# [DISPATCHES]



REPORTS FROM THE FRONT LINE

FRONT LINE DEFENDERS

## **DENIS O'BRIEN**CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS



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

IN 2018, WE ENGAGED IN A BROAD consultation with human rights defenders, donors, staff and other stakeholders to develop the Front Line Defenders Strategic Plan 2019-22. The Strategic Plan, which you can read about on page 33, and which is available in full on our website, challenges us to strengthen our work in support of human rights defenders at risk.

In this strategic plan we have set out our ambitious vision for growth to meet the demands of HRDs. Providing rapid and practical support for protection of human rights defenders at a global level remains 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 of human rights defenders and organisations to impact their resilience over the long term. 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 have already embarked on expanding our field-based presence in each of the world regions and as a consequence we must also strengthen our management and systems. Building the capacity of the protection grants programme has also been a priority and we will seek to give greater focus and energy to

campaigning on behalf of those human rights defenders sentenced to long prison sentences.

One of those who remains particularly in our hearts is Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja who pioneered the development of our work to support human rights defenders in the Middle East & North Africa as our Protection Coordinator from 2009 to 2011. Abdulhadi stepped down from that role to join the movement for human rights and democracy in Bahrain and was then detained in April 2011, tortured and subjected to a show trial, resulting in a sentence of life in prison. We continue to campaign for his release and it was a privilege to have one of his daughters, Maryam Al-Khawaja, represent Front Line Defenders in receiving the UN Prize for Human Rights at the General Assembly in New York in December.

We were profoundly honoured to be chosen as one of the winners of the UN Prize for 2018 (see pages 6-7). It is fantastic recognition of the work over eighteen years of our dedicated and highly skilled staff and the inspirational vision and drive of Mary Lawlor who identified the need for an organisation exclusively focused on the protection and security of human rights defenders at risk.

In 2018, Front Line Defenders provided support to more than 1,700 human rights defenders in 96 countries, including over 530 protection grants.

I would like to place on record our thanks to all those who have supported the work of Front Line Defenders in 2018 including the fantastic help we have received from our donors. Without their generous support Front Line Defenders would not be able to undertake its work.

Denis O'Brien.

Chairman of the Board of Directors

#### 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) registered as a charity in Ireland. 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;
- 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.







Nurcan Baysal, 2018 Front Line Defenders Award Global Laureate, stands in front of a projection featuring the faces of human rights defenders at risk around the world.

The projection was made outside Dublin

City Hall in cooperation with the Dublin City Council on 10 December, on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

#### COURAGE AND DEDICATION

"My hope lies in a set of people not widely known internationally, but familiar to those in the human rights community. Unlike the self-promoters – the elected xenophobes and charlatans – these people do have courage. They have no state power to hide behind: instead, they step forward. They are the leaders of communities and social movements, big and small, who are willing to forfeit everything – including their lives – in defence of human rights."

ZEID RA'AD AL HUSSEIN, THE OUTGOING HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, identified human rights defenders as a source of hope for the future in his outgoing message in August 2018. Front Line Defenders has always believed that those working for human rights at local and national levels have the greatest and most sustainable impact. And the autocrats and fascists agree, which is why they invest such energy and in smearing, threatening, resources persecuting, jailing and killing those who defend the rights of the most vulnerable.

It is almost like Newton's Third Law, "for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction". It is the impact of human rights defenders that is usually the most important factor in the level of repression that they face. The concerted and escalating global backlash against human rights defenders, independent media and civil society is, in some ways, a reflection of the growing strength of the global human rights movement. There are more human rights defenders, working on more issues, in more countries, than ever before.

Note that while the legal and regulatory framework of civil society space has shrunk, with serious negative consequences in some countries, the determination and courage of activists at the local level ensures that no autocrat except, perhaps, the brutal Kim Jong Un in North Korea, has succeeded in silencing those who speak truth to power.

It is the courage and dedication of activists in Xinjiang Province, in the face of severe risks, which has finally exposed the horrific extent of repression in the Uyghur population in China. It is the courage and dedication of women human rights defenders in Saudi Arabia who continue to press for equality and dignity in spite of the torture and sexual assault of their sisters in prison. It is the courage and dedication of

defenders of LGBT+ rights that provided practical support for the victims of homophobic brutality in Indonesia, Tanzania and Russia, amongst others. It is the courage and dignity of human rights defenders and journalists who continue to expose corruption in Turkey, South Africa, Guatemala and elsewhere.

And the exposure of corruption continues to be a key driving factor in the increasing numbers of human rights defenders who are being killed, at least 321 in 2018, with three quarters of those defending land rights, environmental rights and indigenous peoples' rights, nearly always in the context of mega projects linked to extractive industries or big business. Too often those implementing such projects believe they can buy off officials responsible for regulation or the rule of law. The pervasive level of impunity for the killers suggests they are right to believe corruption and violence works. There is a need for much more effective regulation at national and international levels including rigorous safeguarding measures by development institutions which provide financing and investment for such mega projects.

In December, Front Line Defenders received the UN Prize for Human Rights at the General Assembly in New York in December 2018. It was a special moment and we were delighted that Maryam Al-Khawaja, one of the daughters of our former colleague Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja now in the eighth year of a life sentence in Bahrain, agreed to go up to receive the prize on our behalf from the President of the General Assembly, the UN Secretary-General and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. It was intended as a message about the contribution that Abdulhadi made to the development of Front Line Defenders as well as an opportunity to call for the release of all human rights defenders







Clockwise from top: Andrew Anderson leading a solidarity protest for jailed Saudi women human rights defenders outside the Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Dublin; with Zaynab Al-Khawaja and Maryam Al-Khawaja protesting the detention of their father, Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, outside the Embassy of Bahrain in London; and preparing to address a press conference to launch the 2017 Front Line Defenders Annual Report.

unjustly imprisoned.

Front Line Defenders dedicates the UN Prize for Human Rights to human rights defenders at risk around the world who struggle every day to advance and defend the rights of their communities. We are inspired on a daily basis by their conviction, energy and tenacity in standing up to injustice and oppression.

It is a privilege for all of us in Front Line Defenders to work with some of the most courageous people in the world, whose idea of development does not depend on the ruthless exploitation of the natural and human resources of the planet or the elimination of those who challenge injustice or inequality.

Andrew Anderson, Executive Director

#### 2018 AT A GLANCE

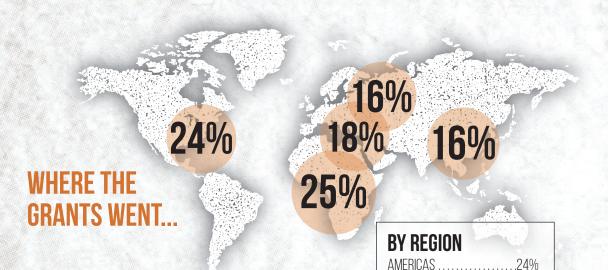
- In total, 1719 HRDs and 316 organisations in 96 countries were directly supported through our programmes in 2018.
- Front Line Defenders issued 186 Urgent Appeals on behalf of 318 individuals at risk in 62 countries and undertook advocacy with the relevant national authorities, submitted cases to the UN and regional mechanisms and lobbied the EU to take action on 111 of the cases.
- Front Line Defenders Protection Grants Programme provided 534 grants, totalling €1,346,704 to 398 individuals and 136 organisations at risk in 85 countries. 183 grants were provided for temporary relocations. 81% 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 86 protection coordination, visibility and security advisor field missions to 42 countries.
- 161 HRDs from 21 countries participated in 14 trainings on risk analysis and protection planning; 93% of HRDs reported having implemented a security plan as a result of the training.
- 150 HRDs received security advice through 57 consultations in 17 countries.
- 280 HRDs and 180 human rights organisations in 66 countries were supported by Digital Protection Consultants through 73 visits and other support; 95% of HRDs

reported using digital security tools as a result of the consultancy.

- 174 HRDs from eight countries participated in 10 digital protection trainings; 66% of HRDs reported using digital security tools as a result of training.
- 36 HRDs from 17 countries were supported through the Rest & Respite Programme.
- The Front Line Defenders Award was presented to Nurcan Baysal, a Kurdish HRD and journalist from Diyarbakir, southeastern Turkey.
- Professor Martha Nussbaum spoke on the topic "Accountability in an Era of Celebrity," held in partnership with University College Dublin and Trinity College Dublin.
- UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, Kate Gilmore, presented a public lecture in Dublin entitled "Human Rights, Gender and the Body Intimate".
- Front Line Defenders published *Creeping Towards Authoritarianism? Impacts on Human Rights Defenders & Civil Society in Zambia*, a report that investigates the deteriorating situation for HRDs and civil society in a country that seems to be entering a period of crisis.
- Front Line Defenders published *Stop the Killings*, a report on the alarming number of killings of HRDs in Brazil, the Philippines, Colombia, Mexico, Honduras and Guatemala the countries which account for 80% of killings of HRDs globally.
- Front Line Defenders published *Set Them Free*, an awareness and advocacy tool calling for the release of nine HRDs in long-term detention.

# FOCUS ON GRANTS

**534** GRANTS DELIVERED **35%** WERE EMERGENCY RESPONSE



BY VIOLATION

**34%** GRANTS IN RESPONSE TO THREATS 28% GRANTS IN RESPONSE TO ARREST/DETENTION 15% GRANTS IN RESPONSE TO PHYSICAL ATTACK 12% GRANTS IN RESPONSE TO JUDICIAL PROCEDURES 11% GRANTS IN RESPONSE TO RAID/BREAK-IN/THEFT 9% GRANTS IN RESPONSE TO SURVEILLANCE

\*TOTAL PERCENTAGE > 100% AS GRANTS CAN BE IN RESPONSE TO MORE THAN ONE TYPE OF VIOLATION

**THREATS** 

**PHYSICAL** DETENTION



EUROPE & CENTRAL ASIA ...16% AFRICA ......25% ASIA-PACIFIC ......16%



#### BY ISSUE WORKING ON

13% TO ENVIRONMENTAL & LAND RIGHTS DEFENDERS

13% TO LGBT+ RIGHTS DEFENDERS

10% TO MINORITY RIGHTS DEFENDERS

10% TO FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION DEFENDERS

6% TO WOMEN'S RIGHTS DEFENDERS

6% TO HRDS WORKING ON IMPUNITY/JUSTICE



#### **URGENT APPEALS**



AFRICA – 28 URGENT APPEALS ON BEHALF OF 50 HRDS
AMERICAS – 42 URGENT APPEALS ON BEHALF OF 66 HRDS
ASIA-PACIFIC – 39 URGENT APPEALS ON BEHALF OF 68 HRDS
MENA – 37 URGENT APPEALS ON BEHALF OF 68 HRDS
ECA – 40 URGENT APPEALS ON BEHALF OF 53 HRDS

#### PROTECTION COORDINATOR MISSIONS



AFRICA – 14 MISSIONS TO 12 COUNTRIES
AMERICAS – 11 MISSIONS TO 8 COUNTRIES
ASIA-PACIFIC – 10 MISSIONS TO 7 COUNTRIES
MENA – 7 MISSIONS TO 5 COUNTRIES
ECA – 7 MISSIONS TO 4 COUNTRIES

## 180 HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANISATIONS RECEIVED DIGITAL PROTECTION FROM FRONT LINE DEFENDERS

## **CAPACITY BUILDING**



#### RISK ASSESSMENT & PROTECTION PLANNING (RAPP)

94% OF HRDS WHO PARTICIPATED IN RAPP TRAINING SHARED THEIR LEARNINGS FROM THE WORKSHOP WITH THEIR COLLEAGUES — ON AVERAGE, ONE HRD SHARED WITH 9 COLLEAGUES.



#### **DIGITAL PROTECTION**

180 HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANISATIONS RECEIVED SUPPORT FROM FLD, WITH OVER 1,200 HRDS IMPACTED BY INCREASED DIGITAL SECURITY

#### **SECURITY CONSULTATIONS**

57 CONSULTATIONS FOR 204 HRDS AND 41 HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANISATIONS



On 18 December, Front Line Defenders was presented with the 2018 United Nations Prize in the Field of Human Rights at the UN headquarters in New York. President of the UN General Assembly, María Fernanda Espinosa of Ecuador, presented the Prize to **Maryam Al-Khawaja**, daughter of **Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja**, Front Line Defenders former MENA Protection Coordinator (now imprisoned), who represented the organisation onstage. The Prize is presented every five years, and previous honorees have included Eleanor Roosevelt, Nelson Mandela, Jimmy Carter, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malala Yousafzai. Other winners recognised in 2018 were Ms. Rebeca Gyumi (Tanzania), Ms. Joênia Wapichana (Joênia Batista de Carvalho) (Brazil) and the family of Ms. Asma Jahangir (Pakistan), who passed away earlier in the year.



hosted a reception at The Times Center in midtown Manhattan, to thank its supporters, celebrate the work and courage of human rights defenders and remember HRDs facing long term imprisonment. Banners featuring photos and names of HRDs featuring in the new report, *Set Them Free*, adorned the room.

HRDs Maryam Al-Khawaja (Bahrain), Mudawi Ibrahim Adam (Sudan), Nurcan Baysal (Turkey) and Hina Jilani (Pakistan) spoke about their experiences as HRDs and the significance of the Prize for them. The Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations, Ambassador Geraldine Byrne Nason, welcomed the audience and reflected on Ireland's role in the world advocating for HRDs,

while UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, **Michel Forst**, spoke to the important role Front Line Defenders plays in advancing his mandate. **Kerry Kennedy**, founder of Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights, was a special guest and offered her insights into why Front Line Defenders is an important ally and keystone organisation of the human rights movement.

Finally, Chairman of the Front Line Defenders Board of Directors, **Denis O'Brien**, closed the event by thanking the organisation's supporters and expressing the gratitude of the organisation for the recognition bestowed by the United Nations in presenting Front Line Defenders with the UN Prize in the Field of Human Rights.



(top, left to right): Denis O'Brien, Ambassador Geraldine Byrne Nason, Nurcan Baysal (Turkey), Maryam Al-Khawaja (Bahrain), Mudawi Ibrahim Adam (Sudan), Hina Jilani (Pakistan) and Andrew Anderson; (bottom) Mudawi Ibrahim Adam speaking at a reception the night before the ceremony at the UN, with Andrew Anderson.



UN GA President 

OUN PGA



Today I announced the 2018 winners of the @UN Human Rights Prize. I am proud to recognise the contributions of individuals & organizations that promote & protect human rights @RebecaGyumi @Asma\_Jahangir Joênia Wapichana @FrontLineHRD Your work is an inspiration to us all #UN4ALL

12:17 AM - 26 Oct 2018





Great news from UNHQ NY - Ireland's Front Line Defenders @FrontLineHRD are winners of prestigious 2018 UN prize for Human Rights. Proud to see them honored as they work to protect human rights defenders in the most dangerous & challenging parts of the world.

3:39 PM - 25 Oct 2018 from Cork, Ireland



Front Line Defenders Protection Coordinator (PC) for Africa visited Djibouti in 2018. Djibouti sits at a strategic location in the Red Sea region, leading it to become the country with the most foreign military bases of any in the world. In over 40 years since independence, it has only had two presidents, with the current incumbent, President Ismail Omar Guelleh, in power for over 20 years. Civil liberties and human rights are regularly trampled upon, though foreign powers view the country as 'stable'. During his visit, the PC met with local HRDs, who mainly work on civil and political rights, journalists, and student activists. There is very little infrastructure of support for HRDs, while the government is expanding its capacity to monitor the population, most recently wth the acquisition of surveillance technology from Chinese partners. Additionally, Africa Regional PCs carried our missions to Angola, Benin, Burundi, Cote d'Ivoire, DRC, Kenya, Mauritania, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda.

Ligue djiboutienne des Droits Humains (LDDH) is one of the only human rights NGOs operating in Djibouti. Front Line Defenders provided a grant for digital security measures and equipment after the national police and security forces

seized the organisation's equipment.

In August, FLD's Executive Director traveled to South Africa to participate in events marking the 100th anniversary of Nelson Mandela's birth. Together with the Head of Communications & Visibility, he then traveled to Durban and the coal mining region of Mpumalanga to meet HRDs at risk and assess opportunities for engaging with South African authorities to boost protection of HRDs. In Durban, HRDs from **Abahlali baseMjondolo** working on housing rights of urban poor are under lethal threat, with four members of the movement killed since 2017 and the Director going underground due to threats to him and his family. In Mpumalanga, community and grassroots activists challenging mining companies in court are also under threat and face a range of physical and legal risks, as well as threats from traditional leaders.

#### **RESEARCH MISSION: ANGOLA**

In August, FLD's Head of Protection and Protection Coordinator conducted a joint mission to Angola to assess the situation for HRDs following a change in the political leadership of the country in 2017. Strongman President José Eduardo dos Santos retired after 38 years in power, during which time the space for civil society was extremely limited and HRDs were routinely subjected to surveillance, attack, smear campaigns and judicial harassment.

Reports from HRDs in Huila province and Lobito suggest the situation has improved somewhat under the new leadership and the defenders are working hard to ensure that this welcome opening is not just temporary.



(Top): HRD and priest Pio Wacussanga, accompanied by a local pastoralist, shows Front Line Defenders the community-led reservoir used to tackle the severe drought resulting from the use of water by large scale farms in Huila Province; (above) Meeting with HRD Nelson Mucazo Euclides (from Moxico Province) during a national gathering of HRDs in Lobito, Benguela Province.







(Left): Andrew Anderson attending community meeting of Abahlali Base M'jondolo in a shantytown in Durban; (middle): Security training for investigative journalists at the Media House of Benin; (right): Zambian WHRD Laura Miti explains the problems of corruption in her country.



### [LGBT+ CRISIS] TANZANIA

In October, Paul Makonda, regional commissioner for Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, put out a call to the public to 'out' allegedly gay citizens, and claimed to have received over 5,000 messages in a matter of days. Earlier in the year, FLD's Media & Visibility Coordinator had visited the country to conduct research for an upcoming report and met many HRDs active in the LGBT+ field. When this crisis hit, LGBT+ HRDs reached out to Front Line Defenders, which was prepared to provide emergency assistance. The crisis quickly became known as a 'witch hunt' with many in the LGBT+ community, as well as the sex worker community, forced to go into hiding, leaving many economically vulnerable. For HRDs, who provide health services and counseling, as well as rights defence, the sudden turn of events served as a reminder of the need for more sustained efforts to raise awareness and tolerance in the country. Front Line Defenders was one of the first organisations to bring international attention to the crisis through our media and campaigning.

FROM 29 OCTOBER – 31 DECEMBER:

6 26 HRDS SUPPORTED

In 2018, Front Line Defenders Protection Coordinators (PCs) for the Americas carried out research missions and attended events, conferences and meetings in Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, and Costa Rica.

In Brazil, the PC visited Rio de Janeiro a number of times, to meet with HRDs impacted by a changing security situation in the wake of the deployment of the army in favelas and the assassination of feminist, human rights defender and city councillor, Marielle Franco, in March. Front Line Defenders provided security grants to 6 WHRDs in the months after the assassination, including to Marielle's family, who have led the campaign for justice in her case.

In Colombia, Movimiento Rios Vivos Antioquia (MRVA) has been working to stop the Hidroituango Dam that threatens to deluge lands where thousands of families live. Since the construction of the dam began, MRVA has been organising public demonstrations to oppose the project and raise awareness about its impact. The Dam burst in 2018 causing a major humanitarian crisis, 10,000+ homes lost and mass destruction. Because of their activism, MRVA members and the communities that support the movement have been repeatedly targeted; MRVA has documented 152 attacks against its members. Six people have been killed, two have survived assassination attempts, there has been one attempted enforced disappearance and 63 people have been threatened. There have also been break-ins, surveillance, smear campaigns, several cases of discrimination, mass arrests, criminalisation and other forms of harassment. FLD supported MRVA and HRDs with advocacy, visibility and security consultation.



Background image: Ivi Oliveira, Americas Protection Coordinator, visiting the Antioquia region overlooking the Cauca River, upon which a major hydroelectric dam threatens local communities.

#### STRENGTHENING CAPACITY



In November 2018, FLD delivered a Trainers Development Meeting in Guatemala for nine HRDs from Argentina, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru and Venezuela. The Trainers Development Meetings provided follow-up support to participants at previous Training-of-Trainers and Risk Assessment and Protection Planning trainings who are now delivering local capacity-building workshops to HRDs in their countries. The meeting provided an opportunity to:

- Share and review learning experiences over the last 12 months from local workshops delivered by the trainers supported by FLD
- Develop advanced skills and knowledge for the participants in the fields of physical, digital and psychosocial security training
- Strengthen networking, resource sharing and support between trainers across the Latin America region.

### [CRISIS RESPONSE] NICARAGUA

On 18 April 2018, pro-government forces in Nicaragua attacked and suppressed a relatively small protest against social security reform. While the initial protest was limited in scope, the video of the repression spread on social media and years of pent up frustration and anger at the Ortega government triggered more protests and more repression, eventually spreading across the country. Since then, hundreds of civilians have been killed, thousands more injured, with hundreds of activists detained as tens of thousands flee the country.

As the crisis expanded, the government started to crack down on HRDs who were documenting the repression, connecting with international human rights organisations and offering a credible, respected perspective counter to government propaganda and efforts to demonize the protesters. HRDs suffered violence, arrest, arbitrary detention, falsified charges, travel bans, intimidation, de-registration of their organisations and threats of violence.

## FROM 18 APRIL – 31 DECEMBER

GRANTS

URGENT APPEALS

**4** ADVOCACY STATEMENTS







(Left): Ivi Oliveira speaking at a press conference in Oaxaca announcing the release of HRDs Damián Gallardo Martinez and Enrique Guerrero Aviña from prison; (centre) Ivi Oliveira [left] with WHRD Isabel Zuleta from Movimiento Rios Vivos Antioquia in Colombia; (right) Mexican HRDs at a Visibility for Protection workshop in Chihuahua.

#### **GOOD NEWS**

On 28 December 2018, Mexican HRDs Damián Gallardo Martínez and Enrique Guerrero Aviña were released from prison after spending more than five years in what was determined to be an arbitrary detention.

Their cases drew international attention, and the release of the HRDs and their fellow detainees seems to be the beginning of the realisation of the promises made by newly installed President Andrés Manuel López Obrador

(AMLO) to introduce reconciliation measures and release prisoners.

Front Line Defenders had campaigned for the release of Damián Gallardo, and had carried out a number of visibility activities in his case. These included publishing a book of his poetry written behind bars, *Fragmentos De Un Espejo Oculto*, and visiting him in prison up to as recently as October 2018, when FLD Americas Protection Coordinators and Deputy Director visited Damián.



## [REGION] ASIA-PACIFIC

Front Line Defenders Protection Coordinator (PC) for Asia visited Indonesia in April to follow up the 2017 Front Line Defenders report, *Attacks on LGBT Rights Defenders Escalating in Indonesia*, on LGBT+ rights defenders and the increased threats they were facing from conservative religious groups, government officials and political party operatives. The PC was joined by the Executive Director for meetings with an advisor to the President, the National Human Rights Institution, the National Women's Commission, a Member of Parliament and civil society organisations and HRDs. With Presidential elections being held in 2019, Front Line Defenders was keen to engage stakeholders about the potential for the LGBT+ community to be targeted for the purposes of generating voter support. Asia Regional PCs also conducted missions in India, Myanmar, Nepal, and the Philippines.





Andrew Anderson and Sayeed Ahmed meeting with the National Women's Commission in Indonesia; (right): Sayeed Ahmed visiting families in Loktak Lake, Manipur, India.

The Asia PC visited Thailand three times in 2018, in order to meet HRDs throughout the country in advance of the general election to be held in early 2019 - the first since the military took over power in 2014. The first visit in Bangkok coincided with a regional consultation workshop on reprisals held by the office of UN Assistant Secretary-General, Andrew Gilmour. In addition to the PC, the Asia Digital Protection Consultant (DPC) made a presentation on digital security.

The next two visits took the PC around the country to meet HRDs working on a variety of issues, and facing various types of threats. The period leading up to the elections in March 2019 was expected to be a time of increased risk to and harassment of HRDs. In an indication of what was expected, 15 prodemocracy HRDs, including **Anon Nampa, Rangsiman Rome, Sirawith Seritiwat, Chonticha Jaengrew** and **Piyarat Chongthep**, were arrested and charged with sedition, and with violating the government's ban on political gatherings of five or more people.

#### [COLLECTIVE PROTECTION] ACEH

In early 2018, Indonesian police drastically increased the number of violent raids, assaults, and detentions of transgender human rights defenders in Aceh province. In January, police arrested 12 transwomen, HRDs and members of the community organisation Putroe Sejati Aceh, in raids conducted on beauty salons. Civilians known to be affiliated with religious extremist groups in the area participated in the violent raid. Police cut the transwomen's hair, forced them to take off their feminine clothing, and physically assaulted them. They were then placed in police trucks and taken to North Aceh Police Station.

At the police station, officers forced the HRDs to wear men's clothing as a form of gendered humiliation, and to perform degrading physical activities including rolling on the floor and doing "exercises" while being beaten throughout the night. FLD responded to the assaults with rapid protection grants to HRDs in Aceh and Jakarta who led the emergency relocations of transwomen and fellow activists; an urgent appeal; a public statement; and a submission to and follow-up advocacy with the OHCHR's new special branch dedicated to LGBT+ rights.

#### **ADVOCACY**

Rani Yan Yan is a Bangladeshi human rights defender and the advisor of the Chakma Circle Chief. As a woman indigenous leader, she works for the empowerment of indigenous women, protests violence against them and regularly raises their issues in meetings in Bangladesh and abroad, including meetings at the UN.

On 15 February 2018, members of the army and plainclothes police arrived at Rangmati Sadar Hospital in Chittagong Division, where Rani Yan Yan and a companion were visiting two sisters who were recovering from a sexual assault. The soldiers and plainclothes police entered the ward, switched off the lights and attacked Rani Yan Yan and her companion. Rani Yan Yan reported that prior to the attack, she had noticed that her movements in the hospital were being recorded by a number of men in plainclothes using the cameras on their smartphones. Within 48 hours, FLD issued an Urgent Appeal, the FLD EU Office contacted MEP Neena Gil, and she raised the case with the Bangladeshi Foreign Minister, who was in Brussels.





## [CRISIS] SRI LANKA

In October and November 2018, the Front Line Defenders Asia PC undertook two missions to war-affected areas in the Northern Province of Sri Lanka, in the midst of a national political crisis sparked by the collapse of the ruling coalition and the installation of former President Mahinda Rajapaksa as Prime Minister. The end of Rajapaksa's term in 2015 provided an increased space for HRDs in the north to operate and critically engage with the State. Local activists who were silent during the Rajapaksa regime increased their visibility as individuals and groups to advocate directly and openly for their rights and to seek accountability for crimes and violations committed against them. The political crisis at the end of

the year caught people unaware and many local activists were ill-prepared to respond to the fresh risk of reprisals and attacks. HRDs working on youth mobilisation among the marginalised Tamil community and HRDs - particularly women activists - working with families of victims of the conflict face heightened risk, including surveillance, intimidation and harassment from the security and intelligence services. Following a series of meetings with HRDs and community leaders, the PC developed a plan for increased support to build capacity of the HRDs in the region and undertook briefings to the diplomatic community in Colombo on the situation in the north and need for increased attention to the risks HRDs face.

## 14 [REGION] EUROPE & CENTRAL ASIA

Front Line Defenders Protection Coordinator (PC) for Europe & Central Asia conducted missions in Russia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan in 2018, and attended meetings and workshops in Lithuania, Czech Republic, Kyrgyzstan, the United Kingdom, France and Sweden. Throughout the region, the twin problems of authoritarian rule and the rise of right-wing political movements has posed a significant threat to HRDs. Combined with an erosion of respect for minority rights, of acceptance of the role of civil society and of support for decades-old institutions and norms, HRDs are facing crises not only in places that make headlines like Russia and Turkey, but also in traditional bastions of democratic norms such as France and Italy.

Defenders of immigrants' asylum seekers' rights were targeted in many European countries. Actions of solidarity with migrants have led to arrests, judicial harassment, intimithreats and dation, campaigns, creating a climate of hostility and hate towards NGOs and volunteers. In Hungary, as a part of the 'Stop Soros' legislation, the Criminal Code was amended to introduce "facilitating illegal immigration" as a crime with a maximum punishment of one year of imprisonment. The stigmatisation of migrants rights defenders and smear campaigns against them also led directly to physical attacks. In October, Génération Identitaire, a wing anti-immigration movement, attacked the movement headquarters of SoS Méditerranée

in Marseille. Members blocked access to the premises, erected a banner with "SoS Mediterranean complicit in human trafficking" emblazoned on it and refused to allow staff to leave for several hours before police arrived to evacuate the premises. In December, the organisation, along with Médecins Sans Frontières, was forced to stop its joint search and rescue operations of the ship Aquarius in the Mediterranean due to "dishonest smearing and obstructive campaigns". HRDs assisting migrants were criminalised in France, Greece, Italy and Spain. Front Line Defenders took up the case of the 'Briançon 7' in France, a pivotal case in which seven HRDs who had supported refugees entering the country were criminalised.

## [PROTECTION] UKRAINE

In October, Front Line Defenders joined with Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and Freedom House in a public statement and advocacy around the fact that over 50 attacks had been recorded in Ukraine in the first nine months in 2018. Those under attack included HRDs working to defend the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people, protect the environment, and campaign against corruption. The purposes of such attacks are clear: to silence activists and HRDs and to discourage others from speaking out against injustice and standing up for human rights. Among those attacked was environmental defender, Mykola Bychko, who was found dead under suspicious circumstances in a village in Kharkiv region. At the time, Bychko was documenting the pollution of a local river, suspected to be caused by a nearby waste treatment plant. FLD's regional Protection Coordinator was among those who initiated the discussion on far-right groups in Ukraine and she delivered a public lecture in Kyiv on physical assaults, organised a security session with LGBT+ activists of **PrideHub** in Kharkiv and moderated the security discussion of the Coalition of Ukrainian NGOs against physical attacks on activists in October. FLD also organised a training on physical security for HRDs from different Ukranian regions with the **Center for Civil Liberties**. In 2018, Front Line Defenders provided 12 grants benefitting more than 50 HRDs in Ukraine, including support for individual and organisational physical and digital protection measures as well as wellbeing and temporary relocation.

#### **RESILIENCE**

At the end of 2017 and continuing in 2018, Uzbek authorities released a number of HRDs from long-term imprisonment, many of whom FLD had campaigned for and supported over the years. FLD provided grant support to four HRDs who each had been imprisoned for more than 9 years. The grants were for medical support, for rehabilitation and to enable them to restart their human rights work with secure ICT hardware.



Background image: HRD Oyub Titiev, behind bars during a court hearing of his trial; he is targeted because of his fearless work to defend rights in Chechnya.

### [TARGETED] CHECHNYA

Oyub Titiev is one of the longest active HRDs in the Chechen Republic, owing both to his determination to stay and continue working in one of the most difficult environments for HRDs and to the fact that most other Chechen HRDs who have been at work for more than 10 years are either now out of the territory, are imprisoned or have been killed. Most well known amongst those HRDs is Natalya Estemirova, who was kidnapped and murdered in 2009. Since she was killed, Oyub has headed up the work of Memorial in Chechnya, even as armed conflict raged on, an authoritarian regime took over and targeted HRDs, and as he personally faced more and more direct threats. On 9 January 2018, the human rights defender was taken from his car by people in road police uniforms and brought to Kurchaloy regional police station. Authorities accused Oyub of drug possession and, in plain sight, planted evidence in

his car. A criminal investigation was opened against him, and since then he has been imprisoned. Front Line Defenders has joined with other international and national human rights organisations to campaign for his release, including generating EU statements and a demand from EU High Representative Frederica Mogherini for his immediate release. In October, Titiev was awarded the European Parliament's Sakharov Prize. In December, the FLD Protection Coordinator for Europe & Central Asia attended a court hearing, and noted, "The absurdity of his charges is obvious not only to us, the trial observers, but also to many people in Chechnya. If you took a taxi or went to the nearest cafe, people would drop a hint that they understand what brought you here and how important your presence is, thanking you multiple times for no obvious reasons with a mysterious expression on their faces."

## 16 [REGION] MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA

In 2018, the MENA Regional Protection Coordinator visited Morocco, Jordan, Tunisia, Qatar and Lebanon, while other FLD staff attended a WHRD workshop in Lebanon, and the Media Coordinator researched labour rights defenders in Egypt, in preparation for a 2019 report. As repression in the region continues to escalate following the 2011 Arab Spring and armed conflict continues in a number of countries, new protests focused on economic and social rights in Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Iran and Iraq demonstrate that the region remains in turmoil. HRDs on the front lines of social movements and pushing for reforms remain at grave risk.

The Larsa Foundation is an Iraqi NGO working to restore peace by carrying out bridge-building projects between different religious traditions and minorities. The organisation was at risk of digital surveillance and hacking and sought grant assistance to establish a secure data management system, communications and a website. The grant application was made following work by the MENA Digital Protection Consultant, who visited the group's offices in Basra for a security and needs assessment.







#### **WHRDS**

The WHRDMENA Coalition hosted a global convening of WHRDs from Africa, the Middle East, Europe & Central Asia, the Americas, and Asia to build solidarity and share strategies for movement building and protection.

Topics included 'Defending Human Rights in Contexts of War, Occupation and Migration,' 'Organizing and Activism Under the Military State and Religious State,' along with sessions on international advocacy opportunities and self-care for WHRDs.



Front Line Defenders Media & Visibility Coordinator and Head of EU Office attended the convening in solidarity with WHRDs and to host a consultation for an upcoming toolkit to make the EU Guidelines more responsive to the needs of WHRDs. Defenders participated in an open forum discussing practical protection needs that EU Member States and in-country Delegations could support, along with case studies of strong EU engagement with WHRD protection in the past.

#### [ROUNDED UP] SAUDI ARABIA



Throughout the year, Front Line Defenders worked on cases of Saudi HRDs and kept up public pressure through media work and advocacy targeting the Saudi government. In a notoriously gruesome killing, Saudi officials at the highest level were - at the very least - implicated in the killing of journalist and dissident, Jamal Khashoggi, in the country's consulate in Turkey. While this act received prominent international media coverage, the situation of Saudi HRDs generally received less attention. WHRDs who had campaigned at great personal risk and cost for the right to drive finally succeeded in having the law changed, only to see some of the key activists in the movement detained and subsequently

tortured behind bars. In June, Front Line Defenders joined over 30 other organisations in a joint public statement condemning the arrests of Loujain Al-Hathloul, Dr. Eman Al-Nafjan, Aziza Al-Yousef, Nouf Abdulaziz Al-

Dosari, Amal al-Harbi, Iman al-Nafjan, Maya'a al-Zahrani, Samar Badawi, Nassima Al-Sadah, Hatoon Al-Fassi, Dr. Aisha Al-Manae, Dr. Hessa Al-Sheikh, Dr. Madeha Al-Ajroush, Walaa Al-Shubbar, Noha Al-Balawi and Maria Naji. In August, Front Line Defenders challenged European nations to follow the lead of Canada and publicly condemn the arrests and continued detention of the WHRDs. FLD's Visibility team and MENA Protection Coordinator appeared in more than a dozen media interviews throughout the year focused on HRDs in Saudi Arabia, especially after the Khashoggi killing, to keep attention on the cases of the HRDs and to maintain public pressure.







On 5 December, **Abd Al-Hamid Goura** was summoned to a police station in Laghouat, hours after the publication of a statement by the regional section of the Algerian League for the Defence of Human Rights, which was signed by the HRD.

Front Line Defenders issued an Urgent Appeal at around 7 pm local time, while he was still being interrogated. According to Abd Al-Hamid, police officers saw the Urgent Appeal online and asked him about Front Line Defenders and how international organisations knew about his arrest. The HRD reported that as a result of the international attention from FLD, the police immediately released him pending trial, while initially they had wanted to keep him in detention and conduct interrogation over a number of days.

One charge related to "glorifying terrorism" was dropped, although the HRD still faces a charge of "assaulting a governmental institution".

## [RECOGNITION] FLD AWARD

FOR THE FIRST TIME, THE FRONT LINE DEFENDERS AWARD FOR HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS AT RISK WAS AWARDED TO HRDS FROM FIVE REGIONS.

Since 2005, the Front Line Defenders Award for Human Rights Defenders at Risk has been presented annually to human rights defenders who have made exceptional contributions to protecting and promoting the rights of their communities. 2018 marked the first time Front Line Defenders has recognised defenders from five different countries as Regional Winners. The 2018 finalists and their families have faced attacks, defamation campaigns, legal harassment, death threats, prison sentences, and intimidation.

Nurcan Baysal, named the Global Laureate, was honoured at a ceremony at Dublin City Hall in Ireland in May 2018 attended by Irish civil society, officials and politicians. UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, Kate Gilmore, presented Nurcan with the Front Line Defenders Award for Human Rights Defenders at Risk. Ms Gilmore spoke about the extreme risks Nurcan has faced in telling the stories of Kurdish communities, calling her "one of the most inspiring examples that one could find of courage in the face of great force and great threat."

Nurcan is a Kurdish journalist and HRD based in Diyarbakir in southern Turkey. When the government launched a military offensive in the south-east in 2016, Nurcan spent months visiting Kurdish villages under bombardment, documenting human rights violations, and helping families who'd lost everything in the conflict. Her writings are known for their critical focus on the voices of women living under the bombardment. She was detained for speaking against the violence, and although later released, she faces up to 3 years in jail in a separate case related to her writing. In addition to her reporting, Nurcan has also co-founded several NGOs, set up a camp to help Yazidi women fleeing the Islamic State, and been a key voice in countless reconciliation programmes in the region.





#### HASSAN BOURAS Regional Winner, Middle East & North Africa

Hassan Bouras is a journalist, blogger, member of the Algerian League of Human Rights, and founding member of the Rejection Front, a coalition against fracking to extract shale gas in Algeria. His reporting on both corruption and torture in Algeria spans more than two decades and because of this work, he has been repeatedly targeted by Algerian authorities.



In Delhi, Front Line Defenders worked with Human Rights Law Network to host a celebration of indigenous peoples' rights defenders working in conflict zones and against extractives in east India, in honour of regional Asia Regional Winner Soni Sori who wanted to use the award to build solidarity amongst fellow at-risk environmental and indigenous peoples rights defenders. Soni also held advocacy meetings for foreign diplomats.

The Head of Front Line Defenders EU Office travelled to Guatemala City in June to present the Award to the Americas Regional Winner, the Peaceful Resistance of the Microregion of Ixquisis. Twenty members of the community received a plaque honouring their defence of human rights, land rights and their livelihood, which they then brought back to Ixquisis to share with the wider community. Front Line Defenders Executive Director presented the Award to the Regional Winner for Africa, LUCHA of the DRC, at a ceremony in Johannesburg, South Africa in July. The award was received by South Africa-based LUCHA HRD Soraya Aziz.



#### SONI SORI, INDIA Regional Winner, Asia-Pacific

Soni Sori is an indigenous and women's rights defender in the militarised Bastar region of Chattisghar, India, where state-backed paramilitary forces are waging a violent campaign against local Adivasi tribes in the name of combating an armed Maoist insurgency. Soni documents and advocates against violence perpetrated by the paramilitary and police forces, which includes razing villages, burning homes, raping local women, and torturing and sexually assaulting tribespeople detained without cause.



## PEACEFUL RESISTANCE OF THE MICRO-REGION OF IXQUISIS, GUATEMALA

#### **Regional Winner, Americas**

La Resistencia Pacífica de la Microregión de Ixquisis formed in response to grave rights violations committed in the name of economic advancement in Guatemala. The government has authorised destructive mining and hydroelectric mega-projects in the region despite widespread opposition from 59 villages and 7 communities in the municipality. HRDs in Ixquisis risk their lives to defend the territory.



#### LUCHA, DRC Regional Winner, Africa

**LUCHA** is a non-partisan youth movement formed in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo that struggles against chronic corruption and impunity in the country. Initially focused on local issues like access to drinking water, electricity, and youth unemployment, in just 6 years the movement has developed into an extensive national-level network of powerful social organisers. Peaceful protests and demonstrations led by LUCHA are routinely attacked by authorities.

The Front Line Defenders EU Office in Brussels raises cases of at-risk HRDs with the relevant institutions of the EU, including the European Parliament, and with Member States in order to generate pressure on authorities. The office also works to raise the issue of HRD protection and respect for the work of HRDs in various EU mechanisms, trade agreements and the EU's bilateral relations with other countries.

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The EU Office raised the case of renowned photographer **Shahidul Alam**'s (left) arrest with the EU Delegation in Bangladesh as well as with MEPs. The EU and its Member States applied pressure on the Bangladeshi government through statements, meetings, and trial observation.

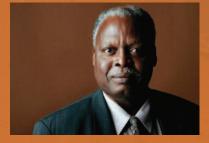
MEPs then advanced a European Parliament (EP) resolution on Shahidul's case in November 2018. He was granted bail on the day the resolution was voted through, and released a few days later.



On 11 May, Amal Fathy (left) was arrested by Egyptian police. The EU Office raised Amal's situation with diplomats and MEPs. MEPs then sent a letter expressing concern about her detention, and the European Parliament adopted a resolution on her case and that of other HRDs on 13 December 2018, and on 18 December an Egyptian court ordered her release, ahead of the EU-Egypt Association Council meeting.

On 1 February, Sudanese NISS forces arrested **Salih Mahmoud Osman**, (right) Vice President of the Darfur Bar Association, at his law firm as part of a crackdown and arrests of HRDs in the country. The EU Office raised his case with the EU and Member States, as well as with the European Parliament. The EP then adopted a resolution

on the cases of detained Sudanese HRDs in March 2018. Salih and fellow HRDs were released in April. In early January 2019, however, Salih was detained again.





(Left): Emma Achili, Head of the EU Office and Colombian HRD Marino Cordoba present the *Stop the Killings* report to EEAS officials, Adrianus Koetsenruiter and Blanca Ausejo; (centre) Brussels launch of the FLD Annual Report; WHRDs from Central America meeting with EEAS officials.

## STRENGTHENING CAPACITY

In October, FLD's EU Advocacy Officer and West & Central Africa Protection Coordinator organised an EU Guidelines Workshop in Niamey, Niger for diplomats and 15 HRDs. Earlier in 2018, HRDs faced a crackdown, particularly those uncovering and reporting on corruption. Despite efforts by the diplomatic community to advocate for the HRDs, contact between and the diplomatic community had been almost nonexistent. There is a strong sense that the diplomatic community did not have a good idea of the challenges that HRDs faced. As a result of the workshop, HRDs agreed to coordinate and provide regular information to the EU Delegation, while in a side meeting, the EU Ambassador and of Political Section committed to establishing regular meetings with HRDs ahead of EU dialogue with the government.





## [RAPID RESPONSE] SENGWER PEOPLE, KENYA

On 16 January 2018, two Sengwer tribesmen were targeted by Kenya Forest Service forces while herding cattle in Kapkot Glade, in the Embobut forest, which is the ancestral land of the indigenous Sengwer people. Community organiser **Robert Kiprotich** was shot and killed and community leader **David Kipkosgei Kiptilkes** was seriously injured, requiring surgery. Kenya Forest Service (KFS) officers carried out forced evictions of the Sengwer people throughout 2017, including burning homes.

FLD's EU office was able to rapidly communicate the incident to MEPs, and the incident was raised in a European Parliament plenary debate the evening of the incident. The European Commission responded by suspending the funding to the Water Towers project in Embobut forest. The following week the EU office facilitated a round of advocacy meetings in Brussels with EU institutions and Member States for a visiting Sengwer WHRD, who was also able to address a FLD-organised public event together with MEPs and senior European Commission

officials. This led to increasing pressure from the EU and Member States on Kenyan authorities to cease attacks on the Sengwer. In November, FLD, together with CSO partners, facilitated meetings for another Sengwer HRD, as well as cohosted an event in the European Parliament, with a continued commitment from EU institutions to support the Sengwer, review the conditions for the project, liaise with authorities and provide access to emergency grants in cases of need.

## 22 [CAPACITY] DIGITAL PROTECTION

Front Line Defenders provided both emergency rapid digital support and preventative capacity-building support in 2018, deploying its network of staff and regionally-based Digital Protection Consultants (DPCs) on 73 field missions in 33 countries.

CONSULTANCIES

HRDS DIRECTLY SUPPORTED

NGOS SUPPORTED

"MY CO-WORKER AND I ARE FEELING ENERGISED TO EDUCATE OUR OFFICE ON SAFER DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT PRACTICES. WE REALLY BELIEVE THAT ORGANISATIONS AND HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN FOUR REGION WOULD GREATLY BENEFIT."

- HRDS SUPPORTED BY FLD DIGITAL PROTECTION CONSULTANT, THAILAND

Background image: MENA Digital Protection Consultant delivering a digital protection workshop in northern Iraq.

Front Line Defenders targeted support to some of the most at-risk groups throughout 2018. Over the course of the year these groups have included: environmental rights defenders; rural HRDs and those working outside the capital or major urban centres; HRDs working on minority rights; LGBT+ movements; investigative journalists and whistle-blowers highlighting issues of corruption and organised crime; and HRDs working in conflict zones, especially those monitoring and documenting violations in conflict. Digital protection support to some of the most at-risk HRDs included:



- Refugee and stateless HRDs and civil society groups along the Myanmar-Thai border, affected by conflict in Myanmar;
- WHRDs and LGBT+ defenders facing gender-based risks in Pakistan, Nepal, Morocco, rural Russia and many more;
- HRDs working in conflict zones including in Yemen, Syria, and Eastern Ukraine, where remote support was provided to HRDs monitoring and reporting from the conflicts.

#### **DIGITAL TRENDS**

Front Line Defenders digital protection staff and consultants identified a number of global and regional trends that negatively impact HRD security as they pursue the defence of human rights, including:

- Anti-NGO legislation, national security legislation, and legislation aimed at restricting freedom of expression and privacy online has granted sweeping new powers to criminalise the work of HRDs.
- The period immediately before and after governmental elections often sees significantly increased digital security risks for HRDs.

## [CAPACITY] RISK ANALYSIS & PROTECTION PLANNING

In 2018, Front Line Defenders organised and supported 14 workshops on risk analysis and protection planning (RAPP), at which 161 HRDs were trained, 86 of whom were women. Workshops were held in Guatemala, Kenya (2), Nigeria, Madagascar, Mexico, Myanmar, Serbia, the Philippines, Tunisia (2), Thailand, Uganda and Ukraine. The workshops included a two-workshop Training of Trainers (ToT) Course for LGBT+ HRDs, and a Development Meeting for Spanish-speaking Facilitators in the trainers network. HRDs came from 20 countries: Argentina, Cameroon, Cambodia, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Kenya, Madagascar, Mexico, Myanmar, Paraguay, Peru, Tanzania, the Philippines, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine and Venezuela.

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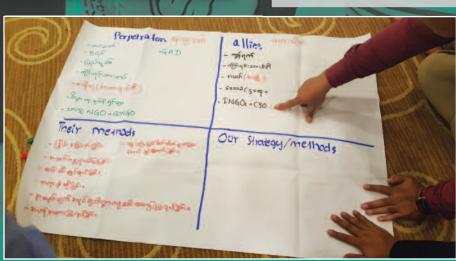
93%

HRDS TRAINED

OF HRDS CREATED AND
IMPLEMENTED SECURITY PLANS

Background image: Eastern Africa HRDs at a Risk Analysis and Protection Planning (RAPP) workshop in Kenya.





#### **ONGOING IMPACT**

HRDs who have been trained in previous years continue to use their knowledge and skills among their peers, often holding workshops to promote Risk Assessment and Protection Planning.

Three training participants from 2018 reported initiating and conducting training for fellow HRDs in Madagascar and Mexico (2), while trained HRDs in Cameroon and Uganda also trained others after receiving grants to cover logistic and transportation costs for participants.

RAPP workshop for HRDs in Madagascar

#### **SECURITY ADVISOR**

Front Line Defenders continued to develop the Security Advisor programme. The Security Advisor works with most-at-risk HRDs to provide one-to-one security planning that is tailored to their needs and the specific threats they are facing.

In 2018, the Security Advisor delivered 74 consultations reaching 150 HRDs in Kenya, Afghanistan, Egypt, Mexico, Costa Rica, Nigeria, Brazil, Tanzania, Occupied Palestinian Territories, Philippines, Ghana, South Africa, Venezuela, Mozambique, Uganda and Indonesia.

## 24 [ENGAGEMENT] VISIBILITY

In 2017, Front Line Defenders Visibility team piloted a series of workshops for WHRDs, HRDs, and activist collectives aimed at identifying and analyzing how risks facing defenders can be proactively combated through visibility, campaigns, and legitimacy projects. The workshops draw on an ongoing process of developing a larger Visibility for Protection (VfP) framework, which understands HRD visibility at local, national, international, and familial levels as integral to their security and protection.

Between 2017 and 2018, Front Line Defenders held VfP workshops in Bangladesh, the Philippines, Mali, Myanmar, Mexico and Mozambique. Participants included at-risk defenders representing indigenous communities, defending land and territories in the context of violent extractive projects, leading targeted LGBT+ movements, documenting extrajudicial killings in working class communities, and fighting for women's full citizenship and political space in the public sphere. The workshops include sessions on defamation analysis, audience selection, and strategy-building for counter-narratives. Over three days, HRDs build capacities to identify the most useful strategies to counter smear campaigns in their local context, and create new narrative projects to stop the spread of defamatory messages.

Emphasis in the workshops is placed on targeting audiences who are currently recipients of negative messages about HRDs, and identifying practical intervention points to counter narratives which put them at direct risk of physical, legal, psychological, verbal, sexual and gendered attacks.

"WE LEARNED THAT WE NEED TO BE CAREFUL ABOUT IDENTIFYING WHO IS BEHIND THE DEFAMATORY ATTACK OR CAMPAIGN, WHICH INSTITUTIONS ARE RESPONSIBLE, AND THEN EVALUATE THE BEST MECHANISM TO ADDRESS IT."

- HRD, MOZAMBIQUE

# **PUBLIC RESOURCES** ISA BIGGER



Adam Shapiro, Head of Communication & Visibility speaking at the launch of the Zambian Network for Human Rights Defenders in Lusaka.



## [ADVOCACY] ZAMBIA REPORT

In November 2018, Front Line Defenders launched a report on Zambian HRDs and civil society, Creeping Towards Authoritarianism? Impacts on Human Rights Defenders and Civil Society in Zambia. Zambia has long been seen as a stable, democratic nation in an otherwise difficult region, and that reputation has helped keep the country out of international news reports and led to a situation where civil society and HRDs face unique challenges in terms of lack of resoures and support when it comes to human rights issues. In the last few years, however, fueled by Chinese investment, governing structures have become increasingly used by the ruling party and elite to consolidate political and economic power. Since presidential elections in 2016, HRDs are increasingly under pressure and threat, particularly those monitoring and exposing political and economic corruption, while media outlets and journalists face censure and those defending LGBT+ rights are coming under renewed attack from an empowered right-wing Evangelical movement.



## [PARTNERSHIP] MEXICO PROJECT

In February 2018, Front Line Defenders initiated a 3-year project partnership with El Centro de Derechos Humanos de las Mujeres (CEDEHM), funded by EU-EIDHR Mexico. The partners coordinated a series of activities focused on capacity building, awareness raising and access to resources for Mexican HRDs.



The activities of the partnership utilised the skills and strengths of each organisation and were conducted after identifying needs of WHRDs in the country related to supporting the security and protection of HRDs and expanding the awareness of and support for WHRDs in the country.

In March 2018, 'La Lucha: The Story of Lucha Castro and Human Rights in Mexico' was launched and presented in Spain and Italy, with the participation of Ruth Fierro, Director of CEDEHM. A training of trainers (ToT) in Risk Assessment and Protection Planning for HRDs took place in July 2018, with the participation of 11 HRDs from across the country, working in a variety of issues including migrants' rights, women's rights, torture and forced disappearances. In November 2018, a 3-day National Meeting with the participation of over 30 CSOs from

Background (top) - Maria San Martin, Visibility Coordinator (far right), facilitating a Visibility for Protection workshop in Chihuahua, Mexico;

(bottom) - HRDs at a RAPP workshop in Mexico.

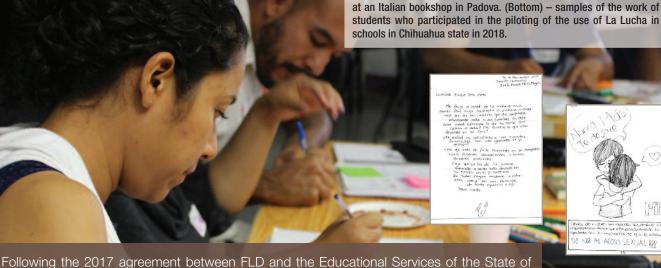
across the country took place. With a strong focus on critical analysis and planning, gender mainstreaming and well-being, participants developed a collective context analysis and advocacy plans on protection policies for human rights defenders ahead of the start of new Government in Mexico.

Also in November, the partnership facilitated a 3-day workshop on Visibility for Protection in Chihuahua City. The 12 participants put in practice tools to counteract risks related to visibility, worked on developing strategic communications plans and deepened on strategies to protect themselves and their networks at times of public overexposure.





(middle left) - Ruth Fiero, Director of CEDEHM (middle) speaking at the launch of La Lucha in Italy; (right) Italian edition of La Lucha on display at an Italian bookshop in Padova. (Bottom) - samples of the work of



Chihuahua, the first year of an educational project based on the graphic novel 'La Lucha' took place in the 2017-2018 school year, with the participation of 1 general secondary school, 18 technical secondary schools and 1 teacher training institution (Normal Rural Ricardo Flores Magón de Saucillo). The pilot project involved 4,798 secondary students and high school students, 60 teachers and 480 future teachers. For the closing of the academic year, on 31 May, the students of the Federal Secondary School Number 8 "Revolution" paid tribute to Lucha Castro, Alma Gómez and Gabino Gómez, presenting works of poetry and traditional songs ("corridos") made for the HRDs by the students. In July, Front Line Defenders met with the teachers to receive their feedback.



## 26 [COMMUNITY] EVENTS IN IRELAND

From 24 - 26 November, Front Line Defenders, together with partners, Irish Council for Civil Liberties, the National Women's Council of Ireland, the National LGBT Federation, the Latin America Solidarity Centre, Fighting Words and Dublin City Council, hosted the 2018 Dublin Human Rights Festival (DHRF) at a number of locations throughout the city.

The DHRF celebrated the voices and actions of human rights defenders from Ireland and around the world with a weekend packed with interactive workshops, film screenings, panel discussions, artistic performances and more. Highlights include panel discussions on LGBT+ rights, women's reproductive health, environmental rights, civil rights movements and freedom of expression in a digital age, interactive workshops by **Clowns Without Borders** (circus skills for young children), a graffiti mural workshop (older children, teens and adults), a story-telling discussion and a protest poetry slam called **Righteous Verse**.







Above: Dublin Human Rights Festival activities; below: Tama (holding flag), an Indonesian HRD on a LGBT+ tour of Dublin during the Dublin Human Rights Festival



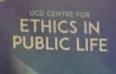


Pictured (left to right) at special event hosted by Lord Mayor of Dublin, Cllr Nial Ring, with Front Line Defenders, Dublin City Council, and the Department of Foreign Affairs to mark the 70th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 20th Anniversary of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders were Michael Gaffey, Ambassador, Permanent Mission of Ireland to the United Nations Office in Geneva, HRD Nurcan Baysal, Lord Mayor of Dublin Nial Ring, Susan Herman, President, American Civil Liberties Union and Andrew Anderson, Executive Director, Front Line Defenders.

9 December 2018 marked the 20th Anniversary of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders and 10 December 2018 marked the 70th Anniversary of the UN Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR). To celebrate both occasions, Front Line Defenders worked with the Dublin City Council to arrange a reading of the UDHR on the steps of City Hall. 2018 Front Line Defenders Award Winner, **Nurcan** 

**Baysal**, returned to Dublin to join in the reading of the principles that have served as a beacon for the human rights movement since 1948.

Lighting up the night and bringing HRDs to the streets of Dublin, Front Line Defenders arranged a light show projection of HRDs faces on the side of an adjacent building throughout the night.



PROTECT ONE EMPOWER DUSAND

Front Line Defenders regularly organises public events and participates in public fora around the world to raise awareness about the work of HRDs and the risks they face. From public events in Ireland to conferences in every region of the world, FLD works to put HRDs and their protection needs on the agenda.



**Prof. Martha Nussbaum** delivered the 2018 Front Line Defenders Annual Lecture, "Accountability in an Era of Celebrity" at University College Dublin, hosted by FLD and its partners, UCD Centre for Ethics in Public Life; UCD Centre for Human Rights; UCD School of Politics and International Relations; and the Irish School of Ecumenics, Trinity College Dublin (TCD).

Programme Manager, **Tara Madden**, presenting human rights defenders to students at the Human Rights Fortnight at Balbriggan Educate Together National School in Dublin.



**Gilmore**, delivering a public lecture, "Human Rights, Gender & The Body Intimate" the night before she presented the FLD Award.

UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, Kate

Panel discussion on Human Rights Defenders Today at the Civil Rights Festival, Derry, 6 October, with **Levent Piskin** (centre), a Turkish lawyer working on LGBT+ issues, **Wanjeri Nderu**, a Kenyan WHRD who uses mainstream media and social media spaces to gather information on human rights violations and



Tara Madden, Front Line Defenders.

KATE GILM UN DEPUTY I COMMISSIONE HUMAN RIGI

Media and Visibility Coordinator, **Erin Kilbride** (left) speaking with Kate McGrew (Sex Workers Alliance Ireland) on a panel 'Ending Violence Against Sex Workers' at University College Dublin.

[DISPATCHES]

## [SOLIDARITY] SUPPORT FROM AFAR





Front Line Defenders constantly works to bring public attention to HRDs who are imprisoned or disappeared, in order to maintain pressure and advocacy. On the first Monday of each month, FLD held protests in front of the Bahrain Embassy in London to demand the release of imprisoned HRD and former FLD staff member **Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja**. Below (left): FLD arranged for **Patson Dzamara**, brother of disappeared HRD **Itai Dzamara**, to publish an op-ed on the anniversary of his brother's disappearance in South Africa's leading newspaper, the *Mail* and *Guardian*; FLD Head of Communications & Visibility appeared on TV to discuss the case of imprisoned Egyptian HRD **Wael Abbas**; (middle right): FLD staff organised public demonstrations on behalf of imprisoned HRD **Khayrullo Mirsaidov** (Tajikistan).





In 2018, Front Line Defenders developed 'Rights on the Line' – a regular podcast featuring the voices and perspectives of HRDs from around the world. The series offers an unfiltered and unique view of what it is like to defend and advance human rights in some of the most challenging and risky countries, environments and contexts.





- RAULL SANTIAGO, BRAZIL

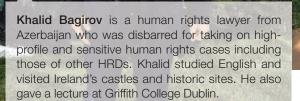
[DISPATCHES]

Mansoureh Behkish has spent the past 30 years empowering survivors and victims of human rights abuses as a member of the organisations Mothers of Khavaran and Mothers of Laleh Park, helping the mothers, sisters and wives of thousands imprisoned or executed by the Islamic Republic of Iran seek justice through legal and humanitarian channels. Mansoureh herself has faced continuous harassment and three terms in prison. She came to Dublin to study English.

## [REMEMBERING] HRD MEMORIAL

In 2018, Front Line Defenders documented that 321 HRDs in 27 countries were killed – 77% were HRDs defending land, environment or indigenous peoples' rights. The **Stop the Killings** report was launched at a side event during the Human Rights Council in Geneva in June 2018, with the participation of UN Special Rapporteur, Agnes **Callamard**, and founder of Front Line Defenders, Mary Lawlor. The report analyses the root causes of the killing of HRDs in the 6 countries (Brazil, Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and the Philippines) which every year since 2014 have accounted for 80%+ of the HRDs killed globally. In August, FLD's Head of the Memorial Project joined an international mission to Guatemala to visit communities and HRDs, and to meet with local and national government representatives, human rights institutions and international partners in the development field. 26 HRDs were killed in Guatemala in 2018 - a 136% increase from the previous year.







Abdifatah Hassan Ali, a blogger and social-media activist who co-founded WITNESS SOMALIA to monitor and document human rights violations in Somalia, spent two months in Kenya on R&R. "During my stay in Nairobi, I was relieved from the stress which resulted from the work and threats I was facing at home. I was able to meet with other human rights activists and representatives from international organisations where we discussed concerns of journalists and HRDs working in Somalia. Being away from Mogadishu for a short while empowered me and doubled my spirit for defending human rights in my country. I am now refreshed and believe that I am stronger than ever."

Pamella Passos is a history teacher in Rio de Janeiro where she also conducts research on popular culture, human rights and participation in the favelas. Pamella came to Dublin for training in human rights and risk assessment, to improve her English and to have quality time with her husband and daughter. During a presentation about human rights in Brazil, she spoke about her friend and fellow woman human rights defender, Marielle Franco, who was assassinated in March 2018.



From 29-31 October, Front Line Defenders joined with Amnesty International, the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID), the International Service for Human Rights (ISHR), the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), the World Organization Against Torture (OMCT), ProtectDefenders.eu, and Reporters Without Borders to host more than 150 HRDs from around the world to commemorate 20 years since the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. The Summit resulted in the adoption of an Action Plan that proposes a concrete set of measures and calls for a lasting commitment from States to act to protect human rights defenders and to take concrete actions to offer better protection and create a more favourable environment for their work in the years to come.





Front Line Defenders is the lead partner in the European Union Human Rights Defenders Mechanism (ProtectDefenders.eu), a consortium of 12 regional and international organisations working with human rights defenders and civil society organisations.

The first phase of the project ran from 2015-2018; during this phase, ProtectDefenders.eu supported protection grants, training, temporary relocation and advocacy as carried out by the coalition.

Left: In June, ProtectDefenders.eu organised the Designing protection mechanisms that work for Women Human Rights Defenders panel discussion at the European Development Days 2018.

## [ENDURANCE] EVALUATION & STRATEGIC PLAN

Every four years, Front Line Defenders develops a strategic plan, after carefully consulting with human rights defenders, other key stakeholders and organisations working with human rights defenders, as well as assessing the impact of its programmes and resources of support. The 2019-2022 Strategic Plan outlines how Front Line Defenders will respond to a changing and worsening environment for HRDs, in which the universal nature of human rights is being increasingly challenged.



"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.

- ANDREW ANDERSON EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



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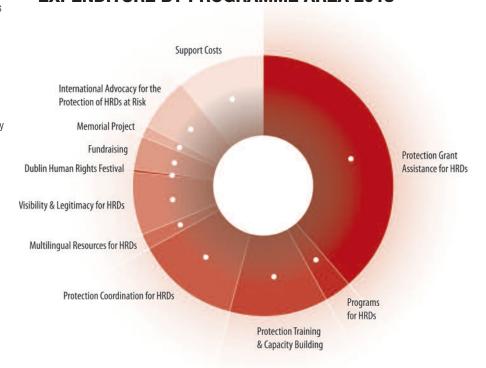
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## 2018 income & expenditure

#### **EXPENDITURE BY PROGRAMME AREA 2018**



#### WHERE FRONT LINE DEFENDERS SPENDS ITS RESOURCES

Total funds €Percentage (approx.)	
Protection Grant Assistance for HRDs2,248,38239%	
Programs for HRDs	
Protection Training & Capacity Building702,37512%	
Protection Coordination for HRDs	
Multilingual Resources for HRDs	
Visibility & Legitimacy for HRDs	
Dublin Human Rights Festival	
Fundraising	
Memorial Project	
International Advocacy for the Protection of HRDs at Risk 380,991	
Support Costs	
Total Expenditure	





#### WE ALSO WISH TO THANK OUR MANY PUBLIC DONORS WHOSE CONTRIBUTIONS ARE CRUCIAL TO OUR WORK.

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

or contact Laurent Aldenhoff at: 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.

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.

<sup>\*</sup> These donors supported the work of Front Line Defenders through contributions to the Front Line USA Foundation.



Denis O'Brien (Chairman) is Chairman of the Digicel 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 an Irish-based



lawyer specialising in refugee law and is the Chief Executive of the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre. Prior to that post, she served as the Director General of FLAC (Free

Legal Advice Centres), an NGO that provides free legal advice and advocates for fairer laws to advance the public interest and achieve greater equality. She is the former Chairperson of both the International Human Rights Trust and the Irish Section of Amnesty International.

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 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 Digicel 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 the Co-Director of



the newly established Urgent Action Fund - Asia Pacific, the first rapid response mechanism for women human rights defenders headquartered within the Asia Pacific

region. She is a founding member and former Coordinator of the Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition. Ms. Real is a long-time advocate of women's rights having worked with

women's rights and human rights organisations in Asia 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.

Verónica Vidal is the Solidarity Tactic



Lead at the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID). She is a long-term feminist activist for women's rights and human rights at the local level and

internationally. She has worked as a researcher and advocate in Uruguay and Mexico with a focus on regional integration processes, international cooperation for development, the environment and civil society, as well as in building networks, documentation of attacks and developing protection approaches with Women Human Rights Defenders from a feminist perspective.

#### **ADVISORY COUNCIL**

Michel Forst is the UN Special



Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders. From 2008 to 2013. Mr. Forst was the UN Independent

Expert on the situation of human rights in Haiti, and between 2012 and 2013 he was the Chair of the Coordination Committee of the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council. Prior to that, he was Secretary General of the Paris Summit of Human Rights Defenders and Director of the French Section of Amnesty International. He is a founding Board Member of Front Line Defenders.

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 completed his term as



**UN Special** Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association in April 2017. He is now

the co-director of InformAction, a community organising NGO in Kenya. A lawyer trained at Nairobi and Harvard Universities, Mr. Kiai has spent the last twenty years campaigning for human rights and constitutional reform in Kenya notably as founder and Executive Director of the unofficial Kenya Human Rights Commission, and then as Chairman of Kenva's National Human Rights Commission. 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).

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Maryam Elahi is President and



CEO of the Community Foundation of Fastern 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 2018**

## The Dream Bearers

#### by Gioconda Belli

In all the prophecies
the destruction of the world is written.
All the prophecies foretell
humanity creating its own destruction.
But time and life endlessly renewed
also engendered a generation of lovers and dreamers;
men and women who dreamt not of the world's destruction,
but of building a world of butterflies
and nightingales.
They were called deluded romantics, inventor of utopias.

They were called deluded romantics, inventor of utopias. They were told their words were old—which was true, since paradise has been an ancient memory in the heart of humanity.

Those who accumulated riches feared them, and hurled their armies against them.
But every night the dream bearers made love, and their seed continued growing in the wombs of women who not only bore dreams but multiplied them, and made them run and speak.
Like hard-working little ants,

they never stopped dreaming and building their beautiful worlds, worlds of brothers and sisters, of men and women who called each other compañeros,

who taught each other to read, consoled each other in times of death,

healed and cared for each other, loved and helped each other in the art of loving and in the defense of happiness.

They were happy in their world of sugar and wind dreaming new prophecies

that spoke of times of butterflies and nightingales

in which the world would not have to end up in a hecatomb.

On the contrary, scientists would design fountains, gardens, surprising toys to further humanity's happiness.

They are dangerous read the message that rolled off the presses They are dangerous said the presidents in their speeches They are dangerous murmured the makers of war They must be destroyed read the message that rolled off the presses

They must be destroyed said the presidents in their speeches. They must be destroyed murmured the makers of war.

The dream bearers knew their power and therefore were not surprised.

And they also knew that life had engendered them to protect itself from the death announced in the prophecies.

And so they defended their lives even with death. And so they cultivated gardens of dreams and exported them tied with big colorful ribbons and the prophets of darkness spent days and nights

and the prophets of darkness spent days and nigh watching the secret routes and the roads searching for these dangerous shipments which they never succeeded in intercepting because the person with no eyes for dreaming

because the person with no eyes for dreaming cannot see dreams either by day or night.

And in the world a dream-traffic has been unleashed

that the traffickers in death cannot stop; and everywhere there are packages with big bows

that only this new race of people can see, and the seed of these dreams cannot be detected

because it is enclosed in red hearts or in ample maternity dresses

where tiny feet of dreamers teem inside the wombs that bear them.

It is said that Earth, after giving birth to them, unchained a rainbow in the sky

and blew the breath of fertility on the roots of trees.

All we know is that we have seen them we know that life engendered them as protection against the prophecies of death.

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