

Call for Papers for a Special Issue in the Journal of Human Rights Practice

*The Protection of Human Rights Defenders*

Publication Date: November 2013

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Deadline for Abstracts: 1 November 2012

Over the past two decades, there has been growing recognition of the significance of human rights defenders as agents of change, and of the importance of protecting their rights in order to enable them to work safely and effectively. In 1998, the General Assembly adopted the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.<sup>1</sup> Since then, states have developed a number of international, regional and national mechanisms for the protection of the rights of human rights defenders.

A transnational community of civil society actors and donors has formed around human rights defenders, contributing creative strategies and mechanisms for their protection, such as the provision of emergency grants, temporary relocation, international accompaniment, and trial monitoring. There has been dedicated effort to strengthen the legitimacy, visibility and credibility of human rights defenders, such as through national and international solidarity campaigns. There has also been stronger emphasis on the development of preventative, 'pre-risk' strategies. However, there are practical difficulties in identifying an individual as a 'human rights defender'. There is a need to examine how legitimacy is created and conferred, and to evaluate the protection benefits and challenges of using different types of interventions.

The proliferation of new technologies has enabled human rights defenders to exercise their freedom of expression, document violations, communicate, organise, and advocate for change in unprecedented ways, allowing them also to overcome restrictions on their mobility. However, new technologies have also increased the vulnerability of human rights defenders, opening up opportunities for greater surveillance and monitoring as well as the interception and control of information.

Methods for repressing the work of human rights defenders have evolved in other ways too. State and non-state actors now use a wide range of legal and administrative mechanisms to curtail the activities of human rights defenders. In some cases, human rights defenders are hampered by burdensome and specious administrative procedures. They have also been targeted through legal action taken against them on a range of alleged grounds – such as for non-compliance with registration requirements, conducting 'terrorist' activities, threatening national security, committing tax evasion, for 'hooliganism' and possessing drugs. Tactics to vilify and criminalise human rights defenders continue to pose real threats to their practice and to their lives.

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<sup>1</sup> Formally, the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

Human rights defenders are also diverse in how they view the world and act in it. They respond to threats differently, have varied levels of resilience, deal with fatigue and stress in different ways, and develop different social and psychological coping mechanisms. Human rights defenders understand risk differently, understandings that are mediated through socio-cultural norms and values. This may make contextually specific mechanisms for protection more relevant than regional or international ones. Interlocutors, regional and international bodies may need to adapt mechanisms, policies and practices in order to have the intended impact. In summary, the diversity amongst human rights defenders has implications for transnational and transcultural collaborations for their protection.

In light of these important challenges, and with the occasion of the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, The Journal of Human Rights Practice will publish a special issue focusing on the protection of human rights defenders.

### *Call for Papers*

Contributions are welcome on these including:

- The development of legal and administrative mechanisms for repression;
- Methods for fostering enabling environments for the defence of human rights (including building stronger digital security);
- Ethnographies of risk and protection; and
- The effectiveness of protection mechanisms

The Journal of Human Rights Practice publishes material in the form of original articles (5,000-10,000 words); Policy and Practice Notes (1,500-5,000 words); Review Notes (800-1,200 words) and Review Essays (2,000-4,000 words). More information about these different types of submissions is available [here](#).

Submissions from practitioners are particular welcome. Manuscripts will be subject to peer review.

To indicate your interest in this call for papers, please submit an abstract (300-500 words), the type of submission, a biographical note (maximum of 200 words), and contact details by 1 November 2012. Please submit this information through [this link](#).

We are planning to bring together individuals whose abstracts have been short-listed to an international workshop in March 2013. More details will be provided in due course.

### *Important Deadlines*

Submission of abstracts: 1 November 2012

Notification of acceptance: 15 December 2012

Submission of full manuscripts: 15 March 2013

For more information on this call for papers, please contact Alice Nah at [alice.nah@york.ac.uk](mailto:alice.nah@york.ac.uk)