

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE G20 ON THE IMPORTANT ROLE OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

The G20 Summit, which this year focuses on ‘Shaping an Interconnected World’, 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 framework of interconnectivity that is developing and envisaged, thus setting an important example to the rest of the world.

Amnesty International welcomes the focus on making progress on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda during the summit. 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 to reduce inequalities and ensure that no one is left behind whilst promoting effective accountability for all stakeholders. In this respect, we urge all members of the G20, to pay particular attention to Goals 5 (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls), 10 (Reduce inequality within and among countries) and 16 (Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels).

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 seeing a full-frontal assault on human rights defenders, with civil society space shrinking daily.

Governments, armed groups, companies and other powerful entities and communities 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.

In this respect, Amnesty International welcomes the commitment of the German government to protect civil society space and freedom of expression throughout its presidency of the G20, which has facilitated the important contributions of civil society actors through the various civil society strands of the process. This commitment should be maintained in future summits.

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

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;
- 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 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.