

# Defending Women-Defending Rights.org

## Statement of the WHRD International Coalition on Women Human Rights Defenders Day

*“Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to promote and to strive for the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels.”* – Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms [“The Declaration on human rights defenders”] (Article 1).

*“Women Human Rights Defenders are more at risk of suffering certain forms of violence and other violations, prejudice, exclusion, and repudiation than their male counterparts.”* – UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders, 2010 Annual Report to the General Assembly.

On the occasion of November 29<sup>th</sup>, Women Human Rights Defenders Day, the [Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition](#) stands in solidarity with the hundreds of thousands of women activists around the world who – with exemplary courage, determination, and strength, uphold women’s human rights, the rights of communities, and of the environment.

The Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition is a resource and advocacy network for the protection and support of women human rights defenders (WHRDs) worldwide. An international initiative created out of the international campaign on WHRDs launched in 2005, the Coalition calls attention to the recognition of WHRDs. Their gender or the nature of their work has made them the subject of attacks, requiring gender-sensitive mechanisms for their protection and support. The Coalition involves women activists as well as all people who defend women's rights and lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, and transgender (LGBT) defenders and groups committed to the advancement of women's human rights and sexual rights.

The Coalition affirms the great value of the work of WHRDs: the struggle to defend human rights, to cultivate peace and to achieve meaningful gender and social justice. It recognizes the different contexts in which WHRDs work and the breadth of the challenges they face. It is proud to support the diverse contributions of WHRDs from across the globe, and it is inspired by the innovation, creativity and adaptability with which they are transforming their communities every day.

Whether they focus on women’s human rights or other rights issues, WHRDs are subjected to arbitrary imprisonment, torture, forced disappearances, death threats, violations of privacy, sexual violence, name calling and other threats to their credibility, closures of their organizations and a host of other violations because of what they do, in defense of human rights, and who they are as women challenging gender norms. Many WHRDs have been displaced or have lost their lives because of their work. The Coalition laments the severe violence WHRDs have faced and seeks to honour the memory of those no longer with us through our solidarity and commitment to Defend Women Defending Rights.

The alarming increase in violence against WHRDs and violations of their rights demonstrates the importance of strengthening protection mechanisms and support networks for WHRDs across the globe. As women’s role in the frontline of human rights defense is more visible, so are the contexts in which violence against WHRDs and violations of their rights take place. Fundamentalisms, militarism and conflict, globalization and neoliberalisms, crises of democracy and governance, patriarchy and heteronormativity are the key contexts that often overlap, as shown in the Coalition’s [Global Report on the Situation of Women Human Rights Defenders](#).

The Coalition calls on all stakeholders and duty bearers to uphold their national, regional and international human rights commitments to ensure the promotion and protection of the rights of WHRDs regardless of their race, ethnicity, nationality, religion or belief, status, age, caste, political opinion, sexual orientation and gender identity as well as on other grounds or contexts.

For more information about the WHRD International Coalition, our work and coalition members please visit: <http://defendingwomen-defendingrights.org>.