

PRESS RELEASE - THE OBSERVATORY

United Nations General Assembly adopts resolution on the protection of human rights defenders by increased majority

Paris-Geneva-New York, December 18, 2015 - The final adoption of a resolution on the protection of human rights defenders by the United Nations General Assembly, in its plenary session, on Thursday December 17, 2015, with 127 States voting in favour (i.e. 10 more than in the Third Committee) was welcomed today by the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint FIDH-OMCT (World Organisation Against Torture) programme.

At a time when the work of human rights defenders has become extraordinarily dangerous and increasingly criminalized in many countries, the Observatory recalls the importance of having a vast majority of Member States to the United Nations (UN) supporting this resolution, entitled "Recognizing the role of human rights defenders and the need for their protection", which calls for accountability for attacks on human rights defenders (including attacks on their family members) and urges States to release defenders who have been arbitrarily detained for exercising their fundamental rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association.

From restricting the civic space of human rights defenders through laws undermining basic freedoms such as freedom of expression, freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association to criminalisation and killings, never since the fall of the Berlin wall had it been more important to protect those who defend our rights. Repressive States across the planet have been increasingly misusing vague concepts such as "State security", the "fight against terrorism" or the interference of "foreign agents" to justify muzzling human rights champions. It is high time for all to respect and implement commitments under the UN Declaration on [the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms](#) (UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders).

127 States supported the resolution, including South Africa, which had voted against it in the Third Committee, while 14 States (**Burundi, Cambodia, China, Cuba, North Korea, Iran, Myanmar, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan, Russia, Sudan, Syria and Zimbabwe**) voted against it.

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