WHAT THREATS DO WHRDs FACE?

Generally, women face gendered threats that men do not face to the same extent. When a woman defends human rights, she is vulnerable to all threats that HRDs face generally, as well as specific gendered threats. The same is also true for sexual minority rights defenders. They may face:

- Sexual abuse and gender-based violence
- Threats to the HRD’s family, including children
- Smear campaigns (online and offline)
- Stigmatisation

Those attacking female HRDs often also try to attack their family.

WHRDs are faced with a lot of hate online. Not only is this mentally draining, but online threats can quickly become a reality.

WHAT PROTECTION IS AVAILABLE TO HRDs?

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Who is a WHRD?
What threats do they face?
What protection is available?
WHO IS AN HRD?
A human rights defender (HRD) is a person who, individually or with others, acts to promote or protect human rights through peaceful means. Anyone can be an HRD irrespective of their age, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, religion or profession. Defending human rights can be their professional source of income or a voluntary engagement.

WHO IS A WHRD?
A woman human rights defender (WHRD) can be a female HRD defending the rights of all or any other HRDs who work in the defence of women’s rights or on gender issues.

WHAT DO HRDs DO?
Anyone who works to promote or protect human rights through peaceful means is an HRD, whether they are paid to do this or not. There are endless ways to promote or protect human rights, here are a few examples:

- Document human rights abuses by collecting evidence
- Raise awareness about human rights abuses (in media, online, or in their community)
- Report human rights abuses to international or regional bodies (e.g. UN or AU)
- Put pressure on perpetrators of human rights abuses, so they stop
- Advocate for human rights with people or entities in power (e.g. politicians or corporations)
- Pursue justice for human rights abuses through the legal system
- Support survivors of human rights abuses (e.g. shelter, legal advice, emotional support)
- Educate people about their rights and teach methods to defend human rights

This is just a small list of examples what kind of work HRDs, including WHRDs, do - there are so many more!

WHAT THREATS DO HRDs FACE?
Human rights defenders face many threats. Often, those who abuse human rights are in a position of power (whether in politics or in a corporation), so they target HRDs, including WHRDs, who threaten their power. These are the most common threats that HRDs and WHRDs face:

- Physical assault
- Killings
- Intimidation and harassment (offline and online)
- Judicial harassment and criminalisation
- Surveillance and theft of equipment (e.g. computer or phone)
- Stress, depression, and burn-out


Witnesses who provide information on human rights abuses in court cases or to human rights bodies are HRDs.

When individuals document and raise awareness about human rights abuses, they are HRDs.

Someone who organises a demonstration (for example for better working conditions, against corruption, environmental degradation or to promote the right to health or education) is an HRD, even if their job is not related to human rights or they do not have a job.

HRDs often face unfounded charges for which they are arrested.
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WHAT THREATS DO WHRDs FACE?

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RISK THREATS

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You’re so ugly just shut up... nobody cares...

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