

WOMEN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS DAY 29TH NOVEMBER 2006

Summary

Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) is a term referring to women who individually or with others, act to promote and protect everyone's human rights and any individual working specifically to promote women's rights. This sub-category of defenders has been singled out because they face risks particular to their gender committed by both state and non-state actors, including their families and communities, especially when they confront and challenge cultural, religious or social norms about the role of women and their status in their societies. Consequently, WHRDs are often the ones who require the utmost support and protection.

In 2004 the European Union adopted *Ensuring Protection - European Union Guidelines on Human Rights defenders* (the Guidelines). The Guidelines acknowledge that it is "important to apply a gender perspective when approaching the issue of human rights defenders". While the Guidelines are addressed to EU member states, EU Missions, and relevant EU bodies, it is also intended to influence the conduct of governments outside the EU regarding the protection of WHRDs and the promotion and realisation of their rights.

In April 2006, the EU carried out a review of the implementation of the Guidelines and in its conclusions the Council called for "particular attention to the situation of women human rights defenders". It provided a set of 41 concrete recommendations, two of which specifically pertain to WHRDs. In order to advance upon these initial important recommendations and ensure their effective implementation, ten women's rights and human rights non-governmental organisations have endorse a set of ***Recommendations for Gender-Specific Implementation of the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders***. We urge you to also endorse this document and lobby representatives of EU embassies, consulates and European Commission delegations in your respective countries to respond to the campaign calls below.

Recommended Actions

1. Organise a meeting with EU representatives or delegations in your country around November 29 - preferably any date from November 29 (Women Human Rights Defenders Day) – December 10 (Human Rights Day). In the meeting, present a copy of the *Recommendations for Gender-Specific Implementation of the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders*.

Organisations with network members within EU

Arrange a meeting with the person responsible for Human Rights in your country's foreign ministry on or around 29 November to discuss the provision of greater protection and support for women human rights defenders. A copy of the Gender-Specific Recommendations on the Implementation of EU Guidelines on HRDs should be handed over during the meeting.

Organisations with network members outside EU

Meet with the EU delegation and/or German Embassy (Germany will take up the presidency of the EU from January 2007) in your country on or around 29 November to discuss the provision of greater protection and support for women human rights defenders. A copy of the

Gender-Specific Recommendations on the Implementation of EU Guidelines on HRDs should be handed over during the meeting.

2. At the meeting with EU representatives or delegations in your country or in any other activity you organise to lobby for the Recommendations for Gender-Specific Implementation of the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders, please call for:

- The adoption of specific conclusions by the General Affairs External Relations Council (GAERC) taking note of the risks and obstacles faced by WHRDs in the exercise of their activities, emphasizing the urgency and necessity of enhancing their protection and stressing the importance of applying a gender perspective in addressing human rights defenders issues;
- The incorporation of gender-specific recommendations and implementation tools into the Handbook on the Implementation of the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders (as drafted under the Dutch Presidency);
- The dissemination of gender-specific recommendations for the protection of WHRDs to all missions as soon as possible and their full implementation.
- The incorporation of the gender-specific recommendations in training for mission staff on HRDs to ensure specific focus on issues related to WHRDs.

3. Please contact the media, mobilise your networks, and involve all women and other human rights defenders you know to support the Recommendations for Gender-Specific Implementation of the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders.

Contact Us

Inform us about your meeting with the EU representative or delegations in your country or any lobbying activity you have done. Send us a brief description so we can post it on the women human rights defenders website www.defendingwomen-defendingrights.org to inspire others!

Send your information or questions to whrd@apwld.org or lisa@apwld.org