



EAST AND
HORN OF
AFRICA
HUMAN RIGHTS
DEFENDERS
PROJECT
(EHAHRDP)

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Defenders in Focus

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East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network

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ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES

Raising awareness of the human rights situation in Eritrea at the African Com- mission on Human and Peoples' Rights

EHAHRDP staff members and a delegation of human rights defenders from Sudan, Uganda, Kenya and Eritrea participated in the 53rd session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights held in Banjul, Gambia in April 2013. We presented our latest report on the human rights situation of countries in the sub region, which is available here: <http://www.defenddefenders.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/EHAHRDP-report-to-ACHPR-53rd-session-November-2012-March-2013.pdf>. EHAHRDP network

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members are encouraged to continue to share their information for inclusion in this report, which is produced every six months. During this session, one of EHAHRDP's key issues was to encourage the Commission to put the human rights situation in Eritrea higher up on its agenda.



Commissioner Catherine Atoki (Chairperson ACHPR) receiving a protection shield from Hassan Shire-Executive Director, EHAHRDP.

The UN Special Rapporteur on Eritrea, who was in attendance, presented her mandate to the HRDs attending the NGO Forum and also privately briefed the members of the Commission. There was high attendance for the side event on Eritrea organized by EHAHRDP, and its members and partners, Human Rights Concern-Eritrea and the Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA Network). The audience was shocked by the testimonies that they heard, especially the grave dangers facing Eritreans who try to flee the country, and called for more action on the continent to tackle the

dire human rights situation in the country. The NGO Forum passed a resolution on Eritrea, and a [joint NGO letter](#) was sent to the members of the African Union at the time of its 50th anniversary celebrations in May 2013 and in advance of the June 2013 session of the Human Rights Council, when the Special Rapporteur's mandate was successfully renewed.



Hassan Shire with the UN Special Rapporteurs on HRDs, Mrs. Margaret Sekaggya (second right) and Torture, Mr. Juan Mendez (extreme right) plus other OHCHR staff

Advocacy at the UN Human Rights Council

In March 2013, EHAHRDP's Executive Director, Mr. Hassan Shire, was in attendance when the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders, Mrs. Margaret Sekaggya, presented her annual report to the UN Human Rights Council. The theme of the report was "the role of national human rights institutions as HRDs". For more information, see: <http://www.defenddefenders.org/2013/03/geneva-special-rapporteur-on-HRDs->

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[highlights-role-of-national-human-rights-institutions/](#)

The topic of the Special Rapporteur's October 2012 report to the General Assembly on the question of laws affecting the work of HRDs, including laws that limit their access to funding, was the focus of much attention at the March session of the Council. The Council adopted (by consensus) a groundbreaking [resolution](#) calling upon states "to ensure that they do not discriminatorily impose restrictions on potential sources of funding aimed at supporting the work of human rights defenders... and that no law should criminalise or delegitimize activities in defence of human rights on account of the origin of funding thereto."



Hassan Shire participating in a panel at the ACHPR

Promoting protection mechanisms for HRDs at the national level

In April 2013, the United Nations Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa organized a meeting in Burundi on protection mechanisms for human rights defenders. Human rights defenders from across Central Africa (including Burundi and Rwanda) as well as a large number of government representatives from Burundi were in attendance. EHAHRDP's advocacy officer

presented measures that organisations such as EHAHRDP can take to promote HRDs' protection and security and participated in discussions aimed at establishing a legal framework for HRD protection at national level

PROTECTION ACTIVITIES

Protection Stakeholders Meeting 2013

The East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project successfully held a three-day protection stakeholders' meeting in Kampala from 23rd to 25th April 2013, bringing together more than 50 practitioners working to support and protect human rights defenders at risk, mainly in the East and Horn of Africa sub region. Participants shared best practices and devised strategies on how best to enhance their joint activities in the support of HRDs at risk.

Local, regional and international human rights organizations and partners were represented, including leaders from national coalitions of human rights defenders working in different countries in the sub region, international human rights organizations including Human Rights Watch, Rory Peck Trust and HIAS Refugee Trust, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the European Union Delegation to Uganda, Norwegian Embassy and the Trust Fund for Victims (for victims of crimes under the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court) and the Uganda Human Rights Commission.

At the end of the workshop, participants came up with best practices including short, medium and long term recommendations to

improve protection support extended to human rights defenders at risk. It was decided that the national human rights defenders coalitions/networks in conjunction with the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project/Network should play a cardinal role in setting up early warning and intervention mechanisms.

In his closing remarks, the Chairperson of the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network, Mr. Hassan Shire Sheikh, urged participants to ensure an all inclusive approach to working with HRDs and encouraged information-sharing to ensure a holistic approach to supporting HRDs at risk.

SECURITY MANAGEMENT

As a result of a fruitful partnership with Protection International (PI) since 2008, EHAHRDP is now fully capacitated to independently run the security management work with HRDs in the sub region. The transition went smoothly and began in March 2013 with a strong induction for the new Security Management Officers (SMOs) by PI's protection officers on PI's "New Protection Manual for Human Rights Defenders".

EHAHRDP's SMOs have thus continued the work of Protection Desk Uganda working closely with human rights defenders from East and Horn of Africa regions. Three trainings on risk assessment and security management for human rights defenders took place during the first half of 2013, with HRDs from Uganda and Darfur. These trainings aimed at increasing human rights defenders' awareness on security by:

- Analyzing their working environment;

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- Understanding and assessing threats and risk;
 - Improving reactions to security incidents; and
- Developing security plans for their institutions.
- Security management for human rights defenders has also been incorporated into other meetings organized by EHAHRDP and was also introduced to different stakeholders during the round table for SOGI activists in Nairobi in April, at the Protection stakeholders meeting in Kampala in May and during the Monitoring, Documenting and Reporting training in Kampala in June.

EU SOMALIA PROTECTION PROGRAMME

Over the past few months, EHAHRDP's Somali Human Rights Defenders Protection Programme undertook the following activities:

In February 2013, EHAHRDP's partner organization Peace and Human Rights Network (PHRN) recruited two security management officers and one protection officer with support from EHAHRDP and Protection International (PI). PI completed a needs assessment in regards to the security situation in Mogadishu in February. Subsequently, a six-day training program on transferring the logic, rationale and methodology of security management to PHRN officers was facilitated by PI and EHAHRDP's new security management team in April. The training was interactive, participatory and addressed various dimensions of security and diverse issues related to the protection of HRDs. In the same manner EHAHRDP's protection team

facilitated a two-day training on setting up a protection programme.

At the end of May, PI team went to Mogadishu to offer intensive follow-up support to the PHRN officers. Similarly, EHAHRDP's protection officer traveled to Mogadishu in the beginning of July to carry out follow up with each officer. Both follow-up sessions included assessment of the impact of inductions that took place in Kampala, how they have implemented the skills acquired and digital security workshop.

Lastly, a stakeholder mapping meeting took place in Mogadishu. This activity was lead by one of the project partners, Somali Human Rights International Defenders Network (SOHRIDEN). This meeting comprised of primarily HRDs, human rights organisations and other NGOs in diverse regions of the country who work on human rights issues.

DEFENDING HUMAN RIGHTS: ONLINE DISTANCE LEARNING PROGRAMME

The University of York (UK) has begun a new Part-time Distance Learning Programme delivered wholly online designed for human rights defenders and related practitioners called Defending Human Rights. It offers online teaching by tutors and guest speakers with practical experience. The programme offers three modules for effective human rights work under challenging circumstances. These are:

1. International Human Rights Law and Advocacy
2. Working Safely: Managing Risk and

Strengthening Protection

3. Effective Programming from Funding to Evaluation

From 7th January to 15th March 2013, the module on Managing Risk and Strengthening Protection featured EHAHRDP Executive Director, Mr. Hassan Shire as a guest speaker. Here is an extract from the text of the conversation highlighting some interesting and useful information:

Module Convenor: Tell us about why you set up the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project in 2005. What motivated you to do this? What did you want to achieve?

Hassan Shire: I have always had a passion for human rights. I joined and continue to be a member of the Global Civil Society Movement led by Amnesty International. All along in my human rights work in Somalia, I advocated for an end to the culture of impunity. I participated in the human security panel as a representative of African HRDs where a resolution was adopted calling on the world leaders to give both diplomatic and financial support to HRDs in-country and while in exile. The recommendations were followed by Amnesty International-Canada section and York University, Canada, which set up and accommodated the African Human Rights Defenders Project (AHRDP) to be hosted by the university. EHAHRDP was created in 2005 as a result of a research study carried out by the AHRDP on the needs and challenges of HRDs in the sub-region of the East and Horn of Africa.

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Module Convenor: We have been discussing about the importance of working together with other human rights defenders on security management rather than working alone. What do you think about this? What can we do to put this in practice?

Hassan Shire: The importance of working together to reduce risks involved in our work as HRDs is at the heart of the work of EHAHRD-Net. EHAHRDP has actively promoted the development of networks and national coalitions of HRDs at national level in Burundi, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda and South Sudan to reinforce the work of the regional network. The coalitions have proven to be an effective mechanism to remedy the condition of insufficient collaboration on the needs of defenders themselves.

Module Convenor: What kind of financial support do you provide to the secretariat of these coalitions?

Hassan Shire: EHAHRDP does not directly provide financial support to national coalitions as we are not a grant-making organisation. We however work with the national coalitions to ensure that they develop a strategic plan and act as a reference for national coalitions when they are making grant applications. We also work with the coalitions to ensure that the secretariat staff acquire fundraising skills, financial management and donor relation skills as well as develop a fundraising strategy which can enable them get grants to implement their programs.

Module Convenor: How do we advance the fight against impunity when institutions do not work?

Hassan Shire: Mapping our stakeholders is very important in the fight against impunity, to determine which actors have influence over those institutions that are not working. For example, the EU embassies have obligations to support HRDs under the EU Guidelines on HRDs and often they also have influence on governments in the countries where they are present so that influence might be useful for HRDs.

For further details on the course and entry requirements and the application process to take part in the academic year 2013/14, please click: <http://www.york.ac.uk/cahr/studying/online/#tab-5>

CAPACITY BUILDING ACTIVITIES

With the assistance of the wider EHAHRDP team, Capacity Building programme is proud to have conducted six successful events from February to July 2013 in Kenya and Uganda. The team held three major workshops for human rights defenders working on sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) issues.



Participants of the Strategic Round Table in the East and Horn of Africa

Strategic Round Table in the East and Horn of Africa

A four day strategic planning and capacity building meeting on security and advocacy issues, was held on 25th to 28th February 2013 in Kenya. The HRDs strategized contingency plans for the possible implementation of restrictive legislation in their countries, recurrent attacks from non-state actors, and discussed advocacy opportunities.

Sustaining Activism through Self Care

HRDs live stressful lives, both at work and personally. Their work entails extending support to others who have experienced trauma and possible firsthand experience of traumatic events of their own, such as fear for their life, intimidation, assault and threats. Experiencing this firsthand or in a support role can cause high anxiety and stress levels which are detrimental to mental health. Therefore on 27th to 28th March 2013, we organized a meeting to equip activists working on SOGI issues with skills of keeping healthy, safe and stress free during their work.

Monitoring, Documentation and Reporting of Human Rights Violations

After carrying out previous advocacy trainings with organizations working on SOGI rights, EHAHRDP realised that there was a gap on documentation of violations and experiences among the HRDs working on these rights. A training to address this gap was held on 15th to 17th May and five HRDs from Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda and Tanzania respectively participated in the training. The defenders mapped out key issues affecting

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their work, identifying human rights violations and abuses plus getting skills on how to deal with stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination.

Human Rights Training and Initiation of a National Coalition for HRDs in Uganda

EHAHRDP organized a four day workshop that brought together sixty human rights defenders from different parts of Uganda. The HRDs were trained in security management, digital security and protection mechanisms. At the end of the workshop they established a national coalition, signed a memorandum of understanding and adopted a declaration to that effect.



Participants at the MDR training in Kampala

Training of Trainers on Monitoring, Documentation and Reporting (MDR) of Human Rights Violations

EHAHRDP carried out a training of trainers on MDR of human rights violations with twenty human rights defenders from: Somalia, Somaliland, Sudan and South Sudan from the 24th to 28th June 2013 in Kampala, Uganda. The main objectives of the training were to provide a space for HRDs from the region to discuss and analyze regional human rights issues and to share their experiences.

We also successfully organised the **Protection Stakeholders Meeting** held on 30th April to 2nd May.

PAN AFRICAN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS NETWORK

Pan-African co-operation for protection of HRDs moves forward

The Protection Programme of the Pan-African Human Rights Defenders Network (PAHRD-Net), composed of five sub-regional organizations - the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network (EHAHRDP), the West Africa Human Rights Defenders Network (WAHRDN), the Central Africa Human Rights Defenders Network (REDHAC), the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS) for North Africa and the Africa Section of the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) in the South, was [officially launched](#) in February 2013. PAHRDN has made major strides thus far in 2013 to improve the baseline standard of protection for human rights defenders at risk in Africa.

In March 2013, staff of the five member networks as well as the PAHRD-Net Steering Committee came together for the first time for an intra-departmental meeting on challenges, best practices, and ways forward in the fields of advocacy, protection, security management, research, fundraising, capacity building, and IT tools and security. This initial counterparts meeting was held in Yaoundé, Cameroon, and had a high level attendance at the opening. PAHRDN thanks its member REDHAC for their help in organising and hosting the meeting. For more information on the meeting see: <http://www.defenddefenders.org/2013/03/>

[cameroon-pan-african-human-rights-defenders-adopt-plan-of-action/](#)



Opening panel of the PAHRD-Net at the Counterparts Meeting, March 2013 in Cameroon

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The third EAHRP training took place in Arusha, Tanzania from 10th to 22nd March 2013, with thirty participants from Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, South Sudan and Somalia attending. The training was facilitated by a team of four alumni with one facilitator. The intensive two-week training programme was intended primarily for representatives of community based organizations and non-governmental organizations, involved in the advancement of human rights through human rights education. The focus of EAHRP is oriented towards strengthening the capacity of human rights organizations to undertake human rights education efforts (for example training, awareness campaigns, information dissemination, and advocacy) aimed at building a global culture of human rights. The Program uses a participant-centered approach that encourages reciprocal learning through an exchange of experiences among participants, facilitators and resource persons. The training ended with thirty small human rights education activities from the individual plans

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from the participants.

Somalia Planning Meeting

In March 2013, a needs assessment was carried out on the human rights situation in Somalia. On 1st and 2nd May, a meeting was convened to disseminate the resulting report and discuss how to improve the situation. Ten human rights organizations were invited to the meeting in addition to the five alumni organizations to disseminate the desktop survey report on the human rights situation in Somalia. One of the meeting's key observations was of the need for defending human rights educators in Somalia.

Kenyan Evaluation Meeting

On 25th and 26th June, a meeting was held to evaluate the five individual plans of the Kenyan alumni that were funded in 2012, in an effort to enhance the transfer of learning acquired from the second EAHRP training. These individual plans are in the final phase of implementation. The evaluation was intended to determine what has been done and how the participatory methodologies have been employed.

African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights

On 15th March, the participants of the third EAHRP training visited the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights. Fortunately, the visit took place while the Court was in session. The participants witnessed the Court hand down a ruling in favour of the Ogiek Community, a Kenyan minority community, which was being evicted from the forests in northern Kenya, by the Kenyan Government.

The Court ordered the Kenyan Government to halt the actions.

ISSUE IN FOCUS

Formation of the Uganda National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders

Civil society organizations working on protection and promotion of human rights in Uganda have long nursed the idea of having synergy and collaboration at national level to enhance protection mechanisms for HRDs in Uganda and came together on 11th-14th June for a workshop facilitated by EHAHRDP. EHAHRDP extends its gratitude to Human Rights Network Uganda (HURINET-U), Human Rights Centre Uganda (HRC-U), Avocats Sans Frontiers (ASF), NGO Forum (NGOF) and Foundation for Human Rights Initiative (FHRI) who played a vital role in the formation of this Coalition.



Delegates of civil society organisations at the formation of the NCHRDs-Uganda

There were over fifty HRDs from grassroots organizations drawn from across Uganda who contributed to developing the Coalition's vision, objectives, plan of action and a declaration, aimed at enhancing the protection and co-ordination of HRDs. The Coalition's Secretariat will be hosted at the Human Rights Network Uganda (HURINET-U)

in Kampala. The formation of the Coalition was ably guided and advised by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of HRDs, and Executive Director of the Human Rights Centre Uganda, Ms. Margaret Sekaggya. The Coalition was formally launched by His Excellency Stefano Dejak, Italian Ambassador to Uganda. For more information please see: <http://www.defenddefenders.org/2013/06/kampala-national-coalition-for-human-rights-defenders-uganda-launched/>

RESOURCE CENTRE

Floribert Chebeya Bahizire Resource Centre for HRDs makes the switch to Linux

Since 2010 the Floribert Chebeya Bahizire Resource Centre for HRDs has been open and available for HRDs in exile to continue their important work. Following stability and security challenges posed by the Windows XP operating systems running in the centre, EHAHRDP IT staff switched the computers to the Ubuntu Linux operating system. Ubuntu is a free and open source operating system known to be user friendly and offering a wide range of free applications as well as high security. Response from the human rights defenders who use the centre has been positive.

The Resource Centre is open Monday to Friday at EHAHRDP offices. HRDs are welcome to use its IT facilities as well as its human rights library and can be supported on any technical difficulties by the Resource Centre Manager, Ms Emma Nabwire.

WHAT'S NEW

The East and Horn of Africa Human Rights EHAHRDP in March 2013 as Welfare Officer.

Defenders Project is pleased to officially welcome a number new staff members.

Ms Loïse Mercier and **Mr Majid Maali** joined EHAHRDP in February 2013 as Security Management Officers to provide security management training and advice to human rights defenders across Africa to minimize their vulnerabilities and risks. The Advocacy and Research programme received **Mr. John Foley** as the new Research Associate.

Finally, we are glad to welcome two new interns to the team: **Sylvia Kym** from York University, Canada, Capacity Building intern and **Krizna Gomez** from Harvard Law School under the Open Society Internship for Rights and Governance.

Mr. Edward Serucaca, has been hosted by EHAHRDP since February 2013 to support the establishment of a Uganda National Human Rights Coalition, but will soon be moving to the coalition's hosts, HURINET.

Ms Shamim Nakato began work for

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

- **24th Session of the UN Human Rights Council** (www.ohchr.org), 9th to 27th September 2013 in Geneva
- **54th Session of African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights**, 22nd October to 5th November 2013 in Banjul Gambia (www.achpr.org) and the preceding NGO Forum. Please check back on ACDHRS website (www.acdhhrs.org) for more details.

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