



REPORT FACTSHEET

PROTECTING DEFENDERS

What **PROTECTION PROVIDERS**, **STATES**, and **DONORS** can do: Recommendations from HRDs across Eastern Europe, South Caucasus, and Central Asia



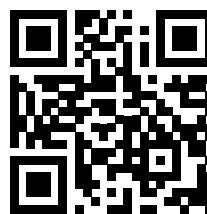
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UN SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON
THE SITUATION OF HRDS

“*Protecting Defenders*” could not have been more timely. The study adds to the ever-expanding documentation of the rapidly deteriorating situation for human rights defenders, and documents the urgency to act, especially in emerging democracies.

READ THE FULL REPORT

The “Protecting Defenders” report by Human Rights House Foundation (HRRF) is a tool for organisations providing protection for human rights defenders at risk and States and donors wishing to align their protection support with local needs. It “maps” protection infrastructure for human rights defenders (HRDs) at risk in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Ukraine. It uncovers trends concerning the protection needs of human rights defenders; identifies and suggests potential actors and partners for future protection work; and, identifies communities of human rights defenders at risk that have protection needs.

This report is based upon interviews conducted with over 200 HRDs across Eastern Europe, South Caucasus, and Central Asia during 2019-2020. Yet, its finding and recommendations are relevant and useful for protection providers, donors, and other partners supporting human rights defenders at risk in other countries as well. We urge those working to protect human rights defenders at risk to consider our findings and implement this report’s recommendations into existing protection programmes.



DOWNLOAD
[BIT.LY/PRODEF21](https://bit.ly/prodef21)

212 human rights defenders at risk or those who provide protection assistance interviewed

Broad geographic, age, gender, professional perspective represented

Study conducted between Sept 2019 – Nov 2020

KEY FINDINGS

- 1** Protection infrastructure is strong yet not without gaps.
- 2** Situation for HRDs in “hybrid regimes” is rapidly deteriorating.
- 3** Types and sources of risks differ in countries with authoritarian and hybrid regimes.
- 4** Women HRDs face additional risks and limitations.
- 5** There is a demand for proactive and preventive protection assistance.
- 6** Collaboration of local and international protection providers yields the best results for HRDs at risk.
- 7** Organisational culture and solidarity affect the security of HRDs.
- 8** HRDs are sceptical about new allies, including embassies and intergovernmental organisations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

IMPROVE EXISTING PROTECTION INFRASTRUCTURE BY:

- 1** Grounding protection work locally: building and supporting national and regional protection coalitions.
- 2** Focusing on preventive support, particularly within countries with the hybrid regimes.
- 3** Strengthening institutional capacities, organisational security and individual well-being of local protection providers.
- 4** Investing in physical aspects of protection infrastructure.
- 5** Support efforts to strengthen domestic legislation and policies related to the protection of human rights defenders.

STRENGTHEN THE DESIGN & IMPLEMENTATION OF PROTECTION PROGRAMMES BY:

- 6** Designing protection programmes with focus on the desired impact on the life of the person for whom the support is provided.
- 7** Supporting and implementing protection programmes which allow for flexibility and adaptability in order to meet changing local needs.
- 8** Continuing the mainstreaming of gender and minority considerations in protection programming.

EXPAND COMMUNICATION WITH BENEFICIARIES AND STAKEHOLDERS BY:

- 9** Ensuring easily available and accurate communication about protection support criteria.
- 10** Enhancing cooperation with local and international stakeholders.