

## ***Strong women: Who protects them?***

We who have participated in the *Strong Women: Who protects them?* conference on 20 - 22 May 2014, believe that as women human rights defenders (WHRDs), we are targeted for who we are as well as all for the work we do in the defence of human rights and the promotion of peace, justice, and democracy. We are often targeted in gendered ways, including through the use of sexual violence. Measures to provide security for us, and for all WHRDs, must therefore be holistic, responding to both of these elements as well as to the specific contexts in which we live and work.

Because the States in which many WHRDs live do not fulfil their obligation to guarantee our security, WHRDs have found it necessary to implement our own security measures, both individually and within our organisations and networks, while continuing to demand that States comply with their obligation. There are many ways that international organisations and governments can support WHRDs in increasing our security.

To this end, we make the following recommendations to the Dutch government:

- Use a broad definition of “Women Human Rights Defender” that includes not only those working for traditional non-governmental organisations, but also WHRDs individually or collectively defending rights, such as labour rights, land rights, cultural rights, indigenous rights, right to self-determination, sexual and reproductive rights, as well as WHRDs from grassroots and community-based organisations and collectives, and those who do this work on a voluntary basis.
- Continue to give priority to the protection of human rights defenders and ensure a gender-sensitive perspective during implementation of existing policies and development of new policies.
- Continue collaborating with civil society in the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and EU and UN guidelines and agreements regarding human rights defenders, and in efforts to provide or facilitate protection mechanisms for women acting as change agents in conflict and post-conflict areas.

- Include WHRDs as a specific target group when consulting civil society, and assure that diplomatic missions, including trade missions, visit and work with human rights organisations and collectives not just in capital cities but also in rural areas.
- Respond to the protection needs of WHRDs, whether individual or collective, e.g. via Embassies, EU delegations, international attention and diplomatic pressure. This should include specific measures to address the problems of sexual violence and femicide.
- Allocate funds to support WHRDs. This should include funds to provide protection based on their specific needs; training opportunities for WHRDs to carry out their own risk assessments and develop strategies and tools for their protection; including digital security tools; psycho-social support; and protection and accompaniment programmes provided by (I)NGOs.
- Issue public statements recognising and supporting the diverse and important work carried out by WHRDs.
- Eliminate the discrepancies between international and national human rights laws and policies, and assure the full implementation of those policies on the local level.

***Strong Women: Who protects them?*** is an international learning conference on gender-sensitive protection of human rights defenders participated by women from Afghanistan, Colombia, Egypt, Guatemala, Mexico, Palestine and Sudan on 20 - 22 May 2014, organized by Peace Brigades International – the Netherlands. [www.peacebrigades.nl](http://www.peacebrigades.nl) / [www.peacebrigades.org](http://www.peacebrigades.org)