

Human Rights Defenders have the Right to Defend Human Rights

(Excerpts from the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders)

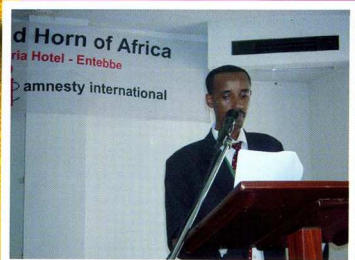
The UN Declaration on HRDs is based on principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and some provisions of international covenants on human rights.



WHRD chairing a session during the conference



WHRD discussing the repression of HRDs in Africa



HRD addressing the conference about his experience



AI HRD Training on Information protection, Kampala, Uganda



AI HRD Conference, Entebbe Uganda

Rights and protections accorded to human rights defenders

Articles 1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12 and 13 of the Declaration provide specific protections to human rights defenders, including the rights:

- To seek the protection and realization of human rights at the national and international levels;
- To conduct human rights work individually and in association with others;
- To form associations and non-governmental organizations;
- To meet or assemble peacefully;
- To seek, obtain, receive and hold information relating to human rights;
- To submit to governmental bodies and agencies and organizations concerned with public affairs criticism and proposals for improving their functioning and to draw attention to any aspect of their work that may impede the realization of human rights;
- To make complaints about official policies and acts relating to human rights and to have such complaints reviewed;
- To offer and provide professionally qualified legal assistance or other advice and assistance in defence of human rights;
- To attend public hearings, proceedings and trials in order to assess their compliance with national law and international human rights obligations;
- To unhindered access to and communication with non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations;
- To benefit from an effective remedy;
- To the lawful exercise of the occupation or profession of human rights defender;
- To effective protection under national law in reacting against or opposing, through peaceful means, acts or omissions attributable to the State that result in violations of human rights;
- To solicit, receive and utilize resources for the purpose of protecting human rights (including the receipt of funds from abroad).

The responsibilities of everyone

The Declaration emphasizes that everyone has duties towards and within the community and encourages us all to be human rights defenders.

- Articles 10, 11 and 18 outline responsibilities for everyone:

Everyone shall:

- promote human rights,
- safeguard democracy and its institutions

No one shall:

- violate the human rights of others.

The duties of States

States have a responsibility to implement and respect all the provisions of the Declaration. However, articles 2, 9, 12, 14 and 15 make particular reference to the role of States and indicate that each State has a responsibility and duty:

- To protect, promote and implement all human rights;
- To ensure that all persons under its jurisdiction are able to enjoy all social, economic, political and other rights and freedoms in practice;
- To adopt such legislative, administrative and other steps as may be necessary to ensure effective implementation of rights and freedoms;
- To provide an effective remedy for persons who claim to have been victims of a human rights violation;
- To conduct prompt and impartial investigations of alleged violations of human rights;
- To take all necessary measures to ensure the protection of everyone against any violence, threats, retaliation, adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the Declaration;
- To promote public understanding of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights;
- To ensure and support the creation and development of independent national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights, such as ombudsmen or human rights commissions;
- To promote and facilitate the teaching of human rights at all levels of formal education and professional training.

The role of national law

- Articles 3 and 4 outline the relationship of the Declaration to national and international law with a view to assuring the application of the highest possible legal standards of human rights.

Particular attention

Should be paid to the role of Women Human Rights Defenders and defenders working for the realization of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR) as they are often persecuted because of their work.



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