

AfricanDefenders Convention

JOBURG +20



Convention Report
Zanzibar, Tanzania
12-14 June 2019



AFRICANDEFENDERS
Pan-African Human Rights Defenders Network

AfricanDefenders Convention JOBURG+20: CONVENTION REPORT

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“To the frontline human rights defenders of the continent, who raise an active voice for those who cannot speak up – wherever you are, you are part of a global movement.”

Hassan Shire,
AfricanDefenders Chairperson

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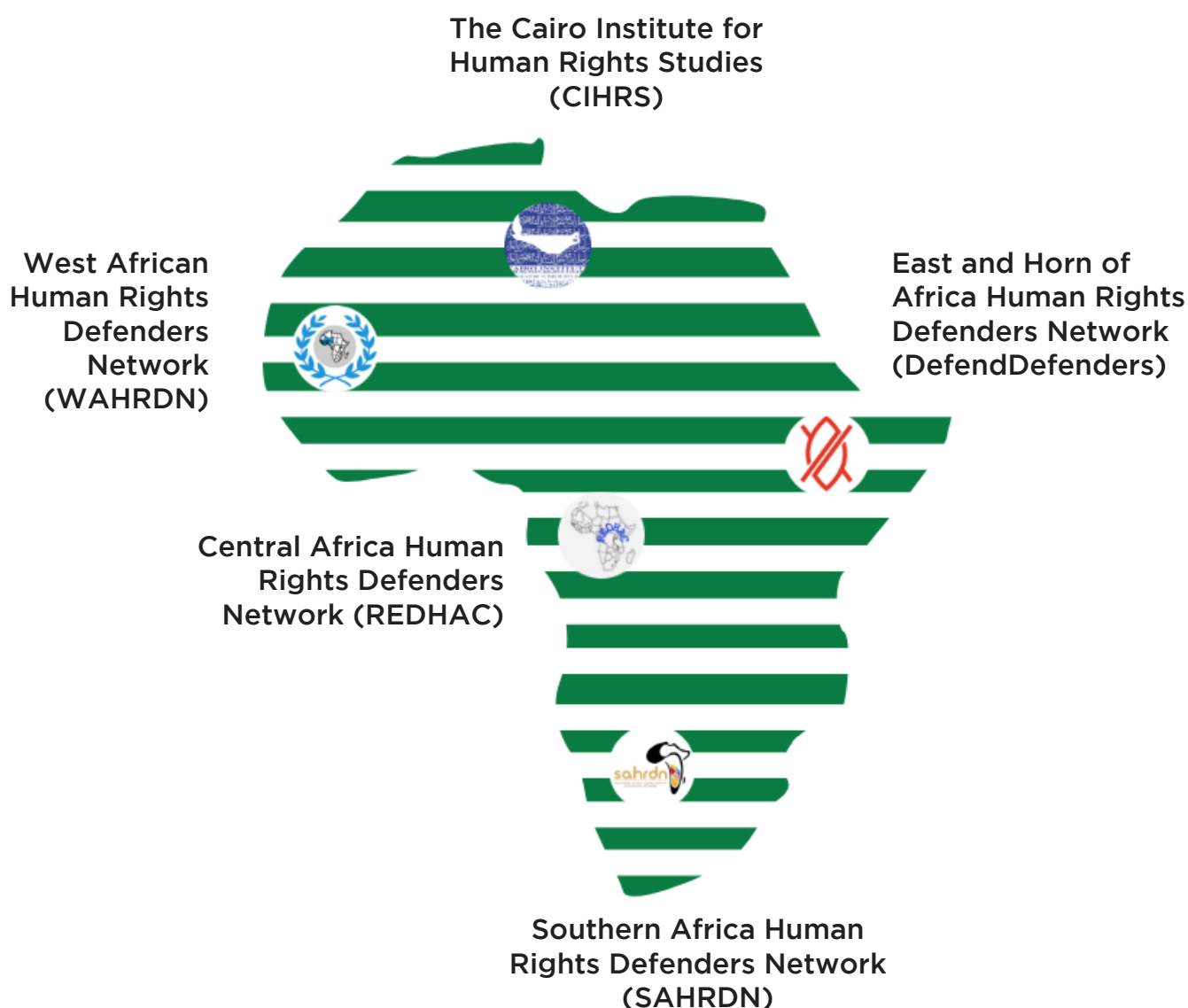
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ACRONYMS

ACHPR	African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights
ACDHRS	African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies
AU	African Union
CCPAU	Centre for Citizens' Participation on the African Union
CIHRS	Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
HRD	Human Rights Defender
ICRtoP	International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect
IRRI	International Refugee Rights Initiative
KNCHR	Kenya National Commission on Human Rights
KAPA	Kampala Plan of Action
KAPA10	Kampala Plan of Action +10
MDR	Monitoring, Documentation, and Reporting
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NANHRI	Network of African National Human Rights Institutions
NHRI	National Human Rights Institution
PALU	Pan African Lawyers Union
PAP	Pan-African Parliament
REDHAC	Réseau des Défenseurs des Droits Humains en Afrique Centrale (Central Africa Human Rights Defenders Network)
SAHRDN	Southern Africa Human Rights Defenders Network
SOGI	Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity
SSHRDN	South Sudanese Human Rights Defenders Network
THRDC	Tanzania Human Rights Defenders Coalition
UHRC	Ugandan Human Rights Commission
UN HRC	United Nations Human Rights Council
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
WAHRDN	West African Human Rights Defenders Network
WHRD	Women Human Rights Defenders

ABOUT AfricanDefenders

The Pan-African Human Rights Defenders Network (AfricanDefenders) is a network of five African sub-regional networks, dedicated to the promotion and protection of human rights defenders (HRDs) across the African continent. AfricanDefenders is hosted by the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project (DefendDefenders), and the two organisations have worked together to strengthen the other sub-regional networks. AfricanDefenders is an umbrella network which aims to share best practices, cross-pollinate protection expertise, establish rigorous reporting, track continental trends, and deal with transregional protection issues, emergency relocations, and resource shortfalls. AfricanDefenders coordinates activities in the areas of protection, strengthening capacities of sub-regional networks and HRDs, and advocacy at continental and international level.







INTRODUCTION

In April 2009, HRDs and regional and international stakeholders gathered in Kampala, Uganda for the 'All Africa Human Rights Defenders Conference' (Johannesburg +10). The event aimed to take stock of the achievements made in the protection of HRDs since the first 'All Africa Human Rights Defenders Conference' held in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 1998. During the conference, HRD networks were identified as a very powerful tool to create a more enabling environment for HRDs. Furthermore, it identified that existing sub-regional HRD networks had been pivotal in enhancing the work of African HRDs. In this context, the establishment of a continental umbrella network that could help to coordinate and strengthen sub-regional efforts was seen as an essential step to enhance the protection and promotion of HRDs on the continent.

The Kampala Declaration of Human Rights Defenders, adopted at the conference on 23 April 2009, thus resolved to form a Pan-African Human Rights Defenders Network, to coordinate initiatives across the continent for the benefit of African HRDs, as specified in the Kampala Plan of Action (KAPA). The secretariat of the Pan-African Human Rights Defenders Network, active under the name of AfricanDefenders, was established in 2011, to support sub-regional HRD networks by fostering collaboration, supporting strategic advocacy efforts, contributing to the protection of HRDs at risk, and highlighting the impact of their relentless work.

Ten years after the adoption of KAPA, it was necessary to reflect on the progress made and design new strategies tailored to the trends and developments since Johannesburg +10. In order to do so, AfricanDefenders convened the AfricanDefenders Convention (Johannesburg+20) from 12 to 14 June 2019 in Zanzibar City, United Republic of Tanzania. The Convention brought together HRDs from across Africa, more specifically representatives from the sub-regional HRD networks and national HRD coalitions, Steering Committee members. In addition, the Convention welcomed key stakeholders, including the Chairperson of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (the Commission or ACHPR), the Special Rapporteur for HRDs in Africa, and the President of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (African Court).

The first day of the Convention was dedicated to reflect upon HRDs' engagement with African human rights mechanisms, specifically the Commission and the African Court. The following two days enabled sharing of good practices and challenges between sub-regional HRD networks and national HRD coalitions, and a collective review of the KAPA, in order to shape the future of AfricanDefenders. The Convention concluded with the third edition of the Shield Awards, which acknowledged the courageous work of outstanding African HRDs. The winner of the Pan-African Shield Award was the Sudan Women Protest, based on their courageous work to promote and protect human rights amid the Sudanese revolution.

The deliberations and outcomes of the three-day convention, including the revised Plan of Action for AfricanDefenders, known as KAPA+10, are summarised in this report.

WHY JOBURG+20?

- To redesign strategies for effective cooperation and dialogue between African HRDs and ACHPR special mechanisms;
- To review the Kampala Plan of Action in light of progress made, lessons learnt, and identified gaps;
- To renew the membership of AfricanDefenders' Steering Committee for effective leadership; and
- To highlight the important role played by African HRDs in the advancement of human rights through AfricanDefenders' Shield Awards.

OPENING JOBURG+20

ONESMO OLENGURUMWA

Executive Director, Tanzania Human Rights Defenders Coalition (THRDC)

“ I am sure and hopeful that these three days of reflections will conceive inclusive and effective strategies on how African HRDs and ACHPR special mechanisms can work together and expand constructive collaboration. ”



Onesmo Olengurumwa welcomed all participants to Zanzibar, an island characterised by a diverse history and a mixed population of people with African and Arabic origins. He gave an overview of the crucial work of THRDC to protect HRDs amidst the shrinking civic space in Tanzania. Having offered security management training to about 2000 HRDs in Tanzania, provided protection support services to about 545 HRDs, and produced more than 40 publications addressing HRD issues and civic space in Tanzania, THRDC has been setting the ground as a reference model for other developing national HRD coalitions in the region to learn from.

HASSAN SHIRE

Chairperson, AfricanDefenders
Executive Director, DefendDefenders



“When things become difficult, you should always remember that you are part of a family of human rights defenders who are there to stand in solidarity with you.”

Hassan Shire appreciated THRDC for hosting the meeting. Recalling the foundation of AfricanDefenders at Johannesburg+10, he underscored the capacity and protection gaps of African HRDs at the inception of the network, the milestones achieved over the years, and the need to urgently address the remaining gaps. To address the online civic space shift, he recalled the importance of innovation, emphasising the need to equip HRDs with digital tools to allow for free expression, association, and assembly. As an example, he highlighted the Ubuntu Hub Cities initiative, which facilitates the relocation of at-risk African HRDs on the continent, as a pioneer innovation for HRDs in need of protection.

HON. COMMISSIONER SOYATA MAIGA

Chairperson, African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights



“Agenda 2063 is a call to action for all segments of African society. We are thus invited, every time we have the occasion, to reflect together on the innovative strategies we can implement to play our part in the achievement of this ambitious vision for Africa.”

Honourable Chairperson Soyata Maiga thanked AfricanDefenders for organising the Convention, which she recognised as an important occasion to exchange on the African human rights system at a crucial time in which the African system in general, and the African Commission in particular, find themselves facing huge challenges that negatively impact the implementation of their mandate. She called for more efforts among all stakeholders for better synergies and strategic alliances to defend the African human rights system and build a continent in line with agenda 2063, which particularly aims for good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice, and the rule of law. She also acknowledged and congratulated HRDs for their constant contribution to the work of the Commission.

“I encourage you to be guided, in your daily work, by values of impartiality, professionalism, commitment, and courage, to better achieve your valuable mission.”

HONOURABLE JUSTICE SYLVAIN ORÉ

President, African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights

“ We, African human rights defenders and African human rights organs, have a common destiny because we have a common interest – that of the advancement of human rights. ”



Hon. Justice Sylvain Ore welcomed the initiative of organising the Convention and bringing HRDs and human rights mechanisms together. He emphasised the importance of building synergies between African regional human rights mechanisms, including the African Court and HRDs, to advance the common interest of promoting and protecting human rights.

ENGAGING THE AFRICAN HUMAN RIGHTS SYTEM



Panellists:

Hon. Remy Ngoy

Commissioner and
Special Rapporteur
on Human Rights
Defenders in Africa

Hon. Soyata Maiga

Chairperson,
African Commission
on Human and
Peoples' Rights

Hon. Sylvain Oré

President, African
Court on Human and
Peoples Rights

Margaret Sekkagya

Former UN Special
Rapporteur on Human
Rights Defenders &
Executive Director of
Centre for Human Rights

Moderate by: **Achieng Akena** | Executive Director, International Refugee Rights Initiative

The first panel discussion of the Convention explored strategies for engagement between HRDs and the African human rights system. Moderated by Achieng Akena, Executive Director of the International Refugee Rights Initiative (IRRI), the conversation identified and discussed avenues to strengthen the African and international mechanisms for the protection of HRDs. Panellists and participants were particularly asked to reflect on the recommendations formulated during the 30-year celebration of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (Banjul Charter), especially the recommendation to strengthen the Commission's special mechanisms and their collaboration with civil society.

Hon. Maiga Soyata elaborated on the existing protection mechanisms for HRDs in Africa, and the need to create a safe working environment for HRDs, free from the fear of reprisals, as “the promotion of human rights and the protection of defenders cannot be separated.” She stressed the vital importance of their active participation in ACHPR public sessions, the submission of alternative reports, and the dissemination of decisions. She invited HRDs to develop innovative approaches to bring the work of the Commission closer to decision-makers, opinion leaders, and the general public. Hon. Maiga also invited participants to mobilise resources to organise thematic seminars, in order to facilitate the engagement of Commissioners with locally-based HRDs. Recognising that funding limitations may affect HRDs' ability to consistently engage during regular sessions of the Commission, she stressed the importance of thinking innovatively to revisit initiatives that can encourage civil society participation without requiring substantial funding.

Looking at how key stakeholders can better work to protect HRDs, **Margaret Sekaggya** stated that HRDs must fully understand the regional and international legal mechanisms that are available to them, in order to engage with, and benefit from, them. To make such mechanisms more accessible to HRDs on the ground, she highlighted the need to domesticate regional and international human rights instruments. For example, she welcomed initiatives to translate key international instruments into local languages to foster ownership among grassroots HRDs and their communities.

Hon. Prof. Rémy Ngoy deliberated on HRDs' engagement with the Commission despite the backlash registered from certain states. He recalled the Commission's Resolution 69 on the protection of HRDs in Africa, drawing attention to its five major pillars, and inviting civil society and African institutions to work collectively towards its effective realisation.

Hon. Sylvain Oré discussed the existing avenues for engagement with the African Court on protection of HRDs, calling on civil society to disseminate the jurisprudence of the Court and increase its visibility among African citizens. He also identified the need to further advocate for the ratification of the African Court Protocol and State declarations. Lastly, he invited participants to reflect on how the Court and the Commission could work together to ensure that decisions to protect HRDs are followed up and implemented by state actors.

Responding to the panel, Hassan Shire, AfricanDefenders' Chairperson, stressed the importance of popularising human rights mechanisms among activists at all levels of society, as well as the need to push back the mounting attacks on the independence and effectiveness of the Commission and the Court, often initiated by state actors. Arnold Tsunga, Chairperson of the Southern African Human Rights Defenders Network (SAHRDN), highlighted the gaps in the existing legal framework for the protection of HRDs, recalling how many African states have converted domestic laws and courts into tools for HRD's oppression through judicial harassment. Hannah Forster, Executive Director of the African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies (ACDHRS), reiterated the need for continuous human rights training and education on the African systems, not only for HRDs, but also for decision-makers and civil society.

Key issues identified:

- The need for a road map between the different human rights mechanisms, HRDs, and civil society organisations (CSOs);
- Challenges with accessing regional and international protection mechanisms;
- Inadequate coordination and dialogue between the regional and international human rights mechanisms and HRDs;
- Inadequate financial resources available for HRDs to engage with regional and international human rights mechanisms;
- The need for African Union (AU) organs to play a proactive role to strengthen the African human rights system; and
- The need for education and capacity building for HRDs on existing regional and international protection mechanisms.

“African civil society has made a comprehensive contribution to the growth of the African human rights system.”

Hannah Forster
Executive Director,
African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies

The reflection on HRDs’ engagement with the African human rights system continued through group work discussions. On the basis of the key issues outlined during the first panel, the groups elaborated and designed action points and recommendations.

HOW TO FILL KNOWLEDGE GAPS?

- To raise awareness about national, regional, and international instruments and mechanisms in an innovative, simplified manner to reach HRDs at all levels of society;
- To develop integrated and practical training approaches about human rights mechanisms;
- To disseminate knowledge on who HRDs are and what rights they have through digital and non-digital methods by contextualising information to targeted communities; and
- To increase the accessibility of available mechanisms for a wider scope of HRDs, including grassroots HRDs and those representing marginalised groups.

HOW TO FOSTER THE POLITICAL COMMITTEMENT OF STATES TO PROTECT AND PROMOTE HRDS?

- To advocate for the establishment of national laws for the protection of HRDs, as seen in Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, and Mali;
- To advocate for the establishment of an independent mechanism for the effective implementation of the national HRD law in the countries where it exists;
- To initiate and advocate for dialogues with state actors about HRD protection; and
- To encourage states to present periodic reports to the Commission and establish mechanisms for follow-up.

HOW TO ENSURE EFFECTIVE FOLLOW-UP OF ACHPR DECISIONS?

- To widely disseminate ACHPR decisions at the national level in collaboration with local and national media;
- To push national governments to openly discuss ACHPR decisions with relevant state organs, as well as civil society;
- To identify and promote entry points for HRDs and CSOs to access decision-makers at the AU level, for example through organisations based in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia;
- Impose sanctions for non-implementation of ACHPR decisions, for example through AU sanctions;
- To foster exchanges between the Pan-African Parliament (PAP) and ACHPR; and
- To seek funding opportunities for HRDs and CSOs to engage with regional mechanisms.

HOW TO IMPROVE THE INSTITUTIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORK?

- To review the appointment procedure of ACHPR commissioners to ensure representation of civil society;
- To develop strategies for the African Commission to preserve independence, as fundraising mechanisms, including sanctions against actors undermining their independence;
- To restructure ACHPR's Ordinary Sessions to be more accessible to HRDs and civil society;
- To advocate for a more citizen-centered AU; and
- To strengthen the Coalition for an Effective African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights.

THE MARRAKESH DECLARATION AND THE ROLE OF NHRIs



Panellists:

Arnold Tsunga

Chairperson of the Southern African Human Rights Defenders Network

George Morara

Commissioner of Kenya National Commission on Human Rights

Hon. Remy Ngoy

Commissioner and Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders in Africa

Margaret Sekaggya

Former UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of HRDs; Executive Director Centre for Human Rights Uganda

Edmund Yakani

Chairperson, South Sudan Human Rights Defenders Network

Moderate by: **Hannah Forster** | Executive Director of the African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies

The panel, moderated by Hannah Forster, explored strategies for impactful collaboration between National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), and HRDs and civil society. Forster highlighted the importance of independent and transparent NHRIs in the promotion and protection of human rights due to their valuable bridging position between the state and civil society. She identified the Marrakesh Declaration and the Paris Principles as vital tools to achieve these goals. “NHRIs are a beacon of hope for partnership,” she stated.

Margaret Sekkagya, who was the first Chairperson of the Ugandan Human Rights Commission (UHRC), echoed Forster's idea that NHRIs hold a strategic position to bridge the gap between HRDs, governments, and regional and international mechanisms. She stressed that NHRIs should raise awareness and build the capacity of HRDs to engage with human rights mechanisms, such as the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process. Furthermore, NHRIs should ensure that national laws are in line with international standards, by monitoring and reporting on governments' human rights compliance and actions. Recalling her experience as the Chair of the UHRC, Sekkagya also invited HRDs to advocate for the establishment of a Defenders desk within each NHRI, following the example of Uganda and Togo.

George Morara recognised the Marrakesh Declaration as a milestone, particularly recalling paragraph nine, which calls on NHRIs to look at the work of HRDs as an integral part of their work. In this context, he invited NHRIs to open the door to marginalised HRDs, such as those working on sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) issues and HRDs defending the rights of indigenous people, to provide them with the necessary space to have their voices heard and their needs taken into account.

Hon. Remy Ngoy further reflected on the importance of the Marrakesh Declaration, which was adopted in his presence on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the UN Declaration on HRDs. Ngoy stressed that the presence of HRDs within the African human rights system is too scarce, and identified the need to develop strategies to make regional and international mechanisms more accessible for HRDs. In this context, NHRIs have an important role to play, by advocating for the wider representation of HRDs at the national, regional, and international level.

Edmund Yakani used the example of South Sudan to highlight challenges and opportunities in HRDs' engagement with NHRIs. This entailed their limited budget, lack of adequate human resources, capacity gaps, and the potential lack of political will by NHRIs to fully implement their mandate. To fill these gaps, HRDs could play a role in building the capacity of NHRIs. For example, the South Sudanese Human Rights Defenders Network (SSHARDN) contributed to the establishment of the HRD desk within the South Sudanese NHRI, which is run by HRDs themselves rather than civil servants. Yakani also stressed the importance of engaging the AU Early Warning System in this direction.

Arnold Tsunga, Chairperson of SAHRDN, referred to SAHRDN's summit, which brought together NHRIs and HRD coalitions from Southern Africa to discuss practical strategies for the effective implementation of the Marrakech Declaration. Here, NHRIs were encouraged to develop concrete actions to implement the Declaration, in collaboration with HRDs. As a way to ensure continued exchange between NHRIs and HRDs, it was decided that the summit should be repeated on a biannual basis. This can serve as a best practice for other networks.

Reflecting on the obstacles encountered in collaborating with NHRIs, participants pointed at NHRIs' lack of independence, the lack of accountability mechanisms, and the need for more transparency in the appointment of Commissioners. Another challenge that emerged is NHRIs' lack of structure, funding, capacity, and awareness on the situation of HRDs, which affect their ability to interact with civil society.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- NHRIs should self-identify as HRDs;
- The ACHPR should make a comprehensive assessment of the status NHRIs in Africa;
- Commissioners should be appointed in a transparent manner to represent different groups in society;
- HRDs should seek to establish platforms for constructive and constant dialogue between NHRIs and civil society, for example through the development of Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) between HRD coalitions and NHRIs;
- A defender's help desk should be established at NHRIs; and
- Potential key areas of cooperation between NHRIs and HRDs can be:
 - » The development of national laws for the protection of HRDs;
 - » The development of joint submissions concerning regional and international human rights framework;
 - » The reform of restrictive laws, such as anti-terrorism laws, which limit the work of CSOs and NHRIs;
 - » The organisation of joint human rights events to highlight the situation of HRDs;
 - » The elaboration of legislative and policy briefs for parliamentarians and decision-makers from a human rights perspective; and
 - » The joint participation in UPR processes.

KEY DOCUMENTS

- The Marrakech Declaration: Expanding the civic space and promoting and protecting human rights defenders, with a specific focus on women: The role of national human rights institutions" (October 2018)
- The United Nations Paris Principles: Principles relating to the status of national institutions" (1993)

AFRICANDEFENDERS' RENEWED VISION



Memory Bandera

Director of Programs and
Administration,
DefendDefenders



Cristina Orsini

Hub Cities
Development Associate,
AfricanDefenders



Joseph Bikanda

Coordinator,
AfricanDefenders

The second day of the AfricanDefenders' Convention kicked off by AfricanDefenders' Secretariat highlighting achievements and challenges in the implementation of the KAPA.

Memory Bandera, Director of Programs and Administration at DefendDefenders, a sub-regional HRD network hosting AfricanDefenders, recalled the main action points outlined in the KAPA and the categories of most-at-risk HRDs it recognises.

WHO ARE THE MOST-AT-RISK HRDs ON THE AFRICAN CONTINENT?

- **Women HRDs and HRDs working on women's rights (WHRDs);**
- **HRDs and journalists working to end impunity and high level corruption;**
- **HRDs in situations of armed conflict;**
- **HRDs working on elections or electoral systems;**
- **HRDs working on minority rights;**
- **HRDs working on natural resources, extractives, the environment, and land rights.**

She gave an overview of the funds secured by AfricanDefenders over the last eight years, 89 percent of which have been used for programme work. Bandera also highlighted AfricanDefenders' efforts to support the development of sub-regional networks, outlining major achievements since the adoption of the KAPA.

AFRICANDEFENDERS' ACHIEVEMENTS

- **70+** HRDs at risk received emergency support
- **6** Ubuntu Hub Cities for the relocation of HRDs at risk established
- **4** sub-regional network receiving continued capacity development support
- **15** HRDs or CSOs recognised with the Shield Awards
- **14** sessions of ACHPR attended with delegations of HRDs and continuous engagement with ACHPR and its special mechanisms
- **1** office in Geneva to bring HRDs' voices to the UN Human Rights Council
- Pools of security management and digital security trainers created
- Increased network visibility (new website, newsletter..)

As explained by Bandera, such achievements cannot come without challenges, including securing long-term funding for a growing initiative. Furthermore, AfricanDefenders has been operating in the volatile political landscape of the African continent, with continuous changes in sub-regional situations, which can affect the working environment of members, collaborators, and beneficiaries. Moreover, HRD protection comes with several challenges, including managing HRDs' expectations and donors' requirements.

The overview of AfricanDefenders' achievements and challenges was followed by an in-depth discussion on the Ubuntu Hub Cities initiative, AfricanDefenders' relocation mechanism for HRDs at risk. Cristina Orsini, Hub Cities Development Associate, explained the concepts at the core of the initiative as well as how it functions in practice. Inspired by similar city-based relocation initiatives in Europe, the Ubuntu Hub Cities initiative was born from the recognition that African HRDs can find safety on their own continent, with a lower exposure to cultural displacement and integration barriers, and the possibility of continuing their human rights activism closer to home. Relocation remains a measure of last resort for HRDs who are forced to leave their country to find refuge, but with the Ubuntu Hub Cities initiative it can be done in a comprehensive and flexible manner aimed at preventing displaced HRDs from finding themselves in limbo. Indeed, through a diverse set of partnership with local organisations in each hub city, the initiative aims to provide relocated HRDs with opportunities to enhance their well-being while enriching their experience of human rights activism through educational and professional placements. As of the official launch of the initiative in February 2019, AfricanDefenders counts 6 hub cities: Kampala, Tunis, Abidjan, Cape Town, Johannesburg, and Pretoria.

Bandera and Orsini's presentation was followed by a lively discussion on the future of AfricanDefenders.

DISCUSSION POINTS:

- **AfricanDefenders should explore the possibility of expanding the Ubuntu Hub Cities initiative to a lusophone city and to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, for engagement with AU organs and international organisations;**
- **The establishment of new hub cities should be based on thorough assessments, including immigration requirements and opportunities for social integration;**
- **Each application under the Ubuntu Hub Cities is assessed on a case by case basis, and placement is flexible according to the HRD's specific needs;**
- **Network members should raise awareness about the Ubuntu Hub Cities initiative;**
- **AfricanDefenders should reflect on the Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa (also known as the African refugee convention) in relation to the Ubuntu Hub Cities initiative;**
- **AfricanDefenders' presence in Geneva should be utilised to better connect regional and international advocacy efforts; and**
- **Physical and mental well-being of HRDs and staff are critical aspects of AfricanDefenders' work. DefendDefenders' artistic therapy approach can be taken as an example by other sub-regions to strengthen psychosocial support mechanisms.**

NEEDS ASSESSMENT OF NETWORKS & COALITIONS



Stanley Wobusobozi

Monitoring and
Evaluation Expert,
DefendDefenders

To provide a starting point for an evidence-based discussion on strategies for strengthening AfricanDefenders and its members in the future, Stanley Wobusobozi, Monitoring and Evaluation Expert, presented the results of a needs assessment conducted with sub-regional networks and coalitions. The assessment aimed at evaluating the status of existing coalitions and sub-regional networks to provide a basis for support, mentorship, and growth, and thus inform AfricanDefenders' planning process. The assessment was disseminated through an online questionnaire which collected 18 responses.

The assessment looked at the functionality of the network/coalition's secretariat, membership, staff capacity, advocacy capacity, institutionalisation, communication, and visibility.

Some of the key challenges highlighted by respondents were:

- **Networks/coalitions do not have enough staff members to implement activities;**
- **Networks/coalitions' staff lack relevant skills;**
- **Networks/coalitions face challenges in fundraising, especially for long-term support; and**
- **Capacity building and mentorship is needed particularly in the fields of psychosocial support mechanisms, monitoring, documentation, and reporting (MDR), and fundraising.**



REVIEWING THE KAMPALA PLAN OF ACTION

The review of the KAPA was conducted by participants in a collaborative manner, building on the presentation of AfricanDefenders' challenges and achievements, the result of the needs assessment of networks and coalitions, as well as discussions on improving engagement with the African human rights system. At the end of the second day of the convention, participants were divided in four groups to critically look at the KAPA in relation to the current needs of HRDs in Africa, to update the vision that will guide AfricanDefenders for the next ten years. The groups respectively discussed issues of partnership and membership, capacity building, advocacy, and HRD protection.

The amendments and recommendations that emerged from each group were integrated into a working draft that was collectively reviewed by participants. This participatory process led to the consolidation of the Kampala Plan of Action + 10 (KAPA10), which was unanimously adopted on the third day of the convention.



THE KAPA +10

Kampala Plan of Action for Human Rights Defenders African Human Rights Defenders Convention Zanzibar, Tanzania, 12-14 June 2019

The Kampala Plan of Action for Human Rights Defenders (KAPA +10), was adopted on 14 June 2019 in Zanzibar, Tanzania. KAPA+10 is a follow up to the Kampala Plan of Action for Human Rights Defenders (KAPA) adopted on 23 April 2009 in Kampala, Uganda at the “Johannesburg +10 All Africa Human Rights Defenders Conference,” organised by Defend-Defenders.

The convention organised by the Pan-African Human Rights Defenders Network (AfricanDefenders) reflected on the progress and achievements made since the adoption of the Kampala Plan of Action for Human Rights Defenders in 2009. The Convention brought together regional and sub-regional networks, coalitions, country focal points, and members of National Human Rights Institutions, the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights, and the African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights.

The African Human Rights Defenders Convention :

- 1. Welcomes the establishment of AfricanDefenders** as an umbrella network dedicated to supporting human rights defenders (HRDs) across the African continent, hosted by the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project (DefendDefenders) in Kampala, Uganda, and a Steering Committee representing both sub-regional networks of human rights defenders and thematic focal points.
- 2. Notes with satisfaction** the progress made by AfricanDefenders under the leadership of its Chairperson and DefendDefenders to enhance the protection of HRDs and their rights across the continent, especially the outstanding innovation establishing the Ubuntu Hub Cities initiative as a medium and long term support mechanism for HRDs within the continent.
- 3. Urges continued collaboration** to reinforce the work of sub-regional networks, national coalitions, and key interest groups.
- 4. Reiterates the composition of the Steering Committee as follows:**
 - The Cairo Institute for Human Rights. as the host of the North African Human Rights Defenders Network (assisted by the Tunisian League of Human Rights);
 - The East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network (hosted by DefendDefenders);
 - The West African Human Rights Defenders Network;
 - The Southern African Human Rights Defenders Network (hosted by the International

Commission of Jurists Africa Regional Programme;

- The Central African Human Rights Defenders Network; and
- The representatives of key interest groups identified as requiring specific protection due to their unique vulnerabilities: women HRDs, HRDs working on sexual orientation and gender identity issues, journalists fighting impunity and corruption, HRDs working in armed conflict areas, HRDs working on election processes, HRDs working on extractive industries, natural resources and land rights, and a representative of the Ubuntu Hub Cities initiative.

The mandate given to AfricanDefenders under the KAPA+10 is as follows:

5. Provide technical assistance to existing sub-regional networks and national coalitions based on their needs:

- Conduct a needs assessment and strengthen the institutional capacity of the sub-regional networks and national coalitions** (establishment of national coalitions where they do not exist);
- Design a plan to strengthen sub-regional HRD networks and national coalitions**, with a focus on revitalising the network in North Africa;
- Create a guide** on the functions (mandate and activities) of regional human rights networks (based on best practices);
- Develop a clear partnership** between the Secretariat and sub-regional networks, and between sub-regional networks and coalitions;
- Coordinate with staff designated by each sub-regional network to enhance **safe communication among networks**;
- Develop early warning methods and a response system** with clear indicators; and
- Enhance the visibility** of the work of the sub-regional networks and national coalitions.

6. Undertake regular assessments of HRDs' needs in Africa to inform interventions:

- The five sub-regional networks in collaboration with their members or with national coalitions of HRDs will **carry out systematic monitoring and documentation of the situation of HRDs** at the national level on a bi-annual basis;
- National reports will feed into regional regular trend analysis** which, in turn, will be used to ensure that AfricanDefenders interventions remain up-to-date;
- Strengthen collaboration with the special mechanisms of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights to enhance the protection of human rights defenders in Africa.

7. Enhance collaboration of HRDs with regional and international mechanisms:

- A. **Develop continental advocacy strategies and campaigns** on key issues identified by the needs assessment;
- B. **Enhance collaboration between urban and grassroots HRDs;**
- C. Develop and design proactive efforts and measures aimed at strengthening collaboration between state and non-state actors identified as potential partners in the promotion of the rights of HRDs;
- D. Build strong, effective, and sustainable alliances with international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other pan-African NGOs;
- E. **Develop memoranda of understanding** with organs and institutions of the African Human Rights System to position AfricanDefenders as a continental and global partner for the protection of HRDs; and
- F. **Aim at developing a reliable database** to systematically report and engage with regional and international mechanisms on the protection of HRDs.

8. Strengthen the capacity of sub-regional networks and national coalitions:

- A. **Build their capacity and enhance their protection mechanisms**, including the drafting and dissemination of a manual based on best practices (systematic information sharing; innovative approaches to circumventing the constraints of mechanisms);
- B. **Create expertise** on digital security, security management, and emergency protection within national coalitions and sub-regional networks, with a focus on prevention, and including specific strategies for contexts related to freedom of Association and Assembly as pertaining to HRDs;
- C. **Develop a mentorship plan and strategies on media and communication**, project management and fundraising, gender and sexual orientation, and documentation and data management; and
- D. **Strengthen and coordinate national coalitions and sub-regional networks advocacy activities** at both the regional and international level, including strategies to protect at-risk HRDs.

9. Enhance sub-regional networks and national coalitions' active use of and engagement with the regional and international human rights systems:

- A. **Support sub-regional network efforts to effectively engage the human rights mechanisms** at the national, regional, and international level;
- B. Widely disseminate the United Nations Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms; and the manual on the use of these mechanisms described above;
- C. Support sub-regional networks to conduct strategic litigation and engage with relevant stakeholders involved in strategic litigation;

- D. Help sub-regional networks and national coalitions by:
- i. Guiding them in preparing and submitting reports and appeals for communications on the situation of HRDs with the support of international partners that have extensive knowledge in this field;
 - ii. Enhancing national coalitions and sub-regional networks' involvement with the african human rights mechanisms and the United Nations Human Rights Council special procedures both in a formal and informal manner;
 - iii. Ensuring participation of HRDs at the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, as well as the United Nations Human Rights Council to advocate for the rights of HRDs and to promote the participation of national coalitions and sub-regional networks;
 - iv. Supporting efforts by sub-regional networks to enhance the capacity of national coalitions in their advocacy activities aimed at pushing for country visits, helping to create space for an active collaboration of civil society with the African human rights mechanisms and the United Nations Human Rights Council special procedures;
 - v. Verifying that there is an active follow-up on cases taken up by the African human rights mechanisms and United Nations Special Procedures;
 - vi. Assisting national coalitions and sub-regional networks in making use of and disseminating the European Union Guidelines on the protection of human rights defenders throughout their region;
 - vii. Advocating throughout the continent for the creation of similar guidelines to protect HRDs by other States and regional entities;
 - viii. Assisting sub-regional networks in providing guidance to coalitions in engaging national human rights institutions;
 - ix. Following up on the implementation of decisions of regional and international human rights mechanisms; and
 - x. Supporting systematic reporting to the African human rights mechanisms and the United Nations Human Rights Council special procedures including advocacy on state reporting.
- E. AfricanDefenders and its Steering Committee members will seek to advocate for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to adopt a comprehensive strategy for the protection of HRDs through its field presence (Geneva Office); and

10. In collaboration with the sub-regional networks, ensure that States, intergovernmental organisations, and NGOs strengthen their assistance and protection to HRDs notably by:

- A. Providing protection grants (that include funds for evacuation and relocation, family support, psycho-medical assistance, and legal assistance);
- B. Developing medium and long-term strategies for comprehensive assistance to

HRDs;

- C. Continuing to strengthen and expand the Ubuntu Hub Cities initiative for the relocation of HRDs at high risk;
- D. Enhancing communication with HRDs (both through formal and informal means and forums) and promoting awareness of protection mechanisms among all HRDs, including marginalised and grassroots HRDs;
- E. Coordinating a mapping of protection actors across the continent, at the national, regional, and international level, which should be regularly updated;
- F. Supporting the establishment of structured alert and referral systems at the national, regional, and continental level;
- G. Providing support to build the protection capacity of newly formed coalitions and enhance the capacity of existing protection officers;
- H. Promoting the harmonisation of protection processes and procedures among network members to facilitate the swift exchange of information;
- I. Promoting the establishment of working groups at the national and sub-regional level, which should regularly hold case management meetings to improve coordination in the provision of services to HRDs and avoid duplication; and
- J. Working to ensure that cooperation partners actively support national coalitions and sub-regional networks enabling them to carry out their work.

11. Ensure continued engagement with African Union organs and progressive African states:

- A. Disseminate and contextualise the local implementation strategies of the European Union Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders based on their needs;
- B. Build on the African Union and European Union human rights dialogue platform to strengthen the protection of HRDs in Africa; and
- C. Establish a forum for constant interaction between HRDs and key relevant stakeholders (national authorities, African Union, and ACHPR mandate holders).

12. Actively develop:

- A. A comprehensive communication strategy incorporating alternative and new media;
- B. Terms of reference for its steering committee members underlining roles and responsibilities; and
- C. A five-year strategic plan based on this adopted KAPA + 10.

Adopted in Zanzibar, United Republic of Tanzania, 14 June 2019

CONCRETE STRATEGIES FOR MOVING FORWARD

Having agreed on the vision that is to guide AfricanDefenders for the years to come, participants closed the convention with a discussion on concrete strategies for the implementation of the KAPA+10. Emphasising the importance of continuous communication, exchange, and collaboration not only between network members, but also between the network and key human rights stakeholders in Africa and in the world, the following action points were outlined:

- **Improve the capacity of sub-regional networks to coordinate the work of national coalitions, in order to fill existing gaps and avoid duplication;**
- **Develop a five-year strategic plan to operationalise the vision enshrined in KAPA+10;**
- **Continue to ensure that sub-regional networks and national coalitions feed information to the NGO Forum for the consistent representation of HRDs' voices at the continental level;**
- **Convene a summit with HRDs, NHRIs, and the Network of African National Human Rights Institutions (NANHRI) to discuss implementation of the Marrakesh Declaration;**
- **Craft innovative approaches and work plans taking into consideration the use of digital space as a response to shrinking physical space; and**
- **Develop youth-focused interventions to ensure inclusiveness and continuity of a strong human rights movement on the continent.**



THE SHIELD AWARDS 2019



On 14 June 2019, to close the convention, AfricanDefenders acknowledged and awarded distinguished HRDs on the African continent for their contribution to the advancement of human rights. The winners, Beatrice Mtetwa, Felix Agbor Aniyor, Donald Deya, Fatou Jagne Senghor, and the Sudan Women Protest exude courage, perseverance, and selflessness amid their harsh and restrictive operating environments. The Shield Awards highlight the positive impact of their outstanding human rights work and their unwavery motivation.

The Shield Awards comprise five sub-regional awards and an overall Africa Shield Award. For this third edition, a jury composed of Hon. Commissioner Soyata Maiga, Hon. Commissioner Rémy Ngoy, Margaret Sekaggya, and Hassan Shire acknowledged that Sudan Women Protest, the winner of the North African Regional Award, should be granted the Africa Shield Award. Sudan Women Protest (represented by Walaa Salah) was the winner of the Africa Shield Award, and the North Africa Shield Award.

Sudan Women Protest is a community of Sudanese women activists at the frontline of the Sudanese revolution since December 2018 – bringing to the fore women’s voices and rights. “This is for all the women, mothers, daughters who stood up to mobilise the people and to ensure that their rights are not forgotten – we all stand in solidarity with them,” said Walaa Salah, a Sudanese activist living in Kenya, who received the award on behalf of the community, as the women activists on the ground were immobilised due to the violence. “I hope I will be able to travel to Sudan, and bring this shield as a testimony to your solidarity.”



Beatrice Mtetwa, Shield Award winner for Southern Africa, is a Zimbabwean human rights lawyer. Mtetwa has protected and promoted human rights for years, with a focus on HRDs and journalists, by representing on a pro-bono basis hundreds of HRDs facing harassment and abusive detention in Zimbabwe. As a founding member and board member of Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights, she continues to nurture leaders on the continent who carry her visionary mission of establishing a blue chip human rights lawyer's organisation in Zimbabwe that has made access to justice for HRDs facing judicial persecution a reality. "This means a lot, particularly because it comes from my fellow African HRDs," she said while receiving the award from Sekagya.



The Central African Shield Award was presented to **Felix Agbor Anyior Nkongho**, a Cameroonian lawyer and the founder of the Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa. He has provided pro bono legal services to hundreds of victims. While seeking social justice and equality in the Anglophone region of Cameroon, he was arrested, charged, and tried at a military tribunal for terrorism, rebellion to incite civil war, revolution, contempt against the State, and secession, which carries the death penalty. He was thrown into a cell with 12 alleged members of the Boko Haram terrorist group, later transferred to solitary confinement for 45 days, and was not allowed to attend his father's funeral. Today, he is documenting and reporting systematic human rights violations committed by both government security forces and the armed separatist groups in the Anglophone region of Cameroon.

"We - HRDs - defend the rights of others, so I thank you for protecting us", he said.



Fatou Jagne Senghor, Executive Director of Article 19 West Africa, received the Shield Award for West Africa for her engagement on freedom of expression and media freedom. The award recognises Senghor's long-standing human rights work in West Africa in general, and in The Gambia in particular. She plays an important role in regards to ensuring accountability on human rights violations, building the capacity of civil society, and strengthening the reforms in The Gambia. "Freedom of expression is increasingly under attack, and we need defenders like Fatou to protect us," emphasised George Morara, Commissioner of the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights, while handing Senghor her shield.



Donald Deya received the Shield Award for the East and Horn of Africa sub-region. Deya is an international human rights lawyer who represent and support victims of human rights abuses on the African continent. He represented numerous victims before the ACHPR, the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, the East African Court of Justice, and several national high courts. Deya is also the head of the Secretariat of the Pan African Lawyers Union (PALU), chair of the Boards of the Centre for Citizens' Participation on the African Union (CCPAU) and the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect (ICRtoP). He dedicated the award to all African HRDs who suffer from persecution.



Through their human rights work, the awardees have faced harassment, intimidation, arbitrary detention, and even death threats – but they have never abandoned their tenacious commitment to human rights protection and promotion. Expressing her appreciation to their efforts, Hon. Maiga said:

“I congratulate all the winners for their courage, and acknowledge the risks they take, and their strength that enables them to stand up for the rights of others.”

On a special note, Hassan Shire presented the Shield of Africa award to Hon. Commissioner Maiga Soyata. This special award is presented by AfricanDefenders to valuable dignitaries who have demonstrated longstanding contributions to protecting and promoting the rights of African citizens. Hon. Maiga dedicated 12 years of her life to protecting the rights of Africans across the continent, notably promoting the rights of women in Africa through the Maputo Protocol. “This is a coronation for her outstanding role in the protection of the rights of African citizens,” said Shire.



GUESTS OF HONOUR



Hon. Comm. Soyata Maiga
Chairperson, African Commission
on Human and Peoples' Rights



Hon. Justice Sylvain Ore
President, African Court on Human
and Peoples' Rights



Hon. Prof. Remy Ngoy Lumbu
Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders
and Focal Point on Reprisals in Africa



George Morara
Vice-chairman and Commissioner, Kenya
National Commission on Human Rights



Margaret Sekaggya
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AfricanDefenders Chairperson



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Executive Director, West Africa
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West Africa



Maximilienne Ngo Mbe

Executive Director, Central African
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Central Africa



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North Africa



Asmahan Hassen Abdeslam
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Nagaad



HRDs in armed conflict



Fatou Jagne Senghor
Executive Director,
Article 19 West Africa



**Journalists fighting impunity
and corruption**



Pedan Marthe Coulibaly
Coordinator, Coalition Ivoirienne des
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Hub Cities initiative



Pepe Julian Onziema
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HRDs working on SOGI issues



Sherifa Riahi
Director,
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Women HRDs

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AWARDEES

SUDAN WOMEN PROTEST

Sudan Women Protest
Women activists in Sudan

**North African &
Pan-African
Shield Awards**



Agbor Anyior Felix Nkongho
Lawyer and Executive Director, Centre for
Human Rights and Democracy in Africa



Central Africa Shield Award



Beatrice Mtetwa
Lawyer and Founding member,
Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights



Southern Africa Shield Award



Donald Deya
Chief Executive Officer,
Pan African Lawyers Union



East & Horn of Africa Shield Award



Fatou Jagne Senghor
Director,
Article 19 West Africa



West Africa Shield Award

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