

DEFENDING ACTIVISTS AT RISK



PROTECTING **HUMAN RIGHTS**
DEFENDERS FROM THREATS
AND VIOLENCE

June 2011

“Whoever destroys a single life, destroys a full world; and whoever saves a single life, saves a full world.”

— Mishna, Sanhedrin 4:5

“Today we want to live another history: we are rebelling and we are saying enough is enough, today and here we want to say that they are afraid of us because we are not afraid of them, because despite their threats, despite their slander, despite their harassment, we continue to walk towards a sun which we think shines strongly.”

— Bety Cariño, Executive Director of CACTUS (killed in April 2010)

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PART I. UNDERSTANDING HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Introduction

Sivaram Mehra¹ was eating dinner in July 2008 at a local boarding house in mountainous Keonjhar, India, when armed police burst through the door. They dragged him through the streets to the local station, beating him when he tried to claim his innocence. Mehra was tortured and forced to sign a false statement that he was a Maoist terrorist. A local magistrate tried him and issued a lengthy prison sentence without bail. Mehra was one of three staff members of Keonjhar Integrated Rural Development and Training Institute (KIRDTI) arrested that day and later imprisoned.

KIRDTI is a community-based NGO that has successfully prevented illegal and harmful encroachment by mining companies on indigenous land—drawing the ire of powerful foreign investors and local politicians. Soon after the arrest, rumors circulated that police intended to detain and question four additional KIRDTI staff, including its director. The staff went into hiding for fear of torture, imprisonment and other ill treatment by police. During this period of persecution, mining companies took advantage of suppressed KIRDTI activity to enter tribal villages and survey land for mining operations. Their operations were halted, however, by strong community resistance that had been nurtured by KIRDTI's persistent organizing and training in hundreds of villages during the previous years. AJWS provided emergency grants to enable KIRDTI and another India-based NGO to link with larger international advocacy organizations, drawing national and international attention to the arrests. Amnesty International, Front Line and FIAN International each issued alerts and urgent action appeals as a result. Police soon eased their harassment of KIRDTI activists. In November 2008, the four KIRDTI members who had gone into hiding were able to return to Keonjhar and resume their work. The three detained staff members were released on bail in late 2010

after spending two and a half years in prison. In early 2011, they were cleared of all charges.

This was not an isolated incident. The violence and impunity that placed the lives of KIRDTI staff in danger affects human rights defenders all over the world.

This paper seeks to identify protection and security strategies that can be utilized to support human rights defenders. With the intention of making this paper useful to both human rights practitioners and grantmakers, we discuss important legislation, highlight case studies and conclude with a series of best practices drawn from our experience and the recommendations of experts in the field. We hope this work stimulates needed dialogue, enhancing the safety of human rights defenders and making them more effective in their tireless efforts on behalf of others.

Protections by the International Community

In recent decades, human rights defenders (HRDs) have received increasing international recognition for their role in protecting and promoting human rights.² The international community has acknowledged the right of HRDs to pursue their work by developing legal protections for their safety and security. In 1998, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.³ Article I established that “[e]veryone has the right, individually and in association with others, to promote and to strive for the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels.” This represents a strong

¹ Not his real name.

² Human rights are understood to refer to the full spectrum of rights: political, civil, economic, social and cultural.

³ *Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms*. United Nations General Assembly, A/RES/53/144. 8 March 1999.

Who is a human rights defender?

Human rights defenders (HRDs) are individuals who work to peacefully promote and protect any of a broad range of human rights. The HRDs that AJWS supports are often community activists or leaders of local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), but may also include lawyers, journalists, health workers, teachers or any other individual who works to defend human rights. They are advocates for local groups of marginalized women, ethnic minorities, indigenous groups, LGBTI communities, religious minorities and the poorest of the poor, and they play an essential role in promoting and protecting the rights of these communities.

commitment by the international community to the notion that human rights will not be maintained without people to protect them, and that if we are to have human rights then a right to defend human rights must exist.

In 2000, the UN Human Rights Commission called on the Secretary-General to appoint a Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders. This was the first mechanism created at the international level to protect human rights defenders in accordance with the rights enshrined in the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. The work of the Special Rapporteur includes monitoring and responding to information on the situation and rights of defenders, conducting dialogue with governments and other actors on the promotion and effective implementation of the Declaration, and recommending effective strategies to better protect human rights defenders. The protection of HRDs is the Special Rapporteur's overall focus. This includes both the protection of defenders themselves and protecting the right to defend human rights.

The European Union adopted the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders in 2004, establishing practical ways for EU missions to support and protect HRDs. The guidelines were developed to systematize and strengthen the efforts of EU missions to work with human rights defenders, including monitoring the situation of HRDs, making public statements, monitoring trials, and providing financial support to strengthen and consult with HRD networks. EU missions report directly to the Council Working Party on Human Rights, which can utilize diplomatic channels to condemn attacks against HRDs. Missions can also appoint a special liaison to work with HRDs, issuing invitations, facilitating visits and/or attending trials of HRDs.⁴ The guidelines, which were renewed in December 2008, attempt to provide a direct link for HRDs to international forums such as the UN Human Rights Council where they can seek redress for the harms perpetrated against them.⁵ Furthermore, the EU has tasked overseas missions with developing local implementation strategies in consultation with HRDs and their organizations. These strategies provide an opportunity for HRDs to build networks and alliances with influential international actors that can provide support when they face threats.

In the United States, some progress has been made toward supporting HRDs in recent years. In 2006, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice issued 10 guiding principles on NGOs, announced the State Department's Freedom Defender Award and pledged to support Freedom House's Global Human Rights Defenders Fund.⁶ While the principles touch on the essential rights of HRDs, they have yet to be translated into strategies for embassies and are therefore not being implemented. On the other hand, the Global HRD Fund, which provides rapid response grants

to support activists' financial, medical and legal needs, has played a role in providing immediate support to threatened human rights defenders.

Threats Against Human Rights Defenders

AJWS grantees report increasing incidents of persecution against themselves and their families. HRDs may be threatened by a variety of actors: local or national government officials and security forces who perceive HRD work as an impediment to their own power; multinational corporations and other large companies—especially in the extractive industries—that view HRDs who advocate for local communities as a hindrance to profit and expansion; and private individuals or groups such as religious extremists and non-state militias. It is sometimes unclear who is responsible for a particular threat, and in many situations a combination of powerful state and non-state actors simultaneously persecute HRDs.

The legitimate work of activists and civil society organizations can be perceived as a threat by state actors, who often seek to intimidate HRDs by using police and other security forces to harass, arrest or torture them. Front Line, an international organization that supports the protection and security of human rights organizations, reported at least 24 cases of HRDs murdered in 2009. Front Line's director Mary Lawlor explained that "[k]illings and attempted killings have been documented in Afghanistan, Burundi, Congo, the Democratic Republic of Congo, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Kenya, Mexico, the Philippines, the Russian Federation and Sri Lanka. In many cases the authorities were directly implicated."

Some states undermine the work of defenders by passing repressive laws that impede HRD activities and provide grounds for incarcerating HRDs who are engaged in legitimate, non-violent work. In the wake of the attacks of September 11, 2001, and the perceived growing terrorist threat, some governments have taken advantage of national security concerns to adopt heavy-handed security measures that group HRDs with terrorists. Throughout the decades-long war in Sri Lanka and following its conclusion in 2009, for example, the government employed the Prevention of Terrorism Act to detain political opponents,

⁴ *Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms*. United Nations General Assembly, A/RES/53/144. March 8, 1999.

⁵ *EU Guidelines of Human Rights Defenders*. International Service for Human Rights. September 4, 2008.

⁶ "US Supporting Human Rights and Democracy Strategy." U.S. Department of State. April 5, 2007.

journalists and human rights activists that were peacefully calling for an end to impunity. In addition, the increasing criminalization of social movements has resulted in anti-NGO laws that restrict the availability of funds, stifle freedom of association, increase bureaucratic red tape for NGO registration, and foster suspicion and violence against social changemakers. Crackdowns on activism in Ethiopia, for example, have paralyzed the work of AJWS grantees and created a deeply insecure environment for HRDs.

Ethiopia. In January 2009, the Ethiopian parliament adopted a new law that criminalizes human rights activities by Ethiopian organizations and allows interference by the government in the operation of civil society organizations. Because of this law, the government revoked the registrations of 54 community associations that were established under the leadership of AJWS's grantee Culture and Art Society of Ethiopia (CASE). In addition, a CASE project that supports indigenous women's labor groups—also funded by AJWS—was shut down and forced to relocate.

Discriminatory laws often constitute a particular challenge for LGBTI⁷ activists. In more than 80 countries, consensual same-sex relations between adults are still criminalized. In other countries, LGBTI people are persecuted under broadly defined statutes criminalizing “debauchery” or “offenses against morality or public decency.” These laws are often used as a way to silence LGBTI activists, as well as women's rights activists, forcing them and their work underground.⁸

HRDs who work under repressive regimes and operate in areas of armed conflict regularly encounter threats. Government or paramilitary security forces can restrict their movement and communications, raid their offices, and in extreme cases destroy or evacuate their communities. HRDs in countries such as Burma, Sri Lanka and Sudan are constantly forced to relocate and engage in anti-surveillance tactics to protect themselves. Threats

⁷ Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex. AJWS acknowledges a broad spectrum of sexual orientations and gender identities. The term “LGBTI,” as it is employed in this paper, is not intended to limit the breadth of the communities with which we partner, to prescribe the terms individuals use to describe their sexual orientation or gender identity, or to generalize the ways our grantees identify their own organizations. Our grantees use various terminology to define the communities in which they work, including: LGBT, LGBTI, LGBTIQ, queer, gender loving people, same-sex lovers, men who have sex with men (MSM), women who have sex with women (WSW), sexually diverse communities, sexual minorities, transgender and transsexual. These choices stem from the diverse linguistic, cultural, sociopolitical and historical contexts in which our grantees operate. For more information on AJWS's LGBTI grantmaking, see *Advancing a Human Rights Agenda: Funding the Human Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) People*.

⁸ *Claiming Rights, Claiming Justice: A Guidebook on Women Human Rights Defenders*. Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development. 2007.

to these HRDs are somewhat different from others in that they tend to be persistent, ongoing threats rather than threats that result from specific actions or campaigns. Non-democratic regimes often lack constitutions or other accountability mechanisms, making it difficult to address violations against HRDs through a legal framework. These governments also tend to respond less to international pressure than more stable regimes.

Sudan. In 2009, the director of an AJWS grantee in Sudan was detained and tortured by Sudanese government officials for his alleged connection to the International Criminal Court. After years of operating under extreme pressure in Sudan, this arrest, as well as threats to other staff members, forced the organization to relocate to another country. The group's network of human rights monitors in Sudan now works underground because of continued fears about safety and security.

Although many HRDs are persecuted by their governments, they may also be attacked by powerful non-state actors who perceive that HRDs' work challenges existing power structures, lessens profits or threatens the standing of the non-state actors in the community. In countries such as India, Ghana and Guatemala, AJWS grantees report threats from powerful community members, including religious fundamentalists, businesspeople, criminal organizations and paramilitary groups.

Ghana. In January 2010, the staff of AJWS grantee Challenging Heights received death threats for aiding in the successful prosecution of child traffickers who supply fishermen with children—some as young as five years old—for use as laborers on Volta Lake in Ghana. Even though the police promised to provide protection for its executive director, Challenging Heights, with emergency support from AJWS, relocated its offices in order to protect staff, equipment and records.

In some cases, AJWS grantees face threats from large corporations for defending the rights of local communities to live on their own land and to access and manage natural resources.

El Salvador. Marcelo Rivera, a community leader, environmentalist and teacher from San Isidro, disappeared in June 2009. His body was found two weeks later with signs of brutal torture typical of death squad killings. Mr. Rivera was a founder of the grassroots association Friends of San Isidro, Cabañas (ASIC) and a leader in the widespread opposition to Canada-based Pacific Rim's mining in the region. This made him a target of local authorities, who expected

to benefit from the tax revenues and royalties that the mining company was going to pay to the local government.

In other instances, human rights defenders are even threatened by their own families who do not approve of their activism and the impact that it has on their own standing in the community.

Women human rights defenders challenge deeply entrenched beliefs and powerful patriarchal institutions. In pursuing this work, they confront the same threats faced by male colleagues as well as those that are specific to their gender. Women HRDs are disproportionately impacted by gender-based threats, including sexual harassment and violence. Women activists often face attacks on their reputations through sexuality-baiting—the strategic use of negative stereotypes about sexuality. These attacks can have severe consequences, including loss of employment, home and custody of children.

India. In 2010, a 12-year-old member of an AJWS grantee working on girls’ empowerment in India was abducted and raped. In response, members of the group documented the case, filed a complaint with the police and took the girl to the hospital for an examination. The police subsequently detained the young woman for three days. When the executive director of the organization protested the girl’s illegal detention, police officers verbally threatened her and filed two cases against the director—including charges of trafficking and organizing the rape of a young woman. When the director was summoned to the police station to give a statement, a police officer sexually harassed her. She fled into hiding to evade arrest, but was eventually cleared of charges after Front Line Defenders issued appeals to the president, a district official and the local chief of police.

Similarly, LGBTI HRDs face additional threats due to their gender identity or sexual orientation. In many contexts, the media stigmatize LGBTI activists and legitimize violence against them. LGBTI HRDs are often targeted by religious fundamentalists and in the worst cases have been murdered by extremist groups or individuals. Ostracization of LGBTI HRDs in their own families and communities increases the isolation and fear associated with defending LGBTI rights, contributing to a high rate of burnout.⁹ Lesbian and transgender women activists are particularly vulnerable due to the overlapping stigmas associated

⁹ *Protecting Human Rights Defenders: Report of an International Seminar.* Front Line Defenders. 2010.

¹⁰ “Claiming Rights, Claiming Justice: A Guidebook on Women Human Rights Defenders.” Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development. 2007.

with their sexual orientation and gender identity and are therefore subject to higher levels of threat.¹⁰

Responding to Threats

Human rights defenders utilize a variety of measures to protect themselves. They may vary their travel routes to and from work; relocate or go into hiding; or create communication strategies that allow them to stay in touch with their colleagues when traveling. Others reach out to friendly organizations and powerful individuals or attempt to raise their public profile so that any harm to them will be noticed and denounced in the press. These actions can prove extremely effective, but in many cases more is needed. Limited funds mean that many HRDs do not have the resources necessary to respond sufficiently to threats, strengthen security systems or develop long-term security plans.



KISLAY, INDIA, HOLDING A RALLY IN A SLUM SCHEDULED FOR DEMOLITION.

PART II. AJWS SUPPORT OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

The AJWS Response

As a human rights funder committed to advancing the rights of marginalized people, American Jewish World Service (AJWS) supports hundreds of HRDs in Africa, Asia and the Americas. AJWS actively promotes the protection and security of these activists by providing grants to NGOs and grassroots community-based organizations with specific considerations for the risks inherent in their work.

In 2010, AJWS program officers received security alerts from 28 grantees in 11 countries across the three regions where AJWS works. The alerts detail surveillance of communications, anonymous threats, arbitrary arrests, torture and violent attacks. While these alerts come from a wide variety of grantees working in varying contexts, we have noted a predominance of threats aimed at HRDs who focus on natural resource rights issues; women’s rights; LGBTI rights; peacebuilding; and human rights

monitoring in areas with protracted conflicts or post-conflict environments.

AJWS utilizes a holistic approach to grantmaking and extends support to grantees with security concerns when possible, using three primary strategies: (1) providing small grants; (2) engaging in advocacy and outreach on behalf of grantees; and (3) connecting grantees to international and regional organizations with expertise in protection and security.

1. Grantmaking. AJWS provides grants in Asia, Africa and Latin America to marginalized grassroots communities that advocate for social justice. Our approach supports the needs articulated by our grantees, including funding core programmatic work; funding staff skills and knowledge development and other organizational strengthening; and helping grantees connect to other donors and networks.

In addition, AJWS provides small grants from earmarked emergency funds to enable HRDs to increase their physical security. This may include support to help HRDs install video cameras in their offices, pay legal fees, receive medical care, relocate, obtain immediate psychosocial support and/or secure food and shelter while they are in hiding.



SAO-SAO-ED, PARTICIPATING IN AN LGBTI RALLY IN THAILAND.

Thailand. Many Burmese activists operate inside Thailand, serving Burmese migrant and refugee communities near the Thailand-Burma border. The Thai government refuses to recognize the refugee status of most of these communities, depriving them of government services and protections and leaving them vulnerable to xenophobic violence and discrimination. On the morning of February 8, 2011, an AJWS grantee's office was raided by the Thai police, and 19 individuals—including staff, volunteers, students and a five-month-old child—were detained for three days. They were forced to pay fines and deported across the border. Unable to return to their work or homes due to police surveillance, the activists reached out to AJWS for emergency support. AJWS quickly provided a grant to secure food, shelter and other necessities until the situation calmed down and the activists could return to Thailand.

2. Advocacy opportunities. AJWS connects threatened grantees to opportunities that allow them to draw national and international attention to their situation. AJWS's grants staff works with our advocacy and communications staffs, colleague organizations and other partners to circulate emergency appeals. We facilitate travel for testimony in international forums or for lobbying sympathetic governments, allowing HRDs to raise awareness about their work and the risks that they face. We also nominate our grantees for prestigious awards and fellowships, as HRDs often advise us that simply raising their public profile can help protect them from threats.

Uganda. In October 2009, a bill was submitted to the Ugandan parliament that, if enacted, would further criminalize homosexuality in the country by introducing the death penalty for people who have previous convictions, are HIV-positive or engage in same sex acts with people under 18 years of age. The bill also includes penalties for individuals, media organizations and NGOs that support LGBTI rights. Many Ugandan LGBTI rights organizations received direct threats to their security while they organized the LGBTI community and fought the proposed anti-homosexuality legislation. In January 2010, AJWS supported the participation of Ugandan activists in high-level advocacy forums in the United States and arranged meetings with government officials and media outlets. This opportunity allowed them to raise awareness about the bill internationally and bring attention to the security concerns they faced.

3. Collegial Partnerships. While the majority of AJWS's grantees are grassroots organizations, we also fund a small number of international and regional organizations that can provide additional technical support or other expertise to our grantees. We refer to these organizations

as "collegial partners." Our collegial partners with expertise in security can link grantees at risk with an international network of supporters to advocate on their behalf; provide rapid emergency grants to our grantees; and train our grantees in security procedures to preemptively mitigate threats. At this time, there are few community-based organizations or national organizations working on protection and security. Therefore, we have prioritized support to regional and international organizations that work directly with human rights organizations to build local capacity and advocate for security.

Our collegial partners Front Line (FL) and Urgent Action Fund (UAF) are international organizations that offer resources and expertise to grassroots groups responding to security threats. AJWS connects grantees to these two organizations when we learn of serious threats that demand an immediate response. When appropriate, FL and UAF are able to provide emergency grants to HRDs to support relocation, access psychosocial support or build capacity related to security.

Mexico. In April 2008, UAF learned from AJWS staff of the murders of two young women activists from Centro de Apoyo Comunitario Trabajando Unido (CACTUS) and escalating threats against other members of the organization. UAF encouraged CACTUS, a network of Indigenous community radio stations run by 70 young people in the Mixteca region of Oaxaca, to apply for a protection and security grant. CACTUS requested a rapid response grant to increase the security of its members by installing an intercom with a camera in CACTUS's office; purchasing portable radios, mobile phones and a laptop computer; renting a safe house; and establishing a small fund to be used for further emergencies. CACTUS was able to quickly secure this critical support due to AJWS's partnership with UAF.

Unanswered Questions

HRD protection and security is a new and evolving field. Grantmakers that focus on HRDs may encounter difficult questions and unanticipated scenarios. Some of these carry ethical implications about the appropriate role of the grantmaker and grantee. HRDs working on dangerous issues or in volatile regions may risk their lives on a daily basis, and in the worst circumstances they can be injured, tortured or killed. What is the role of the grantmaker in such a situation?

For example, in April 2010, 30 human rights activists were attacked by a paramilitary group as they attempted to bring critical supplies to people in need in Oaxaca, Mexico.



CENTRE FOR PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS, SRI LANKA, HOLDING AN EVENT ON INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY.

The director of an AJWS grantee and another member of the convoy were killed. The activist left behind a husband and two young children. In what ways could AJWS be most supportive, as a grantmaker, after her death? When a grantee is injured or killed because of his or her work, should the grantmaker provide support to his or her family, and what kind of support or action is most appropriate?

How can funders ensure that our security grants reach all HRDs affected by threat, and not only those who have the broadest networks and loudest voices? Furthermore, what role can funders play in supporting the protection of the communities that are exposed to similar threats as a result of their collaboration with HRDs?

Since many HRDs in hostile environments are under constant threat, grantmakers must provide sustained and ongoing security support. How do we balance support for core work with support for security? Is it responsible to support relocation and other rapid response measures without also funding long-term support such as development of security plans?

Grantmakers should also consider the psychological impact that hostile environments have on activists.

Operating under continual threat can take psychological and emotional tolls that impact HRDs' work by leading to "burnout" and even affecting their physical health. How can grantmakers address these long-term effects of working in insecure environments in order to support not only HRDs' protection and security but also their general well-being?

These questions highlight the complexity of working with HRDs and the need for further dialogue among grantmakers and human rights organizations. We hope that this paper will serve as a catalyst for further discussion, and we look forward to engaging in dialogue with other organizations.

PART III. TOWARD A NEW VISION FOR SUPPORTING HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

In recent years, AJWS has witnessed escalating threats against our grantees. In response, we increased our annual emergency grants budget in 2010 to enhance our ability to respond to the urgent needs of HRDs. But it is not

just about the money—there are many other means of supporting HRDs. AJWS staff surveyed a number of international and regional organizations that support HRDs in order to better understand the primary methods of support and to identify gaps in funding. Our review shows that organizations have developed a number of innovative best practices and recommendations. These recommendations apply not only to AJWS but to other grantmakers as well. In short, we recommend a comprehensive, collaborative approach that allows funders and grantees to undertake ongoing risk assessments and to develop holistic security strategies that addresses the immediate and long-term security concerns of partner organizations. Detailed explanations and some practical examples follow. We hope that other funders will consider them and offer input so that we may work together to strengthen our support for HRDs.

Best Practices and Examples

1. Provide emergency, capacity-building and long-term security grants. Security threats to HRDs vary according to context. Emergency grants often prove useful but do not provide sufficient long-term protection in the face of repeated, consistent threats. There are a growing number of regional and international organizations that provide rapid response grants when HRDs are threatened, but less funding is available for long-term preparedness. Capacity-building grants with specific funds earmarked for security can ensure that HRDs are planning for their own safety. However, it is also important that other funding be flexible enough to allow HRDs to respond to threats in unexpected emergency situations—for example by using grant monies to purchase bus tickets or new cell phones to avoid surveillance—even if those funds were earmarked for something else. Donors should provide support to HRDs and their dependents to seek safe shelter or relocate when necessary. In addition, donors should support HRDs in exile to stay connected and continue their work.

HRDs are often arrested without due process of law and denied legal representation. In countries that have functional legal infrastructure, grants to support legal defense can offer critical protection to HRDs under threat, and can establish important local precedents for the right to defend human rights. Finally, funders should protect the anonymity of grantees when necessary—ask them if there are security concerns around publicizing grantmaker-grantee relationships.

■ AJWS has supported Arcoiris, an organization working on LGBT rights in Honduras, to strengthen its security by providing a range of grants. In 2007 we provided a rapid response grant to support emergency medical and psychosocial treatment to the director when he

was harassed, detained and tortured. This grant also provided support to conduct local media campaigns raising awareness about attacks against members of the LGBT community. Since the group has continued to receive threats, we have supported it to continue to build its own security capacity. In 2010, we supported Donny Reyes, general coordinator of Arcoiris, to attend the Free from Fear Conference and an international training on LGBT security and emergency response in Chicago. In addition, we supported AJWS regional partner Unidad de Defensores y Defensoras de Derechos Humanos de Guatemala (Unit for the Defense of Human Rights Defenders of Guatemala—UDEFEHUA), a Guatemalan organization that works with HRDs, to facilitate a workshop on security planning with Arcoiris staff. With support from AJWS, Donny and his colleagues have connected to allies that specialize in providing security support, allowing them to respond more quickly to threats.

2. Build the response capacity of grantmaking staff. Program and grantmaking staff often develop long-term, trust-based relationships with their grantees who then are comfortable reaching out to staff and consultants in response to threats. Country-based staff members need to be equipped with the tools necessary to document threats and communicate with headquarter staff, playing a vital liaising role. Additionally, staff and consultants should be well trained regarding the resources they can provide to grantees. True support entails apportioning time and resources to discussing and preparing for security threats—not just assuming that security will be “part of the package.”

■ In July 2010, AJWS organized a self-care session in New York to discuss the barriers to long-term engagement on human rights work faced by activists as well as their funders. This workshop allowed grants staff to reflect on practices that we could put in place, both internally as well as in our grantmaking, to support self-care and sustained activism. We hope to integrate these practices into our grantmaking to promote and develop the idea of self-care among our partners as well as our staff.

3. Support HRDs in developing and implementing a security plan. While security risks may emerge from a variety of actors in multiple contexts, there are consistent themes that can be addressed by good security plans. In developing their plans, grantees should be encouraged to work with recognized professionals. Experts may include police officers, private security specialists, professional soldiers, firefighters, therapists, doctors, nursing staff, lawyers and/or security guards. Furthermore, security plans must be comprehensive, addressing a range of support,

including office, travel and information security; capacity building efforts for staff; effective advocacy on HRD security; psychosocial services; and access to medical care. In addition, plans should take into account the diverse security needs of the organization's staff, volunteers and beneficiaries, as well as specific needs related to gender and sexual orientation. Each plan should identify specific roles in the event of emergencies, address different types of risks and be regularly updated according to changing conditions. Local, national and international actors who are expected to help HRDs should also be contacted and made aware of the plan.

■ ■ ■ Protection International reinforces the security and protection of HRDs by providing the knowledge and necessary tools to integrate protection on the ground. The organization held a security training for three AJWS grantees in 2010. The grantees developed practical security plans, taking into account the threats that their organizations and staff members might face. They outlined objectives that could reduce threat levels and lessen their vulnerability.

4. Identify regional “hot zones” and issues that are likely to place HRDs in danger. Many HRDs that AJWS supports work in areas that are flashpoints of violence or protracted conflict. Other grantees advocate for issues that are known to be controversial in their local political context. When grantees are at increased risk of threats for the work they do, grantmakers should be proactive with grantees about discussing the types of emergency support they can facilitate. Grantmakers should also provide flexible funds to allow grantees in these hot zones to respond to urgent situations.

■ ■ ■ In countries where our partners work on controversial issues, AJWS has provided small pots of emergency funding that can be used at the discretion of grantees when urgent situations arise. In one country, a partner receiving threats used the funds to pay a retainer fee for a lawyer, enabling the organization to respond quickly when its members were arrested.

5. Improve digital security and support grantees in doing the same. Even in the remotest areas, grantees utilize cell phones, communicate through internet calling services and use video cameras to document abuses. While essential to the work that they do, each of these technologies is vulnerable to surveillance and attack by authorities or private actors. Cell phones can be used to track the location of grantees, and computers can be infiltrated with monitoring software. Technology has become a key tool for oppressive regimes and state actors. Staff, consultants and grantees should be trained in basic digital security in order to work safely.

Tactical Technology Collective (TTC) provides resources on digital security to human rights organizations. Following a training facilitated by TTC, AJWS's grants staff began utilizing software and other tools to improve security when sharing sensitive files and enhancing computer security while traveling.

6. Work with grantees to establish security networks.

Networks of community-based organizations can provide immediate protection when an HRD is threatened, and national and international NGOs can provide support by issuing press releases or contacting government officials. Through official channels, contacts within embassies can apply diplomatic pressure or issue emergency visas. HRDs and funders may already have such contacts but may not have nurtured them with security in mind. Explicit conversations about security may be necessary so that each contact can be made aware the role they may be asked to play in a security situation. Finally, high-level contacts should work to ensure that their actions—even when well intentioned—do not further endanger HRDs. For example, consulates should avoid publicizing discussions with civil society groups or choosing meeting places that might subject HRDs to observation by or threats from hostile actors.

■ ■ ■ In one country where AJWS works, EU foreign officers rely on AJWS country consultant reports on human rights violations. In turn, the foreign officers provide support to ensure that consultants travel safely.

7. Fund psychosocial support. HRDs operating under insecure circumstances for extended periods often experience reduced productivity, depression, illness and burnout. In some instances, HRDs may still be unable to implement a security plan—despite technical preparations—without proper psychological preparation and a better understanding of how various members of their organization might react to an unexpected threat. Psychosocial support should therefore be incorporated into any security plan as both a preventive measure and a responsive measure, regardless of the degree of stress or threats. Local, national and international psychosocial support organizations should be identified, with attention given to cultural contexts and individual preference (for example, while one HRD might prefer a therapist, another might prefer to consult a traditional healer or spiritual leader). With this in mind, AJWS also identifies opportunities that allow threatened activists to take a break and recover from the stress of working in volatile environments. These opportunities include attendance at international meetings and conferences, internships and fellowships.



MEMBER OF ASOCIACION INTERETNICA DE DESARROLLO DE LA SELVA PERUANA, AFTER WITNESSING AN HISTORIC AGREEMENT WITH THE PERUVIAN CONGRESS.

■ A number of organizations provide training on coping with traumatic stress and conflict resolution. For example, California-based Headington Institute offers psychological support to aid workers.

8. Support local responses. While international organizations currently provide support when an individual or an organization is in danger, it is important for activists to have access to experts and organizations that understand the cultural, legal and political contexts within which they are operating. Funders should therefore support regional organizations, offices and training programs that are dedicated to exploring these issues locally. Furthermore, at times, international organizations are better equipped to fund well-known, national-level human rights defenders who are already well networked at the international level. Local actors can better reach those social activists who work at the grassroots level and are, at times, overlooked.

■ Guatemala-based UDEFEGUA has been working since 2004 to promote the right to defend human rights. The organization works in Guatemala to strengthen the threat response of government institutions, the international community and HRDs themselves.

9. Consider Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation. In addition to receiving threats from state and non-state actors, women and LGBTI human rights defenders are often overlooked within larger mainstream human rights

movements. Women's and LGBTI rights are deferred, since they are seen as peripheral and subordinate to more highly prioritized rights. This neglect can extend to activists' right to security. The particular security concerns of women and LGBTI activists are often disregarded by their colleagues when security plans are developed, and they may be unable to find security experts who are well-versed in responding to their specific needs. Funders should familiarize themselves with the security issues that affect women and LGBTI activists and support partners to develop security plans that address the needs of these activists.

■ In September of 2010, a group of international organizations working on protection and security gathered in Oslo, Norway, to discuss good practices for supporting HRDs. They developed a list of recommendations related to the security of women and LGBTI HRDs, including advocating for the decriminalization of non-coercive sexual acts, supporting safe spaces where women and LGBTI activists can meet to discuss security, and providing training for officials and police on gender and sexual orientation.

10. Foster dialogue among funders about security and protection. The broader human rights funding community has been slow to address the issue of the protection of grantees. AJWS itself is eager to further develop our own capacities and practices. Some grantmakers argue that



MEMBER OF ALIANZA MAYA PARA LA EDUCACION POPULAR, GUATEMALA, PARTICIPATING IN A WELLNESS TRAINING.

supporting security is too complex because of the gravity of security decisions—lives are at stake, and funders do not have the training to effectively assess security risks. However, the persecution of HRDs is a real, identifiable problem that has been acknowledged by the international community. AJWS welcomes continued dialogue with other funders on the issues and strategies raised in this paper as we move toward our goal of offering stronger protection and support of the courageous activists defending human rights around the world.

■ AJWS supports funders' collaborations that help to coordinate programs and initiatives to protect the rights of HRDs in Mesoamerica. In 2009, for instance, AJWS and its collegial partner Grassroots International participated in the Funders' Working Group on Honduras that assessed the impacts of political upheaval on the civil and political rights of HRDs. In addition, AJWS played a key role in a similar funder-led initiative about resource rights and the protection and security of HRDs in Mexico.

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FURTHER READING ON THE PROTECTION AND SECURITY OF HRDs

Claiming Rights, Claiming Justice: A Guidebook on Women Human Rights Defenders, Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (2007)

Front Line Handbook for Human Rights Defenders: What protection can EU and Norwegian Diplomatic Missions offer? researched and written by Chris Collier and published by Front Line

Insiste, Persiste, Resiste, Existe, Jane Barry with Vahida Nainar. Project partners: Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights, The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation and Front Line International Foundation for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (2008)

New Protection Manual for Human Rights Defenders, researched and written by Enrique Eguren and Marie Caraj and published by Protection International (2009)

Security in-a-box: Tools and Tactics for your Digital Security, Tactical Technology Collective and Front Line International Foundation for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders

Self-Care and Self-Defense Manual for Feminist Activists, Marina Bernal. Artemisa, Grupo Interdisciplinario en Género, Sexualidad, Juventud y Derechos Humanos and Elige—Red de Jóvenes por los Derechos Sexuales y Reproductivos (2006). Published in English by CREA (2008)

What's the Point of Revolution if We Can't Dance, Jane Barry with Jelena -Djordjevic. Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights (2007)

GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

AJWS American Jewish World Service

EU European Union

HRD Human rights defender

LGBTI Lesbian, gay, bisexual transgender or intersex; an inclusive term for groups and identities sometimes also associated together as "sexual minorities."

NGO Non-governmental organization

Psychosocial support Multifaceted support that addresses the ongoing psychological and social needs of individuals, their partners, families and caregivers.

UN United Nations

Risk Refers to the possibility of events, however uncertain, that will result in harm.¹¹

Threat Indications that someone will harm somebody else's physical or moral integrity or property through purposeful and often violent action.¹²

¹¹ *Protection Manual for Human Rights Defenders*. Front Line Defenders. 2007.

¹² *Protection Manual for Human Rights Defenders*. Front Line Defenders. 2007.



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Inspired by Judaism's commitment to justice, **American Jewish World Service (AJWS)** works to realize human rights and end poverty in the developing world.