

Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition

March 2010 Update

In March, the Coalition engaged at the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and the Human Rights Council (HRC) meetings by working with partners to participate in debates on counter-terror measures and reprisals against women human rights defenders. Work on the WHRD IC Global Report on Women Human Rights Defenders is gathering momentum, with a working group meeting in March and another scheduled for June. The Secretariat has also been looking to the sustainability of the Coalition, and beginning to make plans for future hosting. Means of communicating with the Coalition are being improved with changes in the existing website planned for April.

MARCH ACTIVITIES

Advocacy at the UN

CSW: In partnership with Cordaid, the Coalition co-sponsored a panel on the **Impact of counter terrorism measures on women activists: responses, strategies and the need to defend human rights to ensure security**. The panel, an NGO parallel event to the CSW session, was held in front of a jam-packed room on March 1st, 2pm-3.30pm, on the 11th floor of the UN Church Center in New York City. Panellists from Indonesia, Philippines, Colombia and Uganda discussed the impact of counterterrorism on women human rights defenders. A particular concern was the vague definition of terrorism found in counter-terror legislation around the world, which means it can be used to target any opposition to the government, including the work of women's rights activists. For more information, see: <http://www.pacificgap.info/2010/03/repressive-states-use-counter-terrorism.html>

HRC: The Coalition co-sponsored two side events at the Human Rights Council meeting in Geneva.

In collaboration with Forum Asia, AI and the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS), the Coalition sponsored a panel, on **Cooperation with UN Human Rights Bodies and Mechanisms: Challenges Faced by WHRDs and HRDs**. The panel discussed cases of reprisals against WHRDs and HRDs cooperating with the UN human rights mechanisms, along with recommendations on how to prevent the occurrence of such forms of intimidation. Margaret Sekaggya, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders took part in the conversation. For a report on the discussion, held on March 10, see:

http://www.defendingwomen-defendingrights.org/prevent_protective.php

Ms Sekaggya was also on the panel of the Coalition's second co-sponsored event in Geneva, held on March 11. In partnership with ISHR, Human Rights First, Front Line, Civicus, The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies and Forum Asia, the WHRD IC was part of another discussion on the **Protection and security of human rights defenders**, specifically to provide feedback to the latest Report of the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders to the Human Rights Council. For more information regarding this panel, contact Kaavya Asoka at ISHR: k.asoka@ishr.ch

For news and reports on the 13th session of the Human Rights Council, see: <http://www.ishr.ch/council>

ON-GOING ACTIVITIES

1. *Global Report on the Situation of Women Human Rights Defenders*

The working group on the Global Report on the Situation of WHRDs met during the CSW in New York, on March 7th from 3pm – 5pm to discuss the implementation of this project. Katherine Hughes-Fraitekh and her Mexico-based colleague Michael, from Peace Brigades International joined WHRD IC Coordinator and Communications Officer in person, while Joseph Tumu and Emerlynne Gil were part of the discussion via skype call. Subsequently, Ruth Ojiambo Ochieng of Isis-WICCE and Kate Lappin of APWLD met with the Coordinator to also share their suggestions.

As a result of the meeting, the working group refined the concept note, clarifying the scope, methodology and timeline to ensure the feasibility of implementing this project. The production of the report is being planned to dovetail with the drafting of Ms Sekaggya's report focusing on women human rights defenders, slated to be delivered at the UN Human Rights Council in March 2011.

Towards this collaboration, the office of the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders has confirmed a **consultation** with the Coalition on **26 June 2010** in Geneva. Following the consultation, the Working Group will meet from **27-28 June 2010**.

2. *Manual*


The Coalition is producing a manual, as a follow-up to the development of the book '*Claiming Rights, Claiming Justice: A Guidebook on Women Human Rights Defenders*' (the Guidebook). In collaboration with members of the WHRD IC, the International Service for Human Rights (ISHR) and International Women's Rights Action Watch (IWRAP) Asia Pacific have been coordinating the production of the manual on documenting violations against women human rights defenders. The main aim of developing the training manual is to complement the conceptual framework laid out in the *Guidebook*. Following several regional and international consultations, members of the Coalition are in the process of drafting the various chapters of the Manual, which is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2010.

3. *Publications*

The Secretariat continues to disseminate Coalition publications. Approximately 60 copies of the Spanish version of the WHRD IC guidebook *Claiming Justice, Claiming Rights*, will be sent from Forum Asia to an upcoming meeting in Oaxaca, México. The Reunión Sobre Violencia Contra Defensoras de Derechos Humanos y Luchadoras Sociales en Mesoamérica (Meeting on Violence Against Human Rights Defenders and Social Activists in MesoAmerica) will be held from 28-30 April, 2010.

4. *Website*

The following items were updated/uploaded in March (all items are clickable, if you would like to read the posts):

- Updated calendar:
http://www.defendingwomen-defendingrights.org/pdf/whrd_ic_calendar2010.pdf
- Urgent Alerts
 - a. Russian Federation: [Criminal proceedings against women human rights defender Anastasia Denisova](#), 16 March 2010 

- b. India: Re-arrest of women human rights defender Irom Chanu Sharmila, March 2010 NEW
 - [Frontline](#), 12 March 2010
 - [The Observatory](#), 16 March 2010
- c. Iran: [Arrest and detention of women human rights defender Mahboubeh Karami](#), 11 March 2010 NEW
- d. Guatemala: [Break-in at the home of women human rights defender Ms Erenia Vanegas and threats and acts of intimidation against Ms Claudia Samayoa and members of SEDEM](#), 10 March 2010 NEW
- e. Honduras: [Murder of Claudia Larissa Brizuela, daughter of human rights defender Pedro Brizuela](#) 4 March 2010 NEW
- What's New
 - a. [Recognising Chinese women human rights defenders, March 8, 2010](#) NEW
 - b. 8 March 2010 [International Women's Day: ARTICLE 19 Affirms the Rights of Women with the Right to Free Expression](#) NEW
 - c. [Respect Universality in Principle and Practice: Defend Women's Human Rights, statement regarding Gita Sahgal](#), March 1, 2010. NEW
- Advocacy at the UN
 - a. <http://www.defendingwomen-defendingrights.org/actions.php>

SECRETARIAT

Post-April plans

The Secretariat's time at CWGL comes to an end in May. In planning for this, the Coordinator met with Front Line in Dublin, Ireland, from 22 – 25 March for an initial conversation to follow up on Front Line's suggestion of possibly hosting the Secretariat. Discussions are underway and will hopefully be finalised by April.

The Communications Officer will also be returning to full-time study at the end of April, and will then cease regular involvement in the Coalition's work. In preparation for this, she is completing reorganisation of the website, as well as other communications-related tasks, and is also working with the Coordinator and members on how to sustain communications activities of the Coalition.

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

The Coordinator will be attending a seminar on protection of HRDs in April. Front Line, with the support of the Ford Foundation and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is convening an ***International NGO Seminar on Strengthening Protection for Human Rights Defenders***. The seminar will take place in Oslo from **16-18 April 2010**. The objective of the seminar is to bring together key actors involved in working for the international protection of human rights defenders to review the effectiveness of current efforts, identify gaps and discuss ideas and proposals for more effective action.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16-18 Apr: Front Line International NGO Seminar on Strengthening Protection for Human Rights Defenders. Oslo. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 28-30 Apr: Reunión Sobre Violencia Contra Defensoras de Derechos Humanos y Luchadoras Sociales en Mesoamérica (Meeting on Violence Against Human Rights Defenders and Social Activists in |

MesoAmerica). Oaxaca.
• 26 Jun: WHRD IC consultation with UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders. Geneva.
• 27-28 Jun: WHRD IC Working Group on the Global Report on WHRDs meeting. Geneva.
• 28 Jun-2Jul: Meeting of Special Rapporteurs/ Reps/Independent Experts and Chairpersons of WG of the HRC – 17th session. Geneva.

See full calendar at:

http://www.defendingwomen-defendingrights.org/pdf/whrd_ic_calendar2010.pdf

2 April, 2010.

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www.defendingwomen-defendingrights.org