

**THE PARIS DECLARATION:  
THE HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS SUMMIT,  
10 DECEMBER 1998**

**We, human rights defenders,**

1. **ARE GATHERED** as a World Summit of human rights defenders on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights at the Palais de Chaillot, a place of symbolic importance where this Declaration was adopted on 10 December 1948 by the Member States of the United Nations;
2. **WE ARE COMMITTED** in our daily lives to make a reality of the high aspirations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights for all people throughout the world of all the rights guaranteed by the international and regional instruments for the protection of human rights;
3. **WE INSIST** that human rights are universal, indivisible and inalienable and represent the birthright of all men, women and children and the common legacy of humanity which binds us and future generations;
4. **WE WELCOME** the fact that, in the last fifty years, the increasing number of organizations and individuals who defend human rights has opened up new possibilities for action and considerably strengthened the influence of human rights defenders at national and international levels.
5. **WE BELIEVE** that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights represents "a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations", and establishes, for the present and the future, principles essential for living in society with respect for human dignity; and that, as such the Universal Declaration constitutes an indisputable moral and legal reference;
6. **WE ARE WITNESSES** to the fact that in the fact in the fifty years since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, "disregard and contempt for human rights" remain the everyday reality in which many people continue to live and that human rights violations take on increasingly varied and complex forms, involving a growing number of actors, particularly economic actors, in the context of globalization;
7. **WE AFFIRM THAT:**

- 7.1 it is the responsibility of States to ensure the realization of all human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international and regional human rights instruments,
  - 7.2 human rights are the concern of the international community as recognized in the Vienna Declaration and Plan of Action and it is the responsibility of all in that community, intergovernmental organizations, financial institutions, multinational corporations and private business, to contribute to their realization,
  - 7.3 it is the rights of any individual to protect and promote the human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international and regional human rights instruments, in conformity with them;
8. **WE DENOUNCE** the growing disparity between the often dramatic reality of human rights violations in many countries and the rhetorical speeches made by those same States to support their international image;
  9. **WE DENOUNCE** the attempts by certain States to justify or excuse the human rights violations in the name of cultural, religious or historical specificity, or of particular or national security interests; and by misleadingly setting civil and political rights against economic, social and cultural rights and the right to development; or, on the contrary, by denying the value of the latter;
  10. **WE DENOUNCE** economic and social insecurity, which in its most serious and persistent forms leads to extreme poverty and exclusion, and constitutes a violation of human rights; we stress that those who are subject to conditions of extreme poverty are among the principal victims of the full range of human rights abuses and that the efforts they expend in their daily struggle to stay alive place them among human rights defenders;
  11. **WE DENOUNCE** the failure of states to address impunity which constitutes one of the main obstacles to the full respect of human rights and which continues to obstruct the work of human rights defenders; we welcome the creation of the International Criminal Court and call upon States to ratify its Statute immediately and to ensure that it functions efficiently and effectively;

**In this spirit,**

12. **WE AFFIRM** that the realization of all human rights remains today as yesterday, the common aim for which we live, work and act and that we are resolute in our belief that until human rights are respected for all, the peace and security for which we all strive will remain unattainable;
13. **WE INVITE** all people, individually or collectively, to contribute to the realization of the rights guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international and regional instruments, as proclaimed in the Declaration for the protection of human rights defenders adopted by the United Nations;

14. **WE DEPLORE** the fact that the increase in the number and influence of human rights defenders in the world has been accompanied by a development and systematisation of repressive measures and practices used against them;
15. **WE DEPLORE** the fact that in some countries, those systematic measures of repression are such that women and men have no means of promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms at a national level;
16. **WE DENOUNCE** in particular the fact that human rights defenders are a target of those whose regimes and practices they condemn; and that, because of their commitment, they are among the victims of summary executions, enforced disappearances, torture, arbitrary detentions, violations of the rights to a fair trial, freedom of opinion, expression, association, assembly, demonstration, movement, the right to privacy, the right to employment and employment rights, the right to housing, health, education and culture and that they are increasingly forced into exile or enforced displacement, or to live in inhuman or degrading conditions;
17. **WE CONDEMN** the proliferation of systematic measures and practices used by States to prevent or impede the legitimate work of human rights defenders, -including censorship and seizure or publications, defamation, administrative and police harassment, intimidation, implication in criminal cases, their identification with 'terrorist' groups, restrictions imposed on the creation or registration of associations, the legal and administrative obstacles to the right of access to and dissemination of information, the surveillance and control of access to funding and the use made of such funds, the creation by the authorities of State-controlled non-governmental organizations, reliance on a state of emergency or public order requirements, impunity for the perpetrators of such acts against human rights defenders;
18. **WE EXPRESS** our solidarity with those whose rights are violated without any recourse to mechanisms for the protection of human rights because of the systematic repression of their rights;
19. **WE CALL UPON** States to fulfill their obligations under international human rights law and to respect, and enforce respect for, the right to freedom of action for human rights defenders, and to this end:
  - 19.1 **TO FULFIL** their obligation, in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international or regional instruments, to which they have freely subscribed, not to impede the free and effective exercise of the right to protect and promote human rights;
  - 19.2 **TO ADOPT** the necessary measures to guarantee this right and protect those exercising it; in particular by ensuring that their national laws are in conformity with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international and regional human rights instruments;
  - 19.3 **AND TO PROVIDE** such protection against acts or omissions of the State, as well as against acts of violence and affronts to human dignity perpetrated by armed groups, private groups or individuals;

20. **WE CALL UPON** intergovernmental organizations, international or regional, to protect human rights defenders and to this end, to set up the necessary instruments and mechanisms to guarantee effectively the freedom of action of human rights defenders, and to protect them against all forms of repression; and, in this respect:
  - 20.1 **WELCOME** the United General Assembly's adoption finally on 10 December 1998, of the Declaration for the protection of human rights defenders(1), which has been in preparation for thirteen years;
  - 20.2 **CALL UPON** States to immediately take the necessary measures at national and international levels to ensure the effective implementation of the rights enshrined in that Declaration;
21. **WE REAFFIRM** the fact that the realization of all the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is the responsibility of everyone, and we call upon private business, multinational companies and international financial institutions to ensure that their strategies and projects contribute to the implementation of civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights, and do not obstruct the freedom of action of human rights defenders;
22. **FINALLY, WE URGE** men and women of all ages and all organs of society to engage in their daily lives in their communities to respect and promote all rights for all people everywhere, and to join us to make of the high aspirations proclaimed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights a reality for present and future generations.