

GUIDELINES FOR  
IRISH EMBASSIES  
AND MISSIONS ON  
HUMAN RIGHTS  
DEFENDERS

Department of Foreign Affairs

An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha

2010

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OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES FOR MISSIONS

☐ Establish and Maintain Contacts with Human

Rights Defenders

☐ Publicise the EU Guidelines on Human Rights

Defenders

☐ Volunteer to be an EU Liaison Officer for Human

Rights Defenders

☐ Engage in Local EU Working Groups on Human

Rights and Related Issues

☐ Take Action to Support Human Rights Defenders

at Risk

☐ Raise the issue of Human Rights Defenders when

Travelling to Countries of Secondary Accreditation

☐ Organise/Attend Events and Training on Human

Rights Defenders

☐ Use the UN Human Rights Mechanisms to Support

Human Rights Defenders

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1. In the context of Ireland's support for human rights defenders, and as a follow up to work done under the 2004 Irish Presidency of the European Union on elaborating EU

Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders, these Guidelines provide an overview of Ireland's work in support of Human Rights Defenders and suggest practical steps for Embassies in supporting human rights defenders (HRDs).

2. Section I provides some background information on the importance of human rights in Irish foreign policy. The specific role played by HRDs is explored and the UN Declaration on HRDs and the EU Guidelines on HRDs are explained. Section II sets out the work that Ireland does in relation to HRDs. Section III sets out the potential role of Embassies and Missions with regard to the protection of HRDs; opportunities for action are identified, as are common challenges faced by Embassies and Missions in supporting the work of HRDs. Section IV elaborates on the suggested actions to be taken by Embassies and Missions, as set out at the beginning of these Guidelines. It is hoped that colleagues will consider keeping the Operational Guidelines to hand for easy reference in the course of their work.

#### SECTION I: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3. HRDs play a key role in working to improve the human rights situation and standards in their countries. HRDs are defined by what they do. They can include individuals, lawyers, journalists, NGO activists, trade unionists, minority activists and demonstrators who are acting to promote or protect human rights. The definition does not include those individuals or groups who commit or propagate violence.

Why are human rights important to Ireland?

4. Ireland has developed a profile internationally as one of a number of countries that takes a leading role in promoting the rights of human rights defenders. Human rights have traditionally been a central concern of Irish foreign policy underpinned by a variety of factors, including our own historical experience, Irish involvement with developing countries, and the human rights dimension of the peace process in Northern Ireland.

The White Paper on Irish Aid also says that the promotion and protection of human rights is central to Irish foreign policy and all of the work of Irish Aid.

5. Human rights are outlined as fundamental to Ireland's foreign policy throughout the Department's current Statement of Strategy 2008-2010, in the Department's Mission

Statement, and as its first High Level Goal. The intrinsic links between human rights, democracy and development have long been recognised by the Department, including the importance of reinforcing an active human rights culture in the Department and

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maintaining the traditional emphasis on human rights in Irish foreign policy in the face of new challenges in the political, economic and security areas. Furthermore, Irish Aid Civil Society Policy has as its first objective supporting an enabling environment for civil society to operate.

Why do human rights defenders need protection?

6. The work of human rights defenders, whether individuals or groups, may by its nature be controversial and often involves criticism of government policies and actions. Some HRDs are linked to political parties or opposition groups. Governments should respect and protect their right to carry out their activities and express their opinions, without committing or propagating violence, regardless of whether they agree or disagree with their political policies. Limitations to the exercise of their rights should only be such as are permitted in international law.

7. The activities of HRDs have over the years become more widely recognised. However, this progress can come at a high price: many defenders themselves have increasingly become targets of attacks and their rights are violated in many countries. Furthermore, these repercussions often extend to family members and associates. Some HRDs are particularly vulnerable because they are defending marginalised or minority groups. They can also be individually targeted based on their own status, i.e. who they are in addition to what they do, which leads to a compounding of discrimination.

8. Increasingly, certain States argue that protection for HRDs should be conditioned upon their compliance with national law, implying that those operating peacefully outside the remit of national law should not be characterised as human rights defenders. The test here is whether the content of or the manner in which national laws are applied is consistent with international standards. The UN consensus also allows for advocacy for new human rights ideas, which of course may imply a criticism of the existing national

normative framework. Legislation is often used to make it difficult for NGOs to operate; bureaucratic procedures, such as registration requirements, heavy reporting obligations, requiring advance permission for activities, confiscating the records and documentation of NGOs, and requiring NGOs to disclose the sources of their funding, reduce the capacity of HRDs and NGOs to do substantive work. More and more, the work of HRDs is disrupted on the grounds of public order, national security and/or counter-terrorism efforts and their work discredited by public statements of a derogatory nature by governments.

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What work takes place at UN level?

9. In 1998 the UN General Assembly set the normative standard for support and protection of human rights defenders by adopting, by consensus, the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, more commonly known as the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. The Declaration outlines some specific duties of States and the responsibilities of everyone with regard to defending human rights, in addition to explaining its relationship with national law.<sup>1</sup> A specific UN mandate on human rights defenders was created in 2000 to support implementation of the UN Declaration on HRDs. HRDs can also appeal to other UN mechanisms, the so-called Special Procedures.<sup>2</sup>

What work takes place at the regional level?

10. In addition to activity at the UN, there has been an increasing interest in HRD issues by the human rights mechanisms of regional organisations. In 2004 the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights established the mandate of a Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders responsible for reporting on the situation of HRDs in Africa (currently Mr Mohamed Bechir Khalfallah). Like the UN, there are a range of Special Procedures under the African Commission that HRDs can appeal to, depending on their situation.<sup>3</sup> In the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, a Human Rights Defenders Unit monitors the situation of human rights defenders in the

Organisation of American States, and can ask the Commission to request precautionary measures on urgent cases.<sup>4</sup> As above, there are a number of Special Procedures under the Commission.<sup>5</sup>

11. In Member States of the Council of Europe, HRDs can take cases of human rights violations to the European Court of Human Rights or write to the Commissioner for Human Rights, who has a role in supporting human rights defenders.<sup>6</sup> Members of the European Parliament often raise individual cases of human rights violations in debates and hearings of the European Parliament.<sup>7</sup> In Member States of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), HRDs can contact the focal point for

1 The full text is available on the website of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights:  
<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/defenders/declaration.htm>

2 Special Procedures is the name given to experts appointed by the Human Rights Council to examine and

monitor human rights situations in specific countries, known as country mandates, or on major human

rights issues worldwide, known as thematic mandates. A list of Special Procedures mandate holders and information about their work can be found at: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/chr/special/index.htm>

3 [http://www.achpr.org/english/\\_info/news\\_en.html](http://www.achpr.org/english/_info/news_en.html)

4 <http://www.cidh.org/defenders/defensores.htm>

5 <http://www.cidh.oas.org/relatorias.eng.htm>

6 [http://www.coe.int/t/commissioner/activities/themes/hrd\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/commissioner/activities/themes/hrd_en.asp)

7 [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/droi\\_home\\_en.htm](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/droi_home_en.htm)

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human rights defenders in the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights.<sup>8</sup> There is no specific mechanism for human rights defenders in the League of Arab States; however, the Arab Human Rights Committee was established in March 2009, which is responsible for considering reports on the human rights situation of States Parties to the Arab Charter on Human Rights.

What are the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders?

12. The adoption of the EU Guidelines on HRDs in 2004 was one of the key priorities of the Irish Presidency of the EU in the field of human rights. The Guidelines commit EU Member States to providing practical support to HRDs in third countries. Since 2004, the EU has taken a series of measures to translate the Guidelines into action – for example by elaborating local strategies for the implementation of the guidelines by EU missions in third countries. Following a review of the implementation of the Guidelines, they were updated in December 2008.<sup>9</sup> Further translation of the Guidelines into other languages is currently under consideration.

13. Ireland is a member of the European Council Working Group on Human Rights (COHOM) Task Force on HRDs which keeps the EU Guidelines under review. In addition to the HRD Guidelines, there are also EU Guidelines on seven other issues. Of particular interest and relevance to Irish foreign policy priorities are the EU Guidelines on Violence against Women, Torture and the Death Penalty.<sup>10</sup> There is also an EU Toolkit to promote and protect the enjoyment of all human rights by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) persons, developed under the Spanish Presidency, which may also be of interest and which aims to provide EU delegations with an operational and practical set of tools to be used in contacts with third countries at all levels.<sup>11</sup>

14. Other countries within the EU which give priority to HRD issues include Austria, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Sweden and the UK. Outside the EU, Norway plays a leading role in raising issues relating to HRDs at the UN and continues to make important contributions in this area.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.osce.org/odihr/27867.html>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocus/cmsUpload/16332-re01.en08.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/showpage.aspx?id=1681&lang=EN>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/st11179.en10.pdf>

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## SECTION II: IRELAND'S WORK ON HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

How does Ireland support human rights defenders in multilateral fora?

15. At the UN level, Ireland has frequently negotiated on behalf of the EU at discussions

regarding HRDs at the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly (UNGA). In recent years there has been a trend towards difficult negotiations that attract considerable interest from UN Member States, as the issues raised go to the heart of States' relationships with civil society. Ireland has negotiated texts inter alia on protection measures for HRDs and for the renewal of the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, as well as preparing EU statements for debates on this issue. Ireland has systematically raised the issue of HRDs in its questions to third countries under the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism of the HRC, whereby the human rights records of all UN member states are reviewed once every four years. Ireland is a strong supporter of the UN Special Rapporteur on HRDs and maintains close links with the holders of the post.

What other work is being done at HQ in relation to human rights defenders?

16. The Human Rights Unit (HRU) represents Ireland at the EU Working Group on Human Rights (COHOM). COHOM can consider possible EU actions where HRDs are at immediate or serious risk, including condemnation of threats and attacks against human rights defenders, through démarches and public statements. Input from embassies on what local action, if any, is most appropriate on any particular case or issue is always valuable for capital- and Brussels-based discussions.

17. The Human Rights Unit facilitates meetings between geographical desks in Political Division and HRDs visiting Ireland. HRU also offers pre-posting human rights training to new officers and those going on posting abroad, including on human rights defenders.

18. The Department has close working relationships with a range of NGOs working on HRD issues. A number of organisations working in support of HRDs are funded through Irish Aid's Civil Society Fund. In the past, financial support has been provided to numerous

organisations working on issues relating to HRDs including Front Line, the Mart in Ennals Foundation, Fédération Internationale des ligues des Droits de l'Homme (FIDH), the Ireland has publicly raised individual cases of concern in its statements to the Human Rights Council. For example, when Floribert Chebeya Bahizire, President of human rights organisation La Voix des Sans Voix, was killed during a session of the Human Rights Council, Ireland urged the Congolese authorities to conduct an impartial and transparent investigation into the circumstances of his death.

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International Service for Human Rights (ISHR), Christian Aid, the Carter Center, Trócaire, Justica Global, and Peace Brigades International. In 2010, Irish Aid's Civil Society Section and the Human Rights Unit finalised a Departmental strategy for human rights-related support to civil society organisations, which aims to reinforce policy efforts with funding, and therefore maximise the effectiveness of Departmental resources. Among the objectives identified in the paper is support for the protection of human rights defenders.

19. Front Line, the Dublin-based International Foundation for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, has a high profile internationally for working on HRD issues. A mechanism is in place to receive urgent action appeals from Front Line on a limited number of individual cases of HRDs at risk. In



an attempt to streamline procedures

to ensure timely responses to cases

raised, some Embassies already receive Front Line “Emergency Appeals” or “Urgent Appeals” directly.<sup>12</sup>

Other appeals are copied to Embassies for information only and may be useful in providing background information. It is not expected that Embassies would automatically raise all cases bilaterally. There is a dedicated point-of-contact in the Human Rights Unit for this appeals system who can advise further on the agreed mechanism. Front Line also offers occasional training for diplomats on human rights defenders and has for example organised a number of regional workshops on the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders for EU Member State diplomats.

What is the humanitarian visa scheme for human rights defenders?

20. Ireland, with Spain, is one of only two EU member states that have a dedicated humanitarian visa scheme for human rights defenders. The aim of Ireland’s scheme is to provide a fast-track approach to processing applications to facilitate recognised HRDs to travel to Ireland for short stays (three months maximum) for the purpose of respite, and because of temporary safety issues. A high degree of confidentiality is maintained around the scheme and around individual cases, given the circumstances involved.

<sup>12</sup> “Emergency Appeals” and “Urgent Appeals” are received only for the following countries: China, Colombia, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Iran, Mexico, The Philippines, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Turkey, Uganda, Uzbekistan and Zimbabwe.

On receipt of an “Emergency Appeal” from Front Line regarding the case of death threats and fear of arrest of a human rights defender in Uganda, Embassy Kampala contacted and met with the human rights defender, contacted the relevant authorities and followed his case, keeping headquarters informed of developments. Organisations

working in support of the individual found it helpful to have a donor country's support locally.

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21. The scheme was agreed between the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform in 2006. It is primarily aimed at those HRDs who face significant immediate risk as a result of their work and who need to relocate on a temporary basis, and/or HRDs who have been working in the face of significant risk for an extended period of time and who would benefit from a period of respite.

22. An application must be submitted through the Irish Embassy or consular representation in the applicant's country of usual residence. If there is no representation in the country concerned, the application should be made to the appropriate representation in a neighbouring country. Exceptionally, the application can be made directly to the Department of Foreign Affairs in Dublin (via the Human Rights Unit). Applications should be made on a visa application form and must state clearly that the applicant is a human rights defender and include supporting documentation. This can include a letter of support from Front Line or from an equivalent organisation which is submitted with the application and confirms the credentials of the applicant and the purpose and duration of the proposed visit. DFA examines the application to verify the request and circumstances of the applicant. All bodies concerned deal with the application as a priority and undertake consideration as quickly as possible. Subject to the approval of DFA and subject to normal visa checks, including consideration of issues of public policy, public security and public health, a visa may be approved and issued by the appropriate embassy or consular representation.

23. All HRDs who have availed of Ireland's temporary humanitarian visa scheme to date have done so with the support of Front Line. Most have worked in the Front Line office in Dublin on human rights issues concerning their countries of usual residence. Front Line has also arranged for them to undertake educational courses, typically language or

conflict resolution courses, and has facilitated speaking engagements and contact with Irish-based NGOs and media. The Department funds this scheme through the Multi-Annual Programme Scheme.

24. Embassies might also receive visa requests to facilitate the travel of HRDs to participate in Front Line's biennial Dublin Platform for Human Rights Defenders. It is estimated that in the region of 500 HRDs have travelled to Ireland since Front Line's establishment in 2001. The sixth Dublin Platform is due to take place in September 2011.

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### SECTION III: THE ROLE OF MISSIONS

Why are human rights part of the work of Embassies and Missions?

25. In Missions, external driving factors for action on human rights can range from interest at the domestic level (especially regarding individual cases) to local and international pressure for diplomatic action. Missions have an important role to play in putting into practice both Irish and EU policy towards human rights defenders.

26. Good relationships with NGOs working on human rights issues can be useful in building trust and helping to manage expectations – Missions know what to expect from HRDs and HRDs tend to have more realistic expectations and an appreciation of the limitations of potential action by Missions. It also facilitates speedy reaction to emergency cases. Building a network of contacts is especially important in countries with a restrictive regime as obtaining reliable and confirmed information on the situation of specific HRDs can be difficult. Up-to-date information is vital to the effectiveness of démarches and public statements.

27. Visible contact with foreign embassies affords a level of

solidarity and protection to HRDs which should not be underestimated. In many cases, sentences given to HRDs have been substantially lower than feared as a result of international attention. Civil society organisations can also provide an insight into the political and economic environment in a country and can help to create a broad picture of the human rights situation there. Where there is interest in a particular issue domestically, engagement by Embassies can supplement the Department's knowledge and expertise on an issue.

Can raising human rights issues affect relationships with the host State?

28. Decisions on the appropriate approach to raising individual cases locally must be guided by Embassies, which are well placed to judge the most appropriate course of action in the context of the full range of issues that contribute to our bilateral relations with the host country.

Trustworthy information that has been provided by national civil society / local NGOs can be particularly important to the Department where there are restrictions on the movements and access of international personnel, including Irish diplomatic staff, for example in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Gaza.

Visible support from the diplomatic community in Pretoria was understood to be a major factor in the release of Jestina Mukoko, a Zimbabwean human rights defender who was abducted and detained for three weeks.

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29. Engaging in critical dialogue on human rights will not be without its challenges.

Discussing the situation of HRDs and support for their work can be quite politically sensitive. Caution is therefore advisable when sharing information. Human rights are often seen as an internal matter in which outside actors should not interfere. National authorities may refuse to engage with foreign embassies on sensitive cases, particularly those involving legal proceedings, or may deny any knowledge of a particular case. This can limit the scope for bilateral engagement.

30. As agents for change who draw attention to shortcomings of the State, HRDs are often characterised as undermining state institutions and face challenges to their legitimacy and credibility. Often forced to rely on international support for their work, they can be accused of working against the interests of their home countries, of having hidden agendas, or even of supporting violent and criminal elements. HRDs facing particular risk include those working on sensitive issues such as the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons, minority or indigenous groups, women HRDs, and defenders working in remote areas. In national contexts where economic growth is a pre-eminent objective and valuable natural resources are at stake, there can be challenges related to the impact of extractive industries on the rights to land and to a safe living environment of individuals from indigenous groups and communities. Some of the most dangerous environments for HRDs are those resource-rich areas where extractive industries are operating.

How should I deal with individual human rights defenders at risk?

31. The appropriate response is determined on a case-by-case basis based on a range of different considerations and will vary greatly depending on the local circumstances.

The first consideration should always be the safety and security of the individual HRD.

Making direct contact with the HRD and/or his/her family can be helpful to all concerned.

32. Consider whether the most appropriate form of response to an appeal for action is through confidential diplomatic action, informal

channels, national or EU démarches, dialogue with domestic human rights institutions etc. It should be determined at the local level whether public statements would be beneficial or detrimental; on sensitive issues, a public statement might not necessarily be helpful. Where information is limited, a case might be highlighted locally among EU partners or at the relevant Brussels-based geographic working group. On other occasions, a bilateral démarche can be made at EU representatives supported the work of human rights defenders Blanca Mesina Nevarez and Silvia Vázquez Camacho in Mexico and met with senior state officials in Baja California to raise serious concerns about death threats received by Ms Mesina Nevarez and Ms Vázquez Camacho.

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the local level. It may be the case that action would be more beneficial through the EU in working to influence local policy, for example through the EU's local coordination mechanisms on human rights, governance or development issues. Where circumstances are such that a human rights defender is facing serious risk, consideration can be given to granting temporary respite in Ireland under the humanitarian visa scheme. If action is taken, it is important to give feedback to HRDs and interested NGOs and other stakeholders.

33. The key message for governments is that HRDs and NGOs are legitimate actors and that allowing room for independent thought and open debate on a government's policies and actions is a tried and tested way of establishing a better level of protection for human rights. The State should create an enabling environment and provide protection for HRDs where required. This message is most effective when reinforced

within the wider EU dialogue with third countries e.g. through discussions on corporate social responsibility, commercial and security interests, development policies to address the link between human rights violations and poverty etc. Colleagues might give consideration to whether there is an opportunity to engage at local level in preparations for EU Human Rights Dialogues. Using political dialogues on human rights and human rights fact sheets are important institutional ways of trying to ensure continuity of support to HRDs.

What opportunities are there for funding human rights defenders?

34. Where local presidencies have drawn up a list of locally available resources to fund and support human rights defenders, this information should be shared with local human rights defenders. At the EU level, the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) is the concrete expression of the EU's intention to integrate the promotion of democracy and human rights into all of its external policies. Further information on the EIDHR can be accessed via the following link:

[http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/what/humanrights/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/what/humanrights/index_en.htm)

35. Where funding is available, Embassies might wish to consider providing modest financial assistance.

The Human Rights Unit does not have a dedicated project funding line. Details of Irish Aid Civil Society Funding can be found in Section II.

Embassy Kampala supported the establishment of a support office for the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders,

Mrs Margaret Sekaggya, in

Kampala.

Under the Irish Presidency of the EU, Embassy New Delhi was involved in establishing an EU-India human rights dialogue. Front Line was asked to provide a background paper for the purposes of the dialogue, which provided an opportunity to identify priority issues and cases.

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#### SECTION IV: OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES FOR MISSIONS

##### 1. ESTABLISH AND MAINTAIN CONTACTS WITH HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Participate, where possible, in meetings with HRDs to introduce diplomats dealing with human rights issues. There may be local NGO human rights networks or agencies or a National Human Rights Institution with which the Mission can liaise. Feedback to HRDs and international NGOs dealing with HRD issues can be useful in giving visibility to Ireland's role. Establish (or make use of an existing EU) list of local HRDs/NGOs in your host country (local/regional/national NGOs may be able to assist). Invite HRDs to key events held in Embassies, e.g. St Patrick's Day celebrations. When arranging visits for Ministers or other officials, consider reserving some time during those visits to meet HRDs. Consider facilitating visits between National Human Rights Institutions, or a visit by an Oireachtas Committee. Consider also including HRD issues in the Mission Business Plan.

##### 2. PUBLICISE THE EU GUIDELINES ON HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Publish the EU Guidelines on HRDs on the Embassy website. Where possible, consideration should be given to publishing the Guidelines in the local language.

##### 3. VOLUNTEER TO BE AN EU LIAISON OFFICER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Is there a division of labour with other Member States with regard to potential action for HRDs, such as meetings with HRDs, trial observation, funding of projects? Consider playing the role of liaison officer. Liaison officers for HRDs are envisaged by the COHOM Task Force



on HRDs as key contact points for HRDs among EU embassies.

#### 4. ENGAGE IN LOCAL EU WORKING GROUPS ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND RELATED ISSUES

Consider whether the political dialogue on human rights, if it exists, is being effectively used to raise the situation of HRDs. Where a local EU working group on human rights exists, use it to raise individual cases of HRDs at risk (discuss criteria for priority cases and EU action) and invite HRDs to attend. If there is no HR working group, consider other fora for raising HRDs (in the context of efforts on gender-based violence, primary education, governance etc). In countries where there is a poorly developed civil society, focus on creating an enabling environment in which civil society can operate and on capacity building for HRDs and NGOs. If the Mission has capacity, consider playing a role in developing / monitoring the local strategy on HRDs / local fact sheet on human rights. Involve HRDs in any EU action or strategies supporting HRDs. Priority should be given to the elaboration of country-specific human rights strategies, which could include a focus on HRDs where relevant .

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#### 5. TAKE ACTION TO SUPPORT INDIVIDUAL HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS AT RISK

On foot of a request from HQ or an appeal from a local organisation, consider the most appropriate form of action to support an individual HRD at risk (confidential diplomatic action / informal channels / public statement / bilateral or EU démarches/ dialogue with the domestic human rights institutions, OHCHR, or other UN agencies or local UN working groups on human rights). Make contact with the HRD or his/her family by telephone, or visit them in person. Attend and observe, where appropriate, trials of HRDs and report to HQ. Report to HQ on any actions taken, bilaterally or through the EU. Consider following up on findings/ recommendation of local human rights NGOs or international or regional HR bodies, e.g. by undertaking field visits in relation to incidents. In the case of a killing of a HRD, urge the authorities to carry out an independent investigation and follow-up on action taken (or not taken). Alert the local authorities to specific HRDs at risk, asking for protective measures.

#### 6. RAISE THE ISSUE OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS WHEN TRAVELLING TO COUNTRIES OF SECONDARY ACCREDITATION

Consider whether there are ongoing cases of threats against HRDs and if they are reflective

of a dangerous environment for HRDs, which might be raised in political dialogues or in contacts with relevant authorities.

#### 7. ORGANISE / ATTEND EVENTS AND TRAINING ON HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Consider organising events on the general human rights situation or that of HRDs. Attend events organised by other embassies and/or NGOs. If time permits, attendance at NGO events throughout the year is often greatly appreciated and can contribute to building relationships.

#### 8. USE THE UN HUMAN RIGHTS MECHANISMS TO SUPPORT HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Encourage the host country to cooperate with the UN Special Procedures (either country or thematic human rights mandate holders). To reinforce a message, use the issues raised in the reports of the UN human rights Treaty Bodies, the relevant UN Special Procedures, the Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review mechanism and the relevant regional human rights mechanisms. Support the participation and representation of poor and marginalised people within the UN system by supporting civil society organisations which promote access to and strengthening of these mechanisms.