

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE G20 IN 2018

ON THE IMPORTANT ROLE OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

The G20 process, which this year under Argentina’s presidency focuses on ‘Building Consensus For Fair And Sustainable Development’¹, is an important opportunity for G20 countries – which together constitute almost two-thirds of the global population, more than 80 per cent of global GDP and three-quarters of worldwide trade - to affirm their collective commitment to ensuring that human rights are a fundamental part of the shared global framework for sustainable development that is continuing to develop, thus setting an important example to the rest of the world.

Amnesty International welcomes the G20’s commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 2016 Action Plan on the Agenda. Implementation of the Agenda should ensure universal respect for human rights and human dignity and recognize that in our increasingly interconnected world, economic policy and development must be developed and targeted in ways that contribute to peace, justice and the effective, accountable and inclusive institutions that are at the core of sustainable development (SDG Goal 16). Goal 16.10 aims to “ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements” and includes among its indicators the number of verified cases of killing, kidnapping, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention and torture of journalists, associated media personnel, trade unionists and human rights advocates in the previous 12 months (Indicator 16.10.1).

THE IMPORTANT ROLE OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Amnesty International believes that sustainable development can only be achieved in conditions of fairness, non-discrimination, transparency and accountability. Human rights defenders¹ (HRDs) play an invaluable role in ensuring that states fulfil their obligation to ensure public access to information and respect and protect human rights, as well as in holding non-state actors to account for abuses, yet we are continuing to see a full-frontal assault on human rights defenders, with civil society space shrinking daily.

Some governments, armed groups, companies and other powerful entities which believe their interests are threatened by human rights defenders are using a range of tactics and tools to silence and repress HRDs. These range from personal attacks like threats, beatings and even killings to the use of legislation to criminalize human rights-related activities; methods of surveillance; and attacks on HRDs’ capacity to communicate and on their rights to peaceful assembly and association; as well as restrictions on their freedom of movement. Central to these methods is the use of smear campaigns and stigmatization to delegitimize HRDs and their work².

Women human rights defenders (WHRDS), who may be women working on any human rights issue or any defender working on women’s rights or gender-related issues, are often exposed to increased risks due to their gender, particularly when they publicly demand human rights and challenge social norms. Women human rights defenders face specific forms of gender-based violence in addition to the attacks other defenders may face, including sexual violence, stereotyped smears and defamation campaigns linked to their gender. Many of them operate in an environment of

¹ In line with the 1998 UN Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (adopted by the UN General Assembly in resolution A/RES/53/144), and other international standards, Amnesty International considers a human rights defender to be someone who, individually or in association with others, acts to defend and/or promote human rights at the local, national, regional or international levels, without resorting to or advocating hatred, discrimination or violence.

² Amnesty International, [Human Rights Defenders under Threat: A Shrinking Space For Civil Society](#), Index: ACT 30/6011/2017, May 2017

hostility against the interests they promote. Those who, for example, challenge gender stereotypes and who work on issues like sexual or reproductive health and rights are often especially vulnerable to gender-based attacks and threats.³

In this respect, the development of the seven civil society engagement strands are an important recognition of the role civil society can contribute to ensuring that global policy development is in harmony with the SDGs. Amnesty International urges the Argentinian government to protect civil society space and freedom of expression in connection with the G20 process throughout its presidency. This protection should be maintained by all future G20 presidencies.

The organization urges all members of the G20 to:

- **Publicly recognize the important role human rights defenders play in realizing the sustainable development goals and ensure that recognition of this role is included in the final communiqué of the G20 summit.**
- **Publicly acknowledge the particular and significant role played by women human rights defenders and those who work on women's rights or gender-related issues, and ensure they are able to work in an environment free from violence and discrimination of any sort.**
- **Commit to ensuring that civil society space at the G20 is protected in the future.**
- **Publicly stress the importance of freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly in civil society participation in the G20 and commit to ensuring that no one is subject to reprisals for participating in any event connected to the G20, including protest events.**

³ Amnesty International, [Deadly but Preventable: Attacks Killings And Enforced Disappearances Of Those Who Defend Human Rights](#), Index: ACT 30/7270/2017, December 2017