A HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER FROM A PARTNER ORGANIZATION HAS BEEN ATTACKED

What can we do to support them?

Gather information; support the defender in assessing his/her situation using a *gendered risk analysis*

What response should Trócaire offer?

Consider:-

a) The *urgency of the risk* should inform the response: is the defender at *immediate risk* (e.g. death threats, physical attack, arrest warrant issued) or is it *medium term* (e.g. smear campaign, summons to appear at police station) or has it *passed* for the moment (e.g. already attacked, offices broken into, etc.)

b) Consider the defender’s *needs and wants* (visibility, medical, psychological, legal, translation, etc.) – Trócaire should be guided by the defender and partner at all times

c) The available *resources* that Trócaire has to respond (human, financial, etc.)

d) *Security* implications for Trócaire and its partners

Consult with Trócaire management as appropriate.

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**1. Analyse Incident**

- Secure funding/support for an *emergency response* (medical, legal, psychological, economic, etc.), e.g. Front Line Defenders, International Land Coalition, ProtectDefenders.eu, Global Fund for Human Rights, UAF, in country EU Delegations. If the defender proposes relocation, in-country relocation should always be considered first, when safe to do so. Temporary relocation externally can become very problematic when the period is up and the financial support has stopped but it’s still not safe for the defender to go home

- Facilitate *psychosocial support* for the defender and his/her family

- If appropriate and does not pose a further threat:
  - Assist the defender in *contacting government officials*, e.g. official national human rights protection mechanisms, police, diplomatic missions
  - Issue *press statements* highlighting incident as well as supportive statements/photos on social media

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**2. Immediate Support**

- Review and further develop partners’ *security plans*
- Facilitate *protective accompaniment*, e.g. Peace Brigades International, Protection International, Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme for Palestine and Israel
- Assist defender in *coordinating action* with other donors, NGOs or networks
- Assist defender in *lodging a complaint* with a UN or Regional Protection Mechanism
- Raise awareness of the case via different media and platforms

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**3. Intermediate Support**

- Support the defender in taking *legal action* in national or international courts
- Visit the defender to *show solidarity*. If detained, visit her/him in prison as well as attend his/her trials. Request trial observations from EU Missions, other INGOs
- Request *high-level visits* (when judged beneficial) to the defender/organisation/community from diplomats/organisations
- Facilitate partner to *enlist support* from Irish Government, regional bodies, UN, foreign embassies, Church groups or advocacy organisations

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**4. On-Going Support**

- Don’t focus only on the person, but *focus on the community*, e.g. in the case of a Guatemalan defender, while he managed to get out of prison, the anthropological study to support his case went even further to discuss the ancestral tenancy rights to the land that the indigenous people have, and this led to obtaining recognition of those rights by the national Court via the trial
- Consider the defenders needs in order to *reintegrate into society*, particularly if they have been in prison or away

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The ideas, comments and recommendations contained herein are entirely the responsibility of the author(s) and do not represent or reflect the policy of Irish Aid.