

## **DefendDefenders (East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project)**

### **Strategic meetings with key representatives of the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network alongside special procedure mandate holders from the UN Human Rights Council and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.**

#### **Press statement**

The East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network (EHAHRD-Net) hosted by DefendDefenders convened its seventh Focal Points Meeting on 1 and 2 October 2024 at Speke Resort Munyonyo Hotel in Kampala, Uganda. The meeting brought together a vibrant and diverse group of 50 representatives from national coalitions of human rights defenders (HRDs) and focal points from the East and Horn of Africa.

The biennial focal point meetings are a testament to DefendDefenders' shared commitment to protect human rights defenders (HRDs) in the East and Horn of Africa sub-region. Such meetings are important spaces for sharing information, best practices, and outlining strategies. They provide strategic direction for the EHAHRD-Net and its secretariat, highlight emerging trends, discuss cross-cutting trends, formulate joint interventions, and improve collaboration between the focal points and the secretariat. The seventh meeting set the strategic direction from 2026 to 2031, following a review of the Plan of Action adopted in 2022.

“The seventh focal point meeting is critical, as authoritarian trends are worsening across the sub-region for instance the conflicts in Sudan, Kenya, Ethiopia, and Somalia, which have severely impacted HRDs.” Kamau Ngugi, Chairperson EHAHRD-Net. “The Network members are encouraged to engage with African and global human rights mechanisms in respect to the identified trends.”

The meeting concluded with a significant milestone: adopting a [final communique](#). This document, a culmination of our discussions and key takeaways from the two-day gathering, is our collective effort and will guide our future actions.

Following the Focal Point Meeting, DefendDefenders convened a meeting with special procedure mandate holders of the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council and the African Commission of Human and Peoples' Rights in the spirit of the Addis Ababa Roadmap. The Roadmap is a framework document that provides strategies to strengthen synergies between the UN and African human rights systems. The meeting allowed Ugandan HRDs to engage with the mandate holders, drawing their attention to critical human rights issues and the restrictive operating environment.

“The framework given by the Addis Ababa Road Map represents a significant milestone in cooperation efforts focused on human rights defenders. It is not just a theoretical document but one that is actively being implemented to address the pressing needs of HRDs.” Hassan Shire, Executive Director DefendDefenders. “I am pleased to see that AfricanDefenders/DefendDefenders is taking the lead in facilitating this collaboration.

We are committed to ensuring this support elevation is practical and focused on tangible actions.”

“Gatherings with human rights defenders, particularly those from grassroots communities, are incredibly valuable for us. The Addis Ababa Roadmap presents a unique opportunity to reflect on the discrepancies between international human rights standards and the actual situations on the ground.” Hon. Remy Ngoy Lumbu, Chairperson African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights. “ This framework is crucial for enhancing our impact and effectiveness in advocating for human rights.”

At the conclusion of the inter-mechanism dialogue, a [Munyonyo Declaration](#) was adopted with strong calls to action: African states to fulfil their human rights commitments and obligations; special procedure mandate holders of the UN Human Rights Council and the African Commission to strengthen the effectiveness of their mandates to respond to human rights violations; and HRDs to enhance collaboration and information sharing.

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