

[DISPATCHES]

REPORTS FROM THE
FRONT LINE

f FRONT LINE
DEFENDERS

what does front line defenders do?

Front Line, the International Foundation for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, is an international non-governmental organisation (NGO) established by charitable deed trust. It was founded in Dublin in 2001 with the specific aim of protecting human rights defenders at risk, people who work, non-violently, for any or all of the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Front Line Defenders addresses the protection needs identified by defenders themselves.

Front Line Defenders provides rapid and practical support to at-risk human rights defenders including:

- grants to pay for the practical security needs of human rights defenders;
- provision of training and development of resource materials on security and protection, including digital security;
- international advocacy on behalf of human rights defenders at immediate risk;
- rest and respite, including the Front Line Defenders Fellowship;
- opportunities for networking and exchange between human rights defenders, including at the biennial Dublin Platform;
- the annual Front Line Defenders Award for Human Rights Defenders at Risk;
- an emergency 24 hour phone line for human rights defenders operating in Arabic, English, French, Spanish and Russian;
- temporary relocation of human rights defenders in emergency situations.

Front Line Defenders promotes the protection of human rights defenders through its support for the work of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders and other international and regional mechanisms. Front Line Defenders promotes respect for the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. Front Line Defenders has special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, partnership status with the Council of Europe and observer status with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. Front Line Defenders received the 2007 King Baudouin International Prize for Development.



On the cover: Peruvian environmental rights campaigner Cesar Estrada survived an assassination attempt on his way to the Dublin Platform for human rights defenders at risk. He was on his way to the bus station to buy a ticket for the airport coach to fly to Ireland when two gunmen pulled up on a motorbike and aimed their guns at him. Cesar was shielded by his wife and a friend. As they drove off the gunmen shouted, "Next time we'll get you when you are not alone".

TRUSTEES



Denis O'Brien (Chairman) is Chairman of the Digicel Group. He is one of Ireland's leading entrepreneurs with extensive investments across several sectors. Mr. O'Brien was voted Ireland's Entrepreneur of the Year in 1998 in the inaugural running of the worldwide competition organised and sponsored by Ernst & Young. Mr. O'Brien is also a director of a number of private companies which hold some of his other business interests including Quinta do Lago SA and Communicorp Group Limited. In 2000 he established The Iris O'Brien Foundation to assist disadvantaged communities in Ireland and internationally. He is co-founder of Front Line Defenders.



Kieran Mulvey is Chief Executive of the Irish Workplace Relations Commission and Consultant with the International Labour Organisation and the European Union.



Noeline Blackwell is outgoing Director of FLAC (Free Legal Advice Centres) and incoming CEO of the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre. She is a Vice-President of The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH).



David Sykes acts as an investment advisor to Island Capital Ltd and previously held positions in banking and stockbroking which included Trinity Bank Ltd and Dolmen Stockbrokers Ltd.



Jim Conway is the founder and Chairman of the Print & Display Group, one of Ireland's largest print companies. He also has a number of other media interests in Ireland and Eastern Europe.



Maria Mulcahy is the CEO of the Iris O'Brien Foundation and the Irish-based Head of Philanthropy for the Digicel Group. She was involved with "People in Need" from 1988 to 2000. She was responsible for organising the RTÉ telethons, which raised €28 million. She was Director of Fundraising for the 2003 Special Olympics World Games.



Mary Jane N. Real is a founding member and former Coordinator of the Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition. A lawyer by profession, she was part of establishing the Alternative Law Groups network in the Philippines. She is a long-time advocate of women's rights having worked with women's rights and human rights organisations in Asia Pacific and internationally including as Regional Coordinator of Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development.



Registered Charity Number CHY 14029



Arnold Tsunga is Africa Director of the International Commission of Jurists. He was Executive Secretary of the Law Society of Zimbabwe and Executive Director of Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights. He was a joint winner of the Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders in 2006.

ADVISORY COUNCIL



Michel Forst is the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders and Secretary General of the French National Consultative Commission on Human Rights. He is a former Board member of Front Line Defenders. He was the UN Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Haiti from 2008 to 2013. He was Secretary General of the Paris Summit of Human Rights Defenders and Director of the French section of Amnesty International.



Hina Jilani is an internationally known human rights lawyer and advocate for human rights defenders. She was the UN Special Representative of the Secretary General on the situation of human rights defenders from 2000 to 2008. She and her sister Asma Jahangir co-founded the first all female legal practice in Pakistan and she is also one of the founders of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan. She is a member of The Elders.



Maina Kiai is the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association. A lawyer trained at Nairobi and Harvard Universities, he has spent the last twenty years campaigning for human rights and constitutional reform in Kenya – notably as founder and Executive Director of the NGO Kenya Human Rights Commission, and then as Chairman of Kenya's National Human Rights Commission (2003-2008).



James L. Cavallaro is the Founding Director of the International Human Rights and Conflict Resolution Clinic at Stanford Law School, where he is also a professor of law. Prior to joining Stanford, he spent nine years on the faculty at Harvard Law School, where he also served as executive director of the Human Rights Programme. In June of 2013 he was elected to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR).



Maryam Elahi is President and CEO of the Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut. For more than 25 years, she has served in positions of leadership in the international human rights community as an advocate, teacher, and grant-maker. She was previously the director of the International Women's Program at the Open Society Foundations.

a powerful collective testament

Too many brave people working non-violently and legitimately for the rights of others are killed because of their work. They are sacrificed to the corrupt power of autocrats, the violence of armed groups and criminals, and the greed of extractive industries and other business interests.

Front Line Defenders established that at least 156 HRDs were killed or died in detention in 25 countries in the first eleven months of 2015. This marked an increase in the number of countries where this occurred. Overall, 45% of the killings appear to be linked to the defence of environmental, land and indigenous peoples' rights. Other targeted groups included HRDs working on corruption and impunity, and journalists and other HRDs using media to publicise and denounce abuses. This is not random violence. This is the calculated elimination of those who speak out for the rights of the most vulnerable.

Sabeen Mahmud was murdered in Pakistan in April. Sabeen allowed us to use her cafe/art gallery 'The Second Floor' to meet human rights defenders when we were in Pakistan. It was an amazing place, buzzing with life. Sabeen was shot on her way home from a discussion she had organised on disappearances in Balochistan – a no-go area where suicide attacks, enforced disappearances by security forces, and sectarian violence are rampant. Sabeen had previously been forced into hiding following online death threats because of her work against the Blasphemy Law. This time, her killers made sure she had nowhere to hide.

Francela Mendez was killed in May. Francela was a human rights defender who worked for the rights of the transgender community in El Salvador. She continued her work despite the everyday discrimination and danger suffered by the community. She was murdered by unknown assailants in the home of a friend who was also killed.

In September, three HRDs were killed on the same day in the Philippines. Emerito Samarca was found with his throat slit in one of the classrooms where he taught. He was director of a school for the Lumad indigenous people. Staff and students at the school had been



Mary Lawlor, Front Line Defenders.

warned to leave the area or they would be killed. Around the same time another human rights defender, Dionel Campos, who campaigned against large-scale mining on ancestral land in Surigao and his nephew Bello Sinzo, were murdered in front of hundreds of residents of the village.

Governments and international organisations that claim to stand for democracy, the rule of law and human rights should automatically condemn any killing of a human rights defender. This has got to be a red line for them – seen for what it is – an unacceptable and obscene affront to humanity.

Front Line Defenders believes it is necessary to do something on a global level. We will reach out to other organisations to create an international memorial which will document all

those HRDs killed since the adoption of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders in 1998. Our idea is not just to build a list of names, but to celebrate their lives and their work on behalf of others. To build something tangible to which their families and colleagues can contribute. We want to resist the banality of statistics which mask the scale of the immense human suffering surrounding their deaths, and keep alive the search for justice in the struggle against impunity. That struggle is, of course, taken forward most powerfully by those who continue to defend human rights at local and national levels in spite of the killings. An international memorial would be a powerful collective testament to the sacrifice of those we have lost, and an enduring indictment of pervasive impunity. □

2015 at a glance

- Front Line Defenders issued 307 Urgent Appeals on behalf of 568 individuals at risk in 70 countries and undertook advocacy with the relevant national authorities, submitted cases to the UN and regional mechanisms and lobbied the EU to take action on 180 of the cases.
- The Front Line Defenders Security Grants Programme provided 454 grants, totalling €1,178,306 to individuals and organisations at risk. 119 grants were provided for temporary relocations. 89% of HRDs reported that they have been able to continue or return to work as a result of having received Security Grant support.
- Front Line Defenders carried out 41 field visits to 28 countries.

- 117 HRDs from 19 countries participated in trainings on personal and organisational security; 86% of HRDs reported having implemented a security plan as a result of the training.
- 309 HRDs from 24 countries participated in digital security trainings; 81% of HRDs reported using digital security tools as a result of training.
- Front Line Defenders Digital Security Consultants carried out 70 field visits to 26 countries.
- The Front Line Defenders Award was presented to imprisoned HRD, Guo Feixiong, from China, whose wife and daughter accepted the award on his behalf.

- Philanthropist Sigrid Rausing spoke on the topic "A Hardening Climate - Funding Human Rights in Repressive Societies" at the Third Annual Front Line Defenders Lecture, held in partnership with University College Dublin and Trinity College Dublin.
- Front Line Defenders published *La Lucha*, a non-fiction graphic novel in English and Spanish with launch events in Europe, USA and Mexico.
- Former Irish Foreign Minister Eamon Gilmore visited human rights defender David Rabelo Crespo, who is serving an 18-year prison sentence in Colombia, and undertook advocacy on his case in Bogotá and internationally, leading to his transfer to a prison located closer to his family, thus allowing for regular family visits.

73% of human rights defenders continued their work after 3-month emergency temporary relocation

In 2015, the Security Grants Programme provided 454 grants for practical security measures such as office security and ICT equipment, legal and medical fees, to enable them to continue their work.

In emergency situations, when the life of a human rights defender is in immediate danger, Front Line Defenders can provide funds for temporary relocation. These grants generally cover travel and living costs for up to three months. The average grant is €2,500.

In 2015, 119 grants were provided for emergency temporary relocation of 162 HRDs.

[Countries where Front Line Defenders supported temporary relocations in the year:]

Broken down by country and number of relocations



[Real stories]

INDIGENOUS LEADER, MEXICO

When an indigenous leader in a rural community in Mexico received information from a reliable source that a 100,000 Mexican peso bounty had been offered to any gunman to kill her, she was forced to relocate to Mexico City for three months. In recent years, she had repeatedly been threatened because of her work for the rights of indigenous women and children in her community. **"The support from Front Line Defenders allowed me to breathe. I could sleep. I could keep working."** She has since returned to her region, but has to keep moving around to stay safe.

JOURNALIST, CHECHNYA

A journalist reporting on human rights violations in Chechnya, who had been under surveillance for some time and had been summoned for questioning about her work by the local authorities, decided it was best to leave temporarily when a project she was involved with and which was critical of the establishment, was due to be launched. She was provided assistance to visit friends outside of Russia for three weeks. The cost of her elderly parent's stay at a sanatorium was also covered while she was away.

"The threat was minimised as a result of my departure – not only for my safety, but above all, for my parent's safety. As is well known in Chechnya, the authorities threaten family members to intimidate people who disagree with their policies."

88% of HRDs relocated in-country or in their region

Where HRDs relocated in 2015

52%

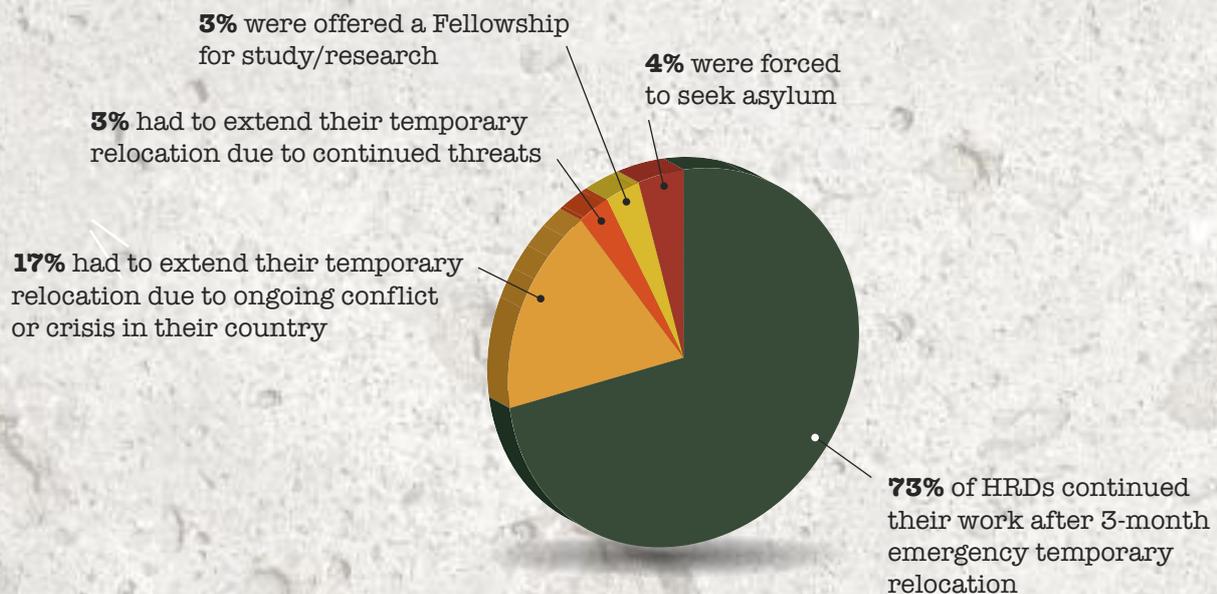
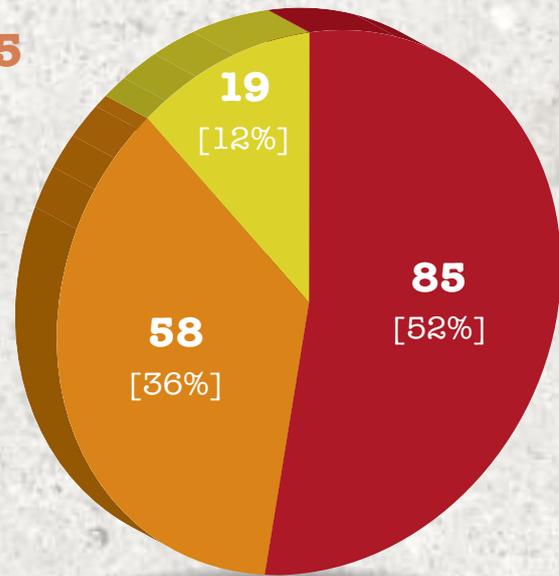
of HRDs relocated within their own country.

36%

of HRDs relocated within their region.

12%

of HRDs relocated outside of their region.



HUMAN RIGHTS MONITOR, YEMEN

Abdulsalam Ahmed Qasem Saleh works with the Yemen Center for Human Rights Studies, monitoring and publicising human rights violations. He became a target of armed groups and his house was attacked and almost destroyed after he documented and publicised the militia's targeting of civilians. Luckily he was not in the house at the time and went unharmed. This incident, coupled with death threats from people who stopped him in the street, made it clear his life was in danger. Front Line Defenders paid for his temporary relocation outside of the country for three months at the end of which Abdulsalam decided to return to Yemen to be with his family. Abdulsalam has resumed his work despite receiving new threats on his return.

COORDINATOR, GRASSROOTS SOCIAL MOVEMENT, KENYA

Wilfred Olal, one of the coordinators of Bunge La Mwananchi (People's Parliament) in Kenya, started receiving threats after initiating meetings and campaigns for the relocation of a notorious garbage dump due to its harmful effects on the community. The threats escalated when four armed men physically confronted Wilfred and ordered him to stop his work. Front Line Defenders paid for his relocation to another part of the country for six weeks. "Before I moved, my life was at risk. I could have been harmed or killed by the gang which was armed and dangerous. This support has improved my courage as a human rights defender. I can now handle any human rights violations in my locality without fear. I can also network with other HRDs and share experiences, ideas and best practises."

The attempted assassination of leading Burundian human rights defender Pierre Claver Mbonimpa in August highlighted a worrying trend in many African countries in which human rights defenders are targets of politically-motivated violence due to their peaceful work. In numerous countries on the continent where African leaders sought to extend their rule beyond constitutionally-mandated term limits, this was a particularly acute problem.

In February, April and August, Front Line Defenders conducted monitoring visits to **Burundi** and eastern **Democratic Republic of Congo**. In the early months of 2015, tension had already gripped Bujumbura, Burundi's capital, and a number of HRDs had started to restrict their movements fearing potential attacks. In late January, the authorities detained prominent journalist, Bob Rugurika, director of the popular independent radio station Radio Publique Africaine, which was seen as a signal from the government that it would not tolerate criticism as the elections drew near. In February, Front Line Defenders visited Rugurika in prison. Unfortunately, the situation unravelled quickly after a failed military coup in May, forcing several HRDs into exile, and others into hiding. Around the same time, a number of independent radio stations were torched. Front Line Defenders extended financial support for individual security and temporary relocation to 36 of these HRDs and their families and maintained contact with those who remained in the country pursuing their work despite the hostile environment.

In **Tanzania** in April, Front Line Defenders met human rights defenders in the northern towns of Kigoma, Mwanza and Musoma whose organisations are relatively disconnected from Dar-Es-Salaam. A major problem is that police harassment is rampant and police officers generally benefited from impunity because of the quasi-dysfunctional justice system in these areas. Combatting gender-based violence is a significant priority for HRDs and has triggered threats against them, especially WHRDs. Front Line Defenders is facilitating opportunities for the WHRDs to participate in peer-to-peer exchange programmes to develop strategies to address the issue.

In March, July and October, follow-up visits were conducted in various parts of **Uganda**. In one visit to the southwestern town of Kabale, Front Line Defenders sought to assess the security of human rights journalists, particularly those affiliated with Freedom Radio, an important platform for human rights advocacy in the region. The radio's director, having been arrested on frivolous grounds, had just been released on bail but continued to face judicial harassment until late October when the case against him was finally thrown out of court.

Front Line Defenders conducted field missions to **Kenya** and **Ethiopia** where civil society actors are confronting policies leading to shrinking space for their work, particularly human rights defenders and journalists. The visit to Kenya concentrated on the coastal region, where in the wake of major terrorist attacks, Muslim-led human rights organisations faced administrative hurdles on the



In eastern DRC, visits focused on the work of women human rights defenders and how to strengthen their protection. WHRDs are targets of physical attacks, many of which involve sexual violence committed by unruly members of armed groups. WHRDs are also increasingly endangered by institutions that are supposed to protect them such as the national army, police and the judiciary. Supported by Front Line Defenders, two WHRDs undertook assessment missions in which they organised regular one-

on-one meetings with activists who have suffered attacks. Assisting this work is a security committee of eight WHRDs from various parts of South Kivu province. Back row, left to right: Raissa Barihuta, Gégé Katana, Hélène Nabintu, Emérite Tabisha, Cécile Lukogo, Joyeuse Nkumi. Front row, left to right: Jeannette Chandazi, Olive Mbogeka and Bitisho Idi.

pretext of anti-terrorism efforts by the government, but were, in fact, efforts to quash human rights monitoring efforts by those organisations. In Ethiopia, Front Line Defenders met the few civil society actors still trying to advocate for human rights after years of instability and repression that had forced many into exile.

These missions to engage with HRDs in distress in coastal Kenya and the few voices of civil society in Ethiopia were intended as a mark of solidarity, as well as to develop ideas and suggestions for how to approach current challenges related to protection. □



Sharon Joseph Mashanya, Human Rights Kigoma, Executive Director with Aloys Habimana, Front Line Defenders, in Kigoma, Tanzania.

grants

When human rights defenders in **Mauritania** organised a peaceful caravan to campaign to end slavery in the country, authorities responded by arresting them on charges of illegal assembly, encouraging rebellion and refusal to carry out orders given by the administrative authorities. Front Line Defenders paid for legal fees, supplies for the defenders in prison and support to their families at home. The HRDs reported **“Without this financial aid, it would have been impossible to mobilise such a large number of lawyers, parents, activists and supporters who have brought great moral support to the imprisoned defenders’ families.”**

Mouliom Illiassou is President of the National Committee for the Defence of Democracy in western **Cameroon**. Having reported on cases of police corruption, two complaints of “slandorous accusation” were brought against him by the police and he was arrested. Although the courts found the detention to be unlawful and ordered his immediate release, he continued to be held in detention. Front Line Defenders provided a grant to help with the legal fees. One month later he was released. **“By arresting and keeping Mouliom Illiassou in prison, the officials wanted to send a strong message to all defenders who denounce human rights violations committed by authorities. Securing his provisional release is an important psychological victory for human rights defenders”.**

advocacy



Mary Lawlor and Andrea Rocca with Pierre Sané (left), founder and director of Imagine Africa Institute, and Aminata Fall Cisso, Chief of Staff of the Minister for Justice of Senegal (right); and (inset) with Judge Claire Houngan

Ayemonna from Benin (left), and Reine Alapini Gansou, Special Rapporteur on HRDs in Africa (second from right).



In August, Front Line Defenders Executive Director, Mary Lawlor, and Head of Protection, Andrea Rocca, travelled to **Cote d'Ivoire**, **Benin** and **Senegal** to discuss with governments, civil society and media how these countries could become more vocal on the protection of HRDs, both internationally and regionally. Cote d'Ivoire passed a law on the protection of HRDs in 2014, while Benin is a donor to the Lifeline Embattled NGO Assistance Fund. Given the current politicisation of the HRD issue internationally, it is essential that governments from the Global South raise their voices in support of HRDs. While all three governments showed an interest in being more active on the issue, the test will be whether any of the suggestions made will be implemented.

On 10 September, following intense lobbying by Front Line Defenders EU Office – in cooperation with other Brussels-based NGOs – the European Parliament adopted its first urgent resolution on the human rights situation in Angola in over a decade. This immediately led to better treatment for some imprisoned human rights defenders, meetings between EU representatives and HRDs, and EU ambassadors and the Minister for Justice of Angola, as well as debate in the Angolan media on the human rights situation. At the same time there have been reports of other HRDs assaulted in detention, their trials delayed repeatedly, and embassy representatives of the United States and the European Union barred from observing the court proceedings.



Left to right: Emma Achilli, Front Line Defenders EU Office with Amadou Diallo, Guinea and Michael Khambatta, Martin Ennals Foundation. Amadou, President of AVIPA – Association of Victims, Parents and Friends of 28 September, and nominee for the 2015 Martin Ennals Award, was in Brussels to discuss the human rights situation and EU action in relation to Guinea.

“I now talk openly about risks around me and my organisation [...] and we have started organising practical and symbolic activities which encourage and strengthen the team spirit.”
 HRD, Security Workshop for Journalists

training

In April, Front Line Defenders conducted its first personal and organisational security workshop specifically for journalists. The participants included journalists from **Somalia** and **Pakistan**. The programme covered safe reporting techniques, as well as risk assessment, threat analysis, digital security, well-being and security planning. Front Line Defenders held a Training of Trainers for Francophone HRDs, in Dakar, Senegal, from 28 July to 1 August. Eight participants came from **Burundi**, **Cameroon**, **Cote d'Ivoire**, **DRC**, **Mali**, **Togo** and **Senegal**.

Front Line Defenders trained 42 HRDs from **Burundi**, **DRC**, **Kenya** and **Nigeria** in digital

security and supported 19 organisations and 29 individual HRDs from **Kenya**, **Nigeria**, **Uganda** and **Zimbabwe** through the work of the regional Digital Security Consultant. A human rights defender from Kenya who has been under continuous surveillance reported after a training, “I now think like a cop and it has kept me alive”. Another activist whose equipment had been confiscated by authorities, was confident that the information on the laptop was secure due to the disk encryption which the digital security consultant had set up for him. An organisation in Uganda reported that its office had been broken into and a computer stolen, but it had a back up copy of the information as a result of the DSC's previous consultation and emphasis on backing up information.



Role-play on security in the office, left to right: Charles Bokaiya Bangala, Cyriaque Ako, Nana Sanou, Mawulikplimi Kenon, and Dany Ndayizigiye.

2015 was another brutal year in the Americas with reports of at least 87 human rights defenders killed by the end of November. HRDs continued to face unfounded criminal charges and those defending land, the environment and indigenous peoples' rights were particularly at risk. Front Line Defenders carried out missions to Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico and Brazil.

In March, former Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Eamon Gilmore TD conducted a high-level advocacy mission with Front Line Defenders on behalf of HRD David Rabelo Crespo, who is serving an eighteen-year prison sentence on the basis of trumped up murder charges. Deputy Gilmore and Front Line Defenders met with David in prison before meeting the Attorney General and the Office of the Presidential Advisor on Human Rights. One of David Rabelo Crespo's key requests at the time was for his transfer from the prison in Bogotá to the prison in Barrancabermeja where he would be closer to his family. The transfer was officially granted later in the year. **"Many thanks for your solidarity which made possible my transfer to the prison in Barrancabermeja, where I am now close to my family. Today is the fifth anniversary of my unjust detention, but**

thanks to your solidarity my morale is very high."

In May, Front Line Defenders conducted a research mission to **Ecuador** where it met with human rights defenders in Guayaquil and Quito, who reported that government officials, including President Correa himself, regularly undermine their legitimate work through public stigmatisation campaigns. There is also judicial harassment of HRDs, for example people are charged and held in pretrial detention for up to six months and when no evidence is found against them, they are sentenced to the time already spent in jail - thus leaving them with criminal records. A presidential decree from 2013 restricts the work of human rights organisations and makes registration difficult. A recent law on communications means that the media practice self-censorship and are afraid not just

of what they do write but even of what they don't report upon. Since the visit, Front Line Defenders has published a number of urgent appeals on cases from Ecuador and approved security grants applications from various organisations. Front Line Defenders EU Office requested the EU Delegation to act on the case of Fundamedios, an NGO dedicated to the protection of freedom of expression and association, which had been notified that the Secretary of Communications had ordered its dissolution. The EU met Fundamedios staff and kept in close contact with them. In September, Fundamedios was notified that the case for their dissolution had been archived. □

grants

In Mexico, Frente de Pueblos en Defensa de la Tierra y Agua de Morelos Puebla, Tlaxcala y Acocil AC (FPDATMPT) works with local communities on environmental rights. Members of staff, including Juan Carlos Flores Solis, face ongoing judicial harassment due to their protests against the proposed construction of a gas pipeline through community lands. The defenders have reported that the assistance for legal support from Front Line Defenders has allowed them to continue their work while battling these charges. Juan Carlos noted that in addition to the financial support, **"the urgent appeal made us feel supported and even some media here re-published the information. It also showed the Mexican government that we have international support."**

In early 2015, Front Line Defenders supported the family of a member of Comision Intereclesial de Justicia y Paz, working with a land rights movement for the restitution of lands to the communities of Curbaradó in the Uraba region in **Colombia**. The human rights defender had been facing death threats, and one of her young children was interrogated as to her whereabouts after she relocated for safety. A grant was provided for the children to relocate to a more secure area. The defender reported, **"This support improved our living situation and allowed us to protect ourselves better."**



David Rabelo Crespo's son, David Jr. (left) and lawyer Reynaldo Villalba Vargas (right) after a meeting with David Rabelo in La Picota Prison in Bogotá.



Eamon Gilmore TD and Caitriona Rice, Front Line Defenders, met Fernando Ibarra Ruiz and Diana Mendieta Durán in the Office of the Presidential Advisor on Human Rights in Colombia.



In October, Front Line Defenders conducted an evaluation of its support to HRDs at risk in Mexico with Liam Mahony, expert in the theory and practice of international protection, as independent evaluator. Liam (right), pictured here with Antonio (left) and Alejandro (middle) Cerezo, had discussions with 17 HRDs working on environmental rights, economic, social and cultural rights, women's rights and the rights

of indigenous peoples, as well as with trade unionists and organisations providing legal support. The aim of the evaluation was to get feedback on the types of support which are most useful to them and on how an international organisation can effectively put pressure on the perpetrators of attacks and threats against HRDs.

“Now I am a human rights defender who takes precautions in the struggle thanks to the training I had with you.”
HRD,
Brazil Security course



MEP Sofia Sakorafa (centre) with members of IM-Defensoras: Gilda Lemus, Guatemala, (left) and Veronica Vidal, Mexico (right) in Brussels in October.

training

13 HRDs from **Brazil** participated in a Security Course, comprising written assignments and two workshops between April and October. The HRDs from all parts of the country were facing threats because of their work on land, environmental and indigenous rights, protection of disadvantaged and minority groups including urban youth, *quilombolas* and LGBTI, and advocating for accountability for human rights violations committed by state and non-state actors.

Front Line Defenders provided digital security training to 136 human rights defenders from **Colombia, Honduras, Mexico** and **Peru** and digital security consultancy to 38 organisations and 86 individual human rights defenders in **Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua** and **Peru**. Support included improving the security of the website and setting up a backup for the IT server of an organisa-

tion in Nicaragua, and installing a computer firewall and a secure file server in an office in Guatemala. One HRD reported, “**We didn't know about the risks we face due to our work on women's rights. Now that we know these risks, we act to protect our network and our supporters.**”



Brazilian HRDs in a session on digital security, left to right: Evane Lopes da Silva, Elena de Araujo Silva, Erina Batista Gomes, Fernanda Shirakawa (Digital Security Trainer).



Front Line Defenders supported a workshop in May to develop personal and organisational security plans for WHRDs in Peru. As a result of their defence of their communities and environment in the face of mining projects, the WHRDs faced fabricated charges, physical attacks including sexual assault, imprisonment and assassination attempts. Pictured: Lina Solano Ortiz (centre)

facilitating a wellbeing session with (left to right, seated) Cleofé Neyra Neyra, María Cruzado Mejía, Ismena Puma Ibáñez, Santos Ibáñez, Jesica Cardar Malver, Lucila Ortiz Velasquez, Felicita Vásquez Huamán, Carmen Pinto Saucedo, Blanca Tasilla Mosqueira, Dianira Trigo Vizconde and Elvira Vásquez Huamán.

advocacy

In partnership with Justiça Global and Terra de Direitos, Front Line Defenders organised a seminar on government protection mechanisms for HRDs at risk, bringing together experts and HRDs from **Brazil, Colombia** and **Mexico** in Brasilia. The exchange of strategies and experiences contributed to a new plan of activities of the Brazilian Committee of HRDs, an informal civil society coalition monitoring the implementation of the National Protection Programme. Front Line Defenders also held a hearing before the Foreign Affairs Committee of the federal parliament, in a bid to encourage Brazil to be more vocal internationally on HRD protection.

In October, Front Line Defenders, Calala Fund for Women and Peace Brigades International supported the Mesoamerican Women Human Rights Defenders Initiative (IM-Defensoras) in the launch in Spain of their report on attacks against WHRDs in Mexico and Central America. WHRDs Verónica Vidal and Gilda Lemus then presented the report in Brussels. Front Line Defenders EU Office organised a round table discussion with COHOM (EU Council Working Party on Human Rights) members and NGOs as well as bilateral advocacy visits with EU institutions for the two women.

2015 was a difficult year for Asian human rights defenders as the environment in a number of countries continued to deteriorate. Front Line Defenders conducted field missions in Afghanistan, Burma, Malaysia and Thailand to find ways to support HRDs in their work. It observed their resilience and strength in the face of many restrictions.

Front Line Defenders carried out a mission to **Burma** soon after the brutal crackdown on student activists involved in protests against the Education Act, which they claim restricts academic freedom, and against military influence within parliament. Discussions were held with leaders of the All Burma Federation of Students Union – who led the peaceful protests throughout the country – focusing on the plight of the detained students. Front Line Defenders observed the opening day of their trial. Separately, Front Line Defenders also met several HRDs defending the rights of the beleaguered Rohingya minority group.

Front Line Defenders visited **Malaysia** in June following an increase of arrests and detention of HRDs under the Sedition Act, which was amended in early 2015 to become extremely restrictive of civil society activity. During the mission Front Line Defenders met HRDs who have been charged or are under investigation under the Act; in 2014 44 people were arrested under this Act, but in 2015 over 200 have been detained, including more than 20 HRDs.

In July, Front Line Defenders travelled to **Afghanistan** to discuss its partnership for protection of WHRDs with the Afghan Women Skills Development Centre in Kabul, and to meet HRDs in Herat and Mazar-e-Sharif for an analysis of their security.

In **Thailand**, Front Line Defenders joined a strategy meeting with community-based human rights defenders who have been facing increasing threats, intimidation and legal harassment since the military coup in May 2014. The meeting provided a better understanding of the situation and improved collaboration between these HRDs and national and international organisations.

In the context of secular internet activists and publishers being brutally attacked and killed – five within a period of eight months – and religious extremists issuing death threats to other human rights defenders in **Bangladesh**, Front Line Defenders supported human rights defenders directly with security grants, risk assessment, security-planning resources and training and facilitation of relocation. □



Surapan Rujichaiwat is a community leader who has been working with a core group of villagers to protect the environment and natural resources in their region, and to uphold their community's agricultural practices in Thailand. Front Line Defenders worked on his case when he was charged with defamation following a post on facebook calling for an investigation into the mining activities of Tung Kha Limited Company. Pictured here (right) with Jareon Kaewpakdee (left) a HRD from the same community, outside Loei provincial court where he appeared for a trial hearing on 27 October 2015.

training

Front Line Defenders held digital security trainings with 53 human rights defenders from **China, Thailand and Vietnam** and supported 18 organisations and 19 individual HRDs from **Cambodia and Thailand** with digital security consultancy. Securing information on their computers and other devices, improving the security of information when travelling and providing better security of cloud services were the priority for HRDs due to the high level of surveillance they face.

Front Line Defenders first Personal and Organisational Security Workshop for journalists, from 28 July to 1 August, included three journalists at risk from Pakistan. Together with Somali participants, they discussed practices and tactics designed to reduce the risk of being killed in scenarios where threats come from both the government and religious extremists.

❖ “I learned heaps: new things, tools and outlook on safety and security issues... The sessions equipped us with the basic tools and processes. And we have a workbook to polish our skills further.”

HRD, Security Workshop for journalists



Sayeed Ahmad, Front Line Defenders Asia Protection Coordinator, with Phyo Phyo Aung, General Secretary of the All Burma Federation of Students Union, who has been in detention since March 2015 for protesting against the National Education Bill.

❖ “You can write about the blasphemy issue one week, but you have to balance it with reports on other subjects.”



Preparing a role-play on a security plan, journalists at risk of abduction. Left to right: Samina Naz, Aurangzaib Khan, Asad Zia, Sayeed Ahmad from Front Line Defenders and Ammara Ahmad.

grants

Front Line Defenders provided a number of security grants to human rights defenders in **Afghanistan** throughout the year. Temporary relocations were funded for HRDs facing immediate threats from the Taliban and religious extremists. Organisations working on women's rights were supported to improve the security of their offices.

The Afghanistan Society and Legal Organisation (ASLO), which provides support to Afghan families through health services, civic education, peace building and micro-economics projects, has faced increasing threats from extremist groups and was forced to suspend many of its regional activities as a result of threatened violence against its offices and staff. Front Line Defenders provided ASLO with a security grant for office security including a CCTV system, an automatic security light, a secure door and fencing. "This financial aid has had a major impact on the activity of our organisation. It has improved the safety of ASLO staff who now come to the office without any stress and in complete confidence."



Chhay Thy, pictured here, is the Provincial Coordinator of the Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association, in Ratanakir province.

He received threats of arrest from the government, due to his work against the deportation of members of the Montagnard ethnic minority who had fled from Vietnam to Cambodia. Front Line Defenders provided him with a grant for secure transport while he dealt with the threats.

"The grant improved my ability to address human rights issues in the region. It enabled me to travel safely while conducting trainings with local communities and investigating human rights violations."

advocacy

Prominent WHRD Teesta Setalvad and her husband Javed Anand, from India, faced a trial this year on fabricated charges of embezzlement, misuse of funds and 'anti-national propaganda'. Front Line Defenders supported Teesta and Javed with urgent appeals sent to the Indian authorities and international media, and publicity around her case at events in Dublin. Although the charges have not

been dropped, the courts have, so far, given advance bail and significant national and international support has been mobilised in favour of the HRDs. "The consistent support by Front Line Defenders has not just provided succor, but has highlighted the complexities of the victimisation that I, my husband, family and colleagues are all going through."

Front Line Defenders raised the case of imprisoned **Chinese** journalist Gao Yu's deteriorating health with the European External Action Service asking them to contact the Chinese authorities. Following that, medical care for Gao Yu improved. In November, the Chinese government released Gao Yu on medical parole. She will serve out the rest of her sentence at her home.



Teesta Setalvad working on a case with the legal team of her organisation, Citizens for Justice and Peace, in Gujarat, India in August.

In 2015, the space for civil society groups continued to shrink, with human rights defenders facing the consequences of restrictive legislation in many countries. Many HRDs had to leave their countries for their security, particularly those from Russia and Azerbaijan. The worsening of the situation in the whole region had a negative psychological impact and FLD responded to several requests from HRDs suffering from burnout.



Yulia Milaya, Human Rights Information Center, Caitriona Rice, Front Line Defenders, Sviatoslav Sheremet, Gay Forum Ukraine and Maya Barkhudaryan, independent evaluator, in Ukraine.

In September, Front Line Defenders conducted an evaluation of its support to HRDs in Ukraine through a series of in-depth interviews with HRDs. The needs of HRDs intensified following the wave of demonstrations which began in 2013 and resulted in a crackdown on Euromaidan participants and supporters, whilst the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the conflict in the occupied territories in eastern Ukraine resulted in high levels of physical and psychological pressure on HRDs. Support to HRDs during this time included training on digital security, personal and organisational security, temporary relocation, rest and respite, urgent appeals and public campaigns.



Mariya Yasenovska, Euromaidan SOS, Oleksandra Matviychuk, Centre for Civil Liberties, and Maya Barkhudaryan, independent evaluator.

At the time of the Front Line Defenders mission to the **Russian Federation** in February, all of the most prominent human rights organisations had been declared “foreign agents”, many of them had spent time and resources trying to appeal these decisions in court, and others had received administrative fines for not complying with the restrictive ‘Foreign Agents Law’. The mission enabled Front Line Defenders to better understand the needs of organisations and to become more involved in different types of support, including legal aid and assistance in developing security plans. HRDs expressed a specific need for rest and psychological rehabilitation.

In March, working sessions were held with Ukrainian and Russian HRDs in **Ukraine**, with a view to drafting a guide on security planning for those working in zones of armed conflict. Ukrainian HRDs had shown an interest in learning from the experience of Russian HRDs working in the North Caucasus region. Recommendations on security procedures were gathered for human rights defenders to use to inform their own security plans. Aleksandra Romantsova, Aleksandra Delemenchuk and Oleksandra Matviychuk from the Kiev-based Center for Civil Liberties, Svitlana Valko, Ukrainian coordinator of the International Partnership for Human Rights and

Stanislav Dmitrievsky from the Natalya Estemirova Documentation Center greatly contributed to this work.

Front Line Defenders visited **Hungary** in May to understand new developments, especially concerning inspections of and criminal and administrative proceedings against NGOs that started in 2014 on the basis of their receipt of funds from the Norwegian government. Meetings were held with human rights groups and organisations working on women’s rights, LGBTI rights, the environment, homelessness, discrimination against Roma people, and those providing legal assistance. While proceedings related to the Norway Fund were partly on hold, concerns for specific groups of defenders remained. Following the visit, Front Line Defenders submitted a report on the situation of human rights defenders for the Universal Periodic Review of Hungary, scheduled for May 2016.

A mission to **Armenia** was organised in the aftermath of the Electric Yerevan protests, which were organised following the decision of the Electric Network of Armenia to increase the price of electricity. When demonstrators

marched on the presidential palace demanding a cancellation of the increase they were stopped by police and clashes erupted as security forces moved in to clear the street with water cannons. Over 200 protesters were arrested, a number of local journalists mistreated and their equipment and phones smashed. The number of supporters grew, reaching 10,000 demonstrators in the evenings. A police investigation resulted in the demotion of a senior figure and reprimands issued against several police officers. During the mission, Front Line Defenders connected with civil society organisations directly involved in protest actions, those monitoring the situation and those providing legal aid to victims of police brutality. Although Armenia has a history of political demonstrations, Electric Yerevan was a new type of protest action. The long summer evenings enabled a new generation of activists to socialise and protest, and as a result several public discussions have been organised and working groups created by those working on subjects traditionally marginalised in Armenia, such as gender issues and LGBTI rights. **[I]**

training



A session on improving password skills during a digital security training for WHRDs from South Caucasus. Left to right: Ketevan Khomeriki (Platform for Equality and Participation), Ekaterine Gejadze (Women's Fund in Georgia), Natia Bokuchava (NGO Avangardi), Salome Merkviladze (Independent Activist) as trainer of the session, Lia Jaqeli (film-maker and activist) and Natia Gvianishvili (Women's Initiatives Supporting Group).

Front Line Defenders trained 42 human rights defenders from **Armenia, Azerbaijan, Abkhazia, Georgia, South Ossetia, Spain, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan**. Digital Security Consultants (DSCs) provided support to 23 organisations and 37 individual HRDs in **Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Ukraine**. One human rights defender contacted the consultant to

express concern about her laptop having been moved in her hotel during a mission. With his support, it was confirmed that her laptop had been infected with spying software which was sending information to those controlling the software, and disposal of the laptop was recommended. The HRD reported that she had learned a lot from this experience and it was of vital importance to her work.

Dmitry Utukin, Russian Federation and Masha Chichtchenkova, Front Line Defenders Protection Coordinator at a Seminar in Dublin, 10-11 November, which brought together security professionals, HRDs from different countries, and Front Line Defenders staff to discuss how to most effectively provide support for security and protection, including best practices in risk analysis and risk mitigation strategies.



Ten Armenian HRDs working on a variety of human rights issues, such as torture, soldier's rights, children's rights and legal rights, participated in a security workshop in Yerevan in February. They created security plans focused on office security, defamation in the media, and physical attack.

"I now take careful precautions about document confidentiality and the organisation of information."

"Any anxiety leads to stress. Now I feel more relaxed because I know some of the security issues and follow the plan."
HRD, Security Workshop for Armenian HRDs

grants

In February, Front Line Defenders provided a grant for secure accommodation to Helena (Miroslav Vuković), a trans activist with CSO Egal in Serbia, after physical threats were made against her. The grant also covered therapy for her and her family as they had been living in insecurity for some time. Helena reported **"The most important thing has been the counselling for my family. I have four children who have suffered threats, school bullying, and pressure from media and the public due to my struggle for human rights in Serbia and, hopefully, a better society for generations to come. The counselling process hasn't finished yet but it has contributed to improving their quality of life."**

In April, a security grant was given to Bir Duino, a human rights organisation that defends freedom of association and political space for human rights defenders in Kyrgyzstan through legal support, culture

and the arts. Members of staff faced police harassment and interrogation and its offices had been searched, with documents and hardware seized on spurious 'extremist' pretexts. The grant was for legal support to challenge the searches, and to replace the equipment that had been taken. Front Line Defenders EU Office also raised the case with the Kyrgyz authorities at the EU-Kyrgyzstan Human Rights Dialogue in May. The Kyrgyz Supreme Court ruled in favour of Bir Duino in June.

"The victory in court has given us a new sense of solidarity, partnership and protection. It was important and timely assistance."

advocacy

In 2015, HRDs from Azerbaijan who had been arrested the previous year, including Leyla and Arif Yunus, Rasul Jafarov, Intigam Aliyev and Khadija Ismail, received prison sentences ranging from six to eight and half years for alleged economic crimes, following unfair trials. Front Line Defenders EU Office participated in a public campaign to raise awareness of the severe crackdown – in a demonstration in front of the European Parliament in May, and at a joint European Parliament-NGO event on the dismantling of independent civil society. Advocacy efforts culminated in the adoption of a strong European Parliament resolution calling for the release of several HRDs on 10 September. Front Line Defenders had a meeting with Azeri HRDs in Georgia in November, to discuss the situation of imprisoned HRDs, their health problems and the difficulties encountered by their relatives. Travel bans and threats to family members were identified as significant challenges to HRDs in the country. Imprisoned defenders Leyla and Arif Yunus, were released in December and November respectively.



Security cameras in use at LGBTI rights organisation which was at risk of data theft and cyber attacks in Ukraine.

Human rights defenders in the MENA region continue to pay a high cost for their involvement in human rights activism. Caught between authoritarian regimes and the proliferation of intractable domestic and international conflicts, they have systematically suffered from persecution and various types of restrictions.

In its mission to **Lebanon** in March, Front Line Defenders met Wadih Al-Asmar and Marie Dauany, leaders of the Lebanese Centre for Human Rights who have been facing trial since February 2014 on charges relating to 'defamation and false accusation' following the publication of a report that denounced torture in Lebanon. Front Line Defenders issued urgent appeals and updates on their behalf. Front Line Defenders discussed the increasing security threats against journalists and bloggers with directors of Samir Kassir Foundation and Maharat Foundation. Front Line Defenders met associations defending LGBTI rights including Helem Association which has been struggling to be officially registered, and responded to the dangers faced by Syrian and Palestinian HRDs in Lebanon with capacity-building in digital security.

In April, Front Line Defenders met human rights defenders in **United Arab Emirates** including prominent HRD and blogger Ahmed Mansoor and the relatives of imprisoned HRDs. Front Line Defenders joined international advocacy efforts to lift the travel ban imposed against Mansoor since 2011. In April, Front Line Defenders travelled to **Jordan** to explore the legal and political landscape of human rights NGOs. Meetings were held with Mizan for Law, Amman Centre for Human Rights Studies, Sisterhood is Global Institution and 7iber on-line newspaper.

On mission to **Tunisia** in October, Front Line Defenders met with leaders of Shams Association, the first LGBTI NGO to be registered in Tunisia whose members have

been subjected to systematic stigmatisation and death threats from conservative religious forces. Front Line Defenders also met members of Chouf, a network of LGBTI defenders currently in the process of registering in Tunisia. Following a meeting with representatives of the Libyan HRD Network, a coordinating body for Libyan HRDs both in and out of the country, Front Line Defenders provided security grants and digital security training.

Morocco has witnessed major setbacks in its tolerance of HRDs over the past two years. In June, Front Line Defenders discussed the situation of HRDs in Morocco and Western Sahara with Driss El Yazami, President of the National Human Rights Council in Morocco on the margins of the General Assembly of the Euro Mediterranean Human Rights Network in Brussels. In October, Front Line Defenders travelled to Morocco to meet leaders of Moroccan Association of Human Rights, Moroccan Association for Investigative Journalism, Freedom Now, Moroccan Association for Digital Rights and Moroccan League for Human Rights.

Egypt's crackdown on human rights defenders has been a major concern. Restrictions imposed on Egyptian civil society have been intensifying steadily through the criminalisation of their work, stigmatisation in both public and private media, suffocating legal requirements and restrictions on access to funding. Front Line Defenders has worked closely with Egyptian HRDs to improve their security. □

advocacy

Front Line Defenders, together with the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network, proposed to European parliamentary political groups the detailed content of a resolution on the imprisonment of human rights defenders in **Algeria**, which was adopted at the April plenary of the European Parliament, and was the first one on Algeria for several years.

In September, **Palestinian** human rights defender Ayman Nasser, the Legal Unit Coordinator at Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association was released after spending almost one year in an Israeli prison without charge or trial. Front Line Defenders had issued urgent appeals and contacted the EU Delegation for action on his case.

In **Egypt**, human rights defenders Yara Sallam of the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights and Sanaa Seif of No to Military Trials for Civilians were released following a presidential pardon for 100 prisoners, the majority of whom had been sentenced as a result of their peaceful participation in demonstrations in 2014. Front Line Defenders had issued urgent appeals on their case and lobbied the EU Delegation in Egypt and the European External Action Service for support.



Moataz El Fegjery, Front Line Defenders Protection Coordinator (right), discussed the recent Tunisian Counter-Terrorism Law, the security of LGBTI defenders and the situation of Libyan HRDs in Tunisia with well-known human rights defender Kamel Jendoubi, who was appointed to cabinet as Minister for Relations with Constitutional Bodies and Civil Society following the last elections in Tunisia.



Front Line Defenders visited human rights defender and academic Maâti Monjib, whose health has deteriorated following his hunger strike to protest the travel ban imposed on him by Moroccan authorities in September. Left to Right: Khadija Ryadi, former president of the Moroccan Association of Human Rights and board member of Freedom Now, Moataz El-Fegjery, Front Line Defenders, Aichetou Mint

Ahmed, Association des Femmes Chefs, Mauritania, Abdallah Kori, Save Slaves, Mauritania, Said Fawzi, Association for the Defense of Human Rights in Morocco, Maâti Monjib and Ahmed Al Hag Sidi, lawyer and member of the Mauritanian Association for Human Rights.

middle east & north africa



Yara Bader and Mazen Darwish of the Syrian Centre for Media and Free Expression. In July and August, Syrian journalists and human rights defenders Mazen Darwish, Hussein Ghrer and Hani Zaitani were released after more than three years in prison.

Their release is provisional, pending a verdict by military court on charges of “publicising terrorist acts” under Syria’s Anti-Terrorism Law, regularly used to criminalise free speech in the country.

grants

When the village of a journalist active in documenting human rights violations in Syria was captured by an Islamic militia, he and his family had to relocate to another village. Rent and living expenses for three months were covered by a security grant. He said that he had “**been living in a state of terror**” and that the grant helped him resume his work.

A security grant covered the cost of temporary relocation for an Egyptian human rights defender working on the rights of detainees, who had been summoned many times by the police and asked to provide information on other human rights defenders. She refused to do so and decided to leave the country before the summons would lead to her ultimate arrest. Front Line Defenders paid for her travel and living expenses in a safer country. She has now returned to Egypt.

Front Line Defenders contributed to legal fees for Nabeel Rajab of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights, who was serving a six-month prison sentence. In July 2015, he was released from prison for health reasons following a royal pardon, but still faces prosecution on charges related to exercising his right to freedom of expression.

training

Front Line Defenders trained 36 HRDs from Algeria, Iraq, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and Western Sahara in digital security and online privacy and supported 18 organisations and 107 individual HRDs via missions by digital security consultants to Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey. Assistance

included recovering access to email and social networking accounts, securing mobile device communication and migrating HRDs to more secure email.

In Iraq, journalists and bloggers face reprisals from Islamist groups and their activities are monitored. The digital security consultant worked with Kurdish

communities located close to ISIS controlled areas, where many human rights defenders fear attack and the seizure of sensitive information related to their work. The consultant helped two organisations running a large refugee camp in the area. As one human rights defender put it, “digital security acts as water and air for human rights defenders in Kurdistan”.



Digital Security Training in Lebanon: Left to right: Hussien Al-Shareef and Layal Bahnam from Maharat Foundation which hosted the training, with bloggers Julnar Doueik, Assaad

Thebian, Omar Kabboul, Khodor Salameh, and trainer Mohammed Al-Maskati.



Mariam Benahou from Western Sahara presenting at the Training of Trainers (ToT) for Francophone HRDs in Dakar, Senegal, from 28 July to 1 August.

“I will now strengthen my existing capacities and aim at acquiring additional capacities to reduce the probability and impact of risks.” HRD, Francophone Training of Trainers

The Eighth Dublin Platform for Human Rights Defenders was held in Dublin Castle on 4 – 6 November 2015 and brought 111 human rights defenders from 98 countries together with 150 representatives from Irish, international and intergovernmental institutions making it one of the biggest gatherings of at-risk human rights defenders in the world.

Every Dublin Platform is unique, reflecting the diversity of the extraordinary HRDs who come together to share experiences, learn from one another and engage with decision-makers. All of the invited HRDs were attending for the first time.

Arnold Tsunga of the Front Line Defenders Board of Trustees welcomed the participants to Dublin, many of whom had travelled great distances and overcome many obstacles to participate in the Platform. Mary Lawlor, founder and Executive Director of Front Line Defenders, paid tribute to all the HRDs whose courage and dedication in the face of great personal risk are sources of great inspiration to Front Line Defenders. Highlighting the growing threat from repressive governments, which

see the successes of HRDs as a direct challenge to their power and privilege, and the need for more concrete support for HRDs, she noted “Authoritarian governments are investing huge efforts to silence and discredit independent civil society – especially those critical of government policies. While this backlash poses a crisis for human rights defenders, there is no consistent counter action by governments who claim to defend democracy and human rights”.

Following this welcome, participants heard inspiring keynote addresses from Irish Minister of State for Development, Trade Promotion and North-South Co-operation Seán Sherlock TD and the UN High Commissioner for Human

Rights, Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein via live video link from Geneva. The High Commissioner expressed his firm commitment to stand with HRDs at risk. “Our cause is your cause. Your struggles propel us forward. I will continue to draw inspiration from your work and be guided by your example”.

Michel Forst discussed his work as UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; the EU Special Representative for Human Rights, Stavros Lambrinidis, detailed the human rights commitments of the European Union and Signe Hejilde, from the Norwegian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, gave an update on the resolution on HRDs at the UN.

□



Imad Al Sharaa, Institute for War and Peace Reporting, Iraq.



Sukhgerel Dugersuren, Mongolia.



Irish Minister of State for Development, Trade Promotion and North South Co-operation, Seán Sherlock TD, at the opening session with Mary Lawlor and Arnold Tsunga, Front Line Defenders.



Left to right: Guleid Ahmed Jama, Somaliland; Suleiman Yousef bin Jassim, Kuwait; Onesmo Olengurumwa, Tanzania; Moataz El Fegiery, Front Line Defenders, Sudan; Mashair Omer, Sudan; Michel Forst, UN Special Rapporteur on HRDs; El Barag El Elwarag, Sudan; Azza Soliman, Egypt; Lama Nazeeh, Occupied Palestinian Territories; Imad Al Sharaa, Iraq; Nawaf Alhendal, Kuwait.

8th dublin platform

In working groups, human rights defenders discussed the risks they face in their regions, making practical recommendations for improving their security. In addition to the formal panel sessions and working group contributions, the personal testimonies delivered throughout the three days were also extremely rich and insightful, with delegates building networks and friendships across geographical, cultural and linguistic divides.

SIDE EVENTS & ACTIVITIES:

Many HRDs had spoken previously of the security challenges and dangers they faced in relation to their online communications and use of social media. To address these issues there was a computer clinic manned by digital

security consultants operating in Arabic, English, French, Russian and Spanish. They offered one-to-one support to HRDs looking to improve the security of their communications.

The participants in the Dublin Platform met local activists at side events organised in partnership with the National Women's Council of Ireland and GLEN (Irish Gay and Lesbian Equality Network). There was a special round table seminar hosted by Twitter to examine the ways in which HRDs are harassed and subjected to surveillance on the social media platform.

CULTURAL ACTIVITIES:

Participants at the Dublin Platform enjoyed cultural presentations from singer and founder

of VOCALISM, Dónal Kearney, who treated the delegates to a rendition of four songs during the opening ceremony, three of which were in the Irish language. Later, at the closing ceremony, rock legend Hazel O'Connor, accompanied on the Irish harp by Cormac de Barra, entertained the delegates with a selection of uplifting songs ranging from Bob Marley's *Redemption Song* to her own *Stronger than Strong*.

On the final afternoon, delegates saw the sights of Dublin courtesy of Dublin Bus, and later that evening relaxed and enjoyed Irish food and music at the Old Jameson Distillery.

A team of 50 wonderful volunteers and the contributions from generous sponsors and organisational donors were critical to a successful event. **[**



Svetlana Gannushkina, Russian Federation (second from right) with volunteers (left to right) Aishat Makhamaeva, Lana Estemirova and Aset Makhamaeva.



Margarita Hilamo Mestizo, Colombia.



Sipho Gumedze, Swaziland.



Emma Cladera, Bolivia.



Songs of Freedom – Hazel O'Connor and Cormac de Barra provide a rousing finale.

“Our cause is your cause. Your struggles propel us forward...”
UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein

The recipient of the 2015 Front Line Defenders Award for Human Rights Defenders at Risk is Guo Feixiong from China

Guo Feixiong is the pen name of **Yang Maodong**, a human rights defender, legal activist and writer from southeast China. He began his human rights activism in 1986, participating in student protests calling for greater freedoms and three years later, in 1989, he took an active role in the demonstrations sweeping the country. In the years that followed he remained involved in the human rights movement and in 2005, he provided legal assistance to residents who were trying to remove a corrupt village chief from power. Following the case Guo Feixiong was subjected to regular state surveillance, harassment and at least one brutal beating before being detained in September 2006 on charges of 'illegal business activity' connected to a book he wrote documenting a political scandal. After being held in pre-trial detention for 17 months he was eventually tried and sentenced to five years' imprisonment and a fine. During his time in pre-trial detention, Guo Feixiong was badly tortured. Upon his release in 2011, Guo Feixiong publicly declared that he would continue his human rights advocacy.

In 2013, Guo Feixiong was arrested again and detained for 10 months without charge. He was eventually charged with 'gathering crowds to disrupt public order' for arranging protests in support of freedom of the press, during which he called on the Chinese government to ratify the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. A trial

lasting 18 hours took place in November 2014. At the time of the Award ceremony nearly one year later, in September 2015, the verdict had yet to be announced. However, on 27 November 2015, Guo Feixiong was sentenced to six years in prison.

At the Award ceremony in Dublin City Hall, Irish author and playwright Sebastian Barry presented the award to Guo Feixiong's wife, Zhang Qing, and daughter, Yang Tianjiao (Sara) who travelled to Ireland from their new home in the United States to accept the award in his absence.

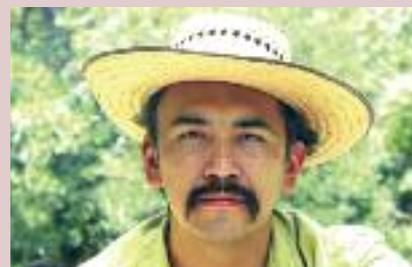
Presenting the award Sebastian Barry said **"Now today we look on the extraordinary example of Guo Feixiong, one of that world-healing company, and one of those rarest of beings, a person who puts his principles before his own comfort – far, far before it, as in, ten thousand impassable leagues"**.

Zhang Qing asked the international community to put pressure on President Xi of China to cease the relentless persecution of human rights defenders in China, whose families and communities suffer surveillance and abuse and in some cases are being forced to live in exile. **"We, as Chinese citizens, desire to have our inherent human rights and dignity. We deserve to have these rights and freedoms. We strongly believe that all people are created equal and we deserve to have equal rights."** []

THE OTHER FINALISTS WERE:



Yara Sallam – a human rights lawyer from Egypt, she was arrested in June 2014 for peacefully demonstrating against the controversial "Protest Law". Initially sentenced to three years' imprisonment, three years' police monitoring and a fine of 10,000 Egyptian Pounds (approx. €1,000), she was released on a presidential pardon in September 2015, having spent 15 months in prison.



Juan Carlos Flores Solís – an environmental rights campaigner in Mexico, he has led the opposition of local peasant and indigenous communities to the construction of a gas pipeline on their land near an active volcano. He was released from prison in January 2015 having spent nine and a half months behind bars, but a charge remains pending against him.



Rasul Jafarov – a human rights lawyer and campaigner from Azerbaijan, he was arrested on bogus charges of "illegal enterprise, tax evasion, and abuse of official power" and is currently serving a prison sentence of six years and three months.



Diane Rodríguez Zambrano – an LGBTI rights activist and the first transwoman to stand for public office in Ecuador, she has been threatened, intimidated and even kidnapped because of her work promoting the rights of the transgender community.



Guo Feixiong's wife, Zhang Qing, and daughter, Yang Tianjiao (Sara) posing with the Front Line Defenders Award statue and a picture of Guo Feixiong painted by Yang Tianjiao (Sara).

recipient, Guo Feixiong, China



Sami El-Haj, Al Jazeera Media Network, Mary Lawlor, Executive Director of Front Line Defenders, Guo Feixiong's wife, Zhang Qing, and daughter, Yang Tianjiao (Sara), Irish author Sebastian Barry, and Denis O'Brien, Chairman of Front Line Defenders.



Yang Tianjiao (Sara) plays "The Cosmos" on the piano, a piece of music her father's struggle inspired her to compose.

dublin platform side events



Panel at the NWCi event (left to right): Lina Bin Mhenni, Tunisia, Supriti Dhar, Bangladesh, Azza Soliman, Egypt, Vera Mora, Hungary and Loreto Bravo, Mexico.



During the first evening of the Dublin Platform, guests were invited to participate in one of two side events. In partnership with GLEN (the Gay and Lesbian Equality Network), one focused on the work of HRDs working to realise LGBTI rights, while a second was organised in partnership with the National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCi) and focused on the work of WHRDs.

Both events provided opportunities for delegates to meet and share experiences with members of the human rights community in Ireland working on LGBTI and women's rights. Many thanks to Twitter for making the two events possible.

Shyra Karki, Nepal and (below) Tarek Zeidan, Lebanon addressing the GLEN event.



long term prisoners, neither silenced nor forgotten

During the Dublin Platform, Front Line Defenders launched a campaign renewing its efforts to secure the release of human rights defenders serving long prison sentences who have sacrificed their own freedom defending the rights of others. The five human rights defenders featured in the campaign are from Bahrain, Colombia, Eritrea, Iran and Kyrgyzstan, and prove that neither stone walls nor iron bars can stop the spread of the ideals and ideas for which human rights defenders fight. **Below: Front Line Defenders Executive Director Mary Lawlor and EU Special Representative for Human Rights, Stavros Lambrinidis discussing the case of Bahraini human rights defender Abdulhadi Alkhawaja.**



a hardening climate

The Third Annual Front Line Defenders lecture in association with UCD and TCD took place on 30 March at The Royal Irish Academy on Dawson Street. Publisher, writer and philanthropist Dr Sigrid Rausing spoke on the topic 'A Hardening Climate – Funding Human Rights in Repressive Societies' and the event was chaired by Denis Staunton, Deputy Editor of *The Irish Times*. Sigrid Rausing is founder of The Sigrid Rausing Trust, one of the United Kingdom's largest philanthropic foundations, which in 20 years has given £230 million to human rights organisations worldwide, including support for Front Line Defenders.



Left: Dr Sigrid Rausing at the Royal Irish Academy.

protectdefenders.eu

Front Line Defenders, as part of a consortium of 12 international and regional NGOs, was successful in winning the contract to establish the EU human rights defenders mechanism, ProtectDefenders.eu

The Mechanism will deliver practical support to at risk HRDs including through emergency grants, temporary relocation grants, capacity building and advocacy.

The budget totals €15 million over 36 months and a minimum of 60% of the funding will be provided directly to support human rights defenders at risk. An independent secretariat based in Brussels will coordinate the project in coordination with the EU. In 2016 the website www.protectdefenders.eu will be launched with full details of how to access funding and support.

The 12 partners in the project are:

- Front Line Defenders
- Reporters Without Borders (RSF)
- World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)
- International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
- Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Network (ESCR-Net)
- International Gay and Lesbian Association (ILGA)
- Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights (UAF)
- Protection International
- Peace Brigades International (PBI)
- Euro-Mediterranean Foundation of Support to Human Rights Defenders (EMHRF)
- Forum Asia
- East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project (EHAHRDP).



**Members of the Board of
ProtectDefenders.eu**

**(Left to right): Andrew Anderson,
Front Line Defenders (Chair),
Elodie Truchon, RSF, Antoine
Madelin, FIDH, Peter Zangl, OMCT.**

team FLD on the run

Despite the rain and the wind, Team FLD were out in force at the VHI Women's Mini Marathon on bank-holiday Monday, 1 June and raised much needed funds for HRDs at risk.

A great day out was followed by delicious scones, cupcakes and tea to warm up! Many thanks to our partners at The Body Shop for helping to spread the word and well done and many thanks to all who took part!

✦ Team FLD were out in force at the VHI Women's Mini Marathon...



redeeming power of love

On 15 November Front Line Defenders and Irish PEN celebrated the Day of the Imprisoned Writer at the Dublin Book Festival.

The event focused on the work of international LGBTI writers with Irish authors Louise O'Neill and Sebastian Barry, and Ugandan LGBTI rights defender Sandra Ntebi, reading from the works of journalists, novelists, poets, bloggers and screenwriters who speak out against the oppression of LGBTI rights with dissenting, critical and beautiful works and who are often targeted as a result. We were delighted to host President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins as our guest on the night.

Sandra Ntebi also took part in the autumn speaker's tour, giving three public lectures during her time in Ireland.

Right: Louise O'Neill, President of Ireland Michael D Higgins, Sandra Ntebi and Sebastian Barry.



Front Line Defenders and Irish PEN celebrated the Day of the Imprisoned Writer at the Dublin Book Festival...

we are the giant

On 10 December Front Line Defenders and the Netherlands Embassy joined forces to celebrate International Human Rights Day and hosted a free documentary film screening of "We Are The Giant", at Filmbase in Dublin, followed by a reception. The film originally premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in 2014 and tells the story of ordinary individuals in Libya, Syria and Bahrain who are transformed by the critical moral and personal challenges they encounter when standing up for what they believe is right.



Picture: Deputy Ambassador of the Netherlands Embassy, Thom Kluck, addressing the audience.

china: rights, resistance & repression

Chinese lawyer, university lecturer and Harvard fellow, Dr. Teng Biao has been subjected to state surveillance, threats, house arrest, and disbarment and was "disappeared" because of his rights work. Teng Biao participated in the spring speaker's tour giving public lectures at the Irish Centre for Human Rights – NUI Galway, the School of Law – Trinity College Dublin, the School of Asian Studies – University College Cork and the School of Law and Government – Dublin City University.

He also met with and briefed The Law Society of Ireland Human Rights Committee (pictured) and had articles published in Irish and international media.



Front Line Defenders launched the first in a series of nonfiction graphic novels - *La Lucha: The Story of Lucha Castro and Human Rights in Mexico*, in late March in English and in November in Spanish. Presenting the gritty reality of life in Chihuahua and Juárez, the book depicts the lives and work of women human rights defenders as they serve their communities, struggling for justice and accountability.

La Lucha is the first in a forthcoming book series which is part of Front Line Defenders efforts aimed at:

- increasing visibility, legitimacy and respect for individual HRDs at risk and to work with them to disseminate the campaign both internationally and within their countries; and
- increasing the awareness of and respect for the role of human rights defenders and the important function they serve in societies, particularly in countries where civil society and HRDs are under attack.





“The idea of using a graphic novel to transmit the message about the work of human rights defenders working in difficult environments is excellent. It is an entirely accessible form of communication reaching out to readers of all generations and segments of the society.”

Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

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Why comic books are helping us process human rights issues

BY KIM CARR • 2 AUGUST 15

The format has also found fans with organisations that work for the defenders of human rights. Adam Shapiro is Head of Campaigns at Front Line Defenders, an Irish-based organisation that works for the security of campaigners across the world. It's just produced comic book *La Lucha*, which focuses on Mexican activist, Lucha Castro.

It's the first in a series of graphic novels that look at the daily lives of human rights workers and, for Shapiro, the appeal of comic books is the association with a more traditional trope. "Yes, the pictures make the stories more human, but at the same time there's that connection with the heroic...I had always seen activists as real-life superheroes."

Ms. MAGAZINE **blog**

The Lawyer Battling Human Rights Atrocities in Mexico

August 13, 2015 by Kim Ewora | 2 Comments

Amidst death threats, targeted disappearances of outspoken activists and the infamous reputation of violence in Chihuahua—where more murders occur annually than in Afghanistan—Lucha and her allies struggle tirelessly against gender-based violence.

The illustrations are a stylistic clash of realism and noir, giving the narration a serious undertone. Appropriately, the art also lacks distracting frills and embellishments, allowing a greater focus on the activists themselves. The combination of art and dialogue, sourced from personal interviews, successfully renders a complex political situation into an easy-to-follow narrative without simplifying or overshadowing the conflict.

COMUNIDAD SOCIAL

Presentan en el Senado libro sobre los defensores de derechos humanos en Chihuahua

Miércoles, 18 de Noviembre de 2015

El senador Javier Corral Jurado, del Grupo Parlamentario del PAN, y la senadora Angélica de la Peña Gómez, del Grupo Parlamentario del PRD, presentaron el libro "La Lucha", que es la historia real de todas las dificultades que viven los defensores de derechos humanos en el norte de México y, particularmente, en el estado de Chihuahua.

theguardian

Global development
Peace and justice
get reporting to the G

Mexico: the graphic tale of Lucha Castro's struggle to defend women's rights

The new Mexico book and graphic novel 'La Lucha' by Kim Ewora

La Lucha is a graphic novel that tells the story of Lucha Castro, a human rights lawyer in Mexico who has spent years fighting for women's rights in a state where violence against women is rampant.

in Paperback in Kindle City

La Lucha is a graphic novel that tells the story of Lucha Castro, a human rights lawyer in Mexico who has spent years fighting for women's rights in a state where violence against women is rampant.

Sometimes Lucha Castro finds herself overwhelmed by the horror stories she hears almost every day. A new non-fiction graphic novel, *La Lucha: The Story of Lucha Castro and Human Rights in Mexico*, seeks to capture some of that daily reality.

Castro stressed the book could not have come at a better time. "It raises the cost to the state of anything happening to me," she said. "It also raises the cost of the kind of smear campaigns against human rights defenders that the government likes to do."

Front Line Defenders launched **La Lucha: The Story of Lucha Castro and Human Rights in Mexico** with a series of events aimed at advocacy, public education and awareness and greater visibility for Mexican human rights lawyer Lucha Castro and her colleagues in Chihuahua and Juarez.

European Tour: Brussels, London, Dublin

Highlighting the European Tour was a public event held at the Museum of Comic Art in Brussels, at which EU Special Representative for Human Rights, Stavros Lambrinidis, joined Lucha and Front Line Defenders for a public presentation. Using the book launch as a platform, Lucha also held advocacy meetings with key EU officials, including Mr. Lambrinidis, all of which took place just a month after the EU-Mexico Human Rights Dialogue.

In London, Lucha met with then candidate (and now Leader) for the Labour Party leadership, Jeremy Corbyn, whose wife is from Mexico and for whom the book held special meaning. There was also a public book-signing event in central London, and Lucha held meetings with potential donor foundations to secure funding for her organisation's work in northern Mexico.

In Dublin, Front Line Defenders organised a series of meetings and events, including a press conference at the Grafton Street Body

Shop, at which one wall of the shop was turned into a mural depicting scenes from the book. Lucha met with the Mexican Ambassador to Ireland and held advocacy meetings at the Department of Foreign Affairs. A book signing at a downtown independent bookshop was followed by an evening reception and book-signing attended by over 150 people in Temple Bar.

United States Tour: New York, Washington, DC, Seattle, San Francisco, El Paso, Las Cruces

The US tour involved a mix of advocacy meetings, public events and meetings aimed at developing strategic partnerships. The book served as a unique entry point for engagement and for public outreach to non-traditional human rights audiences.

Starting in the southwest, Front Line Defenders, Lucha and other colleagues from Chihuahua and Juarez were invited to give two presentations at universities - at the University of Texas, El Paso and New Mexico State

University, Las Cruces - that have high proportions of Mexican-American and Mexican students. At each university, the book was purchased by the official university libraries, while professors committed to using the book as part of their curricula.

In New York, Front Line Defenders and Lucha were joined by Amy Goodman, host of the critically acclaimed news program Democracy Now!, Charlotte Bunch, founder of the Center for Women's Global Leadership at Rutgers University and leading campaigner for women's rights, and Jon Sack, illustrator of the book. Amy moderated a discussion held at an art gallery in SoHo, which was recorded and broadcasted on C-Span's Book TV.

While in Washington, DC, Lucha held meetings with officials from the US State Department and staffers from key Congressional offices on Capitol Hill. Along with fellow WHRD, Emilia Gonzalez, she held important meetings at the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, including with Executive Secretary Emilio Álvarez Icaza. Secretary Icaza also joined us for a public presentation at the IACHR, which was also attended by the Mexican Ambassador to the IACHR and representatives from other national delegations. Closing the two-day DC visit was a public event at a DC art gallery, attended by over 100 people, including Ireland's Ambassador to the United States, Anne Anderson.



Lucha Castro and María san Martín, Front Line Defenders at La Lucha book presentation at Impact Hub in London on 1 May.



The presentation in Chihuahua gathered 160 attendees and closed with a tribute to the founders of CEDEHM by all of its members. The graphic novel was presented by researcher and academic Víctor Quintana, journalist Marcela Turati, Alan García, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and María San Martín, Front Line Defenders.



Stavros Lambrinidis, EU Special Representative for Human Rights, with Lucha Castro and Front Line Defenders for the launch of La Lucha at the Comic Arts Museum in Brussels on 28 April.



Lucha Castro with her colleagues from CEDEHM at the book launch reception in Mexico City.

On the West Coast, events were held in Seattle and San Francisco, with local institutions organizing public events, as well as one private donor-only meeting to help expand the network of potential supporters for Lucha's organisation. The event at the Latino community centre El Centro de La Raza in Seattle was attended by over 100 community members, in an emotional engagement communicated entirely in Spanish. The event was recorded for local public radio. In San Francisco, the Global Fund for Women hosted an evening event at its downtown San Francisco offices.

Mexico Tour: Mexico City, Chihuahua, Oaxaca

The Spanish edition of La Lucha was released by Mexican publisher Editorial Resistencia in November 2015, and Front Line Defenders together with local partners in Mexico City, Chihuahua and Oaxaca organized a series of events to launch the book in Mexico. It was also opportunity to convene WHRDs from across the country for a seminar on strategic communications and messaging in Mexico City, and to hold a second event in Oaxaca with local WHRDs on strategic communications and access to resources.

In Mexico City, the book was presented to the public with a press conference, attended

by numerous local and national media outlets, which yielded over a dozen articles in the first 24 hours after the book was officially launched. A few days prior, leading feminist scholar and writer, and public intellectual Marta Lamas, presented the book on one of the most watched morning television news and commentary programmes El Mañanero, giving a tremendous boost to the launch. The EU Delegation to Mexico and the Embassy of The Netherlands hosted an evening reception and presentation, which the Mexican Under Secretary for Human Rights, Miguel Ruiz Cabañas, attended and addressed the audience, lauding the initiative.

Closing the Mexico City portion of the book tour, a public presentation was held at the Mexican Senate, hosted by Senators Javier Corral and Angélica de la Peña (head of the Senate's Human Rights Committee), and joined by leading Mexican actress and women's rights advocate Ofelia Medina. In an auditorium filled to capacity with over 125 people, Lucha and her colleagues Alma and Gabino Gomez talked about the significance of the book to their work and the importance of such visibility. The Senators graciously endorsed the book, calling for all their colleagues to receive a copy and to read the compelling stories.

In Chihuahua, Lucha's organisation, El Centro de Derechos Humanos de las Mujeres (CEDEHM) organised an evening reception in the Chihuahua State Capitol, with over 150 attendees, while in Oaxaca, local partner Consorcio para el Dialogo Parlamental y la Equidad organised a full day event with local WHRDs followed by a book-signing event at a local bookstore.

Impact Report from CEDEHM

"The publication of La Lucha has not only served to make visible the daily life of those who defend human rights in one of the riskiest states to do so in Mexico, but has allowed the general public to understand, in an illustrative, creative and simple way, the implications of being an advocate for human rights. The support of Front Line Defenders serves to legitimize our work and enables a greater dialogue with different actors: political, social, business, media, etc.

But it also gives us hope and certainty that our work is valuable, necessary and that the struggle for justice, equality and dignity will always be worthwhile. La Lucha opens minds and hearts, inspires and engages, it is a book that builds hope." □



Lucha Castro and Emilia Gonzalez present La Lucha at the Inter American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) in Washington DC on 2 June. Left to right: Hilaire Sobers, IACHR, Emilio Álvarez Icaza, IACHR, Emilia Gonzalez, Lucha Castro, Maureen Meyers, WOLA, Laura Aragon Castro.



Andrew Standley, Ambassador of the European Union in Mexico, Dolf Hogewoning, Ambassador of the Netherlands in Mexico, Roberto Campa, Mexico's Under-secretary for human rights at the Interior Ministry, Alejandra Nuño and Lucha Castro, CEDEHM, and Jesus Peña, Deputy Representative of the UN Human Rights Office in Mexico, at the book launch reception in Mexico City.



Democracy Now's Amy Goodman leads discussion with artist and writer Jon Sack, Lucha Castro and her daughter Laura Aragon Castro at La Lucha book launch in NYC on 29 May.



La Lucha book presentation at El Centro de la Raza community center in Seattle on 4 June.

resources



Annual Report on Global Trends for Human Rights Defenders

The report provides a snapshot of the situation for human rights defenders in 2015 on both global and regional levels.

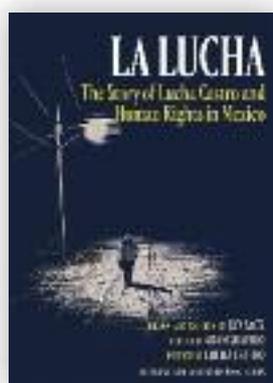
The report will be available in Arabic, English, French, Russian and Spanish.



The Eighth Dublin Platform Report

The report identifies the main themes and highlights the issues which emerged in the discussions at the Eighth Dublin Platform for Human Rights Defenders at Risk in November 2015.

The report will be available online in Arabic, English, French, Russian and Spanish.



**La Lucha
The Story of Lucha Castro and Human Rights in Mexico
(graphic novel)**

La Lucha is the first in a series of non-fiction graphic novels from Front Line Defenders documenting the stories of human rights defenders at risk around the world. La Lucha recounts the stories of Lucha Castro, her colleagues at the Centre for Women's Rights in Chihuahua, Mexico, and others who sacrificed their lives in the defense of women's and human rights in their communities in Chihuahua and Juarez – consistently two of the most dangerous cities in the world for more than a decade.

Available in English and Spanish.



**Workbook on Security:
Practical Steps for Human Rights Defenders at Risk**

The Workbook on Security is designed to raise awareness about security issues and to help human rights defenders consider how to mitigate threats. The workbook takes human rights defenders through the steps to producing a security plan – for individuals and for organisations. It follows a systematic approach for assessing their security situation and developing risk and vulnerability reduction strategies and tactics

Available in Arabic, Chinese, Dari, English, French, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish and Urdu.



Human Rights Defenders and Business: Searching for Common Ground

Produced together with Institute for Human Rights and Business and Civil Rights Defenders, the report showcases examples of human rights defenders challenging economic policies or business operations and the consequences they have faced. The report includes essays outlining the importance of human rights defenders, the role of governments, what companies should do, and offers recommendations to the business community. It also argues that a wide civil society space is in the interests of companies.

Available in English.



Security-in-a-box – tools and tactics for your digital security

Security in a Box, created and developed by Front Line Defenders and Tactical Technology Collective, is a toolkit of peer-reviewed free and open source software and guides for improving the security and privacy of stored information and communication.

The aim of the toolkit is to provide an understanding of the risks involved in electronic communication and provide a step by step guide towards the implementation of practical solutions. <https://securityinabox.org>

Available in Amharic, Arabic, Bahasa, Burmese, English, Farsi, French, Khmer, Macedonian, Mandarin, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Thai, Tibetan, Turkish and Vietnamese.



Multiple Exposure (Monthly Video Magazine)

Multiple Exposure is a monthly video magazine broadcast focusing on human rights defenders at risk and the context of their work.

Segments in the series offer a behind-the-scenes look at the difficulty of carrying out human rights work in different countries; information about trends and political developments that directly impact human rights; and profiles of individual human rights defenders at risk.

<http://www.frontlinedefenders.org/multipleexposure>



Gendering Documentation: A Manual For and About Women Human Rights Defenders

A publication of the Women Human Rights Defenders Coalition, the manual outlines the reasons it is important to document experiences of WHRDs and what should be documented, with a focus on context and environment. It provides a practical tool for documenting violations against women human rights defenders and outlines different uses of documentation, including for various advocacy sites.

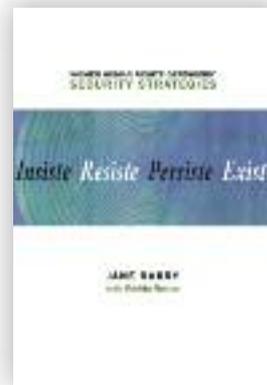
Available in English on www.defendingwomen-defendingrights.org



The European Union: What it can do, getting it to take action

This handbook shows what protection human rights defenders can expect from EU Delegations and Member State Embassies and how to proceed to get the EU to take action. It also gives some tips for effective strategies for lobby and advocacy towards the EU and contains a quick reference table for requesting EU action

Available in Arabic, English, French, Russian and Spanish.



Insiste, Persiste, Resiste, Existe: Women's Human Rights Defenders' Security Strategies

Produced together with Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights and Kvinna Till Kvinna, this report makes the threats encountered by women human rights defenders in their work visible as well as the strategies they use to combat and handle the threats.

Available in Arabic, Bosnian, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish



What protection can UN Field Presences provide?

The handbook gives a summary of the type of support and protection UN agencies can provide locally to human rights defenders. It is intended to give practical and helpful suggestions to human rights defenders on how to engage constructively with the UN.

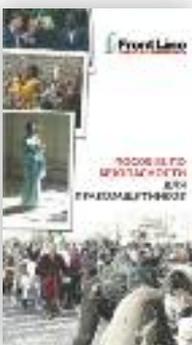
Available in Arabic, English, French, Russian and Spanish.



Trial Observation Handbook for Human Rights Defenders

The Trial Observation Handbook for Human Rights Defenders is designed as a resource to enable trial observers to accurately report on trial proceedings and to contribute to the protection of HRDs facing prosecution by highlighting injustice and the lack of due process.

Available in English



Protection Handbook

The Protection handbook is intended as a quick reference tool for human rights defenders, in which to find helpful and practical suggestions on how to deal with threats, intimidation and attacks in order to improve their personal and organisational security.

Available in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish.

All of these resources are available on our website at: www.frontlinedefenders.org/resources

To order a copy of any of our publications please send an email to fladmin@frontlinedefenders.org specifying the publication and language requested.

Through its Rest and Respite Programme, Front Line Defenders supported 40 human rights defenders to take some time out to escape the stressful and difficult circumstances in which they work for a short time, and to focus on rest and recuperation. Some chose to work on a specific project, learning about digital security or enhancing other skills relevant to their work.



Prasanga Fernando, Sri Lanka journalist, faced numerous threats.

Sri Lankan journalist Prasanga Fernando was supported on a two-month Fellowship with People's Watch Tamil Nadu in India during the summer. Pictured here explaining his work with victims of torture and families of disappeared persons, he has faced a number of threats, especially from the police, due to his involvement in public protests and legal action against torture.

"The Fellowship was a great support for my future endurance. Though it was for a short time I gained much strength from it. I gained new skills in video editing and my English improved. People's Watch organisation and staff showed love and compassion towards me which gave me strength. I learned a lot from them – the way they engage with the victims to reduce the stress they are under, and the way they deal with local authorities to get justice and benefits for victims."

Twenty human rights defenders from Ukraine took part in a three-day stress management seminar in a beautiful area of Georgia, where they went hiking in the mountains, fishing, cycling and swimming. Issues of professional burnout, fatigue and trauma were addressed and participants had an opportunity to reflect upon their concerns, feelings and behaviours in a safe and protected manner. They were also given the option to work with a psychologist in group or individual sessions.

Tilder Kumichii, of the Gender Empowerment and Development Foundation in Cameroon, spent ten days by the sea with her two daughters. She had been receiving threats and needed some time away.

"The activities included rest, some sports and relaxing at the beach. Before the support I had serious burnout caused by the stress from my work, especially from a domestic violence case I was working on when I was attacked and my computer and phones taken. I had a constant headache and was very stressed but I'm feeling well again and am back to work." □



Tilder Kumichii (right) from Cameroon with UN Special Rapporteur on HRDs Michel Forst at the Dublin Platform in November.

✦ "The Fellowship was a great support for my future endurance. Though it was for a short time I gained much strength from it. I gained new skills in video editing and my English improved."

Prasanga Fernando



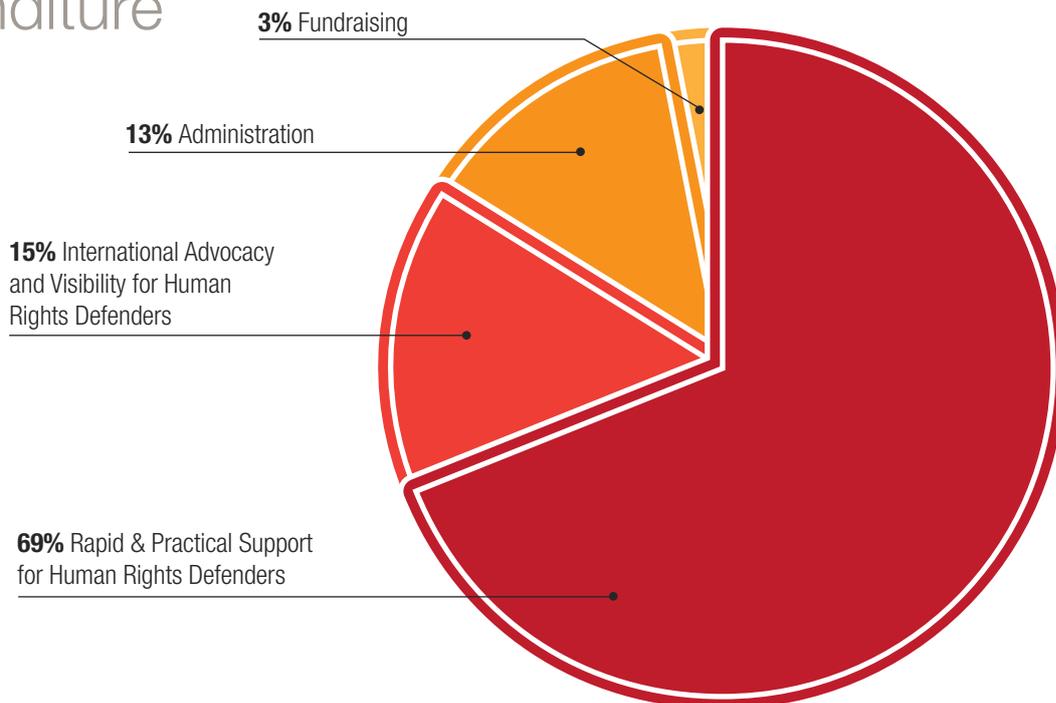
Mary Akrami, Director of the Afghan Women Skills Development Centre, and her husband were hosted on rest and respite in Ireland for two months in the Spring.

"This programme is great for women human rights activists who have been subjected to stressful, tense and often dangerous and threatening situations in their work. I enjoyed my stay in such a quiet and safe place. There was no feeling of tension or concern about our personal security. We felt it was a haven of peace, and perfect for us after the many stresses experienced in Afghanistan. At last we were able to relax."

Left: Mary Akrami, Director of the Afghan Women Skills Development Centre.

2015 income and expenditure

EXPENDITURE OVERVIEW



Front Line Defenders is grateful for the generous support of the following donors:

€200,000+

Adessium Foundation
 European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights
 Hivos International
 Irish Aid
 Lifeline Embattled CSO Assistance Fund
 Oak Foundation
 Open Society Foundations
 Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
 Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
 Sigrid Rausing Trust

€100,000 - €199,999

Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs
 Foundation for a Just Society

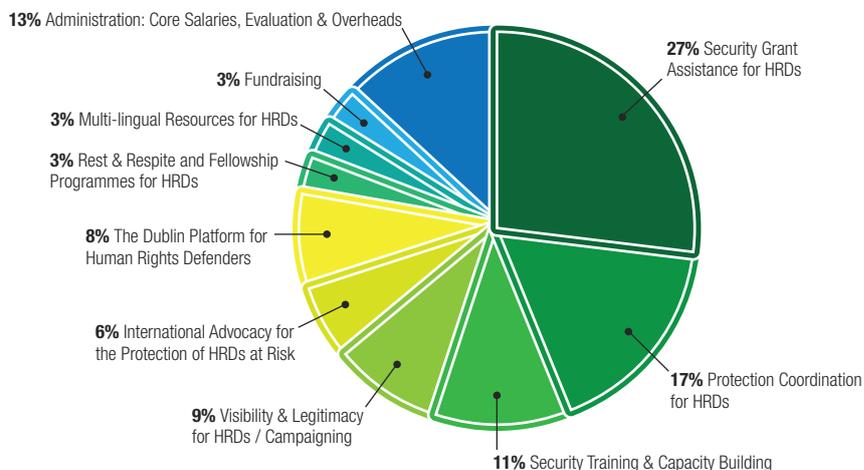
€50,000 - €99,999

American Jewish World Service
 Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs

€5,000 - €49,999

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 The Roddick Foundation
 The Tikva Grassroots Empowerment Fund
 The Violet Jabara Charitable Trust
 Tides Foundation
 Twitter Inc.
 Public donations

EXPENDITURE BREAKDOWN



WHERE FRONT LINE DEFENDERS SPENDS ITS RESOURCES

Security Grant Assistance for HRDs	1,262,527
Protection Coordination for HRDs	804,833
Security Training & Capacity Building	544,148
Visibility & Legitimacy for HRDs / Campaigning	408,694
International Advocacy for the Protection of HRDs	295,002
The Dublin Platform for Human Rights Defenders	376,823
Rest & Respite and Fellowship Programmes for HRDs	128,308
Multi-lingual Resources for HRDs	156,248
Fundraising	164,344
Administration: Core Salaries, Evaluation & Overheads	593,254
TOTAL Expenditure*	4,734,181

*Official figures pending completion of 2015 Audit of Front Line Defenders Accounts.

WHAT I HAVE LIVED FOR

BY BERTRAND RUSSELL

Three passions, simple but overwhelmingly strong, have governed my life: the longing for love, the search for knowledge, and unbearable pity for the suffering of mankind. These passions, like great winds, have blown me hither and thither, in a wayward course, over a great ocean of anguish, reaching to the very verge of despair.

I have sought love, first, because it brings ecstasy – ecstasy so great that I would often have sacrificed all the rest of life for a few hours of this joy. I have sought it, next, because it relieves loneliness – that terrible loneliness in which one shivering consciousness looks over the rim of the world into the cold unfathomable lifeless abyss. I have sought it finally, because in the union of love I have seen, in a mystic miniature, the prefiguring vision of the heaven that saints and poets have imagined. This is what I sought, and though it might seem too good for human life, this is what – at last – I have found.

With equal passion I have sought knowledge. I have wished to understand the hearts of men. I have wished to know why the stars shine. And I have tried to apprehend the Pythagorean power by which number holds sway above the flux. A little of this, but not much, I have achieved.

Love and knowledge, so far as they were possible, led upward toward the heavens. But always pity brought me back to earth. Echoes of cries of pain reverberate in my heart. Children in famine, victims tortured by oppressors, helpless old people a burden to their sons, and the whole world of loneliness, poverty, and pain make a mockery of what human life should be. I long to alleviate this evil, but I cannot, and I too suffer.

This has been my life. I have found it worth living, and would gladly live it again if the chance were offered me.

DUBLIN

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WWW.FRONTLINEDEFENDERS.ORG



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IRIS O'BRIEN
FOUNDATION



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