

Kampala Plan of Action for Human Rights Defenders (KAPA+15)

African Human Rights Defenders Convention
Bishoftu, Ethiopia, from 15th to 17th February 2023

The Kampala Plan of Action for Human Rights Defenders (KAPA +15) was adopted on 17 February 2023 at Bishoftu, Ethiopia. KAPA+15 is a revised version of the Kampala Plan of Action for Human Rights Defenders (KAPA+10) adopted on 14 June in Zanzibar, Tanzania at the “Johannesburg +20 African Human Rights Defenders Convention,” organised by AfricanDefenders and DefendDefenders.

The African Human Rights Defenders Convention, organised by the Pan-African Human Rights Defenders Network AfricanDefenders, reflected on the human rights situation across Africa during the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, and decried the increasing violations and killings of Human Rights Defenders. The AfricanDefenders Convention also reflected on the progress and achievements made since the adoption of KAPA+10 in 2019. The AfricanDefenders Convention brought together regional and sub-regional networks, coalitions, country focal points, the Network of National Human Rights Institutions, the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights, and strategic and development partners

The African Human Rights Defenders Convention:

1. **Notes with satisfaction the exceptional progress made by AfricanDefenders** in setting standards and innovative protection mechanisms across the continent aiming at providing capacity development and resilience building to Human Rights Defenders (HRDs), including holistic protection mechanisms and leadership in strategic advocacy and policy development.
2. **Notes further** the leadership of its Chairperson, DefendDefenders, and its Steering Committee in innovatively developing strategies for the protection of HRDs across the continent, especially the establishment of the exceptional Ubuntu Hub Cities initiative that purposefully responds to the needs and realities of HRDs and provides medium and long-term support mechanisms, as well as social integration of relocated or exiled HRDs within the continent.
3. **Urges the continued collaboration** with National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) including through the Network of African National Human Rights

Institutions (NANHRI) 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;
- 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+15 is as follows:

1. **To conduct research, evidence-based advocacy, and impactful strategic litigation through:**

- a. Expanding **norm setting** at national, regional and international levels through strategic advocacy and litigation, and development of an advocacy and litigation strategy which outlines and prioritises the development of enabling laws, and the pushing back against restrictive and oppressive policies and practices;
- b. Establishing **a network of pro-bono lawyers** to support AfricanDefenders, national coalitions and sub-regional networks in strategic litigation, and build strategic linkages with other litigators on the continent;
- c. Engaging in ratification, domestication, implementation and accountability **campaigns for human rights instruments**;
- d. Developing **advocacy and communication strategies and toolkits** that include continental campaigns on key issues identified by the needs assessment, including the impact of elections in Africa;
- e. Developing and design proactive efforts and measures aimed at

strengthening collaboration between **state and non-state actors** identified as potential partners in the promotion and protection of the rights of HRDs;

- f. Establishing a **forum for sustained interaction** between HRDs and key relevant stakeholders including national authorities, African Union organs and institutions, and ACHPR mandate holders, including strategic meetings and engagements before regional and continental summits;
- g. Providing **capacity development of HRDs on how to engage** with AU and regional mechanisms, including training of trainers;
- h. Facilitating the **participation of HRDs** at existing continental advocacy spaces like the NGO Forum, GIMAC, High Level Dialogue, women and youth pre-forums, expert meetings and various sub-regional fora;
- i. Developing **strategic research and human rights monitoring tools** to enable situational assessments that inform targeted and purposeful responses;
- j. Conducting research that analyzes **global political, economic, social and normative trends** that affect African HRDs and WHRDs and producing an annual report for HRDs situation in the continent;

2. To ensure enhanced and continued engagement with African Union organs and progressive African states, through:

- a. Developing Memoranda of Understanding with organs and institutions of the **African Human Rights System (AHRs)** to position AfricanDefenders as a continental and global partner for the protection of HRDs;
- b. Continuing to engage and support the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), including:
 - i. the mandate of the **Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders and Reprisals in Africa**, to enhance their resolutions, recommendations, and guidance to and interactions with States to reinforce the protection of HRDs, including protection measures and litigation at the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) on behalf of HRDs, and to finalise various guidelines e.g. on Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) and freedom of association and assembly, to inform state practice and the African Declaration on Human Rights Defenders;

- ii. the **Working Group on Death Penalty, Extra-Judicial, Summary or Arbitrary Killings and Enforced Disappearances in Africa** to develop annual reporting on killings and disappearances of HRDs;
- c. Advocating for the ACHPR to develop a **sustained monitoring framework for indexing violations and reprisals** against HRDs and civil society actors on the continent, in order to better address emerging trends and early warning signifiers, and craft targeted responses, in collaboration with HRDs and civil society;
- d. Advocating for strong protections for HRDs within **existing AU mechanisms and frameworks** like the African Governance Architecture (AGA), the Human Rights Strategy for Africa (HRSA), the reporting system for the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG); as well as in their partnerships with other bodies like the Joint AU-EU Strategy (JAES) and the AU-EU Human Rights Dialogue;
- e. Developing a rating of **human rights friendly countries** on the continent, including their participation and voting patterns in regional and international fora and leverage their good offices towards enhancing protections for HRDs;
- f. Disseminating and contextualizing **local implementation strategies** of regional and international instruments focused on the protection of HRDs, including the European Union (EU) Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders based on their needs;
- g. Advocating for the Office of the **United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights** to adopt a comprehensive strategy for the protection of HRDs through AfricanDefenders field presence (Geneva Office).

3. To provide capacity development and resilience building for sub-regional networks and national coalitions, through:

- a. Conducting a capacity needs assessment and building capacity and enhancing **protection mechanisms**, including the drafting and dissemination of a manual based on best practices, and systematic information sharing on innovative approaches, to circumventing challenges and constraints of these protection mechanisms;
- b. Creating 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 related to freedom of Association and Assembly for HRDs;

- c. Providing **digital and physical toolkits and equipment** to aid the safety and security of HRDs/WHRDs;
- d. Developing **online training platforms** and harnessing the opportunity of digital tools and new technologies, including gamified curriculum (online didactic games) and open source resources, for capacitation, security and networking;
- e. Developing a **mentorship plan and strategies** on media and communication, project management and fundraising, gender and sexual orientation, and documentation and data management;
- f. Strengthening and coordinating **advocacy activities** by national coalitions and sub-regional networks and active use and engagement of regional and international human rights mechanisms and mechanisms for protection of at-risk HRDs; through training on existing mechanisms; reflections on African instruments on elections, governance, peace and security; supporting the submission of alternative reports; sharing of information on upcoming sessions and summits; and advocating for more organisations to have formal collaborative statuses, including memberships and observer status;
- g. Strengthening and coordinating **communication within the network**, and mechanisms for solidarity and mutual support whenever issues arise;
- h. Developing a **compendium of best practice** of strategic engagements eg with NHRIs, that can replicated and/or adapted to different contexts;
- i. Enhancing collaboration between **urban and grassroots HRDs**;
- j. Establishing **peer-to-peer** networking and collaboration, periodic exchanges and cross national and regional support networks;
- k. Development of contextual **risk management and mitigation** strategies;
- l. Developing **clear referrals mechanisms** between local and sub-regional network;
- m. **Translating all working documents** into French, Portuguese and Arabic;

4. To ensure holistic protection of HRDs and WHRDs, through:

- a. Conducting a **scan of the working environment** of HRDs and WHRDs to ensure targeted and purposeful responses and interventions that take into account specific vulnerabilities and intersections including LGBTIQ+ HRDs, WHRDs and HRDs with disability;
- b. Developing and enhancing **comprehensive and inclusive prevention strategies** to address threats and risks, and prevent attacks and reprisals against HRDs and WHRDs, that overlays physical, legal and digital protection, with broader advocacy, engagement and solidarity modalities;

- c. Developing a **roadmap or directory for standard procedures** that can be diligently and speedily enabled for HRDs or WHRDs facing threats and/or reprisals;
- d. Developing **early warning and response systems** and modalities;
- e. Ensuring that **relocation measures** are properly planned, contextual and targeted; guarantee the continuity of relocation; responding to the immediate and longer term needs of the individual HRD or WHRD; and capitalizing on their skills and experiences during relocation;
- f. Developing **model policies and mechanisms** for protection for the continent which can be contextualized nationally and regionally;

5. To strengthen strategic partnerships and collaboration, through:

- a. Building **strong, effective, and sustainable alliances** with regional and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) including pan-African NGOs, with a view to fortifying solidarity and the protection of HRDs in contexts that are increasingly violent;
- b. **Advocating against restrictions** in accessing EU institutions and countries including visa restrictions;
- c. Conducting advocacy for more **robust resource mobilization** from development partners to ensure adequate resourcing including core funding and security and risk management financing for HRDs and civil society organisations, in order to enhance protection and sustainability; as well as provide technical and practical support;
- d. Strengthening relationships with **National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs)** and the Network of African National Human Rights Institutions (NANHRI) including through the development of memoranda of understanding at national and regional levels; open dialogue; expanding space for participation of civil society actors in NHRI processes including nomination and appointment of commissioners and budgeting; sharing of information; joint research and monitoring; joint advocacy for policy development and review for protection of HRDs as well as establishment of NHRIs where they do not exist and strengthening of those that exist especially in conflict affected areas; exchange of expertise; development of mechanisms including online platforms for reporting violation against HRDs; joint proposals and donor engagements; and establishment of a focal point for the protection of HRDs;

6. To ensure institutional development and movement building, through:

- a. Developing a **common operational framework** and provide technical and financial support for National and Regional Networks and Coalitions;

- b. Developing robust **accountability mechanisms and reporting procedures** for the supported work and resources to National and Regional Networks and Coalitions;
- c. **Increasing visibility** for the work and plight of HRDs and WHRDs including a comprehensive communication strategy incorporating alternative and new media, and communication and digital tools;
- d. Secure **sustainable resourcing models** for protection mechanisms including establishing a fund for providing national and sub-regional networks with adequate emergency funds to ensure effective responses and mobilizing resources from alternative sources, including African donors;
- e. Establishing structures and mechanisms for **mental wellbeing and psychosocial support** for HRDs and WHRDs;
- f. Evaluating and monitoring **Ubuntu Hub Cities** including determination of safer cities and more resource mobilization for the Hubs;
- g. Developing **self-governing modalities** for transparency and accountable conduct including a model code of conduct for African HRDs;
- h. Establishing coalitions where there are no coalitions and strengthening and operationalising of existing coalitions;
- i. Developing a five-year strategic plan based on this adopted KAPA +15;

7. To respond specifically to the situation of North African HRDs and WHRDs, through:

- a. Developing inclusive **protection, emergency, legal assistance, risk assessment and mitigation** strategy per country to better understand and respond to the dynamics of the specific countries in the region, utilizing a gendered lens; and support individual institutions in the development of their own security plans;
- b. Conducting a **mapping of organisations and networks** that can be engaged including as focal points per country and in the region with a view to setting up a North African Network with regular convenings;
- c. Increasing **visibility of HRDs and WHRDs**, capitalizing on their experiences, and highlighting the particular and contextual ways in which they experience violations, attacks and reprisals;
- d. **Capacity building** on physical, legal and digital security, mental wellbeing, advocacy, case management, gender mainstreaming, and protection procedures, documents, and available services in the 3 main languages of the region (Arabic, French and English); and peer-to-peer networking and learning exchanges;
- e. Organising **trainings and simulations** on regional and international mechanisms, including the African Human Rights Systems (AHRS), for North African HRDs and WHRDs to enable them to use the mechanisms for

increased protection, and for lawyers in the region;

- f. Developing **technical and financial support programs** for HRDs and WHRDs as well as their families and organisations working with them, including including programs for psychosocial support, rehabilitation, and motivation.

Adopted in Bishfotu, Ethiopia, 17 February 2023