

FRONT LINE DEFENDERS STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-2022



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MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I am inspired by human rights defenders on a daily basis – by their conviction, their energy and their tenacity in standing up to injustice and oppression for the rights of others despite the consequences. Their successes, whether big or small, are a cause for celebration and hope. Against a backdrop of increased political extremism, a global backlash against civil society and the erosion of human rights norms we need human rights defenders now more than ever.

The courage and integrity of human rights defenders is exemplified by Emil Kurbedinov, a human rights lawyer who has been detained for challenging systematic discrimination and for defending the Crimean Tatar minority, political prisoners and journalists in Occupied Crimea. Gégé Katana, Justine Masika and other women human rights defenders in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are unrelenting in their work, providing support to survivors of sexual violence, documenting and demanding justice for violations and advancing women's rights, equality and peace. The indigenous communities who formed the Peaceful Resistance of the Microregion of Ixquis to defend their rights and territory in the context of grave rights violations in Guatemala, have faced killings, harassment and defamation campaigns but refuse to be deterred. This violence towards them occurs in a context of destructive mining and hydroelectric megaprojects authorised by the government despite widespread opposition from the villages and communities in the municipality.

We in Front Line Defenders stand with and offer support to these inspirational and determined people during challenging times and dark days when they face threats, attacks, prosecutions and detentions. Despite an increasingly restrictive environment, human rights defenders are active in every part of the world, standing up to injustice, adapting and continuing their work and bringing about real change for people and communities. We know that this work requires resilience, perseverance and courage, and that we too must demonstrate these qualities in our work.

This new strategy for our work builds on 17 years of experience and the feedback we have received from human rights defenders and other key stakeholders, all of whom are saying that the work and support of Front Line Defenders is needed now more than ever.

Through this strategic plan we have set out our ambitious vision for growth to better meet this demand. Providing rapid and practical support for protection of human rights defenders at a global level will remain the core focus of our work. We will expand our outreach and support to women human rights defenders and marginalised groups of HRDs. We will focus more on strengthening the capacity and resilience of human rights defenders and organisations to ensure we have a long term impact. We believe that taking a holistic approach to protection, which includes personal, digital and organisational security, a significant emphasis on solidarity and well-being, and using media and visibility as tools for recognition of their vital role, is also key to effectively supporting human rights defenders.



We are committed to the struggle. We stand with human rights defenders and will provide support in every way that we can. We will challenge ourselves to be more effective and innovative to strengthen the protection of human rights defenders.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew Anderson". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Andrew Anderson
Executive Director

THE CONTEXT WE ARE WORKING IN

Human rights under political attack

The global context in which Front Line Defenders will operate in the next four years will undoubtedly be more complex than the previous Strategic Plan period (2015-2018). The universal nature of human rights is being increasingly challenged. Democratic values are under threat with authoritarianism, unaccountable governance, systemic corruption, and extremist politics all on the rise. There is a concerted ideological effort to undermine human rights as well as a high priority focus on repressing and discrediting human rights defenders.

Although human rights defenders have always been attacked in certain quarters, these attacks have broadened in scope and have also started to occur in previously liberal societies as the rise of populist, nationalist politics and politicians have emerged on a scale not seen since the 1930s. Within this context a key challenge is the danger that at the same time as defenders continue to be discredited and attacked in hostile countries, appreciation for the importance of the role of HRDs plummets amongst previously supportive governments.



Demonstration in Mindanao, The Philippines

Increased severity of threats faced by HRDs

The severity, intensity and range of threats faced by human rights defenders have increased dramatically in the last ten years. Physical attacks, detention, arrest and imprisonment remain all too frequent in the daily work of human rights defenders. A particularly distressing trend has been the increasing number of killings of HRDs reported across all regions.¹ In 2017 Front Line Defenders documented the murder of 312 defenders in 27 countries.

As it was five years ago, **criminalisation** is the most common way in which HRDs are targeted, but now there are more laws being introduced to expand the ways in which governments can legally pursue defenders.² These include legislation and decrees restricting freedom of expression and association both online and on the streets. According to the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL), between 2015 and 2017 more than 64 laws were put forward or enacted by governments that restrict NGOs' ability to register, operate, and receive foreign funding.³

These laws are an increasingly common strategy used by governments to **isolate civil society organisations and HRDs legally, socially and financially** from international backers while also undermining them at home. As an EU report stated in 2017, "the burden of argumentation has now switched around to fall on civil society's shoulders. Civic groups are faced with the need to explain why they should have the right to exist unhindered and receive support from the outside. There is a major inversion of the whole civic climate that goes well beyond the individual NGO laws that means *inter alia* that effective response will need to rework a whole narrative about the merits and rights of civil society."⁴

Digital threats targeting HRDs have increased in both number and frequency, reflecting the ubiquitous access of HRDs to digital devices and the important role technology plays in their work. Digital attacks run the gamut from surveillance to targeted infection, hacking to trolling, and confiscation of devices to loss or compromise of sensitive information. Governments (and companies) have become more sophisticated in their use of technology to monitor populations while also attempting to normalise this tracking as a trade-off for safer societies or increased convenience.

Online smear campaigns directed at defenders and organisations have become prevalent and are very likely to increase.⁵ These campaigns are cheap, can be carried out anonymously and are extremely difficult to confront effectively.

Role of Non-State Actors

Non-state actors also increasingly generate threats and a complex risk environment for defenders' work. Many of these risks exist in the context of mega-projects, large scale agribusiness or development projects in which HRDs are targeted because of objections to envisaged negative impacts that these projects would have on their communities and the environment. Companies continue to tolerate, tacitly condone or sometimes even orchestrate attacks against defenders. Private security companies, employed by the companies at the local level, are responsible for many of the acts of aggression against HRDs. As many of the companies have links to powerful figures within the national government, defenders can rarely rely on the state for protection, and rates of impunity for attacks hover at around 90%. In some countries there is effectively state capture by corporate interests, fuelled by corruption, putting the state's security and judicial institutions at the disposal of corporations. International financial institutions (IFIs), which provide funding for development projects, bear responsibility when their country-level partners fail in their human rights due diligence or when the IFIs fail to react appropriately to reports of threats or reprisals against defenders relating to projects. The influence of fundamentalist groups is also a growing threat felt by HRDs, especially those



Maryam and Zainab Al-Khawaja at the Embassy of Bahrain in London campaigning for the release of their father, human rights defender and former colleague of Front Line Defenders, Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja

defending minority, religious, SOGIE (sexual orientation, gender identity and expression) and reproductive rights. HRDs are also increasingly experiencing threats and attacks from paramilitaries and criminal organisations whose vested interests and power are threatened by the work of HRDs.

Risks faced by particular groups

There are a vast number of factors that contribute to risk. These include, although are not limited to, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, location, political stability and the specific issue the defender is working on. For example, anti-corruption activists take on the might of immensely powerful interests. HRDs working in war zones face challenges related to the unpredictable nature of conflicts, absence of the rule of law and the presence of multiple aggressors. Severe nationwide crackdowns and particularly repressive states make it increasingly difficult for HRDs to operate. There are also flashpoints which tend to increase the level of risk, such as during elections and political transitions.

Women human rights defenders (WHRDs) are subjected to many additional gender-specific threats and attacks. They are far more likely to experience sexual assault, harassment and intimidation of a sexualised nature. Their leading role in human rights struggles often fails to be recognised or is intentionally overlooked because of the challenge it presents to patriarchal gender norms and structures. As a result, they are afforded neither the same standing in their communities nor the same

access to protection resources that their male colleagues have, while the risks they face are similar or sometimes greater. This is especially true where domestic violence is used as a way to ‘punish’ WHRDs for their identity as activists - a phenomenon that often goes unreported. WHRDs often face discrimination and threats also from other HRDs or within their communities. Women from marginalised communities working on rights related to the identity of individuals and/or communities, such as indigenous peoples rights or LGBTI rights, are doubly targeted, both because of their work as activists and because of how they identify themselves politically, ethnically, socially or by gender. Furthermore, when WHRDs are targeted with criminalisation, stigmatization or loss of employment as a result of their human rights work, there is an added psychological burden connected to their frequent role as primary carers in their families. Women are also more likely to be targeted by smear campaigns, which often contain gendered hate speech. In addition to media and social media efforts, these campaigns can also manifest themselves in rumour and attack the ‘honour’ of WHRDs. WHRDs role as mothers is also questioned in a way that male HRDs role as fathers never is.

HRDs working in defence of **land, indigenous peoples’ and environmental rights** have emerged as a group of defenders facing extreme risks. While the data prior to 2014 highlighted that these HRDs faced significant challenges, including being killed because of their work, the violence and criminalisation they experience has become more prevalent over the past five years. Defenders working on these rights made up 67% of the killings reported by Front Line Defenders in 2017. The power imbalance between these defenders and the interests they are confronting – frequently subsidiaries of major companies involved in extractive industries – is exacerbated by the corruption of local and national authorities. In many cases, the geographic isolation of communities working to defend their rights to land, clean air or water and sustainable development leaves them highly vulnerable to physical attack. Their rural locations, sometimes unreachable by vehicle and often without mobile phone coverage, serve to dramatically reduce security options when facing threats from private security companies, paramilitaries or the state itself. Racist narratives promoted by the state or businesses, especially against indigenous communities, which portray those objecting to the human rights impacts of large-scale projects as ‘backward’, ‘uncivilised’ or simply ‘anti-state’, generate a hostile environment in which criminalisation and attacks can occur without broader societal protest or outcry.

Defenders working on LGBTI rights are particularly vulnerable for several reasons. In addition to the risks that any HRD may be exposed to, HRDs working on LGBTI rights are exposed to a greater extent to specific risks such as sexual violence, defamation and discrimination because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. As of April 2018, same sex consensual sexual activity was outlawed in 74 countries, bringing an extra dimension to the risks. In countries throughout the world, the repression of LGBTI people remains openly, passionately, and in many cases, officially defended in the name of culture, religion, morality or public health. Finally LGBTI rights defenders are often marginalised even within the human rights movement, which is normally the first line of support for HRDs at risk.

Responding to the heightened risks faced by WHRDs, environmental and LGBTI rights defenders, there has been increased recognition in the field of the need to foster and support **community and collective protection**, especially in rural areas. This involves providing support beyond the individual and finding ways to strengthen resilience and protection at a broader community level. It recognises that while an individual approach can solve problems of imminent risk to some HRDs, it does not necessarily change the conditions and environment in which these HRDs are operating. It also recognises the reality that all struggles and successes are the result of a collective effort and not the work of isolated HRDs.



HRDs working on LGBTI rights at the 2015 Dublin Platform

Opportunities for Civil Society

These trends must also be seen in the context of real progress made in the recognition of the critical role of HRDs in advancing fundamental rights, democratic values, good governance and environmental stewardship in the 20 years since the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. Much has been said about the shrinking civil society space in the last five years, and the growing restrictions have had a negative impact on the work of HRDs, but there are also more defenders, increased civic participation and a growing number of social movements at local, regional and global levels doing more work in more countries in spite of this backlash. Courageous defenders are **fighting back against restrictions, adapting and finding ways to continue their work**, making it more accurate to describe civil society space globally as ‘contested’ rather than ‘shrinking’. In particular, increased online mobilisation and a new generation of youth, feminist and environmental movements have initiated action and organising for social justice. In many regions there has also been a profound cultural shift to support women’s rights and LGBTI rights.

There has also been an **increased number of actors working on HRD protection**. This has included a growing number of national and regional civil society networks focused on protection. For example, there are now more donors, foundations and international development NGOs recognising the need

to build in protection as part of their support to grantees and partners, and more universities are conducting research on HRD protection. International actors are also more coordinated through the development of mechanisms such as ProtectDefenders.eu, Lifeline – Embattled CSO Assistance Fund, and numerous donor coordination initiatives.

At a **state level the adoption of HRD Protection Laws** in a number of West African countries is a positive development. While the establishment of a number of State Protection Mechanisms is positive and to be encouraged, they need to become more robust in order to ensure their effectiveness. At a regional level, the effectiveness of the protection mechanisms varies and there remains room for improving their functioning and developing more specific protection mandates. Most recently a General Rapporteurship on the situation of Human Rights Defenders was submitted for approval at the Council of Europe for example. Given the moves by hostile states to block effective action on HRDs there is a need for increased engagement with regional mechanisms. The mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of HRDs also plays a significant role in raising the visibility of HRDs and putting pressure on governments, including through communications and country visits which create an opportunity for HRDs to demand accountability and protection.

Opportunities are also currently emerging as a result of **engagement between the business sector and human rights movement**. Potential legal precedents have been set which may influence HRD protection, such as the 2017 appellate court ruling in Canada that seven Guatemalan HRDs could bring a lawsuit against Canadian mining company Tahoe Resources seeking damages for injuries sustained when they were shot by security personnel.⁷ There has also been slow but steady pressure on business to take into account HRDs in their policies, with some companies including Adidas and Marks & Spencer introducing specific HRD policies as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) mandates.⁸ International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and development banks are also slowly responding to pressure from human rights organisations to take greater account of HRDs. In 2017 FMO, the Dutch Development Bank, published a position statement on human rights which refers to the work of defenders⁹ while a number of other international financial institutions have asked for guidance on developing policies aimed at protecting defenders.

While the **UN Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs) are not as strong on HRDs as needed, they do offer an opportunity to highlight the important role of human rights defenders in delivering long term development. SDG indicator 16.10 (protection of fundamental freedoms)¹⁰ also offers the opportunity to generate stronger global empirical evidence to highlight the extreme abuses against human rights advocates, journalists, and others, such as killings and enforced disappearance. However, as highlighted by ICNL, SDG 16 does not cover the more insidious ways governments suppress civil society freedoms, such as restricting CSOs' access to resources or arbitrarily prohibiting peaceful assembly.¹¹



Despite death threats, intimidation and abuse, environmentalist René Gradis campaigns against the destruction of Honduran forests

WHO WE ARE

OUR VISION: Human rights defenders are recognised and supported as essential actors in defending and advancing human rights, and bringing about positive change in society.

OUR MISSION: The mission of Front Line Defenders is to protect and support human rights defenders who are at risk as a result of their human rights work.

OUR VALUES:

Inclusivity: We focus on the primacy and centrality of HRDs, we seek to be inclusive at all times, demonstrating profound respect and empathy for HRDs in all their diversity.

Agility: We strive to meet the needs expressed by human rights defenders in a fast, flexible and relevant manner.

Solidarity: We believe in the importance of solidarity. We commit to being present in a meaningful way when HRDs are most at risk; steadfast and relentless in our actions.

Integrity: We perform with dedication, professionalism and accountability, acting with independence and integrity at all times.

About Front Line Defenders

Front Line Defenders was founded in Dublin in 2001 with the 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 (1948) and subsequent covenants and treaties addressing and specifying rights. Front Line Defenders has established itself as a leading organisation on HRD protection having pioneered work on rapid, practical support, digital security and rest and respite. It currently serves as the lead partner in the EU Human Rights Defenders mechanism (ProtectDefenders.eu) and the HRD Memorial Project, and as a partner in the Lifeline – Embattled CSO Assistance Fund.

Our Unique Approach

Global mandate: Front Line Defenders supports human rights defenders globally. This enables us to effectively respond to crises wherever they occur and to support HRDs working in areas less well supported by the international community.

Speed: Front Line Defenders recognises that in many cases the speed of response is a critical element to ensuring effective support. To enable this, Front Line Defenders has established an emergency system to ensure we can respond to the needs of human rights defenders within 24 to 48 hours when needed.

Holistic support: Since its inception, Front Line Defenders has focused on providing a comprehensive package of support for human rights defenders which includes personal security, organisational security, digital security, support for well-being & stress management, visibility and



Vigil at the Chinese Embassy in Dublin in honour of human rights defender Cao Shunli, who died in a Chinese military hospital in March 2014 having been denied medical treatment during five and a half months in detention

recognition. Through our holistic support we aim to integrate these elements of protection and highlight their interrelatedness.

Extensive network of HRDs: Front Line Defenders works with a network of over 10,000 human rights defenders. The organisation works to expand its reach and support to lesser known and marginalised HRDs.

Relationship of trust: Front Line Defenders network, expertise and extensive experience on the issue of HRDs at risk has earned the trust of human rights defenders. Our practical and flexible support is tailored to the needs identified by HRDs. Front Line Defenders also continues to invest both in people and in technical solutions to protect this trusted partnership and ensure that our programmes and activities are efficient and do not add any additional risks for HRDs.

Innovation and shared learning: Our approach and the data we collate on the global trends and issues HRDs are facing in their contexts enables us to play a unique role contributing to and sharing learning in the sector. We strive to share effective strategies for supporting HRD protection and to influence decision-makers in policy and practice. We also seek to innovate and pilot new areas of work to sharpen and enhance our support with a focus on practical impact for HRDs.

Ireland-based International Organisation: Front Line Defenders was founded and is proudly based in Ireland. Ireland has a tradition of support and solidarity for fighting injustice internationally and has been a leading country on the issue of HRD protection and civil society space. With this in mind, we particularly value engagement with the Irish public and our strong relationship with the Irish Government. Front Line Defenders also has an office in Brussels, field-based staff across all regions, and an internationally diverse staff and Board.

4 THEORY OF CHANGE

- We believe that HRDs working at the local and national level play the most important role in protecting and promoting human rights and bringing about positive change for their societies and communities.
- We believe that international support can enhance resilience and the capacity of HRDs to manage risks, foster an enabling environment, dissuade attacks, facilitate recovery, contribute to their protection and enable them to carry out their work
- We believe that we can support and enable HRDs to continue their work by achieving the following goals:
 1. Provide fast, flexible and effective 24-hour emergency response that responds to the protection needs of HRDs at immediate risk
 2. Strengthen the resilience and capacity of HRDs to manage their security and protection
 3. Enhance the visibility¹² of human rights defenders and the positive impact of their work
 4. Strengthen national, regional and international protection of HRDs at risk

- FLD's role in bringing about these goals is:

Listening to HRDs

Providing resources

Building capacity

Consulting and advising

Facilitating, linking and convening

Networking and coalition building

Researching and analysing

Advocating and amplifying

Influencing

Underpinned by a strong, innovative and value-based organisation.

**WE BELIEVE THAT HRDS
WORKING AT THE LOCAL AND
NATIONAL LEVEL PLAY THE MOST
IMPORTANT ROLE IN PROTECTING
AND PROMOTING HUMAN RIGHTS**

LISTENING PROVIDING BUILDING CONSULTING
ADVISING FACILITATING LINKING CONVENING
NETWORKING RESEARCHING ANALYSING
ADVOCATING AMPLIFYING INFLUENCING
PROVIDING BUILDING CONSULTING ADVISING
FACILITATING LINKING CONVENING NETWORKING
RESEARCHING ANALYSING ADVOCATING
INFLUENCING LISTENING PROVIDING BUILDING
CONSULTING ADVISING FACILITATING LINKING
CONVENING NETWORKING RESEARCHING



STRATEGIC GOALS

Goals to provide holistic and effective protection support to HRDs at risk

Front Line Defenders will provide support that is relevant and effective, tailored to the needs of HRDs in their specific contexts.

The organisation will continue to strengthen its emergency response systems while also strengthening its focus on preventing attacks and building HRD resilience and capacity to manage risk. Front Line Defenders will continue to develop its holistic approach and ensure that its programmes are integrated in a practical way to strengthen the effectiveness for HRDs.

FLD will continue to focus on HRDs who are most at risk and will demonstrate perseverance and solidarity by continuing to take on the most difficult cases. We will also develop an intersectional approach to develop an understanding of the way gender, race, class, ethnicity and sexual orientation contribute to marginalisation, discrimination and risk. We will also ensure marginalised HRDs are given increased attention in our outreach and prioritisation. We will strengthen our outreach and practical support to women human rights defenders and strengthen gender-sensitive responses to address the additional and specific risks they face. We will continue to adapt protection and advocacy strategies for defenders working on environmental and LGBTI issues, HRDs working in rural areas and HRDs who are less well connected. We will build on our support to social movements and communities and make our approach to collective security more visible.

We will also seek to build partnerships with other organisations, networks and other actors to further our reach and effectiveness.



Women's rights activist Emérite Tabisha in Democratic Republic of the Congo

Goal 1. Provide fast, flexible and effective 24-hour emergency support that responds to the protection needs of HRDs at immediate risk

Front Line Defenders will respond to the immediate protection needs of HRDs on a global level. We will continue to focus on rapid, practical support by being accessible, flexible and able to act in emergency situations. We will continue to expand our regional field-based presence in order to develop and strengthen close connection with human rights defenders, to be present in a meaningful way and for up-to-date analysis.

How we will achieve this goal:

- Continue to strengthen and expand our outreach to remote and marginalised at-risk HRDs and communities through missions, research, analysis and relationship-building with HRDs;
- Increase provision of effective protection grants to provide practical security measures, legal support, medical support, emergency relocation support, and other expressed needs of HRDs, their families, organisations and movements in an efficient manner;
- Respond to HRD needs through advocacy tailored to the specific context and levers of influence;
- Be immediately available, accessible and ready to act through a 24-hour hotline and secure one-to-one communications with HRDs.

Goal 2. Strengthen the resilience and capacity of HRDs to manage their security and protection

We will strengthen our approach and expand our resources for capacity building for HRDs through workshops, courses, advice and support, and further develop a pool of trainers to respond to ongoing high demand. We will continue to focus on strengthening the capacity of HRDs to analyse and manage the physical, well-being and digital risks they face and support them to build resilience at individual, organisational and community levels. We will develop regional context-specific strategic interventions in order to provide a more in-depth, impactful and long-term approach to risk reduction/prevention. We will promote opportunities for shared learning on effective protection strategies between HRDs. In strengthening capacity and resilience we will be mindful of the specific needs of WHRDs and marginalised groups.

How we will achieve this goal:

- Provide protection grants focused on prevention, solidarity and resilience for HRDs and their families, organisations, movements;
- Expand our Risk Assessment and Protection Planning (RAPP) capacity-building programme and one-to-one mentoring focused on personal and organisational protection;
- Maintain and deepen our Digital Protection Training and mentoring programme;
- Strengthen our focus on building local capacity and trainers to share expertise, deliver workshops and provide on-going peer support to HRDs in their own contexts;
- Strengthen support to HRDs on stress management and well-being, including through our rest and respite programme, contributing to strengthening of shelter initiatives, links with professionals for psychosocial support, solidarity interventions, and integrating well-being into all training programmes;
- Continue to develop the Dublin Platform as a regular opportunity to bring together HRDs on a global level with a focus on providing a safe space for HRDs to share learning, meet with decision-makers and build solidarity;
- Create new opportunities for convening of HRDs for cross-regional sharing of learning;
- Develop practical resources and tools for HRDs at risk;
- Further develop responses to collective protection: document and assess what has worked well, adapt our support, share learning and make it a more visible element of our work.



Nurcan Baysal from Turkey, the recipient of the 2018 Front Line Defenders Award for Human Rights Defenders at Risk speaking at the Award ceremony in Dublin

Goal 3. Enhance the visibility of human rights defenders and the positive impact of their work

Through this Strategic Plan we will further develop our work on visibility for protection as a tool to counter defamation and to build enabling environments for HRDs. This approach will be integrated into a holistic package of protection support for HRDs and will have a specific focus on strengthening recognition, building allies and generating respect for HRDs in their own societies.

In addition, we will continue to build international awareness of the crucial role of HRDs, the changes they are bringing about, and the risks that they face as a result of their work. We will draw attention to the diversity of HRDs (as peacebuilders, activists fighting for sustainable development, women HRDs defending environmental rights etc.) and their lived experiences in our discourse for a richer appreciation of their critical work.

How we will achieve this goal:

- Support HRDs to identify smear campaigns, reporting and other narratives which put them at risk and build their capacities for strategic communications and advocacy;
- Develop strategic campaigns and innovative communications tools linked to an overall package of protection supports for HRDs in specific contexts;
- Develop specific thematic reports on targeted HRDs that will be used to focus advocacy, generate specific protection measures and guide other work for those HRDs;

- Further develop the FLD award as a visibility tool tailored to the needs of the HRD and their community/context;
- Cultivate new voices to enhance the visibility of HRDs and work more closely with emerging social movements;
- Bring sustained and energised attention to HRDs serving long-term prison sentences and develop new strategies to secure their release;
- Continue to develop the HRD Memorial Project (focused on HRDs who have been killed), to address the need for accurate and reliable data, to celebrate the lives, struggles and achievements of the HRDs that have been killed, to show solidarity with their families and peers and to demand accountability;
- Promote the inclusion and participation of HRDs at key policy and agenda-setting fora.

Goal 4. Strengthen national, regional and international protection of HRDs at risk

Since it was established, Front Line Defenders has played a unique role in supporting and strengthening international and regional protection for HRDs and building an active international constituency of support for the protection of HRDs. We will continue to strengthen our work in this area and ensure that our case work is more focused and adapted to be more efficient and effective.

We will also focus more on investment agencies, businesses and other non-state actors as key power holders. Recognising an opportunity for added value, we will also aim to do more in-depth, context-specific work at the national level by providing practical support to civil society-led protection initiatives in partnership with local HRDs.

How we will achieve this goal:

- Continue to support and strengthen the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on HRDs by submitting information, ensuring that marginalised HRDs are represented, advocating for greater effectiveness including stronger follow-up on cases, and strengthening the capacity of the office of UNSR;
- Strengthen the focus of UN mechanisms on HRD protection, with a particular focus on the Universal Periodic Review;
- Push for recognition of HRD protection with development actors including for achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals;
- Push for stronger implementation of the EU Guidelines on the Protection of HRDs including through advocacy on individual HRDs, lobbying for stronger policy, protection and funding mechanisms, and training of HRDs and diplomats;
- Promote strengthened regional mechanisms (ACHPR, IACHR, CoE, OSCE) for the protection of HRDs and lobby for their effectiveness / implementation;
- Continue to engage bilaterally with individual governments and donors to strengthen their support for HRDs;
- Explore new tactics to target and influence non-state actors;
- Engage with International Financial Institutions to strengthen their policy and practice on HRD protection;
- Work with local actors to strengthen a select number of national/ regional civil society-led protection initiatives where there are opportunities for particular impact;
- Diversify the targets, model and language used in advocacy appeals and briefing papers for more selective and strategic advocacy.

DEVELOPING FRONT LINE DEFENDERS AS AN EFFECTIVE, SUSTAINABLE AND INNOVATIVE ORGANISATION

1. Human Resources and Development

Committed, talented and value-driven staff are key to the success of the organisation. To achieve the goals of the Strategic Plan, Front Line Defenders will ensure that its staff continue to be motivated to carry out impactful work in a diverse, respectful and gender-sensitive organisation. We also need to acknowledge and respond to how the work we do bears particular responsibility, pressure and risks for staff security and well-being.

To further develop in this area we will:

- Continue to strengthen our approach to risk assessment and HRD & staff security;
- Remain committed to investing in staff well-being and professional development;
- Cultivate an organisational culture that values participation and provides meaningful spaces for all staff to have a voice;
- Develop a comprehensive gender strategy and build staff capacity on gender;
- Strengthen human resource management, staff diversity and our multi-cultural working environment;
- Develop progressive, gender-sensitive human resource policies that reflect the values of the organisation.

2. Organisational Structure and Growth

Feedback from our key stakeholders has highlighted that the work of Front Line Defenders is needed now more than ever. To achieve meaningful impact for human rights defenders in the current context Front Line Defenders needs to grow, advance its organisational structure and work with others who complement its programmes.

To further develop in this area we will:

- Strengthen and expand our regional structure and presence;
- Develop stronger coordination at a regional level and across programmes to strengthen our holistic support to HRDs;
- Develop a more focused prioritisation process for regional strategies;
- Ensure that any growth is proportionate and strategic e.g. growth in regions is mirrored by capacity in the grants teams, finance etc.;
- Incrementally grow the organisational budget through continuing to develop the organisation's funding base through sustaining and developing strong partnerships with institutional funders and major donors;
- Work in collaboration with other international, regional and national organisations who complement our work and strengthen our reach to HRDs. Specifically build partnerships with feminist organisations and organisations focused on specific marginalised groups.



Front Line Defenders staff campaigning for the release of Tajik journalist and HRD Khayrullo Mirsaidov in 2018

3. Governance and Accountability

Front Line Defenders recognises the huge trust that is placed in us by human rights defenders, donors, supporters and the wider human rights sector. We will carry out our work with integrity and respect and will hold ourselves accountable to all of our stakeholders.

To further develop in this area we will:

- Regularly review progress on the Strategic Plan with oversight from our committed and diverse Board;
- Support effective functioning of governance structures in accordance with the Dochas Code of Corporate Governance and international best practice;
- Continue to strengthen financial accounting practices and systems;
- Strengthen our approach to safeguarding and implement a complaints mechanism.

4. Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

Front Line Defenders is committed to becoming a more effective learning organisation and to use innovation and learning to improve the quality of our work. Recognising that we have access to a wealth of information on trends and issues impacting human rights defenders at risk, Front Line Defenders will strengthen our knowledge management to inform our work.

To further develop in this area we will:

- Strengthen our monitoring, evaluation and learning systems and capacity;
- Strengthen how we document and communicate the impact of our work and the work of HRDs;
- Create more space, time and resources for learning;
- Share our analysis and learning and strengthen our role as a thought leader in the sector;
- Support more inter-regional and cross-regional learning between HRDs;
- Continue to cultivate an organisational culture of innovation and find new ways to support HRDs, including carrying out pilot projects;
- Continue to play a catalytic role in bringing together human rights defenders, decision makers and those with specific expertise to promote innovative approaches and best practice to strengthen protection.



Participants at the Dublin Platform in Dublin Castle, October 2017

Footnotes

- 1 Regarding the number of killings of HRDs, it is difficult to assess how much of the increase in documented cases is as a result of increased capacity and coverage by NGOs to record cases and how much that there are simply more killings taking place.
- 2 In 2017, 47% of Urgent Appeals issued by Front Line Defenders involved criminalisation of human rights defenders.
- 3 <http://www.icnl.org/research/trends/trends7-4.pdf>
- 4 [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2017/578039/EXPO_STU\(2017\)578039_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2017/578039/EXPO_STU(2017)578039_EN.pdf)
- 5 In the first six months of 2018, nearly 20% of emergency requests received by Front Line Defenders' Digital Protection Consultants related to attacks on social media or trolling.
- 6 <https://76crimes.com/76-countries-where-homosexuality-is-illegal/>
- 7 <https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/tahoe-resources-lawsuit-re-guatemala>
- 8 <https://corporate.marksandspencer.com/documents/plan-a-our-approach/mns-human-rights-policy.pdf>
- 9 [https://www.fmo.nl/l/library/download/urn:uuid:c0240734-e58f-49d3-b5b3-](https://www.fmo.nl/l/library/download/urn:uuid:c0240734-e58f-49d3-b5b3-f88d8c20ab0/position+statement+human+rights.pdf)
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- 10 <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/?Text=&Goal=16&Target=16.10>
- 11 <http://www.icnl.org/research/trends/trends7-4.pdf>
- 12 Where visibility is a desirable element of the HRD's strategy, Front Line Defenders will also facilitate anonymity and confidentiality where appropriate

FRONT LINE DEFENDERS STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-2022

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