.” And he was, of course, right. If we are to win the struggle for human rights we must believe change is possible. 2016 was a tough year to remain positive. Almost every day we received news of another human rights defender killed because of her/his peaceful work. The scale of the repressive backlash against human rights defenders reached new heights in countries around the globe. And yet the courage and dedication of human rights defenders continues to inspire.



Mary Lawlor, Founder of Front Line Defenders, with Andrew Anderson, new Executive Director.

Together with partners from national and international human rights organisations, we launched the Human Rights Defenders Memorial in November. Irish President Michael D Higgins spoke powerfully and paid tribute to those who had been killed and those who continue the struggle. We are now reaching out to the families and colleagues of all the human rights defenders who have been killed since the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders was adopted in 1998 to make sure the HRD Memorial becomes something that celebrates the lives and achievements of their loved ones. We will also launch, together with our partners, an international campaign to stop the killing of HRDs.

We will redouble our efforts to strengthen protection for those at risk through our protection grants programme, through capacity building and support with managing security, including digital protection, and

through support for temporary relocation. HRDs continue to tell us that the most important thing is to provide them with rapid and practical assistance when they are under attack. Russia's Vladimir Putin, China's Xi Jinping, and other autocrats understand that HRDs working at local and national levels are key agents of change and use massive resources to spy on, disrupt, threaten, smear, harass, detain, torture, prosecute, and jail human rights defenders. Physical repression is coupled with defamation campaigns and an ideological assault on human rights. Copycat repressive legislation restricting the ability of civil society organisations to register and access funding has spread like a viral epidemic.

Front Line Defenders will strengthen efforts to enhance the visibility and legitimacy of human rights defenders. We will further develop our use of multimedia materials,

social media and HRD profiles to push back against the defamation that is too often the precursor to physical attacks. We will also publish a graphic novel on the risks faced by human rights defenders working to defend land rights, indigenous peoples' rights and the environment in the context of mining projects.

The scale of the challenge we face is considerable. There have for example never been greater demands on our protection grants budget which has more than doubled in the last five years. But there is also a sense in which the reaction of the autocrats is a confirmation of the effectiveness of human rights defenders who continue their work in spite of the threats. There have never been

more human rights defenders active in so many countries on a wide diversity of issues. Those struggling for LGBTI rights and women's rights have made considerable advances, often at too high a cost and with much still to achieve, but we must recognise that the backlash is a response to our victories.

We embrace the future on a solid foundation bequeathed to us by our inspirational founder, Mary Lawlor. We are fortunate that Mary will continue on our Board and we will continue to draw on her wisdom and undiminished passion for the protection of human rights defenders. We are determined to sustain the ethos that Mary nurtured from the very beginning of Front Line Defenders: fast, flexible, focused on the needs expressed by HRDs, demonstrating respect and empathy, delivering impact. **□**

### 2016 AT A GLANCE

In total, 1854 HRDs in 102 countries were supported through our programmes in 2016.

Front Line Defenders issued 274 Urgent Appeals on behalf of 398 individuals at risk in 68 countries and undertook advocacy with the relevant national authorities, submitted cases to the UN and regional mechanisms and lobbied the EU to take action on 155 of the cases.

The Front Line Defenders Protection Grants Programme provided 480 grants, totalling €1,200,570 to 494 individuals and 90 organisations at risk in 72 countries. 143 grants were provided for temporary relocations. 84% of HRDs reported that they have been able to continue or return to work as a result of having received Protection Grant support.

Front Line Defenders carried out 51 field visits to 38 countries.

153 HRDs from 26 countries participated in 12 trainings on personal and organisational security; 96% of HRDs reported having implemented a security plan as a result of the training.

268 HRDs from 25 countries participated in 21 digital protection trainings; 77% of HRDs reported using digital security tools as a result of training.

156 HRDs and 96 human rights organisations in 41 countries were supported by Digital Protection Consultants through 53 visits; 78% of HRDs reported using digital protection tools as a result of the consultancy.

26 HRDs were supported through the Rest & Respite Programme.

The Front Line Defenders Award was presented to Ana Mirian Romero from Honduras, an indigenous and land rights defender with Movimiento Indígena Lenca de la Paz (MILPAH).

Czech Professor Jan Sokol spoke on the topic of 'Dictatorship to Democracy' at the Annual Front Line Defenders Lecture, held in partnership with University College Dublin and Trinity College Dublin.

Front Line Defenders published *Victim Blaming: Bangladesh's Refusal to Protect Human Rights Defenders Targeted by Extremists*, a report that investigates the wider implications of the killings of HRDs and bloggers in the south Asian nation.

# it started as an idea...

## mary lawlor – a legacy of leadership



It started as an idea – an organisation which would concentrate all its efforts to protect HRDs in danger. In 2001, we launched Front Line Defenders with enthusiasm, energy and a commitment to be fast, flexible and furious. The first thing we had to change was mindset – when working to protect HRDs in danger, you have to be ready to respond 24 hours a day/365 days a year.

This was the first organisation of its kind. We wanted to respond to the needs of those we were fighting to protect. Theodore Roethke's words "I learn by going where I have to go" almost became a mantra. We were, and we have been, continuously inspired and humbled by the courage of those we work for. From a handful of HRDs in 2001, we have now supported almost 10,000 HRDs in over 120 countries.

Some highlights were:

- In January 2002, then UN High Commissioner Mary Robinson launched the inaugural Dublin Platform for HRDs in Dublin Castle. 100 HRDs from over 80 countries participated. That it succeeded was a minor miracle. There were two of us, two staff, two computers, two small rooms for an office. We had night shifts to use the computers and many volunteers worked on their laptops on the stairs; I will never forget the sight of that full hall of HRDs. That day was extraordinary and I realised that we could achieve our vision.

- Supporting over 1200 HRDs each year is motivating. In 2003, Aloysius Toe escaped from prison when the armed rebels took over Monrovia. He was on a blacklist so had to be evacuated immediately. We managed to get a bank to open, despite looting, and transferred money for a small fishing boat to take him to Cote d'Ivoire. He hid under the boat until the nightly security sweep was completed. After he took off, the boat ran out of petrol but

drifted down to Abidjan. We had a lorry there to take him to Ghana – from where he joined us in Ireland for a month.

- The adoption of the EU Guidelines on HRDs in 2004 under the Irish EU Presidency. These Guidelines have been instrumental in highlighting the situation of HRDs and their need for systematic protection from the European Union and its Member States.

- In 2005, we secured a system for temporary humanitarian visas for HRDs in extreme danger or suffering burnout. Tragically, two of those supported by the scheme were subsequently assassinated. Natalya (Natacha) Estemirova spent three months with Front Line Defenders, together with her daughter Lana (10), to be safe and to give them time to be together - Lana had to live apart from her mother due to the danger they faced in Chechnya. Natacha was assassinated in 2009. Ali Abd Al-Karim Al-Khawi, a fearless journalist from Yemen spent some months with us learning English. He was killed by gunmen in 2015.

- Organisationally, we have grown to 35 talented and tenacious staff and interns. Protection Coordinators based in each region travel constantly to meet and consult with HRDs in different countries; we have strong financial and accountability systems in place; at all times we are refining our work, measuring impact and assessing new pathways for more effective protection.

- In November 2016, Front Line Defenders launched the HRD Memorial project in partnership with 20 other organisations to celebrate the lives of those killed defending human rights.

Protecting human rights defenders is, and will remain, a major challenge. Looking forward,

we need to increase our budget in order to deliver the rapid, practical support HRDs identify as being the most important.

Attacks on and murders of HRDs do not occur in a vacuum. Orchestrated campaigns targeting HRDs set the stage. Hostility is fomented by the media, the language of extremism has become normalised. Rather than protect HRDs, governments are often the agents of the most insidious attacks. The rise of right-wing populism will exacerbate this situation as human rights are eroded, fear and fanaticism flourish, and racism increases.

Against this backdrop, some things are evident:

- We need to stop the murder of HRDs; to make it a red line for governments and non-state actors.

- We have to find ways to secure the release of HRDs who have been given long prison sentences.

- HRDs must be protected from the unfettered power of multinational corporations who use hired thugs to attack and kill HRDs.

It is true that governments and non-state actors are restricting the ability of HRDs to operate. But HRDs act as a crowbar in an unequal system weighted in favour of those in power. They build justice brick by brick. From Pol Pot to Pinochet, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of apartheid, HRDs have broken through and prevailed.

The challenge to the oppressors is in the spirit, will and hope of HRDs. This cannot be crushed.

A luta continua... A vitória é certa. The struggle continues, victory is certain. **□**

Mary Lawlor



# GLOBAL, FAST, FLEXIBLE: HOW FRONT LINE DEFENDERS

## DISTRIBUTION OF GRANTS



# GLOBAL

### THE DISTRIBUTION OF GRANTS

EUROPE & CENTRAL ASIA	18%
AFRICA	12%
ASIA/PACIFIC	28%
MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA	19%
AMERICAS	23%

### WE RESPOND QUICKLY

**274** URGENT APPEALS ISSUED

**68%** ISSUED WITHIN **48** HOURS

**34%** OF **480** GRANTS WERE RAPID RESPONSE

# FAST

### DIGITAL PROTECTION CONSULTATIONS

**112** INDIVIDUAL HRDS SUPPORTED

**168** ORGANISATIONS SUPPORTED

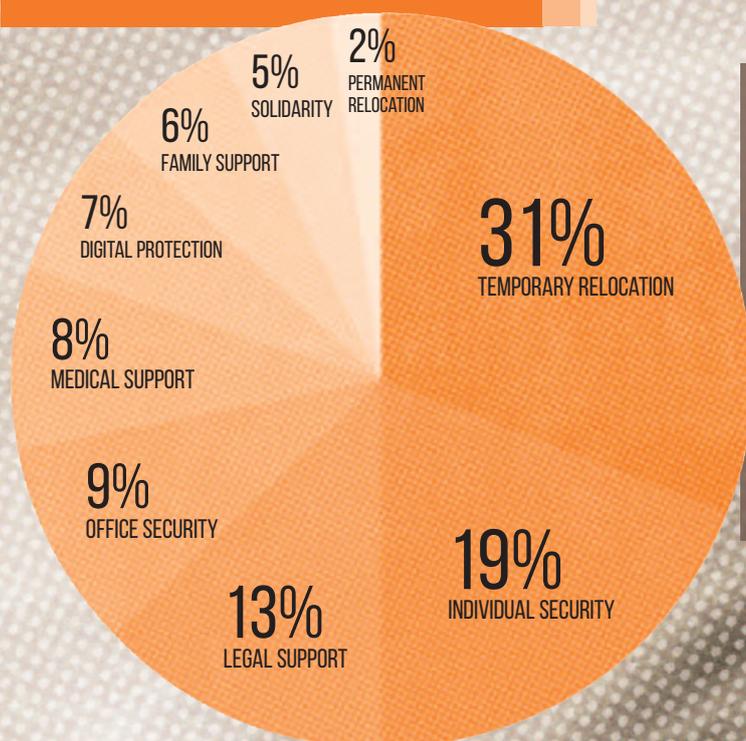
INDIRECTLY SUPPORTING **725** HRDS

**f** FRONT LINE  
DEFENDERS

# GET GRANT-AID WHERE IT IS NEEDED MOST

## FLEXIBLE

### TYPES OF GRANTS



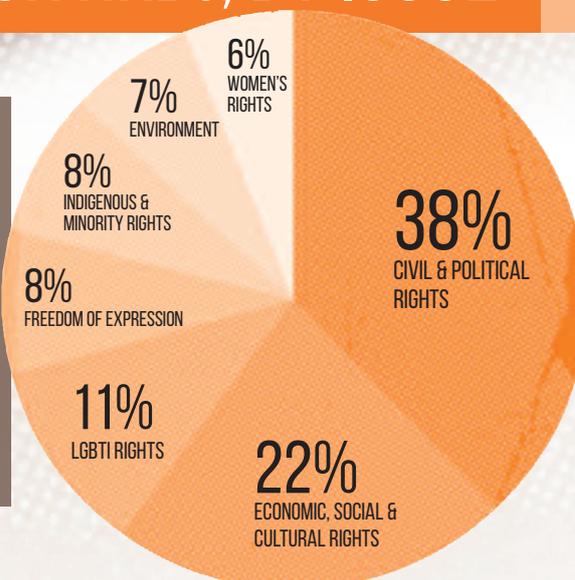
#### TYPES OF GRANTS

TEMPORARY RELOCATION	31%
INDIVIDUAL SECURITY	19%
LEGAL SUPPORT	13%
OFFICE SECURITY	9%
MEDICAL SUPPORT	8%
DIGITAL PROTECTION	7%
FAMILY SUPPORT	6%
SOLIDARITY	5%
PERMANENT RELOCATION	2%

### GRANT SUPPORT FOR HRDs, BY ISSUE

#### GRANT SUPPORT FOR HRDs BY THE ISSUE THEY WORK ON:

CIVIL & POLITICAL RIGHTS	38%
ECONOMIC, SOCIAL & CULTURAL RIGHTS	22%
LGBTI RIGHTS	11%
FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION	8%
INDIGENOUS & MINORITY RIGHTS	8%
ENVIRONMENT	7%
WOMEN'S RIGHTS	6%





## 9 RESEARCH MISSIONS

Presidents in a number of African nations sought to extend their rule by amending national constitutions. In Burundi, Rwanda, the Gambia and the Democratic Republic of Congo, HRDs found themselves under attack for being at the forefront of efforts to ensure that constitutions and rule of law did not become victims to corrupt elites seeking to hold onto power beyond their mandates.

HRDs were seen as necessary targets as they form critical elements in civil society, able to challenge extrajudicial manoeuvres, mobilise fellow citizens and reach out to international media and institutions to raise an alarm about these so-called 'constitutional coups'.

On 3 October, **Bernadette Ntumba** faced death threats from a former rebel leader who came to her office. The incident was the latest in a series of threats against the human rights defender by the former rebel who is targeting her following her intervention in a rape case involving a minor.



Bernadette is the coordinator of the Association des Mamans Chrétiennes pour l'Assistance aux Vulnérables – AMCAV (Association of Christian Mothers for assistance to vulnerable peoples), an organi-

sation that provides services to disadvantaged peoples and to women who have survived sexual violence in South Kivu in the DRC.

Previously, on 9 September 2016, the former rebel leader lashed out at Bernadette in AMCAV's office by saying: "I can slit your throat here in your office and the blood would flow everywhere... You know very well that I am from the jungle and I store a lot of weapons... You don't know that these weapons could help me return to the jungle after slitting your throat..."

In September, Front Line Defenders Africa Protection Coordinator made the first visit by the organisation to Madagascar to network with HRDs and to investigate the challenges they face, particularly those working on environmental issues and journalists.

In Madagascar, there are three major environmental issues that HRDs and journalists try to document and advocate on, and all the three issues have huge business interests attached to them. Thus, HRDs are potential targets of well-connected and powerful mafias: organised trafficking of rosewood – a precious tropical timber used in the manufacturing of luxury furniture and musical instruments; organised trafficking of critically endangered animal species, particularly tortoise/turtle species – many of Madagascar's tortoises end up in Thailand where they are bought at very handsome

prices and kept as pets; lack of transparency in the management of extractive industries. HRDs are faced with numerous challenges, including the misuse of defamation laws and the imposition of huge penalties against journalists and other critics for defamation, with fines of up to \$100,000, as well as the use of intimidatory tactics such as verbal attacks and threatening phone calls that have pushed many environmental defenders and other active HRDs into a pattern of self-censorship. **Ndrato Razakamanarina**, head of the Alliance Voahary Gasy (AVG), has reported new forms of pressure and surveillance on the members in his network. □

## Grants

**John Mathenge** is the director of HOYMAS (Health Option for Young Men on HIV/AIDS/STIs) a male sex worker organisation. He has worked for the promotion of male sex workers health and legal rights issues in Kenya since 2008. After his landlord discovered he was gay, he gave John a 5-day notice to leave the apartment, while also revealing the address of the HOYMAS office to anti-gay hate crime perpetrators, putting John and his organisation at grave risk. Front Line Defenders provided a security grant which allowed HOYMAS to relocate to a safer neighbourhood, reinforce home and office security by installing CCTVs and ensure legal representation for John in a discrimination suit against his landlord.

**Omot Agwa Okwoy, Ashinie Astin and Jamal Oumar Hojele** were detained on charges of terrorism for trying to attend a food security workshop in Kenya organised by Anywaa Survival Organization, a London-based charity campaigning on behalf of the poorest, marginalised and disadvantaged pastoralist and indigenous communities in remote Ethiopian peripheries.

The HRDs were held for six months at a police station and then transferred to another prison, where their health conditions deteriorated. The HRDs were targeted for their peaceful work advocating for the rights of Anuak indigenous people and other minority ethnic groups in the Gambella region and other areas targeted by large-scale land grabs as well as Ethiopia's controversial "villagisation" program, which forcibly relocates indigenous communities.

Omot is now facing charges that could entail between 20 years and life in prison. The grant provided by Front Line Defenders covered the cost of defence lawyers, provided support to the families of the HRDs and financed their travel expenses to visit the detainees in prison.

## Advocacy



In Nigeria, HRD and performance artist **Jelili Atiku** was arrested and charged after a performance called "Aragamago Will Rid This Land of Terrorism". Front Line Defenders issued an Urgent Appeal about his case on 1 February 2016 and collaborated on local advocacy work for his case with the Nigerian branch of CORA/Arterial Network. With mounting international pressure calling for Jelili's release, on 18 July 2016, the Ejibgo Magistrate Court struck down all charges against him. The Court came to this decision after the prosecution and the defence reached an amicable solution through the 'African community dispute resolution method', according to CORA/Arterial Network. Jelili attributes this resolution of his case to international pressure, and to Front Line Defenders own work on his case.





**RISK ASSESSMENT & PROTECTION PLANNING WORKSHOP FOR HRDs WORKING IN ARMED CONFLICT**

Michael Murphy, security consultant from Ireland, led a session on ‘hard security’ issues related to conflict. The workshop also included modules on reducing the risks of arrest and abduction, plus strategies for dealing with roadblocks, as elements building towards the final completion of holistic security plans.

**Training**

In June, Front Line Defenders supported a Risk Assessment workshop in Goma for 13 HRDs facing threats in the eastern part of the DRC. The workshop was organised and led by local HRDs who had been previously trained by Front Line Defenders.

The DRC is one of the most dangerous countries in the world for HRDs, particularly the eastern part of the country, where multiple militia groups operate, and where the government has limited ability to police and enforce the law. Even the UN peace-keeping mission in the region has been unable to provide effective protection for the civilian population, including the most at-risk HRDs.

HRDs often face death threats from local armed groups and commanders, and many HRDs have been killed over the past decade. With virtually no options to turn to from the government security forces, HRDs are left on their own to protect themselves, their colleagues and their families.

According to one participant in the training, “Every threat has a different context and shape, and it helped that we were all together from the same region, that we could analyse the different types of threats we received that were often common to the context, but sometimes totally case-specific. Most people have experienced or know someone who has experienced a death threat. For example, in North Kivu, all protests are prone to generate threats.”

He went on to explain, “In 2015, I received a death threat, and this training helped me analyse each security incident that arises. It helped me to once again open my mind to methods of protection and security.”

**“The facilitators showed us how they care about our security and by knowing different kind of protection for myself, I’ve realized that am responsible for my own security and I feel now Front Line can be my backup in case of any threats.”**  
- HRD, South Sudan



Hermann Agboka, Rachel Boyindjo and Saliou Diop participating in a digital protection training in West Africa in May.

**38**  
Urgent Appeals on  
**46** HRDs

**92**  
Security Grants



## 11 RESEARCH MISSIONS

The killing of Honduran indigenous human rights defender Berta Cáceres on 3 March 2016 dominated headlines in the region, and was a harbinger of a year in which more than 100 HRDs in the region would be killed. The other major event in the Americas was the signing and ultimate acceptance of a peace agreement in Colombia, though in the weeks leading up to and immediately after the accord, HRDs suffered a wave of violence and intimidation by groups opposed to peace.

In the aftermath of her assassination, Front Line Defenders responded to assist Berta's family and her organisation, as well as other at-risk HRDs with a mix of grants, digital protection consultation and advocacy in Honduras, at the Inter American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) and at the EU.

One of the biggest mobilisations of indigenous people in the region took place in the United States, as the **Standing Rock Sioux Tribe** called for support in confronting the Dakota Access Pipeline planned to go through the tribe's sacred territory. For months, indigenous peoples, joined by solidarity activists, maintained a prayer camp to block the machines, while pursuing legal efforts in court. Authorities responded brutally, using intense physical force, including dogs, high pressure water in freezing winter temperatures and 'less-lethal' crowd control weapons. Front Line Defenders Head of Communications & Visibility visited the encampment and produced a short video for social media to give greater international visibility to the indigenous defenders.

HRDs are often victims of stigmatisation and smear campaigns. These are aimed at attacking their reputations, credibility and support within their communities. Labelling HRDs as traitors, terrorists, foreign agents or accusing them of being violent extremists serves to diminish support for their work. State-run media are often used as platforms

to stigmatise HRDs and, in some countries, HRDs are attacked by the highest political authorities. Smear campaigns often precede judicial harassment.

In Venezuela and Ecuador, governments have taken effective control of media institutions and weaponised them against those who would challenge the rule of Presidents Nicolás Maduro and Rafael Correa, respectively. Unfortunately, this practice was not limited to these authoritarian states in the Americas region, as HRDs in Honduras, Nicaragua and United States found themselves targeted and smeared on both state-owned and private media outlets.

In March, Front Line Defenders Americas Protection Coordinator travelled to Venezuela.

Government and elected officials had been targeting HRDs in media for many years, but a campaign of smearing seemed to take off in 2015 and 2016. In June, HRD **Marco Antonio Ponce**, Coordinator of the Venezuelan Observatory of Social Conflict (Observatorio Venezolano de Conflictividad Social - OVCS), was called a traitor by congressman Diosdado Cabello on his weekly programme "Con el Mazo Dando". In October, Cabello targeted prominent HRD, **Humberto Prado Sifontes**, claiming that he received funding from the US-based National Endowment for Democracy (NED), that he steals the funds, and that he sends them to a company registered in Panama under his wife's name. **[I]**



HRD Marco Antonio Ponce, Coordinator of the Venezuelan Observatory of Social Conflict (Observatorio Venezolano de Conflictividad Social - OVCS).



Standing Rock Sioux Tribe protest.

## Grants

CIARENA is an indigenous organisation based in Oaxaca, Mexico, that has been working since 2001 to defend the rights and autonomy of women and indigenous people. An important component of this work is to document and report on the devastation of the environment in the region, as well as to work for conservation.

As a result of the effective work of the organisation, members have been followed, intimidated, surveilled and threatened. Although the government's Protection Mechanism has previously supported CIARENA, in 2016 it removed **Silvia Pérez** from the list of HRDs it would offer protection, thus leaving her and the organisation vulnerable. This was precisely at a time when CIARENA was planning to do work specifically in regions where it had previously received threats.

Front Line Defenders provided CIARENA with a grant to cover the costs of a radio communications system, as a means of ensuring the security of organisation members travelling to remote areas, where cell phone coverage is spotty and as an emergency communications system. Since receiving the grant, CIARENA has resumed its work in communities throughout the Oaxaca region.



Journalist and HRD **Claudia Julieta Duque** has faced intimidation, harassment, threats and surveillance for over a decade due to her work as an investigative journalist. In an unprecedented case, she sued the Colombian secret police for psychological torture, and the case was heard in March 2016. She requested that Front Line Defenders attend the hearing as an act of solidarity, writing:

"I find it urgent to organize a protection and political advocacy strategy for my case and with this purpose I reach out to you to request your presence observers at the trial. The aim is to send a clear message not just to [the

defendant] but also to the judge and other parties involved in the process that I am not alone and I have the national and international support to continue this fight for justice.

Your presence in Colombia will also be useful to conduct a press conference and to inform to the public that you will be monitoring the case, reporting its development as well as alerting on the obstacles and difficulties we still encounter despite the significant progress."

From 2004-2016, Front Line Defenders supported Claudia Julieta Duque and her family with 8 security grants, and raised 11 distinct Urgent Appeals on her behalf. □

49

Urgent Appeals on

77 HRDs

110

Security Grants

## Training

Together with IM-Defensoras and UN Women, Front Line Defenders convened a regional workshop for more than 50 women HRDs from El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Nicaragua, focused on comprehensive feminist protection for WHRDs in the Mesoamerica region. The WHRDs shared their experiences, analysed the contexts and conditions in which they work, enjoyed self-care sessions, and strategised on how best to develop comprehensive protection measures that lend security and sustainability to their struggles from a feminist perspective. Front Line Defenders Protection Coordinator for the Americas participated in the workshop.





## 11 RESEARCH MISSIONS

Human rights defenders in Asia face a myriad of challenges to their work and security, from state-led persecution in China, Thailand and Malaysia, where the legal systems have been used as weapons against HRDs and civil society, to physical threats from armed groups in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh, and new administrative regulations aimed at curtailing anti-corruption and environmental protection efforts in India, Burma/Myanmar and Cambodia.

In October, Front Line Defenders Asia Protection Coordinator visited Thailand, following the death of the king, to meet students activists and human rights lawyers. The Protection Coordinator accompanied WHRD **Sirikan Charoensiri** to the police station to put pressure on the authorities with regard to the postponed cases of sedition and political assembly filed against her. Sirikan is one of the legal representatives of the 14 student activists from the New Democracy Movement (NDM) who were arrested on 26 June 2015 after staging peaceful protests to mark the first anniversary of the military coup. The military is targeting students as a means of intimidating others. The Protection Coordinator also met with Rohingya defenders in exile from Burma/Myanmar; the situation of Rohingya remains very difficult and there have been a lot of killings of members of the Muslim minority community by the Burmese military. This area of work is particularly sensitive and HRDs working on Rohingya issues are reluctant to expose themselves, explaining that while they previously could raise the issue in Thailand, it is now much more difficult to do so due to the overall restrictions of civic space.

The Asia Protection Coordinator was in Sri Lanka in November to attend a digital protection training. While there, the Protection Coordinator also participated the 7th Asian Human Rights Defenders Forum organized by FORUM-ASIA. In addition, the PC went for a

2-day field visit to Batticaloa - a coastal city located in the Eastern Province which was badly affected by the long-running civil war. It is predominantly a Tamil speaking area, but a significant number of Muslims also reside there. Since the end of the war, the working space for HRDs has opened up - they can organise and mobilise. However, they feel they are still constantly under surveillance and threat. Religious and ethnic tensions still remain. No process of transitional justice seems to have begun. 'The war is over but there is another war without guns currently going on', observed a HRD.

The Protection Coordinator also met some Bangladeshi HRDs who have been on temporary relocation in Sri Lanka with the support of Front Line Defenders and other organizations.

**Maria Chin Abdullah** is the Chairperson of Bersih 2.0, a coalition of NGOs advocating for reforms of the electoral system in Malaysia, challenging corruption and calling for the resignation of leading political figures in the country, for which members have faced legal harassment.

Maria received extremely violent and graphic Whatsapp messages from Islamic State Malaysia threatening to kill her, her three sons, Mandeep Singh and Ambiga Sreenevasan. The message warns: "you listen carefully...i will not repeat. i am giving last warning to you. do not continue you stupid

intention to organize the bersih rally...i will not hesitate to whack you till pieces and also willing to slaughter you... i know who you are, i know where you stay, and i also know who are your family and your children...i will fight to the end against your stupid work...this warning is from islamic state malaysia..."

Following Front Line Defenders advocacy on the case, the EU Delegation in Malaysia established contact with the HRD, while the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia issued a statement calling on the police to investigate and arrest those responsible for the intimidation, calling the threats and harassment "ghastly".

## Grants

**Ryan Lariba** is a campaign officer of Alliance for Genuine Development (AGD), an organization working for the empowerment of marginalised groups. He is also the secretary general of Bayan Socksargen, a cause-oriented group campaigning against human rights abuses perpetrated by the state security forces and the entry of foreign large-scale mining companies which have been encroaching the ancestral lands of Indigenous People and peasants in Mindanao, Philippines. Last year, he assisted the 200 individuals who had been displaced from Malapatan, Sarangani Province and sought refuge to General Santos City due to heavy militarization and gross human rights abuses committed by the military troops against the community.

Since 2013, because of his work, Ryan has been the subject of surveillance and fabricated charges by government agents. In January 2016, he was formally charged with a number of trumped-up charges related to firearms possession and distribution. Due to the efforts to use the judicial system to persecute him, Ryan was given a grant to assist with the legal expenses, as well as funds to support a temporary relocation to more secure housing while his organisation and lawyers work on both legal and media advocacy to clear his name.



A photoshopped image of Maria Chin Abdullah held by an Islamic State militant poised to slit her throat was circulated on social media when she, her family and colleagues were threatened with death in October and November.



## Grants

After holding a press conference to detail abuses in brick kiln factories in May 2016, Pakistani labour rights defender, **Imran Anjum**, founder of the Peaceful & Active Centre for Humanity in Sahiwal, Pakistan, was followed, dragged out of his car and had a gun pointed to his head, and warned to stop his activities. Less than two weeks later, armed men arrived at his office to threaten him again. With an office security grant from Front Line Defenders, Imran has been able to better secure the offices with CCTV and unarmed security guards.

According to Imran, "After hiring a security guard and installing the security system in the office premises, PEACH staff are feeling secure from the attacks of brick kiln owners and their companions, because if they attack the PEACH office, they will be caught with solid proof. The FLD funded security grant really helped to save the PEACH office and to continue its activities."



Above left: (left to right) **Thet Mon Ko** (writing), **Lway Poe Reang**, **Yamin Tun** and **Phyo Thit Luu** create a security plan.

Above right: Front Line Defenders Protection Coordinator with Burmese student HRDs **Lin Htet Naing** and **Phyo Phyo Aung** at a Yangon court hearing - though newly married, the appearance at court in February was a rare opportunity to meet and talk as they were denied phone privileges in prison; they were both released, along with other students, in April.

"I was in prison when I heard that I had been nominated for the FLD Award and the media attention around it was useful, it can influence people in power."

- **Phyoe Phyoe Aung**, General Secretary of the All Burma Federation of Student Unions (ABFSU)

## Grants

The brutal murders of LGBTI magazine editor, **Xulhaz Mannan**, and fellow HRD **Mahub Tonoy Rabbi** in April in Dhaka, Bangladesh, generated fear in the LGBTI community, most notably among HRDs who worked to raise awareness and to promote the rights of the community.

Front Line Defenders responded to the security requests of the **Boys of Bangladesh**, the oldest and the largest platform of self-identified Bangladeshi gay men, for secure housing and transportation for four LGBTI HRDs. The HRDs had received death threats and were highly visible due to their work with the magazine and the Boys of Bangladesh. Front Line Defenders provided the emergency funding and helped arrange for secure facilities that allowed the HRDs to continue to remain in the country and to continue their activism in a more secure manner.

69

Urgent Appeals on

104 HRDs

128

Security Grants

Being the most outspoken LGBT rights activist with vivid online presence, we are sure that militants had the information of our location from different sources and it was very important for us to have a secure place to continue our regular work. This grant helped us to find a secured home and transportation. This facility allowed us to secure our activities from the extremists. The grant allows us to stay safe and restart our work that we have been doing for 15 years.

- HRD, Bangladesh



## 8 RESEARCH MISSIONS

The overall trend in Europe and Central Asia remained problematic for HRDs and civil society in general, but the most significant developments occurred in Turkey, where a failed coup, a wave of bombings targeting both security forces and civilians and the ongoing use of military force in predominantly Kurdish regions in the southeast were used by the government to curtail civil liberties and launch an unprecedented crackdown on human rights defenders, journalists, academics, lawyers and other citizens engaged in work defending rights or advocating for alternative policies.

In March and November, Front Line Defenders Protection Coordinator for Europe & Central Asia visited Turkey to meet HRDs facing this crackdown and seeking means to continue their work in the hostile environment. She met with HRDs working in a variety of fields who all felt pressure from the government. In Istanbul and Ankara, journalists have received death threats on social media because of their coverage of military operations in Cizre - which faced eight days of curfew and being sealed off from the outside world.

Hundreds of journalists face defamation cases for allegedly insulting state officials. After the attempted coup in July, major purges took place – more than 100 media outlets were shut down by authorities, and journalists were imprisoned or left without work. Journalists reported that they could no longer work in Turkey and that there were “forbidden topics” like weapons trafficking that nobody would cover out of fear of reprisals.

In November, 375 NGOs were permanently closed down and their assets frozen by executive decree; hundreds of HRDs were left without any resources. During the missions, the Protection Coordinator met with a leading children rights NGO which was recently closed down by the authorities. At particular risk in Turkey are LGBTI rights defenders, environ-

mentalists, journalists, lawyers and minority rights activists.

In February, the regional Protection Coordinator conducted a mission to eastern Ukraine and in October, she visited HRDs in Crimea, crossing into occupied territory. Front Line Defenders was one of the few international human rights organisations to visit the region since Russian troops and local militias removed the Ukrainian government.

A climate of impunity prevails in Ukraine regarding grave violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law committed during the Maidan events, in Odessa in May 2014, in Crimea since November 2013 and most massively in Eastern Ukraine. Ukrainian civil society groups and victims’ lawyers denounce the lack of political will to investigate and prosecute crimes committed and lack of coordination between investigative bodies.

In territories controlled by the so-called Donetsk People’s Republic/Luhansk People’s Republic, arbitrary detention and hostage taking is perpetrated in a widespread manner. Civilians are in constant danger of being arrested or taken captive by armed groups in control of these areas. Those seen as pro-Ukrainian are particularly targeted, but there is also hostage-taking motivated by profit. Once

detained, these people are systematically subject to torture or ill-treatment.

A number of human rights initiatives in Ukraine assist internally displaced people, like **Kharkiv Station**, an organisation that started as an initiative of volunteers who have been supporting IDPs arriving at Kharkiv train station, or **Kramatorsk SOS**, an organisation that provides IDP with legal counselling. Human rights defenders are exposed to difficult situations on a daily basis, many of them do this work voluntarily and they are often on the verge of emotional burnout.

**Anna Mokrousova** is a co-founder of Blue Bird, a volunteer initiative that provides psychological and practical help to families of captured or missing persons in the occupied territories of eastern Ukraine. Until May 2014, Anna lived in Luhansk; after the takeover of her town, she moved to Kyiv and started working to investigate abductions and torture carried out by rebel forces in Ukraine.

In Crimea, human rights defenders reported on numerous human rights violations and the absence of fair trials. The Protection Coordinator met with several local activists, lawyers and family of imprisoned defenders and followed the work of Crimean Field Mission on Human Rights, a solidarity initiative of mostly Russian defenders who can travel to the peninsula and help local defenders with trial observation, legal counselling and reporting on human rights violations. □

## Grants



Nina Djikic, Azra Causevic and Belma Steta from Association Okvir.

**Association Okvir** is an organisation committed to the promotion and protection of human rights of LGBTIQ persons in Bosnia Herzegovina. Okvir members have been assaulted and repeatedly received threats.

In March 2016, three community members were physically attacked at Art Cinema Kriterion – the latest in a series of attacks in public spaces against Okvir HRDs.

Front Line Defenders

provided support for Okvir to install a CCTV system and panic buttons at its offices and unarmed security guards for three public events. These measures helped create a deterrent against those who sought to attack the HRDs and ensure the safety of the community.

**38**  
Urgent Appeals on  
**45** HRDs

**90**  
Security Grants

## Training

Front Line Defenders organised a Protection Course for 13 HRDs from Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Russian Federation and Ukraine (Crimea) from May to September. The Course comprised two preliminary written assignments on security assessments for each HRD's unique context, and a first workshop covering risk assessment, threat analysis, strategies for specific risks, digital security, wellbeing and security planning. This was followed by the task of producing and implementing a security plan for and with the HRDs' organisations and a final workshop to review progress and fill gaps.

The participants work on civil and political rights including collection and documentation of incidents of human rights violations, legal rights, the protection of HRDs, the promotion of civil society control over law enforcement mechanisms, environmental issues, gender equality, LGBTI rights, and the rights of people displaced by conflict.

The initial training needs analysis revealed that at least 50% of the HRDs faced the threat of deregistration or closure of their organisations. This topic was therefore chosen as one of the sessions on strategies for specific risk. The session was facilitated by a trainer with regional expertise, and Front Line Defenders Protection Coordinator for Europe and Central Asia.

Various strategies were discussed, including: legal challenges to deregistration (in the national courts, and using the international legal system); changing the way of working to meet new legal frameworks; or, if after assessment that the previous strategies could not be successful, closing the organisation and continuing the work as volunteers.



Missions to Russia in April and August were occasions to meet with organisations facing the consequences of the "Foreign Agents" law and discuss their strategies on how to continue human rights work. By the end of 2016, 149 organisations, including all main Russian human rights organisations were added to the list of foreign agents maintained by the Ministry of Justice; more than 20 organisations closed down as a result. Many others were involved in court cases, appealing the administrative decisions and fighting against fines.

Front Line Defenders continued to follow up on the high-profile case of imprisoned HRD

**Azimjan Askarov** and the June 2010 events in southern Kyrgyzstan. Azimjan, a Kyrgyz human rights defender of Uzbek origin, who was sentenced to life imprisonment after having been tortured, was denied a fair trial, and found guilty of a murder he had not committed. In 2016, a decision of the UN Human Rights Committee recognised the violations of the ICCPR in the case and requested that Azimjan be released and, if necessary, retried. The Protection Coordinator went to observe the hearing on his case in the Supreme Court and before the Chuy Regional court. Unfortunately, the legal efforts failed and life imprisonment was confirmed. □

**Protection Coordinator Masha Chichtchenkova meets with Azimjan Askarov's wife, Khadicha Askarova and Abdumomum Mamaraimov from the Voice of Freedom.**



## 10 RESEARCH MISSIONS

Human rights defenders in the Middle East and North Africa continue to be the target of various forms of oppression and violence from both state and non-state actors in the aftermath of the Arab Spring protests that started in 2011. Perhaps in no other region of the world have HRDs so systematically come under pressure as in the MENA region, from the use of legal codes to target HRDs and civil society organisations in Egypt, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Iran and Algeria, to the outright killing of HRDs in countries where the state is weak or virtually non-existent, as in Syria, Libya, Iraq and Yemen. Persecution of HRDs continues unabated in communities struggling for minority rights and self-determination in Morocco/Western Sahara and Israel/Palestine.

Addressing the ongoing crackdown on HRDs in Egypt has been a major priority for Front Line Defenders. Since March 2016, Egyptian authorities have imposed restrictions and taken punitive measures against HRDs, by using arrests, judicial harassment, travel bans, and imprisonment as tools to stifle dissent. Case No. 173 targets 37 Egyptian organisations for having received foreign funding and has led to charges against HRDs and NGO staff members for “receipt of illegal foreign funding” and “working without legal permission.”

In September 2016 an Egyptian court ordered the freezing of personal funds and family assets of a number of HRDs and their organisations, including **Gamal Eid** and **Hossam Bahgat**, the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS) and its founder **Bahey El Din Hassan**, the Egyptian Center for Right to Education (EIPR) and its Director **Abdel Hafez Tayel**, and the Hisham Mubarak Law Center and its Director **Mostafa Al Hassan**, along with WHRDs **Mozn Hassan**, Director of Nazra for Feminist Studies and **Azza Soliman**, founder of the Centre for Egyptian Women’s Legal Assistance (CEWLA).

Throughout 2016, Front Line Defenders published several urgent appeals and updates on HRDs at risk in Egypt, assisted many HRDs through its protection grants programme, participated in advocacy missions to the Netherlands, Belgium and France and joined international coalitions to push the international community to take a proactive stance on the crisis in Egypt. The MENA Protection Coordinator also undertook two research missions outside Cairo to assess the situation of HRDs in more remote areas.

Palestinian HRD **Imad Abu Shamsiyya** received death threats since March 2016 when he documented crimes committed by Israeli soldiers in Hebron. In August, the HRD received a message in Hebrew on his Facebook account, which included the logo of the Israeli extremist right wing movement Kach, a picture of the human rights defender and the statement, “It is the time to be killed. You are a source of danger for the settlers of Tel-Rumeida”. Furthermore, a video in Hebrew was circulated on the Internet, accusing Imad and his family of being terrorists and agents for “suspicious” organisations like Israeli human rights group B’Tselem, and blamed the

HRD for the detention and trial of Elor Azaria, the Israeli soldier who shot a wounded Palestinian at point blank in March 2016 in Tel Rumeida, which Imad had recorded on video.

Deputy Director, Andrew Anderson, and Head of Protection, Andrea Rocca, visited the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) in May and met Imad and other HRDs in Hebron. They also visited 2016 Front Line Defenders Award finalist **Mohammed Khatib** in Bil’in and saw how unchecked settlement expansion impacted the village, and how settlers and the Israeli Army would harass HRDs in the West Bank.

In October, the MENA Protection Coordinator visited Lebanon to meet with Syrian HRDs who have been forced into exile, but who are still working on human rights issues and supporting activists still in the country. There has been an increased security threat to Syrian HRDs in Lebanon. **Maher Ibrahim**, Director of the Development Interaction Network, is based in Beirut, but had to close his office due to threats - several of his colleagues were recently killed by ISIS, which has become active in targeting HRDs in Lebanon.

In April, the MENA Protection Coordinator visited Kuwait, to assess the situation of HRDs in the one country in the Gulf region where there still exists some ability for HRDs to work without fear of outright repression. Nonetheless, there are forces that are mobilised to challenge and threaten HRDs, particularly on minority issues and women’s rights issues. **Badria Al-Turki** is a member of the Bedoon community in Kuwait who faces several forms of discrimination. The WHRD has been repeatedly summoned for police interrogation because of her affiliation with human rights groups and her advocacy on behalf of the Bedoon community. She has been also subjected to threats and pressure from security agencies to stop her human rights activism. □

**“I think that my previous reaction toward threats was very low because of a lack of personal security plan. I now acquired the capacity to react to threats and be aware about them.”**  
- HRD, Kuwait



Deputy Director, Andrew Anderson, and Head of Protection, Andrea Rocca, visited the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) in May and met Imad and other HRDs in Hebron. They also visited 2016 Front Line Defenders Award finalist Mohammed Khatib in Bil’in.



## Training

With HRDs facing threats from working in countries at war, Front Line Defenders held its first workshop on risk assessment and protection planning focusing on HRDs working in armed conflict. Participants came from both Africa and the Middle East/North Africa regions, with MENA HRDs from Egypt, Iraq, and Sudan.

The workshop included modules on reducing the risks of arrest and abduction, plus strategies for dealing with roadblocks, as elements building towards the final completion of holistic security plans.

Front Line Defenders also supported a trainer to conduct two Risk Assessment & Protection Training workshops for HRDs from Sudan in October; a Training of Trainers in Risk Assessment & Protection for Arabic speaking trainers in May; a Digital Protection Training for HRDs from Saudi Arabia in January; and supported a training in Risk Assessment and Protection for HRDs in Palestine in October.

80  
Urgent Appeals on  
125 HRDs

60  
Security Grants



## Training

In May, a Training of Trainers for Arabic-speaking HRDs on risk assessment and protection planning took place. The participants were HRDs from Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Kuwait, Lebanon, Palestine, Sudan and Tunisia. Following this, participating HRDs organised further training for approximately 50 other HRDs, which was also supported by Front Line Defenders.

## Grants

Egyptian HRDs came under intense pressure as the government used a wide range of tactics to close down civic space and target HRDs. Front Line Defenders responded with 21 security grants over the year, with 30% for temporary relocation, 30% for individual protection measures and 20% for legal support.

In Gaza, Baitona is an independent community development organisation working for the promotion of women and children and youth, and support people with disabilities through training, rehabilitation, education, empowerment and participation in sustainable development opportunities. The organisation faces repeated attacks because of its independence, including theft. A security grant from Front Line Defenders has provided CCTV cameras allowing for greater security.



Abdelbraki Mezin and Belhadi Bouhdid, members of the Tunisian LGBTI organisation Shams, met with Media Coordinator Erin Kilbride on the side of the Choufftohounna Feminist Art Festival in May. Though Shams has been able to register as a legal entity, it has faced certain administrative obstacles imposed by the authorities, and there have been consistent incidents of physical violence or incitement to violence against the LGBTI community in Tunisia. Belhadi was physically assaulted twice in 2016. Front Line Defenders arranged for Belhadi to meet Martin Schulz, then President of the European Parliament, during his visit to Tunisia in February.



Protest march to the Imider Silver Mine by villagers from Imider, Morocco.

An increasing number of countries are employing measures to restrict the use of digital resources that have had a direct and negative impact on the work of HRDs. The rapid expansion of technological capabilities of repressive and not-so repressive governments and their use of surveillance and censorship under the guise of fighting terrorism, combined with the relative lack of knowledge and resources among human rights defenders and their reliance on social media and communications technologies combine to pose a significant risk to HRDs. Front Line Defenders has been expanding its Digital Protection Programme to include training, rapid-response consultation and the development and maintenance of the digital toolkit, Security in-a-Box.

The last three years, Front Line Defenders has witnessed an increase in the number of HRDs facing digital threats including:

- compromised data through confiscation of equipment such as laptops and mobile phones, direct surveillance and data leakages, leading to loss of data, and exposure of networks and sources;
- threats and physical action against HRDs to procure passwords, compromise accounts, infiltrate networks and steal identities;
- online surveillance and account hacking to gather information which can be used in legal cases or defamation campaigns, to disrupt communication or destroy information;
- blocking and destruction of online resources and publications, such as blogs and websites through censorship and filtering.

**West and Central Africa** – Front Line Defenders held four trainings for HRDs in West and Central Africa, one for HRDs from Francophone countries, another for HRDs from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), a third for Burundian HRDs, and a fourth for journalists from The Gambia.

While participants faced different digital challenges in their work, all shared the concern that they deal with sensitive information on a regular basis in an environment where governments across the region have strengthened their surveillance capabilities. Exposing themselves and those they serve to danger was a common risk that the workshop sought to address. For example, a participant from Burkina Faso mentioned that in 2015, there had been a period of unrest where no one was staying in their homes because they knew they were being monitored and their phone calls were being listened to.

Participants in the DRC workshop raised concerns related to experiences that they and their colleagues had in relation to digital vulnerability in their daily work, such as interception of phone calls; interception of SMS messages; search and seizure of their computers and phones by intelligence services; receiving phishing emails which compromise their data; having email accounts compromised mainly due to weak passwords and use of public internet access points; com-

promising the integrity of information on their computers by government security and intelligence agencies; and malware attacks on their computers and phones.

In The Gambia, the government tightly controls information, notably restricting citizens' use of various online platforms, including Facebook and WhatsApp. The training was organised for journalists as media practitioners are one of the most targeted groups in the country, and a number of journalists are in exile due to fear for their lives. Gambian private media companies are heavily censored, surveilled and some have been shut down.

**Mexico** – HRDs in Mexico face a myriad of security risks, and digital protection is often not a primary concern, yet online threats are proliferating, and HRDs are becoming more aware of the need to protect themselves in this space. Twelve HRDs from the Veracruz region participated in a training in October, very few of whom had previous digital protection training and required a more complete view of all the tools needed for reducing the risks involved in their daily work.

**Thailand** has become very dangerous for HRDs, with the military government restricting political and activist space and the use of *lèse majesté* and the Computer-Related Crime Act as instruments of repression.

Front Line Defenders provided a training to members of student organisations, many of whom, despite their age, had previously been arrested due to their activism.

Among key concerns, the training addressed security when using social media and digital communications, and how to best protect HRD networks when someone is arrested. □



Sri Lankan journalist and HRD, Freddy Gamage.

## Grants

Russia - LGBTI HRDs and organisations face a dual threat from the authorities due to recent legislative efforts aimed at criminalising 'gay propaganda' and foreign funding for Russian civil society.

The Russian organisation **T9 NSK** works to improve the quality of life of transgender people through organizing special thematic events, such as movie showings, psychological counseling, social assistance, informational seminars on gender identity and support group meetings. The director of T9 NSK was brought in to have a 'chat' with the FSB intelligence agency, during which there was strong indication that the agency had information that was not publicly available.

Front Line Defenders provided a security grant for equipment and also provided consultation on best practices for digital protection, to enable the organisation to move to more secure communications with members and staff.

Following implementation of the security measures, T9 NSK reported: "A very important effect upon receipt of the grant was to raise a sense of safety and security. Now we feel that we are not alone and there is support."

Sri Lanka - In June, journalist and HRD **Freddy Gamage** was violently attacked, leaving him in hospital. He has played a key role in exposing corruption in connection to Deputy Minister Nimal Lanza and his relatives, who have alleged links to the organised crime in Negombo.

In addition to his physical security, the HRD requested support to improve his digital protection, and Front Line Defenders provided a grant for equipment and also consulted on measures for him to take. He reported, "The new devices and tips helped me to incorporate digital security as a way of life."



Camp for internally displaced persons in Iraq, where the MENA Digital Protection Coordinator provided support to groups registering Yazidis fleeing ISIS-held towns and villages.



(Top) Rose Degboe, Gabriel Bombambo and Godwin Etse at a digital protection training in West Africa in May; (below) HRDs at a digital protection training session.



## Advocacy

**March** - RightsCon in San Francisco, USA, session on means of supporting HRDs in digital emergency situations

**May** - participated in Sakharov Prize conference organised by European Parliament focused on "Defending Human Rights in a Digital Era"

**September** - participated in the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) conference in Brazil

**September** - participated in the Internet Governance conference in Tunisia

**October** - participated in the Deutsche Welle Academie international media development, which supports the development of free and transparent media

**"As social movements we have to be able to understand what this means, the government is using digital surveillance as a weapon against us, we have to do something about it."**

- HRD, Colombia

## Consultation

There is an acute need among human rights defenders for increased digital protection, particularly in the world's most difficult human rights situations, where human rights defenders work under extreme constraints. Ensuring that HRDs communicate safely and that their information remains secure and not used against them, is a prerequisite to bring positive change in their countries. Not allowing HRDs to communicate safely will in effect silence human rights movements and bring any opposition to authoritative regimes and human rights advancements to a halt.

To respond to this need, Front Line Defenders has established a Digital Protection Consultancy (DPC) programme with DPCs based in each region of the world. The DPCs provide one-to-one technical support and capacity building to HRDs and organisations working in situations of acute human rights crises.

The Digital Protection Consultants are field-based IT specialists, who monitor regional developments and threats. The one-to-one process of direct engagement is critical to gaining a clear and immediate sense of the specific threats confronting individual HRDs and developing and implementing tailored solutions. Following and between direct meetings and engagement, ongoing assistance is provided through secure communication between DPCs and HRDs.

**Uganda** - The Africa DPC visited Uganda during the general election process. This was a period of high risk for HRDs; access to social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp were disabled. Outside urban areas, there was almost a complete blackout with regard to social media and, in some cases, the Internet.

The DPC provided support to a LGBTI organisation and found that it had issues with information from compromised emails being used to blackmail some members of the community. As a result, some witnesses to human rights abuses have been intimidated and forced to reveal other information.

The DPC also worked with one of the leading organisations which advocates for the rights of journalists. The organisation holds a large amount of information concerning journalists and sources in Uganda. The DPC supported it in securing this data and ensuring that they it has backups in case of break-ins.

**Azerbaijan** - In Azerbaijan, HRDs claim that the biggest threats for them are interception of mobile communications and physical surveillance. It was clear from the mission that the digital protection training that had been provided to HRDs from other organisations had not changed the behaviour of many HRDs or reduced the risk that they face.

In Azerbaijan, most HRDs are using outdated Android smartphones as their primary devices for work. Their computers are also run with pirated software, cracked anti-viruses, etc. The DPC provided training to HRDs to migrate from using plain GSM calls to secure messaging applications, how to use full disk encryption and strengthen their passwords. The DPC also provided support to NGOs that do election monitoring in Azerbaijan as they were deemed to be at risk of digital attacks.

**Iraq** - The DPC observed that digital protection threats are emanating from a number of sources, including the Iraqi authorities, armed militias and ISIS. Many journalists who publish information about corruption and sectarianism are being targeted and have been subjected to online smear campaigns as well as attempts to infiltrate and seize their accounts on social media.

The DPC assisted mitigation of hacking of the Facebook account of a HRD who is working with refugees and was collecting donations for the refugees and displaced people in Iraq. Hackers had collected information about the HRD's social networks from the account and had published defamatory information online.

# the front line defenders ID card

## a fitting legacy

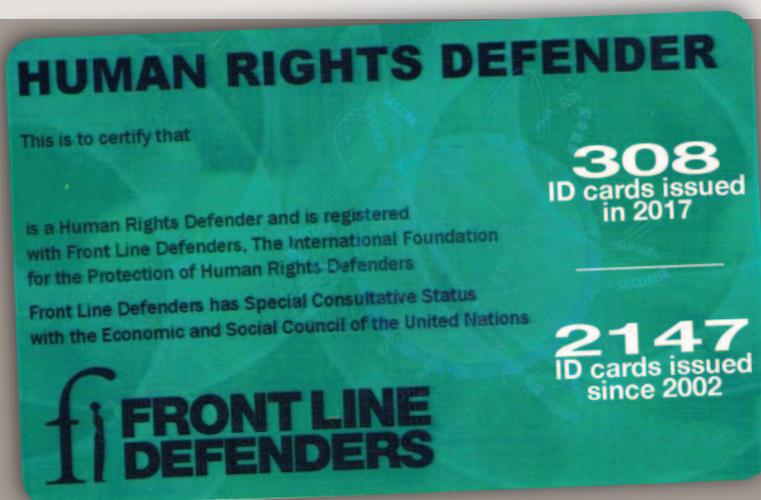


In early August, Brazilian HRD Monica Cunha was called to a favela by a mother whose 24 year-old son had just been killed by police. Monica's own son had been killed by police in Rio de Janeiro some years before and since then had worked to challenge police violence, especially against the city's youth. When she arrived at the scene, there was a crowd gathered, even though it was after midnight. Police were preventing anyone from approaching the body, but were not doing anything about the crowd. Monica showed her Front Line Defenders HRD card, and insisted that the police officer clear the scene and allow the family some dignity. The police immediately responded and arranged for the preservation of the crime scene.

The Human Rights Defender ID Card was the creative idea of Frank Jennings. We had received a couple of requests from human rights defenders in Chechnya to have something on a Front Line Defenders letterhead stating that we recognised their work so that they could show this to their local authorities when they were being harassed.



Frank took this and developed an ID card that was designed to look as official as possible complete with hologram and logo. The cards have since been used most ingeniously by human rights defenders around the world to demonstrate their legitimacy and enhance their security. Sadly, Frank died in 2005, but the ID Card is a fitting legacy of a dedicated and creative human rights campaigner who is also commemorated through an internship. [ ]



The Human Rights Defender ID card from Front Line Defenders

**“THE CARD HAS ALWAYS ENABLED ME BE IDENTIFIED AS A GENUINE HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST. IT IS A GENUINE INDICATION THAT MY WORK IS LEGITIMATE. ONE DAY I WAS ALLOWED TO ATTEND A COURT MARTIAL TRIAL OF CIVILIANS ON THE BASIS OF MY HRD IDENTIFICATION CARD. THOSE WITH NATIONAL IDENTIFICATION CARDS HAD TROUBLE GETTING PERMISSION”**  
**GERALD KANKYA, UGANDA**



“I document war crimes and crimes against the humanity in the East of the Ukraine, as part of Ukranian organisation Truth Hounds. Key members of our team have HRD cards and we found them very useful for crossing checkpoints. It gives us more legitimacy in the eyes of soldiers and we feel better protected. We also used cards during our observation of protest demonstrations in Armenia, just hung it on our neck and were considered as “observers” by the police and it opened additional doors for us. Usually, small organisations as ours don’t have our own cards, in our post-soviet countries we need some ID which prove our HRD’s status to police, combatants and authorities”.

- Svitlana Valko, Truth Hounds, Ukraine

**“HOLDING THE CARD ACCREDITS MY WORK. WHENEVER I AM DENIED ACCESSING A PLACE WITH HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS, IT HELPS ME TO GET IN AND DO MY WORK. IT IS VERY POWERFUL TOOL FOR ME AS A HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER”**  
**NAJIB SANJAR, AFGHANISTAN**

**“THE HRD CARD HAS BEEN INVALUABLE IN MANY WAYS:**

- 1) ENABLING ACCESS TO RESTRICTED AREAS AND INFORMATION THAT ARE GUARDED BY OVER ZEALOUS GATEKEEPERS;
- 2) PREVENTING VIOLENT ATTACKS BY POLICE & OTHER STATE EMPOWERED FORCES THAT ARE USED TO SUPPRESS DISSENT AND OPPRESS THE CITIZENRY; AND
- 3) EXPEDITING RECEPTIVITY BY CSOS AND NGOS IN OTHER COUNTRIES WHO WERE NOT AWARE OF MY EARLIER EFFORTS IN THE DEFENCE OF HUMAN RIGHTS.”

**RAFIQ HAJAT, MALAWI**



“After I get the HRD card from Front Line Defenders I can work freely without any discrimination by the military or Police Authorities. With this card I now have freedom to be able to work and investigate cases of human rights violations in Papua. On behalf of families and communities I convey thanks for your help to send the Front Line Defenders HRD card.”

- Theo Hesegem, West Papua, Indonesia

## The recipient of the 2016 Front Line Defenders Award for Human Rights Defenders at Risk is Ana Mirian Romero from Honduras

Ana Mirian Romero is a Lenca woman and a member of both Movimiento Indígena Lenca de La Paz Honduras, MILPAH, (Lenca Indigenous Movement of La Paz) and Consejo Indígena San Isidro Labrador (San Isidro Labrador Indigenous Council). She has fought for legal recognition of her community's indigenous land, and against the installation of the Los Encinos hydro-electric dam which would destroy their livelihoods.

As a result, she, her family and other members of MILPAH are now targets of repeated attacks by police, military and armed civilians connected to the hydroelectric company. Her children were forced to leave school due to repeated harassment, and in early 2016 her home was burned to the ground.

At the ceremony in Dublin City Hall on Friday morning, 10 June 2016, former President of Ireland, former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and

President of the Mary Robinson Foundation Climate Justice, Mrs. Mary Robinson, presented the award to Ana Mirian.

Presenting the award, Ms. Robinson said, "Despite the life-threatening risks to human rights defenders in Honduras, Ana has persevered. The Front Line Defenders Award is recognition of the work that Ana and so many women like her undertake for the greater common good and I am honoured to confer the award on her here today."

Ana Mirian accepted the award on behalf of her community and her social movement, MILPAH, and also remembered the murdered Honduran HRD and fellow Lenca, Berta Cáceres, who was killed just three months prior to the award ceremony.

Receiving the award, Ana Mirian noted, "This recognition is not for me, it's for all indigenous people in Honduras fighting against dams that destroy our land. This award will not make us complacent. We will

continue our struggle for our rivers. We do not fear."

The impact of the award was immediately felt by Ana Mirian, her family and her community back home, as a local mayor, who had long ignored requests for protection and investigation into attacks on the community, publicly expressed his congratulations to Ana Mirian and pledged to look into the complaints of the community.

Following the ceremony, Ana Mirian and Mary Lawlor were invited by the President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins, to the President's official residence, Áras an Uachtaráin. Both this meeting and consultations with the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade offered Ana Mirian the opportunity to advocate for indigenous and environmental rights in Honduras.

Following the events in Ireland, Ana Mirian travelled to London, where Front Line Defenders arranged a public speaking engagement and meetings with the government Foreign and Commonwealth Office. □

**"THIS RECOGNITION IS NOT FOR ME, IT'S FOR ALL INDIGENOUS PEOPLE IN HONDURAS FIGHTING AGAINST DAMS THAT DESTROY OUR LAND." ANA MIRIAN ROMERO**



Ana Mirian Romero from Honduras is presented with the Front Line Defenders Award for Human Rights Defenders at Risk by former President of Ireland, former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and President of the Mary Robinson Foundation Climate Justice, Mrs. Mary Robinson.



Ana Mirian Romero with Mary Lawlor and President Michael D. Higgins.



FINALIST: Phyo Phyo Aung of Burma/Myanmar.



FINALIST: Mohammed Khatib of Palestine.



FINALIST: Khalid Bagirov of Azerbaijan.



FINALIST: Maanda Ngoitiko of Tanzania.



FINALIST: Ingrid Vergara Chavéz of Colombia.

Throughout the year, Front Line Defenders staff participated in and organised events with HRDs to raise public awareness and conduct advocacy in support of HRDs and their protection



**Mexico, November 2016**

Front Line Defenders Protection Coordinator for the Americas, Ivi Oliveira (above), joined family members of arbitrarily detained Mexican HRDs at a press conference in advance of a week of meetings and advocacy in Mexico City. Earlier in the year, the families of 5 HRDs whose cases were taken up by the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention were in Brussels for advocacy meetings co-hosted by the Front Line Defenders EU Office.



**Thailand, September 2016**

In early 2016, three Thai human rights defenders released a groundbreaking report on torture allegedly perpetrated by Thailand's security forces in the country's troubled "Deep South" region. Following the release of their report, human rights defenders **Pornpen Khongkachonkiet**, **Anchana Heemmina** and **Somchai Homlaor** were harassed, accused, and charged for "crimes" related to criminal defamation and computer violations. Among the claims made against them, security forces alleged that the HRDs issued a false report on torture without the consent or support of the local community and surviving victims.

In July 2016, just days before their court hearing, Front Line Defenders worked with a Thai filmmaker and lawyer to create a short documentary about the HRDs' torture investigation, and filmed them receiving a powerful welcome by hundreds of supportive community members on the day of their hearing. The film, aimed at countering the defamation campaigns issued by the security forces and authorities, was screened at a press conference organised by the HRDs at Thailand's Foreign Correspondents Club in Bangkok to a crowd of more than 100 officials and journalists.



**International Financial Institutions (IFIs)**

The killing of Berta Cáceres in Honduras in March 2016 raised a number of questions about the role of international investment and finance agencies in megaprojects around the world, including their possible culpability in attacks against HRDs who are organising to confront these projects out of concerns for the environment, indigenous and land rights, the health of communities and corruption.

Together with other leading human rights, development and environmental organisations, Front Line Defenders participated in key meetings and workshops, and consulted on the development of draft guidelines for the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

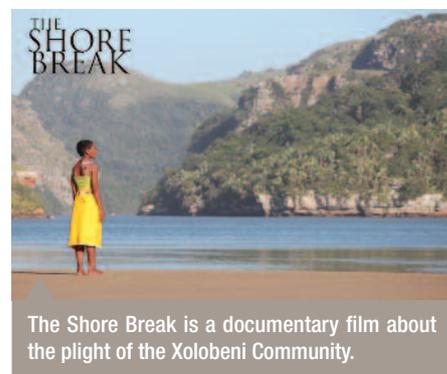
Head of Communications & Visibility, Adam Shapiro (above), consulted on HRD security in June at the Inter-American Development Bank, while Deputy Director Andrew Anderson attended a meeting with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development in August.

**Solidarity screening**

**Sikhosphi Rhadebe** was the chairperson of Amadiba Crisis Committee (ACC), an advocacy group that campaigns for the rights of the residents of the Xolobeni Community in Eastern Cape, South Africa. He was at the

forefront of a campaign opposing open-cast titanium mining in the Xolobeni area by Mineral Resource Commodities Ltd (MRC), an Australian-owned company. On 22 March 2016, he was shot dead outside his house by unidentified assailants purporting to be police officers.

In late July 2016, MRC announced plans to divest from the proposed mine. News of the divestment reached London the night before Front Line Defenders and a coalition of rights groups screened *The Shore Break*, a documentary about the struggle for land rights near the mine. HRD **Nonhle Mbutumba** from the community spoke at the event via Skype. The event was organised by the London Mining Network, The Gaia Foundation, Marikana Miners Solidarity Campaign, War on Want, Movimiento Jaguar Despierto, Wretched of the Earth and Front Line Defenders.



The Shore Break is a documentary film about the plight of the Xolobeni Community.

**One World Film Festival, Brussels**

In April, Front Line Defenders hosted a film screening of the documentary film *Land Grabbing* as part of the One World Film Festival - Brussels. The film presents extensive testimony from many corners of the world about palm oil production, and the impact on communities. Brazilian HRD **Tonico Benites** spoke about palm oil in his country and in particular the impact on indigenous communities during a post-screening discussion.



Tonico Benites taking questions following the film screening, with Front Line Defenders Americas Fellow, Renata Oliveira, on hand for translation.



### Annual lecture

The Fourth Annual Front Line Defenders Lecture in association with UCD and TCD took place on 28 April at the Royal Irish Academy. Professor Jan Sokol (above), a signatory of Charter 77, a petition drawn up and signed by brave Czechoslovakian writers and intellectuals in 1977 which demanded that the Communist government of Czechoslovakia recognise basic human rights, spoke on the topic of “Dictatorship to Democracy – The Role of Human Rights Defenders.”



### Solidarity with HRDs

Front Line Defenders organised solidarity events in Dublin for imprisoned Azeri HRD Khadija Ismayilova in May, as part of a 40-city coordinated day of action, and co-organised a memorial in March to remember murdered Honduran HRD, Berta Cáceres, in partnership with the Irish development agency Trócaire, the Irish section of Peace Brigades International and the Dublin-based organisation LASC (Latin America Solidarity Centre).



The Rest and Respite Programme was established in 2005 to provide a safe space for HRDs to take time out from their work and the stressful environments in which they operate. Since then Front Line Defenders has supported 196 human rights defenders on the programme. Sixty of those have been hosted in Ireland.



Palestinian HRD Samir Zaqout from Gaza (standing), enjoying the Dublin Mountains with his hill-walking group.

#### THIS YEAR, 26 HRDS BENEFITED FROM REST AND RESPITE OPPORTUNITIES

Palestinian human rights defender **Samir Zaqout** came to Dublin for three months in the autumn. Samir is Head of Monitoring and Awareness at Al-Mezan Center for Human Rights in Gaza. He had been prevented from travelling to Ireland in 2015 due to the denial of his exit permit from Gaza. Samir's work involves monitoring and documentation of human rights violations; coordination of fieldwork and media follow-up; informing UN Special Procedures and the Human Rights Council about human rights developments in Gaza; and advocacy towards local decision-makers, police and other institutions in Gaza. During his stay, Samir studied English, joined a local hill-walking group and connected with academic institutions and members of the public to discuss the challenges faced by Palestinians trapped in Gaza.

*"This is a great chance for me. It's very helpful for human rights defenders especially for defenders working in difficult situations like in Palestine. Especially in Gaza because we are suffering in so many ways in our day to day life. Now when I go back I'll be able to talk to the media in English because here I've gotten used to speaking in English all the time, not just in class but in social contexts, problem-solving, etc. So this will really help me to do my work."*

**Saadet Yildiz** is a journalist from Turkey who was based in the Kurdish region when a curfew was imposed during the brutal crackdown on civilians in 2015-2016. When approximately 300 people were killed in Cizre and homes and businesses destroyed, she reported on the events happening in the region.

*"I was psychologically distressed from living and working in the conflict zone and needed some time away. This support has had a positive impact on my wellbeing. Before coming to Malta I could not stay in crowded*

*environments, I could not tell people where I lived because I would not trust anybody. I would have nightmares and wake up thinking I heard gunshots. But in Malta I slowly began to recover, to gain trust in people and to be able to be in crowds and go out, more relaxed."*

**Tilder Kumichi Ndichia** is Program Coordinator of GeED, an organisation dedicated to improving the lives of women and youths through advocacy, education, training and empowerment in Cameroon. Tilder had been receiving threats due to her monitoring and reporting on cases of violence against women and needed some time away. Having been supported to spend ten days with her daughters by the sea in 2015, she explained that the impact of this programme was felt long after.

*"The support enabled my children and I to have some time together in a relaxed environment. In the short term, it enabled me to recuperate and develop my energy to move on. It also enabled me to release most of the*

*stress I had gathered through my work over the years. It gave me the opportunity to feel safe in a period when I was receiving threats and attacks from different sources.*

*The long term impact was the unique opportunity to relax and to think through better strategies for my work. These strategies are helping me to do my work better today. Above all it gave me new hope that defenders are not alone in their work. I felt protected and cared for."*



Saadet Yildiz.



Tilder Kumichi Ndichia.



Human rights defender Mohamed Zarea from Egypt (centre), indigenous rights defender Tonico Benites from Brazil (right), together with Renata Oliveira of Front Line Defenders, enjoying a day out in the west of Ireland in the spring.

# aseem trivedi, india

In November and December, Front Line Defenders hosted Indian political cartoonist and anti-corruption activist, Aseem Trivedi for an Ireland and European speaking tour. In addition to events in Dublin, Limerick and Galway, Aseem spoke to audiences in Rome, Paris, Berlin, Belfast, Glasgow, London and Brussels.

Aseem also did a series of media interviews with *Vice*, *Deutsche Welle*, *The Irish Times*, Reuters and *The Guardian*, and also held advocacy meetings with MEPs in Brussels and the Foreign Commonwealth Office in London.

On 13 November, Front Line Defenders and Irish PEN marked the Day of the Imprisoned Writer at the Dublin Book Festival.

Aseem joined Irish author Lia Mills and poet Gerard Smyth in reading the words of imprisoned HRDs from around the world who have been imprisoned for speaking out. In this annual event, Front Line Defenders engages the Irish public to consider the risk to freedom of expression for HRDs challenging power and corruption. **FI**



Lia Mills, Aseem Trivedi and Gerard Smyth on stage at the Dublin Book Festival.



Front Line Defenders Head of Protection Andrea Rocca (2nd from left), interim Campaigns Coordinator Lorena Cotza (right, front row) and Aseem Trivedi (right, standing) together with HRDs and members of Italian civil society prior to speaking at a conference on HRD protection at the Italian Parliament.



Aseem on Deutsche Welle TV news, English edition, in Berlin, Germany, during speaking events presented by Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF) and the European Centre for Civil and Human Rights (ECCHR).

Aseem Trivedi, Dr Fergal Quinn and Muireann Prendergast at an event hosted by the Department of Journalism and the School of Modern Languages and Applied Linguistics at the University of Limerick in November.



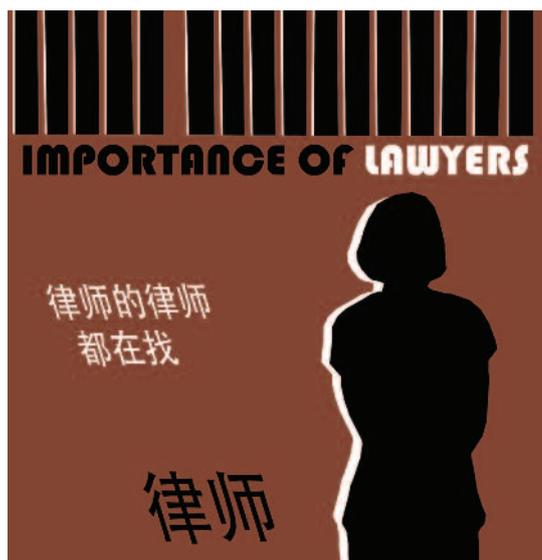
Throughout 2016, Front Line Defenders worked with HRDs around the world to campaign and provide visibility to their struggles and their sacrifices, as a means of supporting respect for and legitimacy of their work. As HRDs adjust to having reduced civil society space in which to operate and unprecedented levels of violence against them from both state and non-state actors, the work of the visibility and communications team at Front Line Defenders is an increasingly potent tool of support.

### Universal Children's Day: November 20

To mark Universal Children's Day on November 20, Front Line Defenders led a campaign for imprisoned Egyptian child rights defender **Aya Hegazi**.

In 2013, Aya founded the Belady Foundation for Street Children in response to the massive numbers of children living, working, and sleeping on Cairo's streets. Less than a year after founding Belady, Egyptian security forces arrested Aya, her husband and four other Belady volunteers. They were charged with sexually abusing the children and paying them to participate in anti-government demonstrations — allegations that human rights organisations have proved false.

Aya was brought to court and kept behind bars with her husband and other detainees for a hearing on 19 November, one day before Universal Children's Day. Front Line Defenders marked the occasion with minute by minute social media posts about her peaceful activism and trial in court, garnering support from international children's rights groups and the European Commission coordinator on the rights of the child, Margaret Tuite.



### 1 Year Anniversary of Mass Arrests of Lawyers in China: 9 July

9 July 2016 marked one year since the most devastating crackdown on HRDs in China for decades began. On that day in 2015, and in the weeks that followed, around 300 HRDs, their families and colleagues were detained, interrogated or harassed. The legal community was especially targeted and despite President Xi Jinping's repeated emphasis on the rule of law, scores of human rights lawyers were detained or threatened or subjected to travel bans simply because they defended their clients.

To give visibility to these HRDs and contextualize the crackdown, Front Line Defenders worked with artist Johanna Zhang to develop alternative 'propaganda-style' posters to highlight the contradiction between the public statements of President Xi in support of the rule of law and the reality of the mass arrests of human rights lawyers.

**"I want the authorities to find him, to tell me whether they have seen him, this is what I want. I only want to know where he is, what happened to him, whether he is in jail, this is what my children are saying. I ask them: how do you know? We don't know where he is. But they tell me that if he was dead, then we would have his body."**

**- Sebastiana Pérez Hernández, wife of disappeared HRD**

### International Day of the Disappeared: 30 August

To mark the International Day of the Disappeared (30 August), Front Line Defenders partnered with IM-Defensoras (Mesoamerican Women Human Rights Defenders Initiative) and produced a video featuring four women HRDs who seek justice for the disappeared and support their families. In the video, Tania Ramírez and Alma Gómez from Mexico, Makrina Gudiel from Guatemala, and Vilma Vázquez from El Salvador share their personal stories and speak about the challenges they face, the lessons they have learned and their hopes for the future.

On the same day, Front Line Defenders also published a letter written by Sebastiana Pérez Hernández, Fidencio Gómez Sántiz's wife. Fidencio is a Mexican human rights defender and member of the grassroots organisation Frente Nacional de Lucha por el Socialismo (FNLS), who was disappeared on 5 March 2016. According to local human rights organisations, Mexican law enforcement agents might have been involved in his disappearance, as they have attacked and threatened Fidencio and other FNLS members in the past. In her powerful letter, Sebastiana wrote how difficult her life had become since her husband was disappeared and how painful it had become for her children, and she renewed her call to the Mexican authorities: she wants her husband back, and she wants him alive.

In July 2016, Front Line Defenders launched the campaign “#AtRiskInRio / #EmRiscoOnRio”, in collaboration with five HRDs in Rio de Janeiro. The objective was to highlight the threats that HRDs were facing ahead of the Olympic Games and their work in defence of the rights of their communities.

# Americas QUARTERLY

■ AQ Feature

## What Went Wrong in Rio's Favelas?

BY JULIANA BARBASSA

**Rio's slums have returned to neglect, but there is still an opportunity for revival.**



Sporting mega-events often take place at the expense of the local population, which faces forced evictions, police violence, and restrictions on freedom of expression and freedom of assembly. HRDs and community journalists who speak out against police violence and other human rights violations are particularly at risk. As the 2016 Olympic Games approached, HRDs in Rio reported that attacks, threats, intimidation and stigmatisation against them were increasing.

The “At Risk in Rio” campaign was officially launched on 28 July 2016, with a press conference in Rio de Janeiro, where the HRDs had the opportunity to share their stories and speak about their work. The campaign content was shared and promoted until the closing ceremony of the Olympic Games, on 21 August.

The campaign had a dedicated website, which featured five video interviews with the following HRDs:

- Heloisa Helena Costa Berto (minority and religious rights): HRD and Candomblé priestess. Her home and her spiritual temple, in the Vila Autódromo community, were destroyed to make way for the Olympic park. Heloisa works to combat discrimination against Afro-Brazilians and promote religious freedom.
- Luiz Claudio Silva (forced evictions): together with his wife Maria da Penha, he was one of few people to remain in the Vila Autódromo community after police violently evicted more than 650 families. Luiz and his wife have been protesting against forced evictions and have led the struggle for housing rights in their community.
- Monica Cunha (children's rights): in 2003, she founded

Movimento Moleque, an organisation for mothers whose children were threatened, attacked or killed by the police. Her own son was killed by police officers in 2006. Monica fights abuses committed by security guards and police and discrimination against Afro-Brazilian youth.

- Raul Santiago (police violence): in 2014 he founded Coletivo Papo Reto, a group of citizen journalists documenting police violence and other abuses in the Complexo do Alemão favela. They collect evidence with the aim of holding authorities accountable for attacks and killings.
- Victor Ribeiro (freedom of expression): a video activist who organised Mutirão de Mídia Livre, a collaborative media project that gathered foreign and Brazilian independent journalists to document the social impact of the Olympic Games in Rio.



Heloisa Helena Costa Berto and Monica Cunha.

The Front Line Defenders EU Office in Brussels coordinates Front Line Defenders advocacy activities with the European Union and individual EU Member States, as well as Norway and Switzerland. The office advocates on behalf of human rights defenders at risk before EU Institutions and Ministries of Foreign Affairs, and to their representations in third countries, pushing them to take quick action in line with the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders, e.g. raising cases with the authorities, contacting human rights defenders and their families, observing trials, and/or visiting detained human rights defenders.

## 2016 Advocacy Highlights

By prioritizing the issue of killings of HRDs, the EU Office helped generate EU statements of condemnation in approximately 25 cases in 2016; there were 4 in 2015 - a fivefold increase.

The EU Office successfully worked to assure that the EU reinforce its statements by naming HRDs as "human rights defenders" rather than activists, protesters, etc., and by calling for charges to be dropped in blatant cases of false or fabricated charges.

A year-long effort to ensure the EU Parliament's resolution on the Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World included specific language on HRDs at risk resulted in the issue being directly addressed as a central part of EU policy:

"[The Parliament] is deeply concerned that many human rights defenders are under attack nowadays; calls on the EU, and the VP/HR in particular, to adopt a policy to denounce, systematically and unequivocally, the killing of HRDs and any attempt to subject them to any form of violence, persecution, threat, harassment, disappearance, imprisonment or arbitrary arrest, to condemn those who commit or tolerate such atrocities, and to step up public diplomacy in open and clear support of HRDs, also when it comes to their testimony in multilateral fora; calls on the EU to issue guidance on this policy, as this adds consistency to the EU's current priorities as set out in the various existing EU Guidelines; encourages the EU Delegations and the Member States' diplomatic representations to continue actively to support HRDs, notably by systematically monitoring trials, visiting HRDs in jail and issuing statements on individual cases, where appropriate; calls for the establishment of a system to monitor civil society

space effectively and with clear benchmarks and indicators; reiterates the importance of the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) in providing urgent direct financial and material support for HRDs at risk and the emergency fund that allows the EU Delegations to give direct ad-hoc grants to defenders whose lives are under imminent threat".



**Front Line Defenders is the lead partner in the consortium of 12 international and regional NGOs implementing the EU Human Rights Defenders Mechanism:**  
[www.ProtectDefenders.eu](http://www.ProtectDefenders.eu)

The results of the first year of operation were very positive with around €825,000 distributed in emergency grants to HRDs in 64 countries through the security grants programme of Front Line Defenders and other partners. In addition more than €300,000 was allocated through 32 grants to local NGOs and groups promoting human rights throughout the world and 149 temporary relocations were supported with around €700,000. ProtectDefenders.eu also held year end meetings of beneficiaries and stakeholders in Brussels as well as a meeting of the EU Temporary Relocation Platform.

The mechanism is an important contribution to the resources available to support the protection of human rights defenders at risk, while the strengthened coordination between some of the international and regional organi-

sations working in the field brings added value. Unfortunately the resources available for support to HRDs is significantly less than the increasing demands in a global context where the backlash against HRDs continues to intensify. Front Line Defenders also continues to press the EU and member states to more effectively and consistently take political and practical action to support HRDs.



## Stand 4 HRDs

The worldwide crackdown against HRDs highlighted the need for a more consistent and credible political response from the EU, which has made the protection of human rights defenders at risk one of its key priorities. The Human Rights Defenders Network (HRDN), a network of Brussels-based human rights groups, through its year-long Stand4HRDs campaign, pushed the EU to renew and reinvigorate this commitment with: higher profile political leadership; a consistent strategy that prioritizes the protection of HRDs across a number of policy areas; and sustained practical support to those under attack on the front line.

Led by the Front Line Defenders EU Office, the campaign called on the European External Action Service to increase its public diplomacy on HRDs, to find concrete strategies on key cases of jailed or harassed HRDs, and to address the shrinking space for civil society worldwide. It also worked with the European Parliament to push for a number of issues contained in its annual human rights reports such as establishing a group of MEPs working on jailed defenders and insisting on an annual EU Foreign Affairs Council debate on HRDs.



Emma Achilli, Head of the EU Office with Esmeralda Saldaña from Pasta de Conchos Family Organisation (PDCFO) during a European advocacy tour, which took her to EU capitals to highlight human rights violations of workers and inhabitants of the mining area of Coahuila, Mexico.



Members of HRDN holding photos of HRDs featured in the Stand 4 Human rights Defenders campaign.

## rapid response advocacy

**COLOMBIA** – On 6 September 2016, two armed men on a motorcycle attacked human rights defender **Rocío Campos** (MOVICE) in Barrancabermeja, in an apparent assassination attempt. After failing to knock her down, one of the attackers drew a gun and pointed it at Rocío, but fortunately she was able to reach the nearest police station 100 metres away unharmed.

The EU Office contacted the EU Delegation in Bogotá which then made a field visit to Barrancabermeja on 22 September to meet with **Iván Madero Vergel** from CREDHOS and Rocío Campos from MOVICE.

The EU official met with the Prosecutor and the head of the police in Barrancabermeja, a specific request by the HRDs and conveyed by Front Line Defenders. Iván reported that since this meeting, the government protection mechanism (UNP) has been in touch regularly and is adjusting all the protection measures for each of the members of the CREDHOS board, something which he had asked for as well.

**SUDAN** – **Wefag Gorashi** was detained incommunicado together with several other student rights defenders in April 2016. The EU Office raised this case with the EU Delegation to Sudan, which established and maintained contact with the HRD's lawyers as well as local NGOs working on the case.

A representative of the EU Delegation met with university officials and political groups close to the students. Support under the EIDHR emergency grant scheme was mobilised as well. Wefag and others were released in June 2016.

**WESTERN SAHARA / MOROCCO** – In January, charges were filed against **Ali Anouzla** for commenting on the dispute in Western Sahara. The EU Office raised this case with EU institutions and several Member States (Italy, France, Netherlands and Germany). The Dutch Embassy as well as the EU Delegation replied in February stating that they were in contact with the authorities and would monitor the case. In June, the charges against Ali were dropped.

**MONGOLIA** – **Beejin Khastamur** is the founder of Delhiin Mongol Nagoon Negdel (DMNN), a NGO advocating for the protection of the environment and the rights of nomadic peoples of Mongolia. The organisation has exposed many violations of Mongolia's environmental laws by foreign and domestic mining companies, in which certain local politicians have a stake.

He was detained and charged in March, and the EU Office raised the case with officials. A trial was scheduled in June, at which point the EU Office contacted the local French Embassy with the request for trial monitoring. As a result, the French Embassy monitored all trial sessions until August, when all charges against Beejin were dropped and he was released.



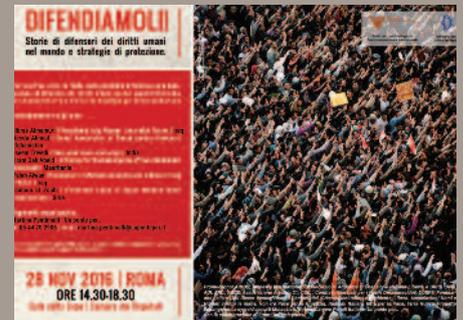
**KYRGYZSTAN** – Long-term prisoner and HRD, **Azimjan Askarov**, was given a new trial in October, following the finding of the UN Human Rights Committee in April that he had been arbitrarily detained, held in inhumane conditions, tortured and mistreated, and prevented from adequately preparing his trial defence. Following the Committee's ruling and in advance of a regional meeting between the EU and Central Asia nations, the EU Office pressed EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini to directly request Azimjan's release from prison from the Kyrgyz foreign minister. Following the summit, the EU Office was informed that Ms. Mogherini raised the case and urged compliance with the UN Human Rights Committee's recommendation of release.

**ITALY** – Front Line Defenders has supported a coalition of over 20 Italian NGOs which have launched a campaign (Difendiamoli!) to encourage the Italian government to include the protection of HRDs in its foreign policy. In October, Andrea Rocca, Head of Protection, spoke before the Human Rights Commission of the Italian Senate and shared the experiences of other EU Member States and best practices related to protection of HRDs in third countries.

In November, Indian cartoonist and HRD **Aseem Trivedi** and Andrea Rocca were among the speakers at a conference on the protection of HRDs hosted by the Presidency of the Chamber of Deputies (Lower Chamber). These events resulted in the two Chambers preparing resolutions requesting the government to support HRDs in third countries and to allow the temporary stay in

Italy of HRDs at risk, on the model of the Shelter Cities Initiative. Front Line Defenders also contributed to media work around the campaign, which has succeeded in generating political momentum on the issue.

**BRAZIL** – In September, the EU Office partnered with FIAN International to host leaders of the Guarani-Kaiowà people at meetings with the EEAS and MEPs to advocate for an urgent parliamentary resolution on the continuous harassment faced by indigenous communities in Brazil, including killings of HRDs. A resolution was subsequently adopted on 24 November, strongly condemning violence perpetrated against the indigenous communities of Brazil and calling on the Brazilian authorities to "take immediate action to protect indigenous people's security and to ensure that independent investigations are carried out into the murder and assault of indigenous people in their attempts to defend their human and territorial rights, so that the perpetrators can be brought to justice".



Andrea Rocca, Head of Protection, Front Line Defenders.



Eliseu Lopes, a leader of the Guarani-Kaiowà people, at meetings with EU MEPs and their advisors with Emma Achilli, Head of the Front Line Defenders EU Office.

From 2013 to 2016, at least 14 HRDs were killed in Bangladesh. In response to reports that Dhaka police continue to refuse to investigate death threats against activists, Front Line Defenders conducted a research mission to examine the government's complicity in the murder of HRDs in Bangladesh.

In a report released in November 2016, Front Line Defenders documented the effect of the killings on human rights defence in Bangladesh and the chilling effect they had on HRDs working in more than 10 rights areas.

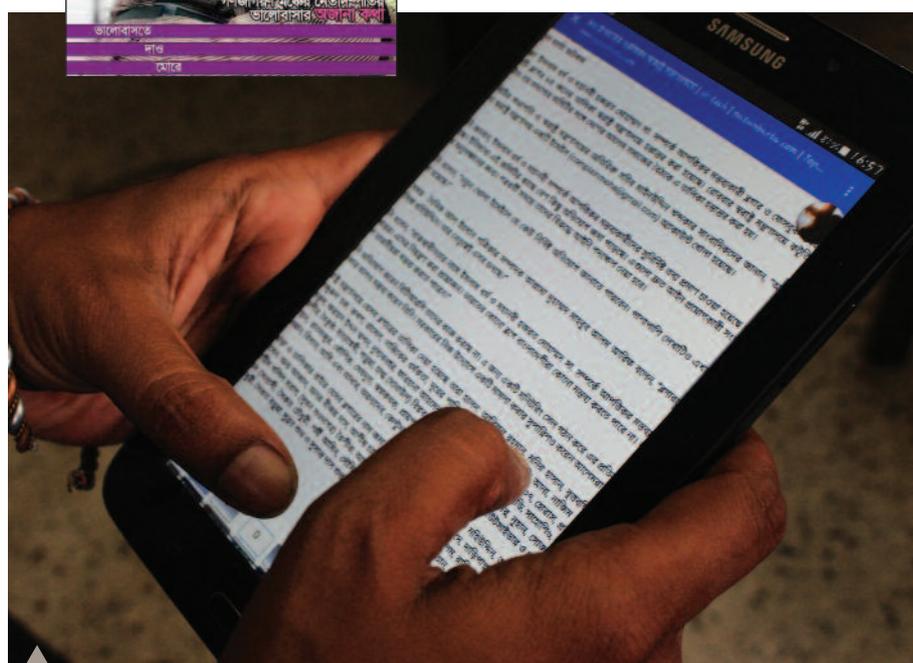
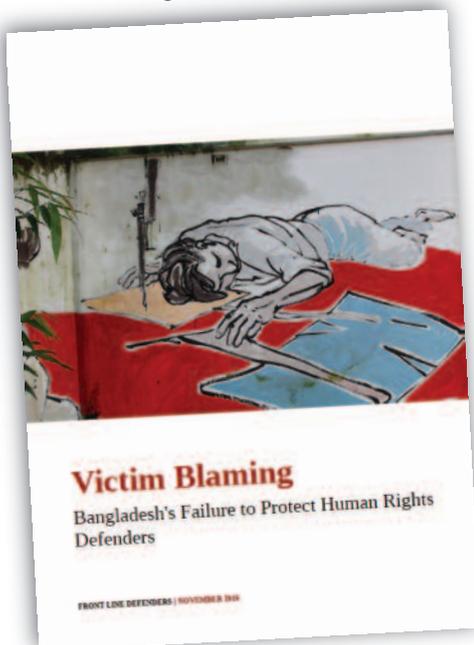
Front Line Defenders examined the government's failure to adequately respond to HRD requests for protection in the months before they were killed, as well as subsequent statements made by the government in which officials criticised the work and writings of murdered HRDs, rather than condemning the killings.

The report documented the effects of the attacks, defamation campaigns, and lack of protection, finding increased numbers of HRDs fleeing into exile, widespread self-censorship and less representation for marginalised communities due to reduced activism. The report found that dozens of HRDs had severed ties with other activists following the killings, deleting their social media profiles, changing phone numbers, and going into hiding in attempts to survive.

Front Line Defenders produced an animated video depicting the breakdown in activist networks, and published exclusive interviews with HRDs still working in Dhaka. HRDs working on the rights of women, labourers, LGBTI people, indigenous peoples, and migrant workers all reported reducing or ceasing their work entirely in response to the ongoing threats and lack of government action.

In collaboration with HRDs, Front Line Defenders launched a multi-part advocacy strategy involving national, regional, and international media work, as well as advocacy meetings at the UK and EU level, including:

- **testimony videos;**
- a **regional launch of the report findings** at the foremost gathering for HRDs in Asia, the Forum-ASIA conference, at which Front Line Defenders Protection Coordinator for Asia presented the report and one of the testimony videos;
- **meetings with the UK Foreign Office's Bangladesh desk** regarding police protection for HRDs and the need for gender-sensitivity training for police;
- **presentation of the report at the preparatory meeting of the EU-Bangladesh Human Rights Dialogue**, providing timely, critical feedback from HRDs to EU representatives in Dhaka. □



The report found that dozens of HRDs had severed ties with other activists following the killings, deleting social media profiles, changing phone numbers, and going into hiding in attempts to survive.

## Human Rights Defenders

are being murdered in Bangladesh

Front Line Defenders

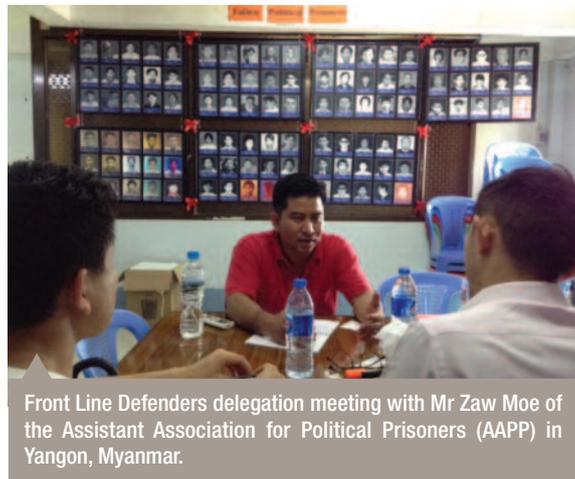
For 4 years, #Bangladesh has ignored death threats against HRDs. What is the cost of failing to protect activists? [frontlinedefenders.atavist.com/bangladesh-rep...](http://frontlinedefenders.atavist.com/bangladesh-rep...)

"The logic of the killings is hurting religious sentiment. But that can mean many things. The way I dress, this bindi, women seen in public, can all hurt religious sentiment. Women's liberation is at stake if killings and impunity are justified by religion." -WHRD Sultana Kamal

**As a result of killings, impunity, and the authorities' refusal to protect HRDs who report threats, more than 45 of the most prominent Bangladeshi human rights defenders and writers are now dead, in exile, or have ceased writing completely.**

# evaluations: myanmar and morocco

In 2016, for the second year, Front Line Defenders conducted evaluation missions to two countries, to assess the impact of Front Line Defenders support for HRDs. Meetings with HRDs who had received grants, training, visibility work or other forms of support were held in Myanmar and Morocco.



Front Line Defenders delegation meeting with Mr Zaw Moe of the Assistant Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) in Yangon, Myanmar.

NLD to government and a number of sweeping reforms, many HRDs reported that they are facing many of the same risks and threats.

In particular those working on land, resource and environmental rights issues such as land grabs and forced evictions as well as violations and abuses due to active conflict between the Burmese Army and ethnic armed groups, and those defending religious freedom and protection of religious minorities, are feeling a continued need for security and protection training, international lobbying and other support.

In December, Front Line Defenders conducted an evaluation of its support to HRDs in **Morocco** and **Western Sahara**, where there continue to be reports of

imprisonment, defamation and stigmatisation of those defending human rights.

HRDs confirmed the critical importance of an international organisation issuing urgent appeals on their cases and adding legitimacy to their activities in the face of accusations of acting against the State. Human rights organisations face multiple restrictions on their activities and some are refused legal registration without any legal rationale.

HRDs in both countries praised the comprehensive and integrated advocacy strategies which include UN mechanisms as well as engagement with the EU, a greater engagement with the media was recommended in order to further publicise cases of violations against HRDs and hold the governments accountable for their protection.

Additionally, a distinct protection gap was felt by HRDs that operate and live in remote / rural or conflict areas. □

In October, Front Line Defenders conducted an evaluation of its support to HRDs at risk in **Myanmar**, where, despite the election of the

Defenders conducted an evaluation of its support to HRDs in **Morocco** and **Western Sahara**, where there continue to be reports of

**...those working on land, resource and environmental rights issues such as land grabs and forced evictions as well as violations and abuses due to active conflict between the Burmese Army and ethnic armed groups, and those defending religious freedom and protection of religious minorities, are feeling a continued need for security and protection training, international lobbying and other support.**

## Myanmar, 2013 - 2016

**Grants:** 13 grants = €34,135

### Advocacy

Urgent Appeals - 24 Cases

UPR Submission - March 2015

Briefing Paper EU-Myanmar HR Dialogue (Nov 2016)

Briefing Paper EU-Myanmar HR Dialogue (June 2015)

### Trainings

EU Guidelines Workshop (2013)

Financial & Organisational Capacity Building (2014)

Personal & Organisational Protection for HRDs (2016)

Personal & Organisational Protection for HRDs (2015, Supported)

**Dublin Platform:** 4 participants

**ID Cards:** 39

**Missions:** April 2013, October 2013, May 2015, February 2016, May 2016

**Award Finalist:** Phyo Phyo Aung (2016)

**Rest & Respite:** Robert San Aung (2014)

## Morocco/Western Sahara, 2013 - 2016

**Grants:** 7 grants = €18,103

### Advocacy

Urgent Appeals - 30 Cases

UPR Submission - October 2016

Briefing Paper EU-Morocco Subcommittee on HR Oct 2016

### Trainings

Digital Protection (2015)

Personal & Organisational / Digital Protection for HRDs (Western Sahara, 2016)

**Dublin Platform:** 9 Participants

**ID Cards:** 49

**Missions:** November 2014, October 2015

On 24 November, Front Line Defenders launched the HRD Memorial website and database. This is a unique project, developed by an international coalition of national and international human rights organisations, to commemorate all the human rights defenders who have been killed since the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders was adopted in 1998.

For the first time ever there will be a dedicated resource which will give a true picture of the scale of killings of HRDs worldwide. Since 1998, an estimated 3,500 HRDs have been killed because of their peaceful work defending the rights of others.

President of Ireland, Michael D Higgins welcomed representatives of 20 national and international human rights organisations to Dublin, for the launch of the HRD Memorial.

Inaugurating the HRD Memorial in Dublin, President Higgins said,

"It is important to hold states to account, to hold those who wield power to account. This is a matter of life and death, the erosion of dignity, and the imposition of grief on families and communities. Yet, the power of these HRDs lives on in all those who are inspired by their example across the globe.

We need to name them, not allow their lives to be lost in statistics. As we speak, more names are being added. We cannot afford to be indifferent. The launch of this memorial will dislodge indifference. It will provide a tool to

track investigations and advance the struggle for justice for human rights defenders who have been killed."

The HRD Memorial Network includes the following organisations: ACI-Participa (Honduras), ACCUDEH (Mexico), Amnesty International, AWID, Brazil Human Rights Defenders Network, CALAS, (Guatemala), CIVICUS, East and Horn of Africa Defend the Defenders Programme, ESCR-Net, FIDH, Forum Asia, Front Line Defenders, Global Witness, ILGA, IM-Defensoras, Karapatan (The Philippines), OMCT, PBI, RMP-NMR (The Philippines) Somos Defensores (Colombia), UDEFEGUA (Guatemala) and the Urgent Action Fund. **[I]**



President Higgins meeting Carlos Guevara from Programa Somos Defensores, Colombia.

**145**

HRDs killed in

**2014**

**196**

HRDs killed in

**2015**

**281**

HRDs killed in

**2016**

**HRD**  
memorial

CELEBRATING THOSE WHO WERE KILLED  
DEFENDING HUMAN RIGHTS

HRD profiles as they  
appear on the website  
<https://hrdmemorial.org/>



**Anna Politkovskaya**

Human Rights Defender  
Russia  
Shooting  
07/10/2006



**Chut Wutty**

Human Rights Defender  
Cambodia  
Shooting  
26/04/2012



**René Martínez**

Human Rights Defender  
Honduras  
Death as a result of torture or il...  
03/06/2016



MEMBERS OF THE HRD MEMORIAL COALITION: (back row) Jim Loughran, Front Line Defenders; Karen Jeffares, PBI; Andrea Rocca, Front Line Defenders; Hedme Castro Aci-Participa, Honduras; Fionnuala Cregan, Land Rights Now; Alexandra Pomeon, FIDH; Guadalupe Marengo, Amnesty international; Rafael Maldonado, CALAS, Guatemala; (front row) Paula Martins, Human Rights Defenders Network, Brazil; Tracy Doig, AWID; Cathal Gilbert, CIVICUS; Carlos Guevara, Programa Somos Defensores, Colombia; President Michael D Higgins, Andrew Anderson, Executive Director, Front Line Defenders; Mukunda Kattel, Forum Asia; Jorge Santos, UDEFEGUA, Guatemala; Cristina Palabay, Karapatan, the Philippines; Veronica Vidal, IM-Defensoras.



President of Ireland, Michael D Higgins, speaking at the launch of the HRD Memorial.



Veronica Vidal, IM-Defensoras, speaking on the impact of violence on women HRDs.



### Annual Report on Global Trends for Human Rights Defenders

The report provides a snapshot of the situation for human rights defenders in 2016 on both global and regional levels.

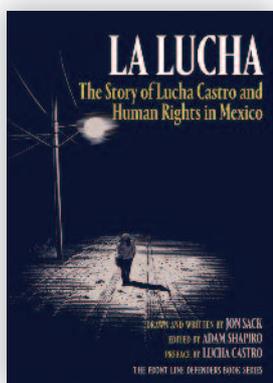
The report will be available in Arabic, English, French, Russian and Spanish.



### The Eighth Dublin Platform Report

The report identifies the main themes and highlights the issues which emerged in the discussions at the Eighth Dublin Platform for Human Rights Defenders at Risk in November 2015.

The report will be available online in Arabic, English, French, Russian and Spanish.



### La Lucha The Story of Lucha Castro and Human Rights in Mexico (graphic novel)

La Lucha is the first in a series of non-fiction graphic novels from Front Line Defenders documenting the stories of human rights defenders at risk around the world. La Lucha recounts the stories of Lucha Castro, her colleagues at the Centre for Women's Rights in Chihuahua, Mexico, and others who sacrificed their lives in the defence of women's and human rights in their communities in Chihuahua and Juarez – consistently two of the most dangerous cities in the world for more than a decade.

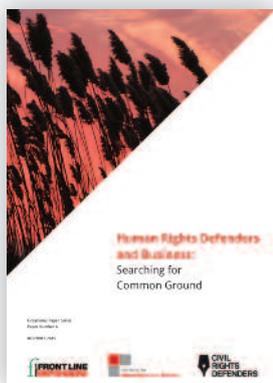
Available in English and Spanish.



### Workbook on Security: Practical Steps for Human Rights Defenders at Risk

The Workbook on Security is designed to raise awareness about security issues and to help human rights defenders consider how to mitigate threats. The workbook takes human rights defenders through the steps to producing a security plan – for individuals and for organisations. It follows a systematic approach for assessing their security situation and developing risk and vulnerability reduction strategies and tactics

Available in Arabic, Chinese, Dari, English, French, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish and Urdu.



### Human Rights Defenders and Business: Searching for Common Ground

Produced together with the Institute for Human Rights and Business and Civil Rights Defenders, the report showcases examples of human rights defenders challenging economic policies or business operations and the consequences they have faced. The report includes essays outlining the importance of human rights defenders, the role of governments, what companies should do, and offers recommendations to the business community. It also argues that a wide civil society space is in the interests of companies.

Available in English.

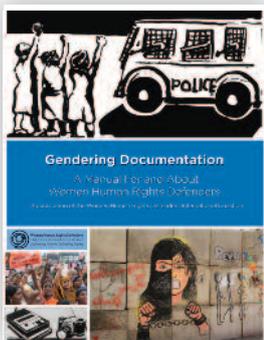


### Security in-a-Box: tools and tactics for your digital protection

Security in-a-Box, created and developed by Front Line Defenders and Tactical Technology Collective, is a toolkit of peer-reviewed free and open source software and guides for improving the security and privacy of stored information and communication.

The aim of the toolkit is to provide an understanding of the risks involved in electronic communication and provide a step by step guide towards the implementation of practical solutions.  
<https://securityinabox.org>

Available in Amharic, Arabic, Bahasa, Burmese, English, Farsi, French, Khmer, Macedonian, Mandarin, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Thai, Tibetan, Turkish and Vietnamese.



### Gendering Documentation: A Manual For and About Women Human Rights Defenders

Available in English on [www.defendingwomen-defendingrights.org](http://www.defendingwomen-defendingrights.org)

A publication of the Women Human Rights Defenders Coalition, the manual outlines the reasons it is important to document experiences of WHRDs and what should be documented, with a focus on context and environment. It provides a practical tool for documenting violations against women human rights defenders and outlines different uses of documentation, including for various advocacy sites.



### Victim Blaming Bangladesh's Failure to Protect HRDs

Available to download from [www.frontlinedefenders.org](http://www.frontlinedefenders.org)

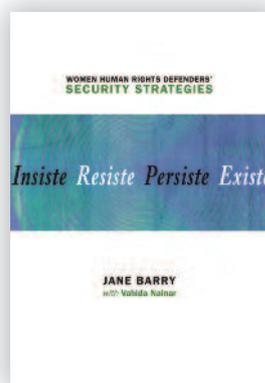
This report reflects the experiences of HRDs working on a variety of rights in Dhaka, though with national impact. HRDs interviewed include those working for the rights of women, LGBT groups, migrant workers, indigenous peoples, and labourers, as well as those fighting for freedom of expression and academic freedom. It includes testimonies from the families and colleagues of murdered HRDs, activists still working in Bangladesh, and HRDs forced into exile, and draws on interviews with Bangladeshi and international journalists, legal experts, and academics.



### The European Union: What it Can Do, Getting it to Take Action

This handbook shows what protection human rights defenders can expect from EU Delegations and Member State Embassies and how to proceed to get the EU to take action. It also gives some tips for effective strategies for lobby and advocacy towards the EU and contains a quick reference table for requesting EU action

Available in Arabic, English, French, Russian and Spanish.



### Insiste, Persiste, Resiste, Existe: Women's Human Rights Defenders' Security Strategies

Produced together with the Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights and Kvinna Till Kvinna, this report makes the threats encountered by women human rights defenders in their work visible as well as the strategies they use to combat and handle the threats.

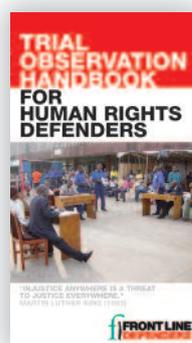
Available in Arabic, Bosnian, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish



### What Protection Can UN Field Presences Provide?

The handbook gives a summary of the type of support and protection UN agencies can provide locally to human rights defenders. It is intended to give practical and helpful suggestions to human rights defenders on how to engage constructively with the UN.

Available in Arabic, English, French, Russian and Spanish.



### Trial Observation Handbook for Human Rights Defenders

The Trial Observation Handbook for Human Rights Defenders is designed as a resource to enable trial observers to accurately report on trial proceedings and to contribute to the protection of HRDs facing prosecution by highlighting injustice and the lack of due process.

Available in English



### Protection Handbook

The Protection handbook is intended as a quick reference tool for human rights defenders, in which to find helpful and practical suggestions on how to deal with threats, intimidation and attacks in order to improve their personal and organisational security.

Available in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish.

All of these publications are available on our website at:  
[www.frontlinedefenders.org/publications](http://www.frontlinedefenders.org/publications)  
[www.frontlinedefenders.org/reports](http://www.frontlinedefenders.org/reports)  
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To order a copy of any of our publications please send an email to [fladmin@frontlinedefenders.org](mailto:fladmin@frontlinedefenders.org) specifying the publication and language requested.

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Please help us protect human rights defenders by donating to Front Line Defenders at: [www.frontlinedefenders.org/donate](http://www.frontlinedefenders.org/donate)

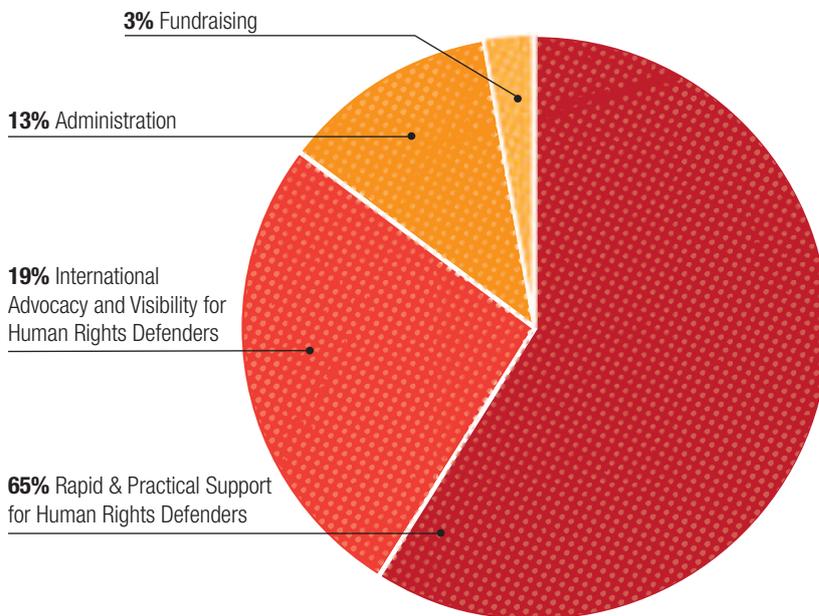
or contact Laurent Aldenhoff at: [laurent@frontlinedefenders.org](mailto:laurent@frontlinedefenders.org) or +353 1 212 3750

Front Line Defenders guarantees that 100% of your donation will go directly to the protection of human rights defenders at risk.

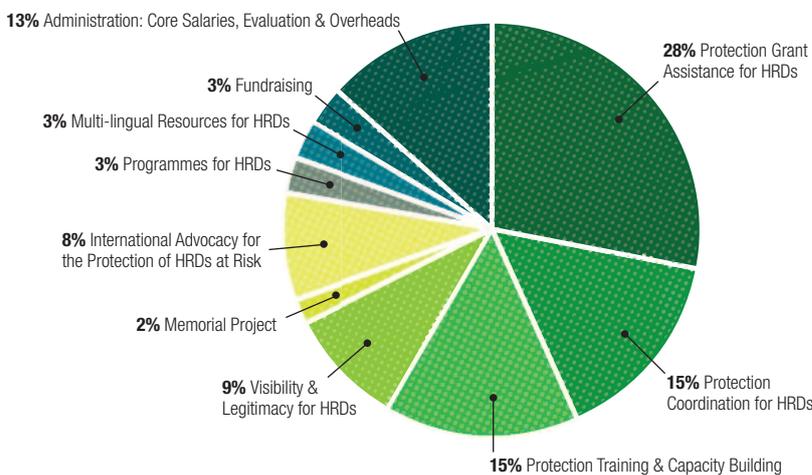
As of 2016, you can also donate to Front Line USA Foundation, which is recognized in the United States as tax exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Front Line USA Foundation is a separate and independent charity and currently does not accept online donations. If you would like to make a donation, please contact Laurent Aldenhoff for further information.

# 2016 income & expenditure

## EXPENDITURE OVERVIEW



## EXPENDITURE BREAKDOWN



## WHERE FRONT LINE DEFENDERS SPENDS ITS RESOURCES

Protection Grant Assistance for HRDs	1,329,896	.28%
Protection Coordination for HRDs	710,218	.15%
Protection Training & Capacity Building	729,122	.15%
Visibility & Legitimacy for HRDs	403,363	.9%
Memorial Project	100,454	.2%
International Advocacy for the Protection of HRDs at Risk	361,490	.8%
Programs for HRDs	158,485	.3%
Multi-lingual Resources for HRDs	153,777	.3%
Fundraising	154,802	.3%
Administration: Core Salaries, Evaluation & Overheads	586,593	.13%
<b>TOTAL Expenditure</b>	<b>4,688,200</b>	



**TRUSTEES**



**Denis O'Brien** (Chairman) is Chairman of the Digical Group. He is one of Ireland's leading entrepreneurs with extensive investments across several sectors. Mr. O'Brien was voted Ireland's Entrepreneur of the Year in 1998 in the inaugural running of the worldwide competition organised and sponsored by Ernst & Young. Mr. O'Brien is also a director of a number of private companies which hold some of his other business interests including Quinta do Lago SA and Communicorp Group Limited. In 2000 he established The Iris O'Brien Foundation to assist disadvantaged communities in Ireland and internationally. He is co-founder of Front Line Defenders.



**Mary Lawlor** is the Founder of Front Line Defenders, and served as Executive Director from 2001 to 2016. Prior to Front Line Defenders, Mary was Director of the Irish Section of Amnesty International from 1988-2000. She became a Board member of Amnesty International in 1975 and was elected Chair from 1983-1987.



**Kieran Mulvey** is former Director General of the Irish Workplace Relations Commission and Consultant with the International Labour Organisation and the European Union.



**Noeline Blackwell** is outgoing Director of FLAC (Free Legal Advice Centres) and incoming CEO of the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre. She is a Vice-President of The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH).



**David Sykes** acts as an investment advisor to Island Capital Ltd and previously held positions in banking and stockbroking which included Trinity Bank Ltd and Dolmen Stockbrokers Ltd.



**Jim Conway** is the founder and Chairman of the Print & Display Group, one of Ireland's largest print companies. He also has a number of other media interests in Ireland and Eastern Europe.



**Maria Mulcahy** is the CEO of the Iris O'Brien Foundation and the Irish-based Head of Philanthropy for the Digical Group. She was involved with "People in Need" from 1988 to 2000. She was responsible for organising the RTE telethons, which raised €28 million. She was Director of Fundraising for the 2003 Special Olympics World Games.



**Mary Jane N. Real** is a founding member and former Coordinator of the Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition. A lawyer by profession, she was part of establishing the Alternative Law Groups network in the Philippines. She is a long-time advocate of women's rights having worked with women's rights and human rights organisations in Asia Pacific and internationally including as Regional Coordinator of Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development.



**Arnold Tsunga** is Africa Director of the International Commission of Jurists. He was Executive Secretary of the Law Society of Zimbabwe and Executive Director of Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights. He was a joint winner of the Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders in 2006.



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**ADVISORY COUNCIL**

**Michel Forst** is the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders and Secretary General of the

French National Consultative Commission on Human Rights. He is a former Board member of Front Line Defenders. He was the UN Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Haiti from 2008 to 2013. He was Secretary General of the Paris Summit of Human Rights Defenders and Director of the French section of Amnesty International.

**Hina Jilani** is an internationally known human rights lawyer and advocate for human rights defenders. She was the UN Special

Representative of the Secretary General on the situation of human rights defenders from 2000 to 2008. She and her sister Asma Jahangir co-founded the first all female legal practice in Pakistan and she is also one of the founders of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan. She is a member of The Elders.

**Maina Kiai** is the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association.

A lawyer trained at Nairobi and Harvard Universities, he has spent the last twenty years campaigning for human rights and constitutional reform in Kenya – notably as founder and Executive Director of the NGO Kenya Human Rights Commission, and then as Chairman of Kenya's National Human Rights Commission (2003-2008).

**James L. Cavallaro** is the Founding Director of the International Human Rights and Conflict Resolution Clinic at Stanford Law

School, where he is also a professor of law. Prior to joining Stanford, he spent nine years on the faculty at Harvard Law School, where he also served as executive director of the Human Rights Programme. In June of 2013 he was elected to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR).

**Maryam Elahi** is President and CEO of the Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut. For more than 25 years, she

has served in positions of leadership in the international human rights community as an advocate, teacher, and grant-maker. She was previously the director of the International Women's Program at the Open Society Foundations.

# REPORTS FROM THE FRONT LINE: JANUARY - DECEMBER 2016

## Wild Geese

You do not have to be good.  
You do not have to walk on your knees  
for a hundred miles through the desert repenting.  
You only have to let the soft animal of your body  
love what it loves.  
Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.  
Meanwhile the world goes on.  
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain  
are moving across the landscapes,  
over the prairies and the deep trees,  
the mountains and the rivers.  
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,  
are heading home again.  
Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,  
the world offers itself to your imagination,  
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting -  
over and over announcing your place  
in the family of things.

## Mary Oliver

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