

ESSENTIAL PROTECTION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN CRITICAL TIMES

 PROTECTDEFENDERS.EU
ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024



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PROTECTDEFENDERS.EU

REPORT | 2023-2024

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2023-2024 In FIGURES



Supporting and Strengthening Human Rights Defenders Globally



10,500+

HUMAN RIGHTS

defenders received direct support from ProtectDefenders.eu

50%

WHRDs

or defenders belonging to gender minorities, gender non-conforming, and non-binary HRDs

38%

YOUNG DEFENDERS

(aged 35 or below)



328

HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANISATIONS

receiving direct support



113

COUNTRIES WORLDWIDE



92%

OF THE HRDs

supported belonging to the most-at-risk groups



23%

LAND, ENVIRONMENTAL, indigenous people's rights HRDs



21%

LGBTI RIGHTS HRDs



15%

JOURNALISTS and media HRDs



5%

HRDs IN CONFLICT AREAS



1,119

DEFENDERS AND 311 FAMILY MEMBERS
at risk receiving emergency support for protection



158

LOCAL HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANISATIONS
receiving core support, seed funding, or lifeline support



122

HRD
protection networks supported



72

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS
and 127 family members receiving support within
comprehensive temporary relocation programs



76

ENTITIES
are members of the European Union
Temporary Relocation Platform



941

DEFENDERS
better able to manage their security through
training and capacity-development



566

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS
accompanied in field-work activities



Urgent advocacy and political
mobilisation on the situation of

2,617

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS AT RISK



4,450+

INDIVIDUALS
assisted with direct guidance and 24/7 support



90%

OF HRDS
reporting a positive impact/ enhanced capacities/
improved security following support

HIGHLIGHT

A KEY MECHANISM FOR THE PROTECTION OF HRDs





Highlight

A Key Mechanism for the Protection of HRDs: Delivering Crucial Support in an Increasingly Hostile Environment

In its nine years of existence, **ProtectDefenders.eu**, the EU HRD Mechanism, has proven to be a **lifeline for human rights defenders (HRDs)** worldwide. Operating in an increasingly hostile global context, the mechanism has demonstrated **exceptional performance**, directly supporting **10,518 HRDs in 113 countries** over the past year. Despite escalating threats and repression, **ProtectDefenders.eu has provided timely, tailored protection**, enabling defenders to continue their vital work.

At least **50% of the defenders supported** identified as **women HRDs (WHRDs)** or defenders from **gender minorities**, including non-binary individuals. Guided by its **gender-sensitive strategy**, ProtectDefenders.eu prioritizes the most vulnerable HRDs, ensuring their unique challenges are addressed. Moreover, over **90% of the mechanism's support** was delivered

to HRDs from high-risk groups, demonstrating its commitment to **intersectional protection** and addressing the needs of those most at risk.

The mechanism's success extends beyond direct protection. Over the past year, it has solidified its role as a **key actor in global human rights advocacy**, shaping policies that directly impact HRDs worldwide. Notable achievements, such as the **#Visa4HRDs initiative**, which contributed to the adoption of the updated EU Visa Code Handbook, exemplify ProtectDefenders.eu's ability to **amplify the voices of HRDs at the highest decision-making levels**.

ProtectDefenders.eu's core programs continue to deliver exceptional results, providing flexible protection mechanisms, including emergency



relocation, financial assistance for HRDs at risk, and capacity-building initiatives to strengthen defenders' resilience. However, the **current political and financial landscape** presents **unprecedented challenges**. **Authoritarian regimes**, the rise of **repressive laws** like foreign agent regulations, and **transnational crackdowns** on civil society have intensified threats to HRDs. Within Europe, **political polarization**, increased **surveillance**, and restrictions on civil liberties further compound these challenges.

Financial sustainability remains a critical issue. The demand for protection **far exceeds available resources**, with ProtectDefenders.eu able to address only **20% of legitimate requests**, often partially. This growing gap is exacerbated by recent cuts in **US funding** for human rights programs,

making the EU the **primary actor responsible for sustaining HRD protection initiatives**.

The international community, particularly the EU, must respond **urgently** to these escalating challenges. **Increased financial and political commitments** are essential to ensure the sustainability of ProtectDefenders.eu's operations and to uphold the protection of HRDs. Without decisive action, **critical programs risk collapse**, threatening the lives and work of those who stand on the frontlines of defending human rights.

ProtectDefenders.eu stands ready to continue its mission, but **global political will and increased funding** are urgently needed to match the growing threats faced by HRDs worldwide.



THE EVOLVING GLOBAL LANDSCAPE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS



The Evolving Global Landscape for Human Rights Defenders

Persistent Challenges

Over the past years, ProtectDefenders.eu has been witnessing the **worsening of the global landscape for human rights defenders** - becoming increasingly precarious, with a growing array of challenges threatening HRDs' ability to operate freely and safely. The challenges faced by HRDs continue to evolve and intensify, **requiring a strong, coordinated, and adaptive response** from the international community. Governments, civil society, and international organizations must take decisive action to counter these threats, ensuring that HRDs receive the protection, resources, and solidarity they need to continue their crucial work.



Escalating Legal and Financial Repression

One of the most alarming trends is the **shrinking of civic space**, driven by the global rise of authoritarianism. **Far-right governments** are enacting a range of **restrictive laws** designed to stifle dissent. These include **bans on foreign funding, complex reporting requirements**, and severe **penalties for activism**. Such laws create a **chilling effect** on civil society participation, discouraging people from speaking out and isolating HRDs from the **support networks** they rely on. The international community is witnessing a disturbing pattern where **governments seek to silence HRDs** through the manipulation of legal systems, making it more difficult for them to carry out their important work.

The **weaponization of legal systems** has become a key tool for governments looking to silence HRDs. Authorities are increasingly using **anti-terrorism** and **national security laws** to criminalize dissent and obstruct activism. Prolonged **pre-trial detention**, restricted access to legal representation, **unfair trials**, and **incommunicado detention** are just a few examples of the tactics used to silence those exercising their right to defend rights. One

particularly concerning example is the widespread use of **Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs)**, especially in **Europe and North America**. These lawsuits are designed to intimidate HRDs, journalists, and activists, draining their **financial resources** and energy, while **distracting** them from their vital advocacy work. While these legal attacks can be overwhelming, **solidarity actions** and **legal support** have led to significant victories, showcasing the power of **collective advocacy** and **resilience** in the face of adversity.

The introduction of **foreign agent laws** is **spreading globally**, placing **excessive administrative burdens** on HRDs and restricting their access to international funding. These laws often serve to delegitimize HRDs' work by branding them as **foreign agents** or threats to national interests, further isolating them and exacerbating their vulnerability. These measures have led to **operational shutdowns** and **increased vulnerabilities**, as many HRDs struggle to sustain their initiatives with **dwindling resources**. Without sufficient funding, HRDs face severe limitations in continuing their work and ensuring their safety.

Heightened Risks for Marginalized Defenders

Marginalized HRDs—from women and LGBTQI+ advocates to indigenous, migrant, and defenders with disabilities—face a growing array of **targeted attacks** and **oppression**. Their struggles highlight the need for more **inclusive protection mechanisms** that recognize and address the specific challenges they face in defending human rights across the globe. Certain groups of **human rights defenders** are facing **heightened risks**, particularly those defending the rights of marginalized groups or advocating for controversial issues. **Indigenous, land, and environmental defenders (LIE)** are among the most targeted, especially in **Latin America**. These defenders often face threats from **illegal armed groups** and **cartels**, whose interests align with **extractive industries**.

Women HRDs (WHRDs) represent another particularly vulnerable group. In addition to the threats faced by all HRDs, WHRDs experience **gendered attacks** that specifically target their **role as women in public life**. They are often accused of promoting “gender ideology,” a term wielded by anti-rights actors to **delegitimize** their work. WHRDs frequently encounter **sexualized violence, harassment, and public slander**, all rooted in deeply entrenched societal norms that restrict women’s participation in **public and political life**. These gendered challenges make WHRDs especially vulnerable, as they face a combination of **physical violence** and **psychological intimidation** that seeks to silence them and undermine their work.

Similarly, **LGBTQI+ rights defenders** are increasingly subjected to **legal persecution**, particularly in countries with hostile environments, such as **Uganda**, where **draconian laws** criminalize LGBTQI+ existence. These defenders are often subjected to **violent repression, arbitrary arrests, and public smear campaigns**, making it difficult for them to organize and advocate for the rights of LGBTQI+ individuals. The **stigmatization** and **criminalization** of LGBTQI+ people create an environment of fear and repression, making the work of LGBTQI+ rights defenders dangerous and often invisible.



Migrant rights defenders are also operating in **increasingly hostile environments**, especially in regions like **North Africa** and **Southern Europe**. These defenders are frequently subjected to **stigmatization, legal persecution, and harassment** as they fight for the rights of migrants and refugees. Their efforts to **combat inhumane policies** and defend migrants’ rights are often complicated by laws that **criminalize solidarity** and **humanitarian assistance**. As a result, migrant rights defenders are at the forefront of struggles for **human dignity**, yet their ability to advocate for those in need is consistently undermined by restrictive policies and a hostile public discourse.

Lastly, **HRDs with disabilities** face **unique challenges** that exacerbate their vulnerability in the context of human rights advocacy. These defenders often face **inadequate protection, limited inclusion, and a lack of access to resources**. Their specific needs require **innovative, intersectional support mechanisms** that take into account both their disability and the broader risks associated with defending human rights. HRDs with disabilities experience compounded vulnerabilities, making it essential to ensure that their **safety** and **continued engagement** in human rights work are safeguarded by **targeted support strategies** that address their **distinct needs**.



Globalized Repression and Isolation

HRDs are faced with globalized repression trends, facing threats from both state and non-state actors, increasing their isolation. **Development projects**, which are often driven by corporate interests and supported by state actors, frequently result in **displacement, violent repression, and even assassinations** of movement leaders. **ProtectDefenders.eu** has documented numerous cases where HRDs defending their communities’ **land rights** are met with **state-sponsored violence** and **legal harassment**. This underscores the intersection between **economic interests** and **human rights violations**, where corporate and governmental agendas prioritize profit and development over the protection of fundamental rights.

Transnational repression has emerged as a particularly concerning phenomenon. Governments are increasingly collaborating across borders to target HRDs through tactics such as **deportation, enforced disappearance, or even extrajudicial killings**. These cases highlight the growing **global reach of repressive regimes** and the pressing need for **robust international protective measures** that go beyond national borders.

For HRDs who are **forced into exile**, the challenges are **immense**. **Prolonged displacement** creates

an environment of **uncertainty, insecurity, and a loss of connection** to their communities, making it difficult to continue their advocacy work effectively. Being disconnected from the ground often leaves defenders feeling **isolated**, unable to directly support the causes they care about. Moreover, the lack of **long-term support mechanisms**, combined with **restrictive immigration policies**, exacerbates their vulnerabilities, making it even harder for them to **rebuild their efforts** from a safe distance. As they try to continue their advocacy from exile, HRDs often struggle to secure the **resources, funding, and political support** they need to carry on their work.

In addition to these challenges, **press freedom** is under **unprecedented threat**, particularly in regions like **Armenia, Sudan, Niger, and Gaza**. Journalists, who are often at the forefront of exposing **human rights abuses**, face rampant **violence, intimidation, and censorship**. Many media outlets are struggling to survive in these increasingly **hostile environments**, with journalists being targeted for their critical work. As HRDs depend on a free and independent press to amplify their voices and expose injustices, the erosion of press freedom further isolates defenders and inhibits the broader **accountability** of governments and corporations.

The Evolving Global Landscape for Human Rights Defenders

Celebrating Progress in a Changing World

Despite the enduring challenges faced by HRDs globally, there has been some **progress in enhancing the safety and recognition of their vital role** in upholding human rights and justice. The year 2024 has seen advancements that attest to the international community's commitment to supporting HRDs and addressing the increasing threats they face. The work of ProtectDefenders.eu and its partners remains central to this collective effort, ensuring that HRDs are supported, protected, and empowered to continue their vital work for justice and human rights.



EU Visa Code Handbook and International Support: A Turning Point for HRDs

The revision of the **EU Visa Code Handbook** in June 2024 marks a breakthrough for HRDs, as it incorporates **explicit provisions** designed to meet their unique needs. This is the first time the EU has introduced such measures within its visa framework, recognizing the vulnerabilities that HRDs face when they need to travel for their safety or to continue their important work abroad. The revision of the Visa Code is the **result of sustained advocacy led by ProtectDefenders.eu** and its partners, who for years have been pushing for a system that would better cater to the needs of HRDs in danger. With this update, the EU has taken a critical step in **ensuring that human rights defenders are not hindered by bureaucratic barriers** when they need protection or opportunities to work internationally. The impact of this reform should be far-reaching, allowing HRDs to continue their vital work with greater freedom of movement, which is crucial for advocacy, networking, and seeking refuge when necessary.

Advancing the Protection of HRDs with Disabilities

In a continued effort to enhance the inclusion and well-being of HRDs, **ProtectDefenders.eu** and other organizations have worked to raise awareness about the challenges faced by HRDs with disabilities. Protection International (a member of ProtectDefenders.eu) launch of a publication in 2024 aims to strengthen the protection initiatives for these defenders, emphasizing the need for tailored support that addresses both physical and communicative barriers.

The Declaration+25 Initiative

The **Declaration+25 Initiative** was launched in 2024 to mark the 25th anniversary of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. This initiative, a **collaborative effort** involving a coalition of CSO, including ProtectDefenders.eu, and over 700 human rights defenders from around the world, seeks to revitalize the global framework that protects HRDs. Through extensive consultations and partnerships with more than 18 human rights organizations, the Declaration+25 strengthens the international commitment to HRD protection, offering updated standards and guidelines that reflect the contemporary challenges HRDs face, such as digital surveillance, the criminalization of their work, and the growing repression of civil society worldwide.

Resilience of Activist Networks, Community-Based Alternatives and Grassroots Mobilization

HRDs have also demonstrated remarkable resilience through the proactive mobilization of resources to address escalating crises. **Activist networks have been instrumental in helping HRDs anticipate and mitigate emerging threats**, particularly in regions facing severe repression. Furthermore, in response to rising repression, communities around the world are developing innovative and self-sustaining alternatives. **Community-driven movements underscore the power of collective action** and the importance of solidarity in the ongoing fight for human rights.

EXPLORING REGIONAL DYNAMICS



Exploring Regional Dynamics

Regional and National Shifts Impacting Human Rights Defenders' Initiatives

Human Rights Defenders in Europe and Central Asia: Repression, Political Challenges, and Regional Influences

The human rights landscape in Europe and Central Asia (ECA) is characterized by increasing repression, state-led control of civil society, and growing political and legal challenges for human rights defenders. The overall trend is one of political fragility, authoritarianism, and heightened risks for defenders and marginalized groups. The situation in various countries across the region such as Belarus, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova reveals a stark contrast between democratic aspirations and the entrenched repressive practices that threaten civil society.

The **Russian government** continues to exert its influence over neighboring countries, employing a mix of **ultra-nationalist ideologies**, repressive legal frameworks, and **political interference** that undermines democratic institutions and civil society. In **Georgia** and **Moldova**, Russian-backed movements and policies have aimed at destabilizing the region's democratic progress, often through coercive tactics, threats of military intervention, and support for political forces that oppose democratic values.

The expansion of **authoritarianism** in **Central Asia** is also linked to Russia's influence. In **Kyrgyzstan**, Russian-style repressive laws have been adopted to silence dissent, including the targeting of civil society groups and human rights defenders. These laws often restrict freedom of expression, assembly, and association, following the model set by Russia's own domestic policies. The **Russian government** continues to push for **regional stability** under its own terms, fostering a **climate of fear** that stifles democratic movements and silences those who dare to challenge state power.

17% of the grants allocated between October 2023–2024 were allocated in ECA



Human Rights Defenders in the MENA Region: Rising Threats, Political Repression, and the Fight for Justice

The **human rights situation in the MENA region** has continued to worsen, with numerous countries witnessing **authoritarian backslides**, **civil rights repression**, and systematic attacks on **human rights defenders**. A troubling aspect is the increasing use of **counterterrorism laws**, **cybercrime legislation**, and **national security frameworks** to silence dissent and **shut down civil society**. These legal instruments have been weaponized to target anyone perceived as a **threat to the status quo**, especially **HRDs**, **activists**, and **journalists**.

Genocide, **ethnic violence**, and **forced displacement** have become prominent features in conflict zones like **the Occupied Palestinian Territories**, **Syria**, and **Libya**, exacerbating the humanitarian crisis. In countries such as **Palestine**, the intensification of **settler violence**, **military aggression**, and **displacement** has made the protection of **civic space** and **human rights** a near-impossible task. The widespread targeting of HRDs is not limited to conflict zones but extends into **peaceful societies**, where states continue to tighten control over **freedoms of expression**, **assembly**, and **association**.

Gender-based repression have disproportionately targeted **women human rights defenders** and **LGBTIQ+ activists**, as they continue to fight for **basic freedoms** in societies where conservative views are entrenched.

10% of the grants allocated between October 2023–2024 were allocated in the MENA region



Human Rights Defenders in Africa: A Region Struggling with Repression and Resilience

Africa is a continent with diverse challenges for human rights defenders, many of whom face increasing risks due to rising authoritarianism, armed conflict, and discriminatory laws. From **Ghana** and **Sudan**, the human rights landscape has been fraught with **violence**, **repression**, and **curtailment of basic freedoms**. Despite these challenges, HRDs across the continent continue to fight for justice, equality, and human rights, showing remarkable resilience in the face of oppressive regimes and systemic injustice. Despite some progress, many African countries' legal frameworks for protecting HRDs remain inadequate or poorly implemented. Several countries, such as Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, have passed laws for HRD protection, yet recent political instability, including coups, has rendered these laws nearly useless. In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), a new law aimed at protecting HRDs was introduced in 2023, but its implementation remains weak. The legal landscape also includes counteracting laws, such as those in Mali and Burkina Faso, where laws that criminalize dissent and restrict freedom of expression have been used to suppress HRDs, particularly through charges like "undermining the state."

Since 2020, in the **Sahel** region, a series of coups has exacerbated these challenges, leading to the **rise of systematic repression against HRDs**. These attacks often take the form of arbitrary arrests, judicial harassment, forced disappearances, and torture paired with attacks on civic space, with restrictions on free speech and the press, forced closures of media outlets, and targeting of organizations that challenge the government.

28% of the grants allocated between October 2023 – 2024 were allocated in Africa

Challenges for Human Rights Defenders in Asia-Pacific: Repression, Displacement, and Resistance in the Face of Authoritarian Regimes

The Asia-Pacific region remains a battleground for human rights defenders, with **numerous countries experiencing severe repression**, escalating violence, and the curtailing of freedoms. From Myanmar's junta-led crackdown to the rise of authoritarianism in Afghanistan and beyond, HRDs face widespread harassment, detentions, and increasingly perilous conditions. The violations against HRDs across Asia are pervasive and systematic. From November 2023 to October 2024, ProtectDefenders.eu's member, FORUM-ASIA recorded 670 violations in 21 countries, highlighting a disturbing trend of arbitrary arrest, judicial harassment, physical violence, and

intimidation. Among the most affected were land and environmental defenders, youth activists, pro-democracy advocates, and WHRDs, all facing a range of targeted violations. Additionally, the rise of transnational repression has emerged as a major concern, with governments increasingly collaborating across borders to target HRDs. **Surveillance, deportation, and harassment have become widespread**, particularly for defenders in exile or those operating in neighboring countries with authoritarian regimes. In many cases, these violations extend to the family members of HRDs, further complicating their ability to safely continue their work.

24% of the grants allocated between October 2023 – 2024 were allocated in the Asia-Pacific region



Human Rights Defenders in the Americas: A Region of Rising Repression, Instability, and Resistance

The Americas has long been a region marked by the struggle for human rights, with defenders facing immense risks in countries from **Colombia** to **Mexico**, **Venezuela**, and **Nicaragua**. While the region has witnessed significant progress in certain areas, it is also confronting a disturbing trend of increasing repression, state-sponsored violence, and challenges to the rule of law. In **Colombia**, the implementation of peace talks and the **Escazú Treaty** has marked a significant step forward in the protection of environmental defenders, despite the challenges posed by illegal armed groups. In **Honduras**, the creation of an **International Commission Against Corruption and Impunity (CICIH)** reflects a positive shift towards

addressing systemic corruption and strengthening democratic institutions. Nevertheless, HRDs across the Americas are experiencing growing threats, particularly as political instability, organized crime, and authoritarian policies continue to affect their ability to carry out their work. HRDs working on **land rights, indigenous issues, and environmental justice** face direct threats from **drug cartels** and criminal gangs seeking to maintain control over natural resources. **Defenders of the land and the environment** are often murdered, disappeared, or attacked with little to no justice. Similarly, those speaking out against government corruption or advocating for marginalized communities risk facing violent retaliation.

21% of the grants allocated between October 2023–2024 were allocated in the Americas





A COMPREHENSIVE TOOLBOX OF PROGRAMS



Emergency Grants

Providing Emergency Material Support to Human Rights Defenders and Organisations Facing Urgent Threats and Risk

The **emergency grants program** provided by **ProtectDefenders.eu** functions as a **flexible and responsive tool** designed to meet the evolving requirements of **HRDs** facing risks, as identified by the defenders themselves. As threats against HRDs evolve, so too does the program's ability to respond, ensuring that defenders receive the support they need in an increasingly hostile environment.



565

Protection grants

young HRDs (18 – 34) **40%**
 people between 35 and 60 **57%**
 HRDs over 60 **2%**



18%

of the grants supporting family members

311

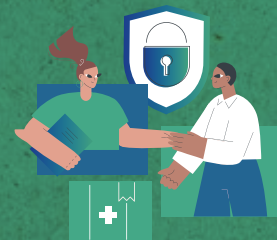
family members receiving urgent protection support



1,119

Human rights defenders including **501 WHRDs**

transgender HRDs **47**
 non-binary HRDs **48**
 intersex HRDs **3**
 belonging to other gender and sex minorities **28**



49

Grassroot groups accessing urgent protection

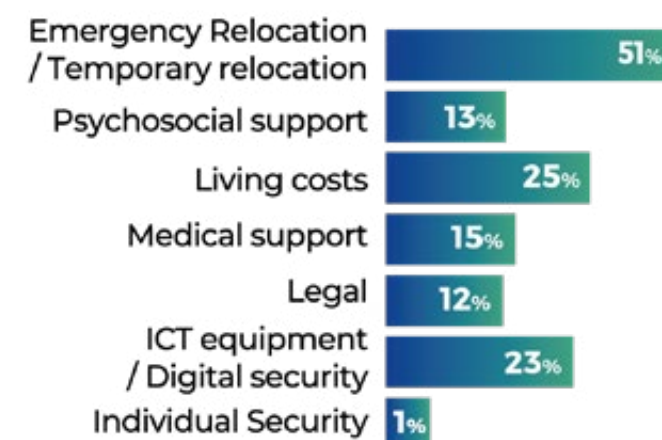
72%

Emergency support



27%

General protection



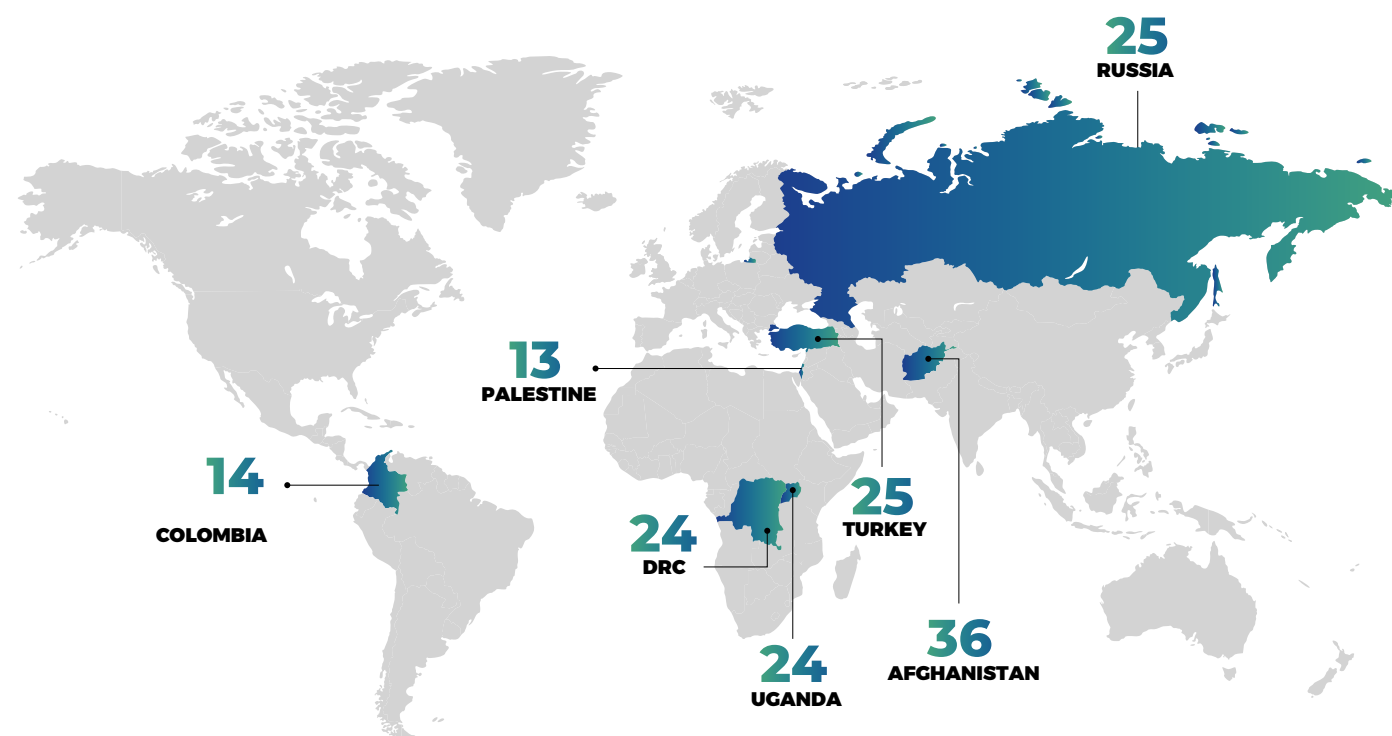
The past year has seen a **sharp increase** in **emergency support grants**, with **72%** of all grants allocated under this category compared to **general protection grants**. This marks a **significant shift** from previous years and underscores the **escalating threats** faced by HRDs globally. This in turns highlights the **critical and deteriorating environment** for human rights defense, reflecting the growing reliance on **ProtectDefenders.eu** to address **urgent needs**.

Likewise, the number of **emergency relocation grants** has continued to rise, now accounting for **51% of the total grants**, illustrating the **worsening security conditions** that force defenders to flee their communities, further emphasizing that attacks have either **remained at unsustainable levels or worsened** in several regions. The upward trajectory of **emergency relocations** reinforces the **urgent need** for adaptable and **comprehensive protection mechanisms**.

The **high demand for emergency support** continues to exceed available resources, necessitating difficult prioritization decisions. Furthermore, the **shrinking civic space** and the enactment of restrictive laws in various regions have made access to assistance increasingly complex.

Despite these escalating challenges—ranging from limited resources to restrictive legal environments, ProtectDefenders.eu's emergency grant program has **remained flexible and adaptive, contributing to holistic protection** strategies – offering psychosocial support, as well as medical support, legal assistance, or digital security.

TOP COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN OF HRDs PER REGION RECEIVING EMERGENCY SUPPORT GRANTS



Emergency Hotline: 24/7 Assistance to HRDs at Risk

- **4,450+** request for support, coordination, and advice processed through the helpdesk and by the Secretariat

This number marks a **25% increase** from the previous year —underscoring the intensifying risks faced by HRDs worldwide. The highest number of requests originated from countries such as **Afghanistan, Iran, Sudan, Mexico, and India**, reflecting the severe challenges posed by ongoing conflict, political instability, and systematic repression in these countries. This surge highlights the increasing dependence on ProtectDefenders.eu as a **trusted provider of rapid and effective support**.

ProtectDefenders.eu operates a 24/7 help-desk available in five languages: Russian, English, French, Spanish, and Arabic, continuing its commitment to supporting Human Rights Defenders (HRDs)

facing immediate risk. The emergency helpline, managed by Front Line Defenders, plays a crucial role in connecting HRDs with urgent assistance. Operating through **secured contact forms and at +353 (0) 1 21 00 489**, the helpline acts as a lifeline for HRDs, enabling them to mobilize rapid international support. Front Line Defenders' protection coordinators, strategically located worldwide, offer ongoing support through encrypted channels like email, Signal, and phone, ensuring **HRDs have continuous access to assistance, regardless of their location**. This constant availability has been instrumental in **responding to urgent situations faced by HRDs**, providing a vital link for seeking help, guidance, and protection during threats, attacks, or arbitrary detentions. The rapid international support facilitated through these channels has been life-saving, preventing harm and contributing to the safety of HRDs facing immediate risks.

Increased Access to Mental Health Support and Community Empowerment of LGBTQIA+ Individuals and Organizations

30 HRDs who were supported within the framework of ProtectDefenders.eu were able to continue their activism in a challenging context thanks to the psychosocial support they received from LGBTQIA+ inclusive and specialized persons.

Turkey presents a particularly troubling sociopolitical landscape, characterized by a heavily restricted civic space. In addition to this, the 2023 earthquake caused immediate devastation but also worsened existing socio-economic disparities, particularly affecting vulnerable communities such as the LGBTQIA+ population and sex workers. The economic crisis has strained resources and worsened the already precarious situation, requiring prompt responses to address urgent needs. Following the 2023 Presidential election results, the political landscape has become more polarised and discriminatory, with hate speech targeting marginalised groups increasing significantly. In this complex environment, a partner organisation acknowledged the need to quickly adapt strategies, streamline processes, and enhance collaboration efforts to effectively support and advocate for the rights and well-being of the LGBTQIA+ community and sex workers in Turkey.

Thanks to a grant provided by Protection International in the framework of the EU HRDs Mechanism, the partner organisation organised a project to improve the resilience of LGBTQIA+ HRDs and their organizations in the face of challenges. They provided **support, supervision, and training activities to equip LGBTQIA+ defenders with the necessary tools** and resources to navigate their oppressive environment. The project's emphasis on well-being highlighted the importance of self-care and community support, strengthening their ability to withstand adversity. This support

enabled organisations to provide crucial aid after the disaster caused by the earthquake, demonstrating their dedication to supporting LGBTQIA+ HRDs during times of crisis. This project has been instrumental in strengthening the resilience of LGBTQIA+ HRDs, enabling them to continue their essential advocacy work despite challenging circumstances.

The project provided individual well-being support, including psychotherapy sessions, to LGBTQIA+ activists, addressing the critical mental health needs of the community. Additionally, five capacity-building trainings and five group supervision sessions for the Well-being Support Network were organized. This resulted in **improved coping mechanisms, reduced stress, and enhanced resilience** among HRDs. Through resilience and wellbeing workshops, the project contributed to building a robust network of support within the LGBTQIA+ rights movement in Türkiye. By addressing the intersection of well-being and activism, the project raised awareness about the importance of self-care and mental health within the LGBTQIA+ community and the broader human rights movement. The project's emphasis on empowerment practices, collective healing, and togetherness through events like well-being gatherings created a sense of solidarity and empowerment within the community, countering feelings of oppression and hopelessness. The project had a significant impact on the well-being and resilience of LGBTQIA+ human rights defenders in Turkey.

Funding to Local Organisations

Financial Support, including Core-Funding to At-Risk Groups and Communities

This year, ProtectDefenders.eu expanded its support for local organizations, **increasing the number of grants by nearly 40%** compared to the previous year. This reflects a strategic shift towards enhancing

direct support and expanding outreach, particularly in the most challenging environments. This approach underscores ProtectDefenders.eu's commitment to addressing the evolving landscape of human rights defense and ensuring that defenders are adequately equipped to navigate complex and hostile contexts.

Over the past year, ProtectDefenders.eu has reinforced local human rights initiatives through strategic program funding, empowering organizations to lead advocacy, enhance security, and provide essential support in high-risk environments.

The dominance of advocacy and campaigning activities (52%) highlights a continued emphasis on strengthening human rights networks, amplifying defenders' voices, and engaging stakeholders at various levels.



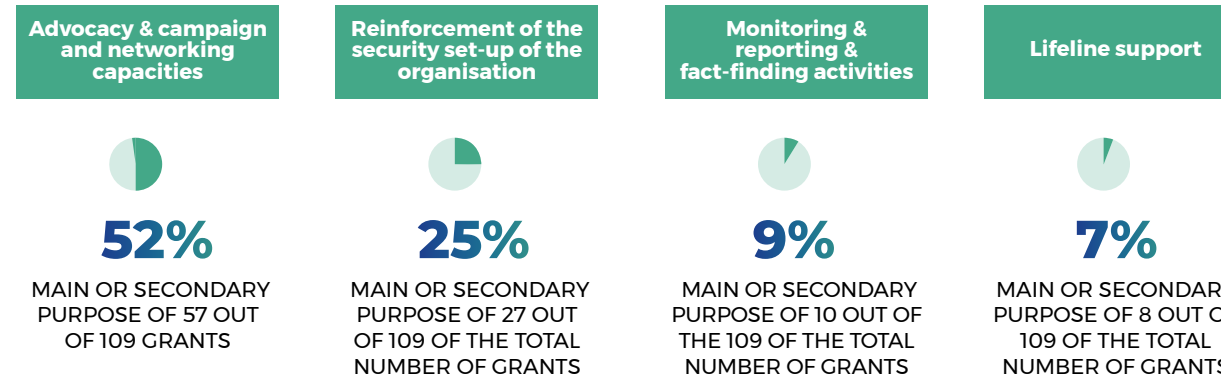
COUNTRIES WITH HIGHEST NUMBER OF GRANTED ORGANISATIONS



This grant-making program continues to demonstrate its adaptability and responsiveness to the evolving and self-identified needs of human rights defenders, **ensuring that local organizations can remain operational and impactful** in defending human rights under challenging circumstances.

Nevertheless, challenges remain. The growing demand

for support consistently exceeds available resources, creating a **gap that highlights the need for increased funding**. To meet these challenges, ProtectDefenders.eu is advocating for continued and increased support. Additional resources are essential to enable defenders and organizations to better navigate risks, promote human rights, and create positive change within their communities and beyond.



Supporting Essential Protection Actors at the Local Level



122 HRD protection networks supported

At ProtectDefenders.eu, Protection Networks (PNs) are understood as patterns of relationships among human rights defenders and other relevant actors that contribute to their protection. A PN brings together **community organizations alongside various local, national, and international stakeholders who interact continuously with a shared objective**: to strengthen HRD security by enhancing collective protection and upholding their Right to Defend Human Rights (RDHR). These networks provide a comprehensive and layered approach to protection, acting as a frontline defense against threats and attacks. They create critical safety nets through resource-sharing and support mechanisms, ensuring defenders can continue their crucial work despite the challenges they face.

Within the ProtectDefenders.eu framework, Consortium members actively contribute to the sustainability of these networks by reinforcing existing structures, supporting key actors, and fostering the creation, training, and mentorship of new networks at various levels. This approach ensures that protection efforts remain adaptable, resilient, and effective in addressing evolving threats.

In 2024, at least **122 HRD protection networks have received support from ProtectDefenders.eu** through various initiatives, with a strong emphasis on emergency funding in countries such as Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkey. Additional support has been provided to communities and organizations in Colombia and Honduras, while efforts focused on training, monitoring, and accompaniment have been implemented in contexts such as Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and Mexico.

Empowering Moldova's Feminist Movement Against Gender Violence

Moldovan National Coalition "Life Without Violence" is a national network of 21 women-driven organizations working as service providers in the fields of preventing and combating violence against women and children, raising awareness, empowering and supporting girls and women, building sensitive communities, and engaging in public policy and advocacy.

The Moldovan National Coalition "Life Without Violence" made a significant impact this year with its March and Feminist Festival, held in Chisinau in March 2024. This initiative aimed to **spotlight women's issues, particularly against a backdrop of rising femicide cases**, and to drive collective action against gender-based violence. With support from the Partnership for Development Center, the coalition launched the "Say No to Sexual Harassment" campaign, which featured powerful graphics and reached a wide audience, especially through social media. The March saw an unprecedented turnout of 500 participants—the largest to date—who gathered to demand justice for victims and call for stronger protective measures.

The coalition's efforts were particularly notable for prioritizing the voices of marginalized women, including those from the Roma community, women with disabilities, and LGBTQIA+ women. Leaders from these groups played key roles in organizing the event, promoting inclusion, and amplifying diverse voices. Despite challenges like funding limitations, which prevented additional activities such as publishing a book on feminist history and organizing public discussions in northern schools, the coalition's accomplishments marked a historic shift in public awareness and engagement on gender violence issues in Moldova. This year's march and related advocacy activities underscored a growing movement, particularly among youth, in support of gender equality and violence prevention in Moldova.

In the framework of ProtectDefenders.eu, UAF provided timely and impactful support to "Life Without Violence," utilizing established advisory and partner network in Moldova and neighboring countries. This allowed UAF to

stay closely informed of regional trends and respond effectively to emerging needs, ensuring that funds are allocated where they will have the greatest impact. A thorough due diligence processes also facilitate swift grantmaking and secure fund transfers, enabling organizations like the Moldovan coalition to promptly mobilize resources for critical actions.

This enabled UAF to support the coalition's successful **organization of the March and Feminist Festival in Chisinau**, amplifying their advocacy against gender violence. With this strategic guidance, the coalition also launched a high-impact digital campaign that resonated widely across Moldova, engaging diverse and marginalized communities. This support has not only bolstered the coalition's capacity but has also strengthened grassroots feminist activism across Moldova.

This story highlights how grassroots feminist advocacy in Moldova has created a safer and more empowering environment for HRDs working on gender based violence issues. Through the Moldovan coalition's March and Feminist Festival, public awareness of femicide and sexual harassment was greatly elevated, giving visibility to marginalized voices, including LGBTQIA+ women, Roma women, and women with disabilities. By fostering intergenerational involvement, with young people making up 60% of participants, the movement has generated new energy and resilience in the fight for gender equality.

The coalition's success demonstrates that even modest resources when strategically directed, can lead to **impactful advocacy**, illustrating the importance of timely, flexible funding for grassroots organizations operating in challenging environments. This increased visibility and community support help shield WHRDs from isolation, which is crucial in a context where they face significant challenges. The story reinforces that strong community backing and a united public voice can create a more protective and enabling environment for activists at risk, allowing them to continue their work with increased resilience and support.

Temporary Relocation of Human Rights Defenders at Risk

ProtectDefenders.eu's temporary relocation program has provided **crucial and holistic support to nearly 200 individual** over the past year. Through this program, 72 HRDs accessed comprehensive and flexible temporary relocation support to address their safety concerns and strengthen their long-term resilience and capacity. HRDs who are facing risks due to their human rights work and are in need of rest and respite could access grants tailored to meet a wide variety of needs specific to each defender. Furthermore, as part of its holistic and integral approach to relocation, ProtectDefenders.eu supported 127 family members either through financial assistance or through relocation.

As part of ProtectDefenders.eu efforts to adapt to the evolving protection landscapes, the temporary relocation program underwent key improvements in 2024. This aimed at better meeting the **growing demand for support amidst limited resources**. By redefining the program's implementation modalities, ProtectDefenders.eu enhanced its efficiency and strengthened the program's **predictability, reliability, sustainability, and responsiveness**. These improvements have ensured that the program remains adaptable to emerging challenges while continuing to effectively address the evolving needs of HRDs.



72

Human rights defenders relocated



50%

OF RELOCATED DEFENDERS ARE WOMEN OR BELONG TO OTHER GENDER MINORITIES



52%

OF RELOCATED DEFENDERS ARE YOUNG HRDS



73%

OF GRANTS INCLUDED FAMILY SUPPORT



127

FAMILY MEMBERS WERE SUPPORTED THROUGH THE TR PROGRAM

96

BENEFITTED FROM FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

31

WERE ABLE TO RELOCATE WITH THE DEFENDER



TOP COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN:
COLOMBIA, EGYPT, TANZANIA, MYANMAR
TOP COUNTRIES OF RELOCATION:
SPAIN, THE NETHERLANDS



19%

Regional relocations



11%

In-country relocations



73%

International relocations

The Coordination of the EU Temporary Relocation Platform



Visit the
EUTRP website



The European Union Temporary Relocation Platform (EUTRP) remains a **unique forum for the exchange, articulation, and collaboration** among organizations and entities working in the field of temporary relocation for human rights defenders (HRDs). The platform boasts a robust membership of 76 entities – including host institutions, policymakers, grant-making entities, donors, and referral and coordination hubs, actively contributing to the platform.

The EUTRP plays a crucial role in the temporary relocation program of ProtectDefenders.eu, enabling the relocations by hosting defenders, but also with the shelter initiatives program, allowing for the exchange of expertise and knowledge.

The Shelter Initiatives programs

Throughout the year, ProtectDefenders.eu supported **15 partner organisations** at various stages of implementing their shelter initiatives. **Five organisations** completed **feasibility studies** in **Senegal, Lebanon, Colombia, Uruguay, and Malaysia**, while **10 organisations** under the “Existing Initiatives” (EI) category received support to strengthen and enhance their operational capacities. (**Ivory Coast** and **Tanzania** in Africa, **Brazil** and

A key highlight of the year was the **EUTRP Annual Meeting 2024, held in Berlin**, a city chosen for its vibrant opportunities for collaboration with EUTRP member organizations and the support of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This gathering, titled “Can Collective Efforts Confront the Elephant in the Room? Seeking Collaborative Strategies to Ensure Sustainability and Stability in Temporary Relocation Programs Amidst an Uncertain Landscape,” stood out as the most interactive, dynamic, and inclusive meeting in the platform’s history. It brought together the largest and most diverse group of participants to date, fostering meaningful dialogue and the development of new, collaborative strategies.

Costa Rica in the Americas, **Nepal, Thailand, and Afghanistan** in Asia & Pacific, **Georgia** in ECA, and **Iraq** in MENA.)

Through this program, ProtectDefenders.eu remains committed to support organizations implementing temporary relocation mechanisms at a local or regional level, with a strong emphasis on an integral and holistic approach to temporary relocation.



The Temporary Relocation of a Belarusian HRD in Spain

A Belarusian civil society activist and HRD was facing imminent risks to his safety. After ProtectDefenders.eu was contacted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Spain regarding this case, it initiated discussions with the Colectiva Mujeres Refugiadas y Emigradas to assess their resources and capacity to host the Belarusian HRD. Despite the challenges this case posed, including language barriers, the significant need for psychosocial support, and cultural differences, this collaboration has proven to be highly effective.

The **temporary relocation was highly beneficial for the HRD**, as it was considered the best strategy at the time of the case referral from the Ministry. It allowed him to escape further persecution and threats while also focusing on improving his physical and emotional well-being, leading to a more peaceful life during this period. The HRD received comprehensive support throughout his relocation, including assistance with socio-administrative procedures (such as registration, healthcare card, residency, etc.), a translator for at least four hours daily (since he speaks Belarusian, Russian, and Ukrainian but not Spanish), psychosocial care, advocacy opportunities, language training, family support, security assessments, and full accompaniment upon his return, all coordinated in close collaboration with his origin organization, Viasna.

Psychosocial support played a crucial role in the relocation process, as the HRD has faced multiple instances of persecution: detained, tried, and imprisoned. He has also endured numerous searches and confiscations of his personal belongings—such as mobile phones, laptops, printers, and books—by the KGB and police. After providing legal aid to dozens of victims of political repression, the HRD developed vicarious trauma, which was confirmed by a psychotherapist. Eight individual therapy sessions were provided to address the emotional impact of his imprisonment and persecution. His reception in Valencia and the psychosocial support he received have been instrumental in helping him heal and mitigate the consequences of

his most recent incarceration. Additionally, receiving treatment for his health conditions and necessary medications has contributed to his overall well-being. Offering this human rights defender a period of respite amidst ongoing repression has been crucial to his recovery and ability to continue his important work.

This case shows how collaboration and open communication among various stakeholders in the protection field can lead to **holistic, quicker and more flexible solutions for HRDs** at risk, even those facing urgent threats. The visa process was expedited through the involvement of the Spanish Ministry and the cooperation of the HRD’s organization.

This story serves also as a valuable example of successful collaboration, highlighting the positive partnership between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Spain, ProtectDefenders.eu, the host organization in Spain, and the HRD’s home organization in Belarus. It also demonstrates the importance of the host organization’s increased flexibility in addressing the HRD’s needs, from overcoming language barriers to offering tailored psychological support with the assistance of a Belarusian interpreter, which was crucial in helping a highly traumatized individual.



Capacity-building and Training of Human Rights Defenders



FOCUS AREAS

CAMPAIGNING STRATEGIES	PHYSICAL SECURITY
PROTECTION MECHANISM AND RISK ASSESSMENT	PREVENTION OF CRIMINALIZATION
INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION MECHANISMS	PSYCHO-SOCIAL SUPPORT & EMOTIONAL SECURITY
DIGITAL & IT SECURITY	EXCHANGE OF EXPERIENCES AND MUTUAL LEARNING

In 2024, a remarkable **50 training initiatives** were implemented, directly benefiting **941 HDRs** from at least **18 countries**, with a strong focus on the **Americas** and **Africa** regions. Notably, **56% of the participants** were **women human rights defenders (WHRDs)**, as well as **trans** and **intersex defenders**, demonstrating an emphasis on inclusivity and addressing the needs of those most at risk.

The **training sessions** were tailored to the diverse contexts and needs of HDRs, covering a wide range of critical topics. The program placed a particular emphasis on building **resilience** and fostering **local expertise**. By including a **training-of-trainers model** and grounding the capacity development in the **local knowledge** and experience of HDRs,

ProtectDefenders.eu ensured **long-term impact** and **sustainability**. The initiative also prioritized creating and strengthening **protection networks**, particularly in **remote and isolated areas**, to support HDRs working in challenging and high-risk environments.

To meet increased demand and achieve these results, ProtectDefenders.eu and its partners demonstrated once again remarkable adaptability. They adjusted their capacity-building efforts to address emerging threats, fostered alliances and collaboration, diversified training modalities, and developed specialized programs tailored to the needs of specific groups of defenders.

Training on Digital Security for Togolese HRDs and HR Organisations

In November 2023, FIDH organized, within the framework of ProtectDefenders.eu, a **three-day training on digital security** for a total of 17 HRDs in Lomé, Togo. Togo is characterised by context of severe restrictions of civic space and documented surveillance of HRDs by State authorities. With the help of a digital security expert, hired as a consultant, the participants benefited from a pre-training (individual interviews and forms to understand the initial level and knowledge of participants, their needs and interests), the 3 days workshop in Lomé, as well as a post training accompagnement (the consultant was available during one month after the training for them, to answer their questions on the daily application of what they learnt during the training). The configuration of the training was really helpful to adapt the training to the needs of the defenders, and answer their specific questions. Furthermore, the digital security kit produced by FIDH was distributed to all participants, and each organisation received a few more exemplaries to be distributed among its teams in a restitution of the training.

The 17 HRDs participant to the training rose their awareness about digital security and enhanced their capacities on this topic. They were able to identify the main threats in the framework of their daily human rights work, change some

practices, upgrade the security level of their devices and share this new knowledge with other members of their organizations, who did not attend the training, notably through the distribution of digital security kits (manual + goodies) produced by FIDH.

This training was made possible by **important synergies between FIDH and other organisations**, namely the OMCT and Tournons la Page, International Federation of ACAT, French Human Rights Platform, Agir ensemble pour les droits humains, and Ligue togolaise des droits de l'Homme (LTDH). This synergy enabled the FIDH to identify a greater and more diverse group of HRDs to participate to the training than the one FIDH could have created alone within its network.

Digital security trainings are essential for Togolese HRDs, working in a very restricted civic space, characterised by the well-documented **use of surveillance and Pegasus against HRDs** and CSOs. It helps the HRDs to be more confident in the way they protect and use their devices on a daily basis, in their human rights works, for example, when going to meeting with the national authorities, or when attending a march or protest, or meeting with victims or other HRDs.



Field-work and Accompaniment

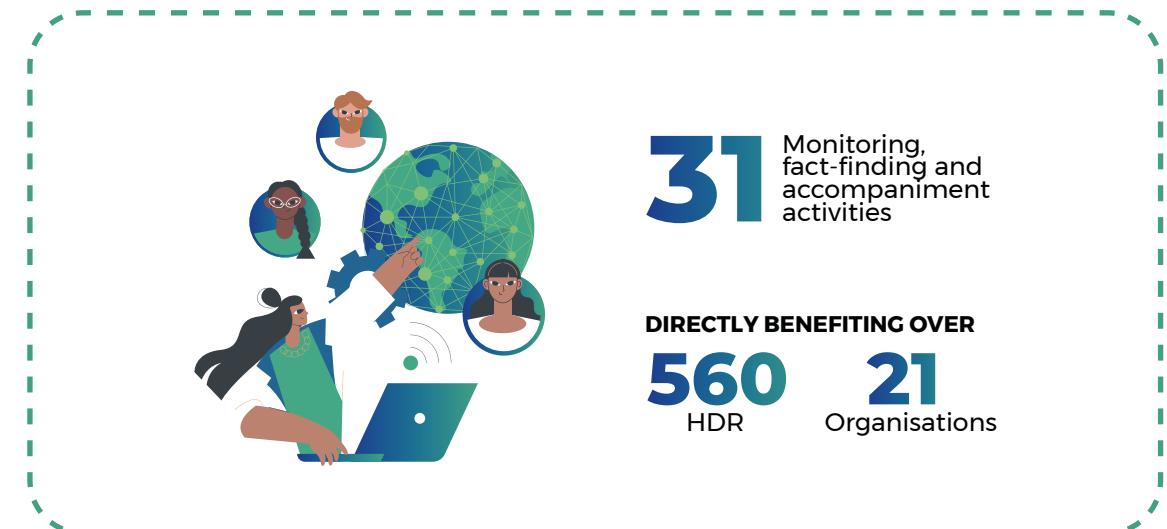
ProtectDefenders.eu continued to uphold its commitment to monitoring the challenges faced by human rights defenders and advancing a robust protection agenda at local, regional, and international levels. In total, **31 monitoring, fact-finding, and accompaniment actions** were carried out in the field, marking a significant increase compared to the previous year. These activities directly supported **566 human rights defenders** and **21 organizations**.

The field activities included **advocacy missions** and **accompaniment initiatives**. They proved pivotal in **documenting human rights violations, raising public awareness, and fostering dialogue** with national and international authorities.

Peace Brigades International (PBI) played a critical role in providing **direct accompaniment to HRDs**, particularly in the Americas. The **physical**

presence of international observers acted as a deterrent to potential aggressors while offering **moral support and visibility** to defenders during sensitive periods. This approach was instrumental in **creating safer spaces** for HRDs to continue their work, even in high-risk environments. Missions aimed at **gathering evidence, producing reports, and issuing statements** served to spotlight critical human rights issues on **national and international platforms**. These actions not only highlighted **systemic patterns of abuse** but also catalyzed **interventions and support for at-risk HRDs**.

Field missions also facilitated the **identification of isolated HRDs**, enabling their integration into **broader protection networks and other program components**. This holistic approach ensured defenders were not only protected in the immediate term but also connected to **long-term support mechanisms**.



Field activities in Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua and Kenya

Advocacy



567

Materials produced



9

Reports



218

Urgent appeals,
communications,
letters and statements



340

Alerts updated on the
[ProtectDefenders.eu](https://protectdefenders.eu)
Index of Attacks

Urgent interventions, issued within a 48-hour period from verified violations, specifically addressed cases involving targeted and at-risk groups, including Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs), LGBTI HRDs, land and environmental rights defenders, indigenous rights defenders, migrant rights defenders, defenders from remote or isolated areas, and journalists

In 2024, ProtectDefenders.eu actively undertook advocacy actions aimed at mobilizing relevant authorities, **raising public awareness, and increasing visibility about the precarious situation of Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) worldwide.** These efforts included the issuance of urgent alerts, appeals, and targeted advocacy measures sent to national authorities, human rights protection mechanisms, institutional mandate-holders, and influential pressure groups. The primary goal of these interventions was to **prevent further violations, initiate immediate investigations, and improve the conditions of HRDs at the local level.**

The impact of advocacy efforts was visible worldwide, with tangible success stories highlighting improvements in HRDs' conditions and preventing further violations. Beyond these achievements, the advocacy also carries a **profound symbolic value, demonstrating international solidarity and support for HRDs at risk.** The public dissemination of documented harassment cases through mailing

lists and social media not only raised awareness but also fostered accountability by increasing pressure on national and international authorities.

The efficiency of urgent appeals and private interventions was evident both at individual and systemic levels, keeping the international spotlight on defenders' conditions in specific countries. These measures empowered HRDs to persist in their monitoring and fieldwork while deterring further attacks. Public expressions of solidarity, such as trial observations and statements, also made a significant difference, often leading to tangible improvements in the safety and credibility of individual HRDs.

Recognizing the need for unified efforts, ProtectDefenders.eu and its Consortium partners developed joint advocacy strategies to amplify the voices of HRDs and maximize the impact of their actions. These strategies addressed critical issues, such as shrinking international funding for HRDs and the persistent barriers they face in accessing EU visas.

International Coalition Demands Justice for Berta Cáceres in Honduras

The EU HRDs mechanism has facilitated **international attention and support for the case of Berta Cáceres**, leading to coordinated efforts by organisations like EarthRights International, DPLF, and the Council of Mayan Peoples. This collaboration intensified pressure on the Honduran judicial system to expedite the confirmation of sentences and address the delays in the case.

In August 2024, representatives from ESCR-Net members EarthRights International, the Due Process of Law Foundation (DPLF), and the Council of Mayan Peoples traveled to Honduras to demand the confirmation of sentences for those convicted in the murder of Berta Cáceres. They presented a letter to the Supreme Court of Honduras expressing deep concern over the stagnation of the case and the lack of justice for Berta and her family. The delegation emphasized the urgency of expediting the judicial process to ensure that all responsible parties, including the intellectual authors, are brought to justice.

The visit, carried out in the framework of ProtectDefenders.eu, also included a press conference where members of the delegation highlighted the broader struggle against impunity in Honduras and the critical need for justice in Berta Cáceres's case. Additionally, members were able to share learnings and experiences particularly between ESCR-Net's social movement members like COPINH and Consejo de Pueblos Wuxhtaj, fostering dialogue on shared strategies for defending land, territories, and human rights in the face of rising criminalisation of movements and social leaders.

In November 2024, these efforts culminated in a landmark decision: the Honduran court confirmed the sentences of those convicted in the murder of Berta Cáceres. This ruling marks a significant milestone in the fight for justice, driven by the relentless advocacy of grassroots movements, international organizations, and human rights defenders.

This initiative underscores the ongoing efforts

to achieve justice for Berta Cáceres and strengthen transnational solidarity in the fight against systemic impunity in cases of violence against HRDs.

A key lesson learned and the significance of this story is the **effectiveness of coordinated international efforts** in addressing human rights violations and pressing for accountability. The collaboration among organisations within ESCR-Net has amplified the impact of advocacy actions and increased pressure on the Honduran judicial system. Moving forward, ProtectDefenders.eu consortium member ESCR-Net plans to strengthen its partnerships with other human rights organisations to continue advocating for justice in other cases of impunity regarding violence and criminalization of HRDs. Additionally, ESCR-Net recognizes the importance of maintaining sustained attention on cases of impunity to ensure that justice is not only pursued but materially achieved.



Berta Cáceres, indigenous peoples' rights activist. Still from the video tribute for UN Environment's posthumous 'Champions of the Earth 2017' award. Author: UN Environment. License: CC BY 3.0.

PROTECTDEFENDERS.EU
COLLECTIVE ADVOCACY

**REPORTS AND
PUBLICATIONS**



ProtectDefenders.eu Collective Advocacy

Advancements in the #Visa4HRDs Initiative: Launched in 2022, the #Visa4HRDs Initiative has continued to gain traction. The collaborative efforts from the past years culminated in 2024 with the adoption of a revised **EU Visa Code Handbook**, providing for the first time concrete guidance to consular authorities and visa officers on how to handle EU visa application from human rights defenders. Since its adoption in June 2024, ProtectDefenders.eu has dedicated significant efforts to ensuring that these changes are well known to the relevant actors, including consular authorities, civil society organisations and human rights defenders.

Research on Financial Support for HRDs: As part of the collective effort of the Consortium members to advocate for increased resources for human rights defenders, the study « **The Landscape of Public International Funding for Human Rights Defenders**, » was released in June 2024. In this report, ProtectDefenders.eu highlights the critical challenges faced by HRDs worldwide, with a particular focus on the role of public actors in financing their work. The study builds upon an earlier investigation conducted in 2016-17, which revealed the **growing disparity between the increasing needs of human rights defenders and the stagnating funding** allocated to their work. By analyzing donor policies, financial data, and gathering insights from stakeholders—including human rights defenders and international NGOs—the study seeks to contribute to the ongoing debate on the most effective ways to enhance and strengthen support for HRDs globally.

Despite rhetoric emphasizing the importance of human rights prioritization, the study shows how the actual **allocation of resources has failed to keep pace with the deteriorating global situation, representing a mere 0.11% of total Official Development Assistance (ODA)** annually. The study also highlights the disparity in funding between regions and area of work of defenders ; the challenges in accessing funds for human rights defenders as well as the need for more core funding and localisation efforts.



Read more about the findings and recommendations:

<https://protectdefenders.eu/projects/research-institutional-funding-human-rights-defenders/>



Reports and Publications

The reports published by ProtectDefenders.eu partners in the framework of the EU HRD mechanism offer **crucial insights into the human rights situation** in crisis contexts, providing a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and risks encountered by HRDs. This year marks a shift from previous years, with a high number of joint, mechanism-led reports. The joint approach highlights ProtectDefenders.eu's leadership in consolidating voices, fostering a unified front, and creating **materials with broader credibility and reach**. Here is a list of the key reports and materials published:



1. Observatory Report: Turkey: Joint report of trial observation – Case of ‘Saturday Mothers/People’



2. Observatory Report: Turkey: Joint trial observation report – Case of Eren Keski and Güllistan Yarkin



3. Observatory Report: DRC: Human rights defenders on the front line. Shrinking space for civil society and dashed hopes for the protection of human rights defenders in the Democratic Republic of Congo



4. ProtectDefenders.eu and Coalition of International Civil Society: Declaration+25: Articulating international standards to protect the right to defend rights



5. ProtectDefenders.eu 2023 Annual Report | REACHING FURTHER



6. ProtectDefenders.eu 2024: The Landscape of Public International Funding for Human Rights Defenders



7. ProtectDefenders.eu 2024: EU Visa Code Handbook Guidance Note for Human Rights Defenders



8. ProtectDefenders.eu 2024: EU Visa Code Handbook Guidance Note for Civil Society Organisations



9. ProtectDefenders.eu 2024: EU Visa Code Handbook Guidance Note for EU Member States, Consular Authorities, and Border Officials

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