



Supporting Women Human Rights Defenders

A Conservative
Human Rights
Commission Report

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Some leaders are born women

Unknown

CONSERVATIVE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

The Conservative Human Rights Commission is a body established by the Shadow Foreign Secretary to highlight international human rights concerns, and to inform, advise and develop the party's foreign policy by making human rights a priority. The CHRC works on the principle that freedom and human dignity should be at the heart of foreign policy. For further information see www.conservativehumanrights.com.

Following the appointment in 2009 of Tony Baldry as the new Chairman, a Working Group was set up to publish this report on 'Supporting Women Human Rights Defenders':

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FOREWORD

Women human rights defenders (WHRDs) are some of the most effective human rights campaigners active today. They are the women who stand up to fight the brutal regimes, injustices and human rights abuses that lead to conflict, global instability and untold suffering. WHRDs face many of the same threats as male human rights defenders, but they also face further risks and challenges. Their campaigning often comes at a very high price as, all too often, by speaking out they are causing themselves and their families to be brutally targeted.

The Conservative Human Rights Commission (CHRC) recognises the value of WHRDs in the international struggle to eradicate human rights abuses and promote peace and stability. This report addresses the issues for WHRDS, recognises the additional risks and threats that they may have to confront and seeks to establish exactly how the UK can better support their work.

In approaching the issue of how the UK can better support WHRDs, it is very important it is not seen as simply a 'women's issue'. Women today remain the carers of children and the elderly in every culture. In this role, they strongly influence the future not only of their children and families but ultimately also their societies. As a result, WHRDs offer unexpected potential for sustainable reform of the social, economic and political fabric of their countries.

It proved to be impossible to isolate the situation of WRHDs from their cultural status as women and so this report, while acknowledging the wide variation in women's status from country to country, attempts to briefly consider how the position that women occupy in their society, culture, and community contributes to their greater potential vulnerability. By standing up to defend their rights and the rights of others, WHRDs frequently challenge the societal norms in their culture, and, as a result, face stigmatization and threat from inside their communities, sometimes even from within their own families. This state of affairs reflects the fact that there is still no country in the world today where women are socially, economically and politically equal and that *'violence against women and girls continues unabated in every continent, country and culture'* (UN Secretary General Ban-Ki Moon).

I was delighted to be asked by Tony Baldry MP to Chair this group and I have been enormously lucky to have had some outstanding people who have given their valuable time to come and serve on it. I would like to thank them all, but especially I would like to thank Nicola Blackwood for being such an excellent Rapporteur and Vice Chairman; Georgina Butler and Jean Geran who have helped us to write this report by contributing sections; Rosemary Hadow for giving the group logistical back-up and support and to Bella Mates for helping with research.

We held two sessions of public hearings to take oral evidence at the House of Commons on 8 and 9 March 2010. I would particularly like to thank all those who have contributed evidence, both as panellists at the hearings and also those who submitted written evidence, their input has been

invaluable and, for some, a painful reminder of what they had suffered. The report has been based on the oral and written evidence received and a list of all organisations and individuals approached can be found at the end of the report. The recommendations that follow are to be submitted to the Shadow Foreign Secretary with the express purpose of helping a future Conservative Government play a leading role in supporting WHRDs, wherever they are at risk.

Certain fundamental principles form the foundation of the arguments and conclusions of this report. Firstly, that human rights violations are not only consequences of conflict but are also early warning signs of instability, potentially indicating or even catalyzing impending conflict. That as such, the campaign against human rights abuses is not only an international development concern but also a key security priority. Secondly, that 'no country can boast of being free unless its women are free.'¹ And finally, that women play a pivotal role in forming and reforming their communities and cultures.

Lastly, and most importantly, we hope that this report will not give the message that WHRDs should just be regarded as victims. Although some WHRDs may be raped, beaten and tortured, these women are courageous and determined. Through the brave and exceptional role they perform, they transform and reshape their societies helping create sustainable peace and more stable societies. The impression that we hope will be left with you is that they are one of the best resources for the protection and promotion of human rights across the world and therefore should be viewed as valuable agents for change.



Fiona Hodgson
25th March 2010

¹ Tambo, Oliver, former president of the ANC, South Africa quoted in speech by Dr Nkosazana Dlamini, then South African Health Minister, to the 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing, 6 Sept 1995: <http://www.un.org/esa/gopher-data/conf/fwcw/conf/gov/950910174126.txt>

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SUMMARY

'Human rights defender' is a term for people who, by non-violent means, promote and strive for protection of human rights. Often putting themselves and their families at risk, human rights defenders are to be found in every culture, country and continent, defending rights of groups and individuals across the spectrum of social, economic, civil and political rights.

Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) is a term applied to female human rights defenders.

There are of course many men doing tremendous work in defence of women's rights and women human rights defenders but as men, in many cases they do not face the same cultural and physical opposition as women. WHRDs can be targeted simply because they are women challenging the *status quo* or because they are standing up specifically for women's rights or other culturally sensitive rights.

Female human rights defenders face different challenges to male human rights defenders and these challenges often put them at greater risk. WHRDs face different kinds of abuse, more severe abuse and, because they are more likely to have dependents, may well be unable to flee persecution. All of this means that WHRDs face double disadvantage: they are targeted because they are women – an 'easy target' – and, when the abuse comes, their status in their families, communities and legal system means they are less able to protect themselves.

Evidence to the CHRC yielded examples of WHRDs who had been abducted, tortured, sexually and physically abused, whose families had been brutally attacked and threatened, who had been labelled as 'whores' and 'witches' and been ostracised and stigmatised within their families and communities as a result. In the words of Amnesty International, 'Whilst many human rights defenders endure risks on a spectrum of gravity, women human rights defenders, by the nature of their gender and the particular rights they defend, confront additional risks that can carry the gravest of consequences.'

It became clear that the greater risks facing WHRDs today are in large part due to their status as women within their own societies. The statistics about where women stand in the world today make sobering reading:

- ***Women make up 70% of the world's poor***
- ***There is a global pay gap of 22%***
- ***Women perform 66% of the world's work, 50% of the food and earn 10% of the income but own 1% of the world's property***
- ***82 million girls in developing countries will be married before their 18th birthday***
- ***Women are the world's primary carers for children, the elderly and the sick***
- ***Women make up two thirds of the world's 1 billion illiterate population***
- ***Half a million women die a year from pregnancy complications***
- ***In most countries women are underrepresented in decision making positions***

At the same time though, the submitted evidence also yielded examples of the impressive range and impact of WHRD activities. WHRDs are to be found defending all kinds of rights in all kinds of circumstances, including everything from rights to political participation, legal rights to property, to be protected from torture and state abuse and to receive a fair trial, to education for boys *and* girls and, of course, to a whole range of women's rights such as, better access to maternal healthcare, protection from female genital mutilation, sexual and domestic violence, to name but a few. The report which follows highlights just some examples of the achievements of WHRDs that were presented to the Working Group, ranging from the Colombian journalist, Jineth Bedoya, who has been abducted, tortured and raped for daring to expose corruption and arms dealing by the state to Ellen Sirleaf-Johnson who became the first female African head of state and immediately passed strong laws criminalising rape and protecting victims. Appendix II contains more details of WHRDs with links to their backgrounds, campaigning activities and achievements.

While the UK Government undoubtedly provides effective support for many HRDs, including WHRDs, through the efforts and programmes of FCO and DFID in country teams the CHRC does have recommendations that could strengthen the UK's efforts to support WHRDs whether unilaterally or through our role in the EU and UN. Chief among these is to recognise that WHRD face special challenges and need targeted support and to make sure that HRDs are able to find out what support is available to them. **The full list of recommendations can be found on page 33.**

Finally, the Working Group was particularly struck by the significant role which WHRDs have to play in achieving the UK's foreign policy aims, including meeting our commitment to the Millennium Development Goals and conflict prevention and resolution. As such, WHRDs become a valuable resource for the UK as we seek to achieve our human rights goals internationally and, as such, their protection is in our own interests just as much as theirs. Without engaging women as allies in our international development work, we cannot hope to achieve any of the Millennium Development Goals by the target date of 2015.

If there is one single message that this report aims to convey, it is that the women we have met and heard about have proved beyond a doubt that with all the odds stacked against them, WHRDs are not just victims, they are effective agents for change.

Who are Women Human Rights Defenders?

'Women in all parts of the world are not able to exercise their human rights and they suffer violence and discrimination.' **UN Secretary General**

Human Rights Defenders

'Human rights defender' is a term used to describe people who promote and strive for the protection human rights. Human rights defenders are identified, and all too often put at risk, by what they do.

To be a human rights defender, a person can act to address any human rights abuse on behalf of individuals or groups. Human rights defenders seek the promotion and protection of civil and political rights as well as the promotion, protection and realization of economic, social and cultural rights.

Article 1 of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders (1999) states that, 'Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to promote and to strive for the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels.' Article 12 requires that a human rights defender must accept and respect two principles: the principle of universality and the principle of non-violence. A person cannot be considered a human rights defender if he or she violates the rights of other groups and individuals. An activist who espouses violence also cannot be covered by the Declaration.²

In essence human rights defenders campaign to uphold democracy, freedom and liberty and every year human rights defenders are jailed, silenced, 'disappear' and killed.

Women Human Rights Defenders

Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) is a term applied to female human rights defenders.

There are of course many men doing tremendous work in defence of women's rights and women human rights defenders but as men, in many cases they do not face the same cultural and physical opposition as women. WHRDs can be targeted simply because they are women challenging the *status quo* or because they are standing up specifically for women's rights or other culturally sensitive rights. As a result this report will focus exclusively on the risks faced by women across the world who are at risk because they are standing up against human rights abuses.

As Margaret Sekaggya, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights Defenders, has stated, women face increased risk of rights abuses from their own communities, are more vulnerable because of their role as primary carer for dependents and far more likely to be targets of sexual or gender based violence.³ At the same time, despite these challenges, Amnesty identifies women as most

² Full text at: [http://www.unhcr.ch/huridocda/huridoca.nsf/\(Symbol\)/A.RES.53.144.En](http://www.unhcr.ch/huridocda/huridoca.nsf/(Symbol)/A.RES.53.144.En) (visited 3 March 2010).

³ *Promotion and Protection of all Human Rights, Civil, Political, Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, including the Right to Development* (Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Margaret Sekaggya): A/HRC/13/22, Dec 2009. See at <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/defenders/docs/A.HRC.13.22.pdf> (visited 23 March 2010).

likely to achieve positive social change within their communities, often driven by circumstances: wanting better education for their children and safety for their families, fighting for justice for a ‘disappeared’ relative or for a way to escape domestic abuse.⁴

Women human rights defenders have a vital role to play across the fields of economic, social and cultural rights and civil and political rights. They have access to often marginalised groups, such as other women and children, that male campaigners may not be able to access and have been proven to contribute significantly the long term stability of peace-building efforts.⁵

What makes Women Human Rights Defenders more vulnerable?

Whilst many human rights defenders endure risks on a spectrum of gravity, women human rights defenders, by the nature of their gender and the particular rights they defend, confront additional risks that can carry the gravest of consequences.

Amnesty International

*‘Societies where women are safe, where women are empowered to realize their aspirations and move their communities forward—are healthier and more stable societies.’ **Senator John Kerry***

Female human rights defenders face different challenges to male human rights defenders. WHRDs face different kinds of abuse, more severe abuse and, because they are more likely to have dependents, may well be unable to flee persecution. All of this means that WHRDs face double disadvantage: they are targeted because they are women – an ‘easy target’ – and, when the abuse comes, their status in their families, communities and legal system means they are less able to protect themselves.

The very act of a woman publicly challenging the authority of the state or community leaders on any issue runs counter to religious or social traditions in many cultures, often dangerously so. In that environment, where a woman does question the *status quo* her own position within that society means that she runs the risk of being ostracized or threatened not only by those she is challenging but also by her own family and community.⁶

It is well recorded that WHRDs are significantly more likely to be victims of sexual and gender-based violence, less likely to find protection from police or the justice system, and are particularly vulnerable to ‘whisper’ or smear campaigns. While in the UK to be labelled as a ‘snake,’ ‘witch’, or ‘whore’ would be unpleasant, in some countries the effect can be life-threatening and many WHRDs are today facing severe ostracism, exile, death threats or even criminal charges as a result of this kind of campaigning.⁷

This stigmatization and repression in the private and work lives of WHRDs generates greater vulnerability, puts other family and community members at risk, and has the effect of inhibiting the work not only of that WHRD but also of others who see her treatment as a warning →

4 Amnesty International: *Evidence to the Conservative Human Rights Commission – Supporting Women Human Rights Defenders* (January 2010), p.3.

5 See UNSC Res 1325. Full text at: http://www.un.org/events/res_1325e.pdf (visited 4 March 2010).

6 Amnesty International: *ibid.*

7 For more see: <http://www.defendingwomen-defendingrights.org/contextualising.php> (visited 11 March 2010).

'Singular attacks on high profile women such as those in politics can have the powerful effect of silencing many, many more women before they even begin their work on human rights.' **Action Aid**



Prison is a constant threat for any human rights defender, male or female, but as a woman often is the primary caregiver of her children, her absence can be especially challenging to a family. Poor prison conditions can also have a particularly severe impact on women's health if they are pregnant or become so due to rape while incarcerated. In other cases, imprisoned women must endure forced abortions or watch their newborn baby be killed by prison guards.

WHRDs frequently operate in situations where they have significantly more limited access to justice than their male counterparts. The international human rights protection mechanisms like the working group on arbitrary detention, for example, may be the only recourse available to women as the legal systems in their own countries are often deficient and inaccessible.

Ni Mo Hlaing is a member of the National League for Democracy (NLD) the main opposition political party in Burma. She was given a five year sentence in March 2009 for her involvement in the Saffron Revolution of 2007 and efforts to assist victims after cyclone Nargis. During the Saffron Revolution she was badly beaten by security forces. "I don't even remember how many times I was beaten. The only thing I heard was 'Hit that bitch! Hit that bitch!' from the plainclothes security officials. My clothes were torn, my watch broken, my umbrella and sandals were lost there." In October 2009, the prison authorities contacted her family to inform them that Ni Mo Hlaing was very ill in prison. She had been demonstrating symptoms of typhoid fever and was steadily deteriorating. Ma Ni Mo Hlaing was administered gastric tablets and typhoid injections by the prison's medical authorities, but her situation did not improved, prompting the prison's resident doctor to qualify her condition as very serious. Ni Mo Hlaing's mother and sister were able to visit on 27 October 2009. Her sister said they cried together when she visited her. "Her face is very pale. She is skinny and has lost weight," she said. It is known that typhoid fever can be fatal when appropriate medical treatment is not provided.

Assistance Association of Political Prisoners (Burma), 8 March 2010

WHRDs often rely on international mechanisms to seek justice and gain international support. There may be few lawyers in a given country willing to represent any human rights defenders, but women particularly have challenges finding legal counsel. Legal expertise is often lacking in underdeveloped countries and is extremely limited when it comes to protecting women's rights and developing sound

family law. The lower number of women in higher education in some countries intensifies this problem for WHRD.



Rebiya Kadeer is a prominent human rights advocate and leader of the Uyghur people from Western China. She spent six years in a Chinese prison for standing up to the authoritarian regime. Ms. Kadeer was a well-known Uyghur businesswoman who was arrested on her way to meet with a US Congressional delegation, for sending newspaper clippings to her exiled husband and sentenced to eight years in prison for 'stealing state secrets'. After a global campaign for her freedom, Ms. Kadeer was finally released on March 17, 2005 and has been actively campaigning for the human rights of the Uyghur people since her release. Her family back in China continues to suffer as a result of her advocacy.

World Uyghur Congress

War and armed conflict has an especially heavy impact on women and children and presents special challenges for women seeking to defend human rights in the midst of conflict and refugee situations. Threats to livelihoods, an inability to work, lack of social protection, separation of families and prevalence of sexual violence make women human rights defenders working in conflict or post-conflict situations especially vulnerable.

The net outcome of this kind of repression is to prevent change, limit democracy and hinder the work of NGOs and the international community in their attempts to prevent human rights abuses and conflict.

This is what they do to them....

Ostracized. Threatened. SEXUALLY ASSAULTED. Smear campaigns. Exiled. Stigmatised. Family and community members threatened and attacked. Honour killing. forced sterilisation. HARASSED AT WORK. Domestic abuse. Imprisoned. babies and children shot in their arms. Kidnapped. Tortured. denied medical treatment. Raped. denied a fair trial. Sexual Slavery. detained without trial. Forced Labour. Followed. DENIED VISA. forced abortion. denied identity papers. Not Allowed To Travel. House arrest. unborn babies cut out of them. Beaten. BURNED. Female Genital Mutilation. Starved. denied access to education. Mutilated. denied legal representation. NEWBORN BABIES KILLED IN FRONT OF THEM. forced marriage. EVICTED. Stripped of property. Intentionally infected with HIV. Denied the right to vote. EXCLUDED FROM PUBLIC LIFE. Segregated. Marital rape. Trafficked. forced prostitution. Poisoned. Family members forced to watch or actually rape sisters, mothers and daughters. Weapons forced up women's vaginas. INFANT GIRLS AND ELDERLY WOMEN RAPED.

Where Women stand in the World Today...

'What we are learning around the world is that if women are healthy and educated, their families will flourish. If women are free from violence, their families will flourish. If women have a chance to work and earn as full and equal partners in society, their families will flourish. And when families flourish, communities and nations will flourish.' **Hilary Rodham Clinton**

There are still many countries of the world where women cannot safely speak out against their culture, their communities or their government; countries where poverty and inequality means women have less power, money, protection from violence and access to education and healthcare and where religious and social traditions seek to keep women out of the public sphere. Without the activities of human rights defenders who risk their lives to stand up for women's rights, these women are likely to remain voiceless and disenfranchised.

POVERTY

Women still make up a staggering **70% of the 1.2bn** people living in poverty.⁸

As employers tighten their belts in response to the global financial crisis, **women's wages** are often the first to be reduced. Women are already subject to a **global gender pay gap of 22 percent**⁹ and they are often the **first to lose their jobs**.¹⁰

Women perform **66 percent of the world's work**, produce **50 percent of the food**, but earn **10 percent of the income** and **own 1 percent of the property**.¹¹

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

'Because women traditionally have been relegated to the private sphere and to subordinate status in society, they have generally been excluded from recognized definitions...of human rights. As such, women and girls' experiences with human rights abuse have been virtually ignored.' **UNIFEM, 1999**

82 million girls in developing countries who are now aged 10 to 17 will be **married before their 18th** birthday, often despite laws forbidding it.¹² Underage or not, in many cultures, marriage is no more than a business arrangement between families in which daughters are commodities. Domestic abuse, sexual slavery, forced labour, polygamy and forced marriage are all far too frequent consequences of 'marriage' in far too many countries. If a daughter tries to avoid such a marriage, she risks becoming the victim of an 'honour' killing.

In almost every culture, **women are the primary carers** for children, elderly and sick relatives. This responsibility can have a positive effect in prompting women to campaign for access to education, healthcare, property rights and so on. However, it also means that women are more vulnerable as they cannot flee and abusers can target family members.

8 *Women, Poverty & Economics* (UNIFEM): http://www.unifem.org/gender_issues/women_poverty_economics/ (visited 19 March 2010).

9 Glenn, S., Melis, S. and Withers, L. (2009). *Gender (In)equality in the Labour Market: an Overview of Global Trends and Developments*. London: International Trade Union Confederation.

10 Emmett, B. (2009). *Paying the Price for the Economic Crisis*. Oxfam International Discussion Paper.

11 UNICEF, 'Gender Equality – The Big Picture', 2007.

12 Plan International: Girls and the MDGs 2010



Justine Masika Bihamba (left), a coordinator of a women's rights organisation supporting victims of sexual violence, and her family have been attacked because of her work. In September 2007, soldiers forced their way into Justine's home while she was out, and tied up her six children, aged between five and 24, at gunpoint. One of the soldiers kicked her eldest daughter in the face, breaking her tooth. He then attempted to rape Justine's 21-year-old daughter. Having failed to do so, he sexually assaulted her with a knife. Although Justine and her children were able to identify the soldiers, they have not been arrested or brought to trial. Workers at the organisation have regularly been threatened and attacked because of their peaceful work against sexual violence in the DRC. They work in North Kivu, one of the provinces in eastern DRC worst affected by conflict and sexual violence.

Widows are amongst the most deprived, marginalized and unequal people in the world, especially in war-torn and post-conflict countries. Traditional practices in some countries force widows into poverty by stripping the widow of all household property, evicting them and their children from their homes, stigmatizing them and even physically abusing or killing them.¹³

EDUCATION AND HEALTHCARE

Women suffer from a **disproportionate lack of access to education and health services**. The gender disparity is partly due to the fact that girls are heavily relied upon to help at home with housework and child care.

There are an estimated **93 million children out of school**, the majority of these children are **girls**, and almost 80 per cent of them live in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.¹⁴ Women make up **two thirds of the world's one billion people who cannot read or write**.¹⁵

An estimated **half a million women die every year as a result of pregnancy complications and childbirth**, 99% occur in developing countries. Yet many of these women's **lives could be saved** if they had access to **basic health care and family planning services**.¹⁶ In many countries, **pregnant HIV-positive women** are widely subjected to abuses including being pressurized into or suffering **forced abortion and sterilisation** even though with appropriate care, **HIV transmission can be reduced to less than 1 percent**.¹⁷

DEMOCRACY

There is **not one country** in the world where women have the same **socio-economic and political opportunities** as men.

¹³ For more information see: www.widowsforpeace.org (visited 15 March 2010).

¹⁴ *The Big Picture* (UNICEF): http://www.unicef.org/girlseducation/index_bigpicture.html (visited 10 March 2010).

¹⁵ See: <http://www.unesco.org/en/literacy/> (visited 23 March 2010).

¹⁶ See: <http://www.dosomething.org/tipsandtools/background-discrimination-against-women> (visited 14 March 2010).

¹⁷ APPG AIDs & Sophia Foundation: *How women human rights defenders could be better supported in their fight for the rights of women living with HIV* (Submission to CHRC: Jan 2010), p. 2.

There are still countries where women are **denied the right to vote** and stand for election and in the vast majority of countries women remain **underrepresented** at senior decision-making levels.

Rwanda is the only country in the world with more women parliamentarians (56.3%) than men. In the UK and the US, generally considered 'liberal countries' in terms of equality, women comprise 19.5% and 16.8% of parliament respectively, entering at 60th and 74th on the world ranking table of women's participation in parliaments.¹⁸

SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

'Violence against women and girls continues unabated in every continent, country and culture. It takes a devastating toll on women's lives, on their families, and on society as a whole. Most societies prohibit such violence — yet the reality is that too often, it is covered up or tacitly condoned.' **Ban Ki-Moon**

An estimated **130 million girls and women** alive today have **undergone FGM** and **two million girls a year are at risk** of mutilation.¹⁹

Amongst women aged 15-44, **violence by a partner or family member** causes **more death and disability worldwide than war, cancer, malaria and traffic accidents combined.**²⁰

A study published by the WHO in 2005: on the basis of data collected from 24,000 women in 10 countries, between **55 percent and 95 percent of women who had been physically abused by their partners had never contacted NGOs, shelters or the police for help.**²¹

In many societies, **rape victims**, women suspected of engaging in premarital sex, and women accused of adultery **have been murdered** by their relatives because the violation of a woman's chastity is viewed as an affront to the family's honour. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) estimates that the **annual world-wide number of "honour killing" victims may be as high as 5000 women.**²²

'During periods of civil unrest, women face increased violence in public and in the home. There is increasing evidence that domestic violence intensifies during times of armed conflict (UNDP)... Post-conflict violence against women may be exacerbated by the reintegration of male ex-combatants into society without the necessary psychological services. This may lead to increased violence in the household, where women and children are often the easiest targets for their aggression (Oxfam). When states fail to take the basic steps necessary to protect women from domestic violence or allow these crimes to be committed with impunity, they are failing in their obligation to protect women's human rights.'

Amnesty USA

18 Inter-parliamentary Union World Classification: <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm> (visited 20 March 2010).

19 Referred to by General Assembly. In-Depth Study on All Forms of Violence against Women: Report of the Secretary-General, 2006. A/61/122/Add.1. 6 July 2006. 39.

20 World Bank 1993, World Development Report: Investing in Health, New York, Oxford University Press.

21 Ibid, p 74.

22 UNFPA. 2000. The State of the World Population.

'This year marks the 30th anniversary of the adoption by the UN General Assembly of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), often described as the international bill of women's rights. Yet around the globe, abuses against women remain systematic. Violence and discrimination against women are global social epidemics, notwithstanding the very real progress of the international women's human rights movement in identifying, raising awareness about, and challenging impunity for women's human rights violations. Our duty should be to expose and denounce those practices and policies that silence and subordinate women, including legal, cultural, or religious practices by which women are systematically discriminated against, excluded from political participation and public life, segregated in their daily lives, beaten in their homes, raped, denied equal divorce or inheritance rights, killed for having sex, forced to marry, assaulted for not conforming to gender norms and sold into forced labour.'

'In areas of conflict, combatants and their supporters have raped women and girls as a weapon of war to humiliate, dominate, instil fear in, punish, disperse and /or forcibly relocate members of a community. In Bosnia/Herzegovina in the early 1990s, up to 50,000 women were raped; during the 1994 Rwandan genocide as many as half a million women were raped; in Sierra Leone more than 50,000 internally displaced women were sexually attacked by combatants; and in the DRC, more than 32,000 cases of rape and sexual violence have been registered in South Kivu Province alone since 2005. The victims in today's armed conflicts are far more likely to be civilians than soldiers. Some 70 percent of the casualties in recent conflicts have been non-combatants — most of them women and children. "It is now more dangerous to be a woman than to be a soldier in modern conflict"'(Maj Gen Patrick Cammaert, 2008).

'Protection and support for women survivors of violence in conflict and post-conflict areas is woefully inadequate. Access to social services, protection, legal remedies, medical resources, and places of refuge is limited despite the valiant efforts of numerous local NGOs to provide assistance. A climate of impunity further exacerbates the situation and serves as an incentive to ongoing violence. UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security calls for women's equal participation in peace and security issues, yet nearly a decade later it is evident that much more effort is needed to strengthen mechanisms to prevent, investigate, report, prosecute and remedy violence against women in times of war, and to ensure their voices are heard in building peace.'

'The Universal Declaration of Human Rights stipulates that human rights apply to all people equally 'without distinction of any kind'. Women's physical security - even in the midst of war - is a right in itself and a pre-requisite to the realisation of all other rights. Women's rights are human rights and sexual violence prevention and punishment should be an obligation, not an aspiration.'

**Lady (Anne) Greenstock
Patron of UNIFEM UK**

WHRDs: A Global Phenomenon



Women fight to protect and promote human rights in every country, every culture, every religion and from all walks of life. Through their work as advocates, social workers, nurses, doctors, counsellors, grassroots activists, community leaders, political activists, trade unionists, journalists, teachers, and lawyers, many women are shaping their communities for the better, not only through their work but also as positive role models for young girls who need to know they can get educated and aspire to change their communities too.

WHRDs are not confined to developing or 'unfree' countries, until human rights abuses are abolished there will always be a need for women to stand up and fight for their rights. Women like Jineth Bedoya (above), a journalist, fighting corruption and state-sponsored violence in Colombia or Ikhlass Mohammed, a Darfuri Survivor, who speaks out against sexual violence perpetrated by the Janjaweed and Shami Chakrabarti, Chief Executive of

Almost 10 years ago on 25th May I was kidnapped when carrying out my work as a journalist, I was tortured, raped by three men and then however I decided to stay in Colombia and didn't want to go and choose the exile path, but to continue with my work in Colombia because I believed that was my responsibility but I have to say that there are no guarantees, there are some security guarantees, but there is no justice guarantee for me to carry out this work and it is very difficult to carry out this work when you know that the perpetrators of these crimes are free.

'So for these cases such as mine, the solution of the Colombian Government is to present from the Ministry of the Interior a plane ticket, for those who want to go abroad, or bodyguards for those who want to stay in Colombia. So if this is really a form of support, is it a solution? How far this constitutes a reparation for the victim? I have been with a bodyguard for 10 years but I have had to get back my life by myself, but I am quite privileged – I had higher education and I work for one of the most important newspapers in Colombia so I could do that, but what happens to those women in rural areas, those indigenous women who have no possibility of doing this of coming here to talk to you and to speak about their experiences?

'I just want to add that I am coming here in their name as well and it is very very difficult to come and tell you this.'

Jineth Bedoya is a Colombian journalist. This is an extract from her Oral Evidence to CHRC, given on 2 February 2010

Liberty, who is well-known in the British media for her defence of civil liberties.

But while WHRDs in developed countries usually act out of principle or compassion for others, WHRDs elsewhere are born out of necessity; literally fighting for survival and for a better life for their families and communities. Whether it is war widows who challenge rebel fighters to work harder to find peace and safety for them and their children, as happened in Sierra Leone, or victims of sexual and domestic abuse who finally stand up and testify to the crimes so that their government will be forced to act as happened in DRC.

The oral and written submissions to the CHRC on this issue have illustrated the extraordinary range and impact of WHRDs across the world. Too often women are portrayed as hapless victims in circumstances which are so appalling there can be no hope of change or improvement. But the evidence we have received tells a different story. A story of women who, regardless of risk, stand up and fight those circumstances and despite all expectations become effective agents for change in societies which have resisted change from all the other instruments of the international community.

What do they defend and how?

Just as Women Human Rights Defenders are to be found in every continent, country and culture, they are also to be found defending all kinds of rights in all kinds of circumstances. These can include everything from rights to political participation, legal rights to property, to be protected from torture and state abuse and to receive a fair trial, to education for boys *and* girls and, of course, to a whole range of women's rights such as, better access to maternal healthcare, protection from female genital mutilation, sexual and domestic violence, to name but a few.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to conduct an exhaustive survey of WHRD activity but the following pages seek to highlight a representative sample of the ways in which WHRDs are achieving reform in their societies. In selecting certain WHRDs to highlight, others just as impressive will inevitably be left out. The CHRC has made no value judgements as to different campaigns or campaigners but has merely drawn on evidence submitted in order to illustrate just how effective WHRDs can be.

Civil and Political Rights



The Millennium Development Goals (MDG), agreed to in 2000 and which are central to UK International Development policy, contain a commitment to achieving gender equality and women's empowerment, including targets for increasing girls' education and the reduction of maternal mortality (MDG 2, 3 & 5).²³ Crucially, though, the MDGs also monitor progress on women's ability to engage in economic activity and public

The 2007 Kenyan general elections saw a record number of women – 269 women out of 2,548 candidates, compared to just 44 in the 2002 elections – vying for a Parliamentary seat. These elections also saw unprecedented levels of violence. One woman, Alice Onduto, was shot and killed after losing her nomination bid in South Nairobi, and another woman candidate, Flora Igoki Tera, was tortured by a gang of five men. In spite of this hostile environment, many women candidates persisted in building their campaigns on a platform of women's rights and gender equality.

Lorna Laboso stood on an explicit agenda to promote the rights of women in her constituency in the Rift Valley, promising to address female genital mutilation and other harmful cultural practices, improve girls' access to education and promote women's participation in decision-making. Lorna's gender issues-based campaign was politically risky. But her track record of delivering on women's rights in her constituency stood her in good stead and she was eventually elected.

Progress of the World's Women 2008/2009
(UNDP/UNIFEM)

23 For latest on MDG progress see: <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/gender.shtml> (visited 22 March 2010).

decision-making on an equal basis with men.

Over and above the basic moral argument that fifty percent of the population should have a say in the decisions that affect them, studies show that the involvement of women at decision-making levels produces stronger attention to women's, children's and family rights. This creates a climate in which women can engage with public decision making and in which governments become more accountable to their female electorate. In other words, without women's engagement in politics, in campaigning, in civil society there is no possibility that the international community will achieve the targets set out in the MDGs.²⁴

However, in many countries women are still unwelcome in the political arena, whether as voters or representatives, and in extreme cases WHRDs are putting themselves and their families at grave risk by for engaging in civil and political campaigning in the face of fierce opposition.

Of course, it is not only by standing for political office that women are engaging with and reshaping their civil and political landscape. Other areas in which WHRDs campaign for civil rights include:

A 2009 study of women in Bolivian politics documented 117 acts of violence and harassment, which included pressuring women to resign as councillors and both verbal and psychological violence. In some cases, there were incidents of physical and sexual violence against women politicians.

One World Action

Ensuring physical integrity and safety As discussed above, WHRDs have played a leading role in the international fight against sexual and gender-based violence. Although Art. 3 and 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights guarantee the security of the person and prohibit torture and degrading treatment, violence against women – including the most brutal of sexual violence – remains the most widespread and intransigent of human rights violations.

In 2006 in Liberia, following appalling violence during the civil war, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf was elected as the first female African head of state and one of the first laws she passed was a strong law criminalizing rape and making it a non-parole offence so suspects cannot return to communities to intimidate victims and witnesses.



Through the tireless campaigning and brave testimony of many WHRDs, in many cases survivors themselves, we now have both international instruments designed specifically to protect women – such as CEDAW and UNSC Resolution 1820 which call for a halt to all acts of sexual violence – and national laws which, when combined with functioning justice systems, can make justice possible for victims act as a deterrent to perpetrators.

24 UNDP/UNIFEM: *Progress of the World's Women 2008/2009, Who Answers to Women? Gender & Accountability*, esp. Chapter 2, 'Politics'.



39-year-old Cambodian, Somaly Mam (left) is a leading activist against human trafficking. Her foundation, the Somaly Mam Foundation, which she established in 2007, offers shelter, medical care, counselling, training and reintegration to victims of the sex trade across South East Asia..

Mam herself is a survivor of this trade. At 12 she was raped and later sold into a forced marriage. Her husband beat and raped her frequently. At 15 he sold her to a brothel; where she would have to see 5 or 6 clients a day. One day, she remembers, she and another girl were sent off with two men. When they arrived there were 20 more men waiting for them. Later, Mam managed to escape and since then she has been devoted to raising awareness about 'modern day slavery', to rescuing the victims, to raising and maintaining international awareness and to helping convict the perpetrators.

Although Art. 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UN Convention against Torture and the domestic law of most states prohibit torture, Amnesty estimates that 50 percent of countries still use torture.²⁵ Those who attempt to prevent torture or find justice for the victims frequently find themselves even more at risk than those they are seeking to defend.



Every year, human rights defenders are jailed, silenced, disappeared, and some are killed. The great Mexican human rights defender, Digna Ochoa, a lawyer with the Mexican human rights organization PRODH, and a nun, was harassed, abducted, and survived numerous attacks on her life for daring to defend torture victims and pursue torturers in Mexican courtrooms. She was assassinated on the 19th October 2001...Her case remains unresolved.

**International Justice Mission
Oral Evidence to CHRC 1 February 2010**

²⁵ Amnesty Annual Report 2009: <http://thereport.amnesty.org/en/facts-and-figures> (visited 16 March 2010).

‘Though rape has been a part of war throughout time, the World has entered a new and dreadful era of sexual violence, most notably in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

‘After the Rwandan massacres of 1994, an internationally supported military operation allowed the genocidal Hutu militias of Rwanda (FDLR) to relocate across the border into Eastern Congo.

‘These lawless, displaced, and resentful militias have plagued the local populations relentlessly for the last 15 years in their fight to gain control of the abundant mineral deposits (coltan, tin, gold). Their most effective form of torture is violent rape.

‘FDLR rape seems has no boundaries: Infant girls and elderly women are raped; brothers, sons, and fathers are forced to rape their own women at gunpoint, if they refuse, they are executed on the spot; weapons are forced up women’s vaginas; bullets are fired and knives lacerate the victim’s internal organs. If the women survive, they are left incontinent, infected with AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, or pregnant. The horror does not end there. Young girls and women are abducted by the FDLR as sex slaves. Tied semi-naked to trees in the forests for months on end, they are raped over and over again. Every day.

‘The sexual violence has spread like a plague to other armed forces in the region, including even those supposed to be protecting the civilians such as the Congolese Army (underpaid and badly trained). Even UN Peacekeeping forces were at one stage accused of sexual exploitation.

‘The lack of containment of this violence from the Congolese or Rwandan Governments, the UN, or any other international Government has meant that the only real answer left is for women to help themselves.

‘NGO’s who are focused on empowering these women to bring about change in their own country are the organisations that are having notable impact. Two standout NGO’s in the DRC are Women for Women International and V-Day.

‘Both organisations work in different ways to empower women with a multi-tiered program of direct aid and emotional support, rights awareness and leadership education, vocational skills training and income-generation support.

‘Zainab Salbi, founder of Women for Women International and Eve Ensler, founder of V-Day are Women Human Rights Defenders whose dedication to relieve the suffering of the women of Congo is extraordinary. Their models should be generously supported and replicated across the globe because in Eastern Congo, where life for many women is beyond our worst imaginings, they are making a real difference.

Lady (Shelley) Sawers and Lady (Penny) Holmes

Co-founders of UN Spouses network, UWaN (United for Women of all Nations) which strives to raise awareness about Sexual Violence in Conflict Areas.

The right to a fair trial and to seek legal redress

'If there is no justice, if there is no law, everything's collapsed. We cannot stop women's violence, we cannot stop rape, we cannot stop any kind of sexual violence towards the women. We need justice. I am a representative of Darfuri women, we are looking for justice.' **Ikhlass Mohammed, Darfuri Survivor and Campaigner (Statement to CHRC: 2008)**

The right to the protection of the law, whether it is to prosecute your rapist, or keep your home if you are widowed, or not lose your job if you fall pregnant, is a fundamental necessity to a stable, fair society. Where justice systems break down, human rights violations increase in direct proportion to the absence of deterrent and a cycle of violence, injustice and resentment create the ideal circumstances for societal breakdown and conflict.



The way in which WHRDs have created change through the justice system was captured in the documentary *Sisters in Law*, which tells the story of State Prosecutor Vera Ngassa and Court President Beatrice Ntuba (both left) as they help women fight cases of domestic abuse, despite pressures from family and their community to remain silent. Working in the little town of Kumba, Cameroon, where there have been no convictions in spousal abuse cases for 17 years, these two WHRDs have already changed their town: they have successfully prosecuted men for domestic abuse in Kumba now.

It is not only those who are able to get the opportunities and education to work in the legal profession who can agitate for justice. In places where the worst atrocities against women have occurred, such as the DRC, where sexual violence is endemic, grassroots organisations of women broken through cultural taboos in order to punish perpetrators and give victims justice.

For some 30 years, every Thursday at 3.30pm the Argentine women known as the Madres de La Plaza de Mayo (above) have marched silently around the Plaza de Mayo in front of the Presidential Palace of Argentina. These mothers became WHRDs in their fight for the right to be reunited with abducted children and grandchildren, who were among the estimated 30,000 people who disappeared during "Operation Condor." Pregnant women were allowed to stay alive until their babies were born, then they were murdered. Their children were given to military families who adopted them, while countless innocents were drugged and their bodies dropped over the ocean during military "Death Flights." With the return to civilian government in 1983, the Madres resisted the decision to pardon the Dirty War officials. One group focused on working with the democratic government promoting legislation to help recover remains; another group split from this approach continuing to hold silent vigils until the laws of immunity for former military leaders were lifted.



'One of the things that I simply will not do now is shut up. The women of my generation in Latin America have been taught that the man is always in charge and the woman is silent even in the face of injustice...Now I know that we have to speak out about the injustices publicly. If not, we are accomplices. I am going to denounce them publicly without fear. This is what I learned.'

Madre, María del Rosario de Cerruti

Freedom of speech, expression and association The ability to criticise state actors, companies and organisations, to express an alternative point of view and publish those opinions is a fundamental of a democratic, safe society in which minority groups are protected and given a voice. In particular, a free press is pivotal 'in contributing to greater accountability, good government, and economic development. Most importantly, restrictions on media are often an early indicator that governments intend to assault other democratic institutions.'²⁶ According to Freedom House, however, press freedom has declined for the second year in a row with only 17 percent of the world's citizens now living in countries that enjoy a free press. WHRDs who campaign through journalism and literature have proved to be particularly at risk in the last decade.



Anna Politkovskaya (1958 – 2006) was a prolific journalist and Human Rights Activist and a well-known, outspoken, critic of the Chechen conflict and Putin. She wrote a number of provocative articles exposing human rights abuses and state corruption. The year she died, she had been writing 'Putin's Russia: Life in a Failing Democracy'. She received many threats and in 2001 was detained and tortured by Russian troops in Chechnya, where she had been investigating the torture and kidnapping of locals by the Russian forces. In 2004 she survived being poisoned. In 2006 she was shot dead in her building. At the trial there was insufficient evidence to press charges.

However, as the internet makes it ever easier for people, including WHRDs, to publish dissent and criticism via blogging, twitter and other social networking media the potential for this form of campaigning to achieve social, cultural and political reform is rapidly increasing. Iran's Green revolution was also called the 'Twitter Revolution' because of the way activities were organised and information disseminated almost exclusively through social networking sites.²⁷

²⁶ *Freedom of the Press* (Freedom House): <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=16> (visited 16 March 2010).

²⁷ Jon Leyne: 'How Iran's political battle is fought in cyberspace' (BBC News): http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/8505645.stm (visited 14 March 2010).



Interestingly, it was the death of WHRD, Neda Agha Soltan, which came to symbolise Iranian Green Movement. Shot, allegedly by one of the government's Basij militia, Neda was a 27-year-old who joined the 2009 Tehran protests. Footage from a mobile phone of Neda bleeding to death from a bullet wound to the chest was posted on a video-sharing website and soon the images of Neda's death were seen around the world. Within days, Neda's name became a rallying cry for Iranian pro-reformists and protesters in cities around the world held aloft pictures of her and carried banners declaring: "I am Neda."

Social, Cultural and Economic Rights

Economic, social, and cultural rights (ESCR) include labour rights and rights to health, education, and an adequate standard of living. The primary international instrument committing states to granting these rights to individuals is the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), a multilateral treaty adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 16, 1966, and in force from January 3, 1976. As of December, 2008, the Covenant had 160 parties.²⁸

Access to education As mentioned above, of an estimated 93 million children out of school, girls suffer from a disproportionate lack of access to education and women make up two-thirds of the world's illiterate population. For this reason MDG2, to achieve universal primary education, combined with MGD3, to eradicate the gender disparity in primary and secondary education, are the focus of much international aid and in-country campaigning. There are many reasons why children cannot access schools; extreme poverty can mean that they are sent out to work, girls can be sold into marriage or prostitution or when orphaned become the primary carer for younger siblings; natural disasters destroy schools and conflict leads to displacement or death of pupils and teachers.



Under the Taliban books were burned and education for girls was banned. Even after the fall of the Taliban, educating girls has been a dangerous occupation. In 2006, Safia Ama Jan (left), 63-year-old head of the women's ministry in Kandahar, was assassinated by Taliban gunmen. Safia Ama Jan had been a proactive campaigner for girls education and women's rights for over three decades.

In response to her death, UNESCO produced a study entitled 'Education under Attack,' which stated there was a dramatic increase in the number of reported, targeted attacks on students, educational staff and institutions between 2004 and 2006. The report chronicles cases of students, teachers, academics and other education staff being kidnapped, imprisoned, beaten, tortured, burned alive, shot, or blown up by rebels, armies and repressive regimes; or recruited or sexually violated by armed groups or armed forces at school or on their journey to or from school.

Obviously the long term impact of this violence is not only the direct loss of teachers, students and intellectuals, but also indirect consequences such as the flight of students and staff, fear of turning up to class, grief and psychological trauma among students and personnel, damage to buildings, materials and resources, and degradation of the education system through staffing recruitment difficulties and halted investment.²⁹

Nevertheless, many continue to risk their lives to educate the rising generations.

²⁸ Find full text of ICESCR at <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/cescr.htm> (visited 18 March 2010).

²⁹ *Education under Attack 2010* (UNESCO, 2010): <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001868/186809e.pdf> (visited 23 March 2010).



Access to healthcare MDGs 4, 5 and 6 concern health care.³⁰ About 900 million people are estimated to live in slum-like conditions characterized by insecure tenure, inadequate housing, and a lack of access to water or sanitation. A child born in a developing country is over 13 times more likely to die within the first five years of life than a child born in an industrialized country. Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for about half the deaths of children under five in the developing world. Between 1990 and 2006, about 27 countries – the large majority in sub-Saharan Africa – made no progress in reducing childhood deaths.

Estimates for 2005 show that, every minute, a woman dies of complications related to pregnancy and childbirth. This adds up to more than 500,000 women annually and 10 million over a generation. Almost all of these women – 99 per cent – live and die in developing countries. Every year, more than 1 million children are left motherless and vulnerable because of maternal death. Children who have lost their mothers are up to 10 times more likely to die prematurely than those who have not.

'My dream is to see my sisters well-educated in a peaceful Afghanistan. They should be able to raise their voices to get their rights since I can't stand seeing them tortured and murdered in the name of honor any more.'

After the fall of the Taliban in 2002, Sadiqa Basiri Saleem (left, with student) returned home from a refugee camp in Pakistan to find 150,000 girls in her eastern Afghanistan province lacking the resources, security and support to go to school. Sadiqa and three other women pooled their money together and founded the Oruj Learning Center, which provided uniforms, supplies, and funding for 36 girls to study in an abandoned mosque.

Last year, Oruj provided for the education of over 2,700 girls in six schools and 200 women at four literacy centers throughout Wardak province. The center has launched a program for gifted students, focusing on English and computer skills. Its Family Welfare Center for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, a domestic violence prevention project, provides services to 14,000 Afghan women, trains government staff on domestic violence and encourages spiritual leaders to discuss women's issues constructively. The center supports training programs for teachers and human rights awareness seminars for the public.

³⁰ The following statistics are drawn from the UN MDG website: <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/> (visited 16 March 2010).

Dr Gao Yaojie is an 81-year-old doctor HIV/AIDS activist from China who is now living in exile in the United States repeated intimidation and house arrest imposed by the Chinese officials after exposing a blood transfusion scandal and education people about HIV/AIDS in China:

“Her involvement in AIDS began when she learned that H.I.V. was silently spreading through Henan in the 1990s. A government-endorsed blood-selling campaign had led to the infection of thousands of farmers. She traveled to villages to provide medical care and free informational brochures to people who had no idea why they were dying. She also spoke out against local officials trying to cover up the crisis.” –The New York Times



Every day, nearly 7,500 people are infected with HIV and 5,500 die from AIDS. Globally, an estimated 33 million people were living with HIV/AIDS in 2007. The number of people living with HIV rose from an estimated 29.5 million in 2001 to 33 million in 2007. The vast majority of those living with HIV are in sub-Saharan Africa, where about 60 per cent of adults living with HIV in 2007 were women.



Kousalya Periasamy (left) was married off at the age of 21, and within months she was diagnosed HIV-positive. Her husband knew he was carrying the virus prior to their marriage but failed to inform his bride-to-be. Seven months after they were wed, he died of AIDS, and Kousalya became the first woman in India to declare that she was HIV+. She also became the first woman to raise an alarm that average Indian monogamous wives are at risk for HIV. Kousalya has created a nationwide grassroots care and support network for the more than 2.5 million HIV positive women in India called “Positive Women Network.” She works to end discrimination of HIV+ women in all spheres, improve access to HIV/AIDS prevention information, and provide care and support to women and their families suffering from HIV and AIDS.

Malaria kills over 1 million people annually, 80 per cent of whom are children under five in sub-Saharan Africa. There continue to be between 350 million and 500 million cases of malaria worldwide each year. An estimated 250 million anti-malaria insecticide-treated bed nets are required to reach 80 per cent coverage in sub-Saharan Africa. To date, the funds committed will provide only 100 million nets – less than one half of the requirement.

Right to work and choice of employment As established above, women in many countries are more likely than men to be poor and at risk because of systematic gender discrimination in education, health care, employment and control of assets. Along with frequently being paid less than men for their work, the average wage gap in 2008 being 17 percent, women face persistent discrimination when they apply for credit for business or self-employment and are disproportionately represented in insecure, unsafe and low-wage work. With eight out of ten women workers are considered to be in vulnerable employment in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, the current financial crisis is likely to affect women particularly severely.³¹ The International Labour Organization estimates that the economic downturn could lead to 22 million more unemployed women in 2009, jeopardizing the gains made in the last few decades in women's empowerment.³²

In many countries though, due to poor levels of education most women can only find employment in the informal sector (e.g. as domestics). This means they do not show up in official unemployment numbers, are not taken into account by economic policy makers and institutions. And, of course, with too few seats at the tables where economic decisions are made, women themselves have limited opportunity to influence policy.³³

Right to own property Property rights can be the route out of poverty, providing secure living conditions and the basis for credit, but in many countries groups that are treated as minorities including migrants, women, widows and those who are HIV positive cannot own property by law or are subjecting to property-grabbing by relatives or state actors.

A 'Typical' Case of Property-Grabbing

Zaujah, a young widow living in Uganda, was HIV positive and had lost her husband in 2003. She was left to raise four small children on her own and struggled to provide for her family. Three days after her husband's death however, her deceased husband's relatives began harassing her. Eventually, her in-laws used harassment and intimidation to force Zaujah away from the home she had shared with her husband. She tried to seek help from the regional government officer in her district, but the relatives refused to give up the home and left Zaujah homeless.

***International Justice Mission
Oral Evidence to CHRC 1 February 2010***

31 ILO Key Indicators of the Labour Market database; ILO (2008); and estimates provided by ILO to UNIFEM on request. For further information relating to MDG1 see 'Progress of the World's Women 2008/09' (UNIFEM): <http://www.unifem.org/progress/2008/mdgsGender.html> (visited 16 March 2010).

32 ILO, 'Global Employment Trends for Women', 2009.

33 For more information on Women, Poverty, and Economics see http://www.unifem.org/gender_issues/women_poverty_economics/ (visited 16 March 2010).

All too often it is not possible for those facing the double discrimination of poverty and minority status to be able to find justice but many WHRDs are working to change this.



Climate Change and Environmental Rights

For many in the UK, being 'green' is almost a lifestyle choice but for those living in low-lying developing countries, like Bangladesh, and in Sub-Saharan Africa, the already devastating effects of climate change - flooding, drought and crop failure, loss of farmland, and natural disasters – are a day to day reality.

In these places, it is often women who are the agricultural labourers and who walk for miles to find drinkable water. They are the first to feel the effects of global warming. Many of these women are becoming WHRDs as they attempt to raise the alarm, in their own countries and internationally, about the risks climate change presents on issues such as food security and fresh water access and the increased disease burden that will inevitably follow.

Ann Njogu (left) is a Kenyan lawyer, winner of an International Women of Courage Award 2010 and founder of Centre for Rights Education and Awareness, She has been at the forefront of campaigns for a new constitution. Her organization, not being content with welfare services, pursued social solutions that tackled the root causes of violence and discrimination. CREAW spearheaded work in taboo areas like sexuality, bride price, widow inheritance, and women's political participation. Ann also runs community work shops which inform women of their rights to property:

'The next day, I got to see Ann in action at a community workshop. It was in a simple, tin-roof-and-cinderblock church in a slum. Several hundred women were packed in the church listening with rapt attention as Ann and her team explained that the practices of denying women inheritance, and sometimes even of forcing widows to marry their brothers-in-law in order to keep their property, violated their human rights. They instructed the women on how they and their husbands could write simple wills, and how to enforce them. They explained that women are entitled to keep family property upon divorce. A troupe of actors did a wild theatrical depiction of a woman being disinherited, and fighting for her rights.'

The women attending the workshop cheered, asked questions, and shared their stories. They left seeming empowered to take a stand for their rights. Many asked Ann to take their cases.'

**Janet Walsh
Deputy Director of Women's Rights Division
Human Rights Watch**

Still others fight destruction of forests and ensuing desertification in South America, pollution of waterways by multinational companies and governments in West Africa and destruction of natural habitats in Asia.

While in the UK the consensus is that the risks of climate change and environmental destruction are of primary concern, in many countries those who speak out put themselves and their families at risk.



In December 2009, Dora "Alicia" Sorto Recinos (left) was murdered -the second anti-mining, environmental activist killed in less than a week in the small community of Trinidad, El Salvador. She was eight months pregnant and carrying her two-year old child when shot after doing laundry at a nearby river. Her child was also shot in the leg. She and her partner, José Santos Rodríguez, were outspoken opponents of the El Dorado gold mine. The Cabañas Environment Committee, of which she was a member, is a grass-roots organization representing 26 communities that campaign on local environmental issues.

The UK Government and WHRDs

'Human rights defenders stand in the front lines of protection, casting the bright light of human rights into the darkest corners of tyranny and abuse. They work to safeguard the rule of law, to reduce violence, poverty and discrimination, and to build structures for freer, more equitable and more democratic societies.' **Kofi Annan**

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) publishes an Annual Report on Human Rights setting out the action taken by British Embassies around the world on human rights issues. Whilst the 2008 Report contains a section supporting Human Rights Defenders (which includes the local action plan of the Embassy in Kathmandu and a report of successful Embassy action in Nicaragua), it does not include the full UK Action Plan on support for Human Rights defenders, nor does it contain the local action plans of all British Embassies.

There is no doubt that in many countries, the FCO is providing effective support to HRDs where this is seen as a priority, but it is not possible to scrutinise and report coherently on UK action in this field whilst the Plan is not in the public domain. Nor is it possible to know whether every Embassy has an Action Plan to support HRDs, and, if they do, what their scope is. The FCO claims that publication of Action Plans could put HRDs at greater risk, however the CHRC believes that the UK Government needs to be more transparent in its support of HRDs, and in particular of Women HRDs. The Commission understands that HRDs themselves would welcome more public support for their actions and a clear, consistent and public statement by the FCO that the work of WHRDs is in the national interest and is a foreign policy priority.

The Department for International Development (DFID) is responsible for delivering UK commitments under the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs), many of which directly affect the work of human rights defenders.

MILLENIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education

Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women

Goal 4: Reduce child mortality

Goal 5: Improve maternal health

Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability

Goal 8: Develop a Global Partnership for Development

Without engaging women in international development, we cannot hope to achieve a single MDG by the target of 2015. As has been illustrated above, in the section on 'Social, Cultural and Economic Rights',

WHRDs are active and effective in pursuing all of these goals and must be key partners if we are to achieve success. The involvement of women is crucial to the development of prosperous, peaceful and stable societies and to nation-building.

The contribution of WHRDs to the achievement of civil and political rights is no less important as the section on 'Civil and Political Rights' shows. Indeed, even in the more 'masculine' strategic goal of conflict prevention and counter terrorism, research shows that WHRDs are particularly effective at ensuring sustainable change. The influence of WHRDs through education and poverty-alleviation plays a significant part in combating extremism. UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) recognised the importance of including women in conflict resolution and peace-building. UNSC 1820 (2008) established the relationship between violence against women and stalled progress on the MDGs.

This report has demonstrated that WHRDs play a valuable role in the international effort to combat human rights abuses, eradicate extreme poverty and discrimination and promote more stable and democratic societies. They are a significant resource which, properly supported, has the potential to enhance the strategic priorities of both the FCO and DFID. *Women are not just victims. They are powerful agents of change and their work and role should be supported as such.*

RECOMMENDATIONS

General Recommendations

The Commission recommends that all UK Governmental, Parliamentary and Non-Governmental Organisations should find opportunities to

- **raise public awareness** of the work of women human rights defenders and of the **specific dangers faced by women** who fight for human rights, including gender-based violence, family reprisals, cultural stigmatisation and loss of property rights
- work more closely together to **identify, monitor and share information** about threats against women human rights defenders around the world and to **document, publicise and condemn** more widely cases of abuse
- champion the need to **protect and promote basic legal rights of women**, including **political** rights such as freedom of expression, freedom of association and freedom of movement, and **economic, social and cultural** rights such as reproductive rights, inheritance and property rights, employment rights, and the right to education
- **encourage pro bono contributions** by UK legal and other experts to assist women fighting against either institutionalised discrimination or tackling legal inheritance disputes and property-grabbing which could impoverish them and their families
- **highlight the special discrimination** faced by women who are HIV-positive and by lesbian, gay, transgender people in certain countries and work together with local NGOs to help alleviate their stigmatisation

Recommendations for the UK Government unilaterally

The Commission recommends that the UK Government should

- **engage** women human rights defenders in the formulation of policy towards countries where there is widespread abuse **by consulting and involving** them in political dialogue and showing them that **the UK is serious about enforcement** of international commitments on human rights
- provide UK **funding for training projects for women** human rights defenders to disseminate knowledge of the basic rights to which they are entitled under treaties, provide security training and counselling on how to manage the trauma of violence and abuse
- provide UK funding for **public recognition of the challenges and achievements** of women human rights defenders through international awareness-raising events, including the funding of UK annual awards, speaking tours, and Fellowship programmes
- provide UK **funding for national projects** in countries where abuse is rife aimed at judicial reform, enhancement of the rule of law and the empowerment of women, and for **training judicial, legal, military and administrative personnel** on the importance of the contribution of women in the

creation of peaceful and prosperous societies and the legitimacy of the role of women human rights defenders.

- ensure that the **strategic priorities of the FCO and DFID** reflect the Government's commitments and that consideration of its obligations towards women are treated as a foreign policy priority
- provide in-service and pre-deployment **training for FCO, DFID and MOD staff** on UN commitments and EU Guidelines, ensuring that working with and supporting human rights is mainstreamed through UK government policy and practice

Recommendations for the UK Government multilaterally

The Commission recommends that the UK Government, in partnership with EU and other countries should

- **agree sufficient international resources** to ensure the implementation of international commitments for projects, technical assistance and awareness-raising
- work to **improve the safety** of women human rights defenders by publicly condemning abuse, mistreatment and stigmatisation, attending trials and visiting those imprisoned, ensuring wide dissemination of statements through the media
- **provide emergency assistance** if necessary (emergency visas, safe houses, medical and psychological support, legal advocacy, rest and recuperation breaks) for defenders and their families
- use its influence and expertise to **implement in full the EU guidelines** on human rights defenders, with specific attention being paid to women human rights defenders
- work to **strengthen local journalism and media-development** in countries where human rights are widely abused to help encourage wider discussion of such issues and give broadcasting time to those who campaign for improvements
- Encourage peaceful **use of the Internet and online interaction** in the promotion of human rights and freedom of expression, particularly in countries where the authorities censor websites, search engines and blogs, particularly those covering women's issues.

International Recommendations

The Commission recommends that all States should

- **honour and implement the commitments** made under international treaties and conventions which relate to the protection and promotion of women's rights, including those in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Millennium Development Goals, the Beijing Platform for Action, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
- **support and promote the work of the UN Special Rapporteur** on Human Rights Defenders, and implement in law, policy and practice the provisions of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders

- **support and promote the new UN Agency for Women**
- **implement fully UN Security Council Resolution 1325** on women, peace and security, which aims to improve the participation of women in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peace-building, and **UNSCR 1820** on sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations
- **permit national and international NGOs** working to protect women and women human rights defenders **to operate effectively** without hindrance or fear of reprisals.

APPENDIX I: CONTRIBUTORS AND CONSULTEES

The CHRC is very grateful to following organisations and individuals, especially those who presented oral and written evidence. Copies of evidence submitted is available at www.conservativehumanrights.com.

- ABColombia**
- ActionAid**
- Aegis Trust
- Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission
- AfghanAid
- Amnesty International UK**
- Anona Development Consultancy
- APPG AIDs**
- APPG Great Lakes
- British Afghan Women's Society (BAWS)*
- Burma Campaign UK
- CAFOD**
- Cambodian MP and Human Rights Advocate
- Central American Women's Network
- Centre for Development Studies, Leeds University
- Centre for Public and Human Rights, John Hopkins University
- Centre for Social Cohesion
- Ceri Hayes (Independent Gender & Human Rights Adviser)
- Commonwealth Secretariat
- Conservative Middle East Council
- Conservative Women's Organisation
- Crisis Action
- CSW
- Dame Audrey Glover (Human Rights Lawyer)
- Defense Committee for Malalai Joya
- Eyecatcher Shevolution
- Foreign and Commonwealth Office
- Front Line Defenders (NGO based in Dublin)*
- Gender Action in Peace & Security (GAPS)**
- Gift of Grace and Network for Young People Affected by War
- Global Business Initiative on Human Rights
- Human Rights Centre, University of Essex
- Human Rights Watch
- Inge Relp (Independent Campaigner)
- Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR)*
- International Alert
- International Crisis Group
- International Justice Mission**
- International Rescue Committee
- International Society for Human Rights (ISHR/FIDH)
- Iranian and Kurdish Women's Rights Organisation
- Iraqi Women's League UK*

- Karen Human Rights Group
- Karen Women's Organisation
- Kurdish Human Rights Project (KHRP)**
- Lady Anne Greenstock (independent campaigner)*
- Liberty
- MADRE
- Mandana Hendessi (social development consultant)
- One Campaign
- One World Action*
- Organisation of Women's Freedom in Iraq**
- Oxfam
- Peace Brigades International (PBI)*
- PHAMIT Project Community Health and Education, MAP
- Foundation for the Health and Knowledge of Ethnic Labour
- Plan
- Saferworld
- Shadi Sadr (Iran lawyer)*
- Shan Women's Action Network
- Shan Women's Action Network (SWAN) Health
- Somaly Mam Foundation
- Special Rep of the UN Secretary General on Human Rights Defenders
- Stop the Traffik
- The British Institute of Human Rights
- The Henry Jackson Society
- The International Centre for the Legal Protection of Human Rights
- The One Million Signatures Campaign
- UK Gender & Development
- Network
- UK National Committee of UNIFEM
- UNHCR
- United for Women of all Nations (Lady Sawyers and Lady Holmes)*
- Visayan Forum Foundation
- Waging Peace
- Widows for Peace through Democracy
- Womankind
- Women for Women
- Women of Zimbabwe Arise
- Women's Democracy Network for the International Republican Institute
- Women's International League for Peace & Freedom
- Women's League of Burma
- Women's Refugee Commission (New York)
- World Organisation Against Torture
- World Uyghur Congress Uyghur American Association
- World Vision

*written evidence

**written and oral evidence

APPENDIX II: SELECTED WHRD BIOGRAPHIES

Afghanistan

[Sitara Achakzai](#)

[Safia Amajan](#)

[Shahla Farid](#)

[Fatima Gailani](#)

[Malalai Joya](#)

[Malalai Kakar](#)

[Ali Mohaqiq](#)

[Saraya Pakzad](#)

[Dr Sima Samar \(extensive work in Pakistan\)](#)

[Zakia Zaki](#)

Bolivia

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Cambodia

[Somaly Mam](#)

[Mu Sochua](#)

China

[Rebiya Kadeer](#)

[Dr Gao Yaojie](#)

Colombia

[Yolanda Becera](#)

[Jineth Bedoya](#)

[Luz Stella Cardenas](#)

[Yolanda Ceron](#)

[Lina Paola Malagon Diaz](#)

[Maria Paola Franceschi](#)

[Aida Quilque](#)

[Gloria Florez Scheider](#)

Cuba

[Ladies in White](#)

Democratic Republic of Congo

[Justine Masika Bihamba](#)

Ethiopia

[Birhane Kelkay](#)

Guatemala

[Norma Cruz](#)

India

[Asha Singh](#)

Iran

[Leila Alikarami](#)

[Shirin Ebadi](#)

Iraq

[Mesoun Al Damealogy](#)

[Houzan Mahmoud](#)

Mexico

[Digna Ochoa](#)

Nicaragua

[Women's Network Against Violence](#)

Philippines

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[Anna Politkovskaya](#)

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Tanzania

[Jane Magigita](#)

Turkey

[Leyla Zana](#)

Uganda

[Grace Akallo](#)

Zimbabwe

[Magodonga Mahlangu](#)

[Jenni Williams](#)

[Women of Zimbabwe Arise](#)

APPENDIX III: INSTITUTIONS & INSTRUMENTS

Universal Instruments

UN Charter (1945)

<http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/>

Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948)

<http://www.un.org/millennium/law/iv-1.htm>

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

<http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>

Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols of 1977

<http://www.icrc.org/Web/Eng/siteeng0.nsf/html/genevaconventions>

UN Refugee Convention (1951) and Protocol (1967)

<http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49da0e466.html>

Conventions on Stateless Persons (1954) (1961)

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/stateless.htm>

Convention on the Political Rights of Women (1953)

http://www.lawphil.net/international/treaties/conv_nonum_1953.html

Convention on Nationality of Married Women (1957)

<http://portal.unesco.org/shs/es/ev.php->

[URL_ID=3977&URL_DO=DO_PRINTPAGE&URL_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/shs/es/ev.php-URL_ID=3977&URL_DO=DO_PRINTPAGE&URL_SECTION=201.html)

Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (1957)

<http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/instree/g1smr.htm>

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965)

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/cerd.htm>

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966)

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/ccpr.htm>

First and Second Optional Protocols to the ICCPR

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/ccpr-one.htm>

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/ccpr-death.htm>

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966)

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/cescr.htm>

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979)

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm>

Optional Protocol (1999)

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/protocol/>

Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1984)

<http://untreaty.un.org/cod/avl/ha/catcidtp/catcidtp.html>

Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm>

and two Additional Protocols (armed conflict, sale of children) (2000)

Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Their Families (1990)

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/cmw.htm>

Regional Instruments

European Convention on Human Rights (with protocols) (1950)

<http://www.echr.coe.int/ECHR/EN/Header/Basic+Texts/The+Convention+and+additional+protocols/The+European+Convention+on+Human+Rights/>

European Social Charter (with protocols) (1961)

<http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/EN/Treaties/Html/035.htm>

European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1987)

<http://www.cpt.coe.int/EN/documents/ecpt.htm>

European Union Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/GuidelinesDefenders.pdf>

European Union Guidelines on Violence against Women and Girls

Guidelines on violence against women and girls and combating all forms of discrimination against them

American Declaration on the Rights and Duties of Man (1948)

<http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/oasinstr/zoas2dec.htm>

OAS Charter (1948) - the OAS homepage

<http://www.oas.org>

The Inter-American Human Rights Commission

<http://www.iachr.org>

American Convention on Human Rights (1969)

<http://www.cidh.org/Basicos/English/Basic3.American%20Convention.htm>

Inter-American Convention to Prevent and Punish Torture (1985)

<http://www.oas.org/JURIDICO/ENGLISH/Treaties/a-51.html>

Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women (1995)

<http://www.oas.org/juridico/english/treaties/a-61.html>

African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981) (OAU)

http://www.achpr.org/english/info/court_en.html

and its Additional Protocol establishing an African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (1998)

and its Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol):

<http://www.achpr.org/english/women/protocolwomen.pdf>

UN Declarations

Elimination of Violence Against Women (1993)

<http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/48/a48r104.htm>

Protection from Torture (1975)

<http://untreaty.un.org/cod/avl/ha/catcidtp/catcidtp.html>

Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (1977)

<http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/47/a47r133.htm>

Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief (1980)

<http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/36/a36r055.htm>

Right to Development (1986)

<http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/41/a41r128.htm>

UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders (1999)

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/defenders/docs/declaration/declaration.pdf>

Other International Resources, UN Resolutions and Criminal Courts/Tribunals

UNSCR 1325 (2000) Women in Armed Conflict

<http://www.peacewomen.org/un/sc/res1325.pdf>

UNSCR 1820 (2008) Women and Peace and Security

<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N08/391/44/PDF/N0839144.pdf?OpenElement>

UNSCR 1888 Women and Peace and Security: Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict (2009)

<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N09/534/46/PDF/N0953446.pdf?OpenElement>

UNSCR 1889 Women and Peace and Security (2009)

<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N09/542/55/PDF/N0954255.pdf?OpenElement>

UN Women's Pages

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch>

Ad Hoc International Criminal Tribunals for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and for Rwanda (ICTR)

<http://www.un.org/icty> and <http://www.icttr.org>

International Criminal Court (ICC)

<http://untreaty.un.org/cod/icc/index.html>

Significant International Institutions

UN General Assembly - Third (Human Rights) and Sixth Committees (Legal)

<http://www.un.org/ga/third/index.shtml>

<http://www.un.org/ga/sixth/64/CharterCttee.shtml>

UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

<http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/>

UN Commission on Human Rights (UNHRC)

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Pages/WelcomePage.aspx>

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

<http://www.unhchr.ch>

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

<http://www.ohchr.org>

Country and Thematic Special Rapporteurs

Experts who serve under the following country and thematic mandates relevant to human rights:

Countries

Country: Title	Name
Burundi: Independent Expert on Human Rights	Akich Okola
Cambodia: Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Human Rights	Surya Prasad Subedi,
Haiti: Independent Expert on human rights	Michel Forst
Burma: Special Rapporteur on human rights	Tomas Ojea Quintana
North Korea: Special Rapporteur on human rights	Vitit Muntarbhorn

Palestinian Territories: Special Rapporteur on human rights	Richard Falk
Somalia: Independent Expert on human rights	Shamsul Bari,
Sudan: Special Rapporteur on human rights	Mohamed Chande Othman

Themes

Theme	Name
Adequate Housing	Raquel Rolnik
Contemporary Forms of Slavery	Gulnara Shahinian
Cultural Rights	Farida Shaheed
Education	Vernor Munoz Villalobos
Effects of Economic Reform Policies and Foreign Debt on Human Rights	Cephas Lumina
Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary executions	Philip Alston
Freedom of Opinion and Expression	Frank William La Rue
Freedom of Religion or Belief	Asma Jahangir
Human Rights Defenders	Margaret Sekaggya
Independence of Judges and Lawyers	Gabriela Carina Knaul de Albuquerque e Silva
Minority Issues	Gay McDougall
Physical and Mental Health	Anand Grover
Protecting Human Rights while Countering Terrorism	Martin Scheinin
Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance	Githu Muigai
Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	Najat M'jid Maala
Torture	Manfred Nowak
Trafficking in Persons	Joy Ngozi Ezeilo
Use of Mercenaries to Impede the Right of Peoples to Self-Determination	Shaista Shameem
Violence against Women	Rashida Manjoo
Human Rights and Access to Safe Drinking water and Sanitation	Catarina de Albuquerque
Human Rights and Extreme Poverty	Magdalena Sepulveda
Human Rights and International Solidarity	Rudi Muhammad Rizki
Human Rights of Indigenous People	James Anaya
Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons	Walter Kälin
Human Rights of Migrants	Jorge Bustamante

United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)

<http://www.unifem.org/>

United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW)

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/>

United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (UN-INSTRAW)

<http://www.un-instraw.org/>

International Court of Justice (ICJ)

<http://www.icj-cij.org/homepage/index.php?lang=en>

UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

<http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home>

International Labor Organization (ILO)

<http://www.ilo.org/global/lang-en/index.htm>

World Health Organization (WHO)

<http://www.who.int/en/>

UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/>

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

<http://www.fao.org/>

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

<http://www.icrc.org/eng>

Working Groups

Contemporary Forms of Slavery

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/slavery/group.htm>

Indigenous Populations

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/indigenous/groups/groups-01.htm>

Arbitrary Detention

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/detention/>

Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/disappear/index.htm>

Right to Development

http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/development/right/WG_Right_to_Development.htm

Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/>

Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice

<http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/commissions/CCPCJ/index.html>

Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD)

http://www.un.org/esa/dsd/csd/csd_csd16.shtml

Commission on Human Settlements (Habitat)

<http://www.unhabitat.org/>

Treaty Bodies

Human Rights Committee (HRC)

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrc/index.htm>

Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD)
<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cerd/index.htm>
Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/index.htm>
Committee Against Torture (CAT)
<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cat/index.htm>
Option Protocol to the Convention against Torture (OPCAT)
<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cat/opcat/index.htm>
Committee on the Rights of the Child (CROC)
<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/index.htm>
Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR)
<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cescr/index.htm>

World Conferences

Vienna: Second World Conference on Human Rights (WCHR)(1993)
<http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/instree/l1viedec.html>
Cairo: International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD)(1994)
<http://www.un.org/popin/icpd2.htm>
Copenhagen: World Summit for Social Development (WSSD)(1995)
<http://www.un.org/documents/ga/conf166/aconf166-9.htm>
Beijing: Fourth World Conference on Women (1995)
<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/>
Istanbul: Habitat II (1996)
<http://www.un.org/Conferences/habitat/>
Durban: World Conference Against Racism (2001)
<http://www.un.org/WCAR/>
Johannesburg: World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002)

Some useful NGO and resource sites include:

- The U.S. Government's annual country conditions reports can be found at <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/hr/> or through the Department of State's homepage <http://www.state.gov>.
- Human Rights Library at the University of Minnesota: <http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts;>
- AU's Center for Human Rights and Humanitarian Law: <http://www.wcl.american.edu/pub/humright>
- The Australian Human Rights Information Center: <http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/ahric>
- Amnesty International <http://www.amnesty.org>
- Derechos Human Rights <http://www.derechos.org> and its human rights links <http://www.derechos.net/links>
- Human Rights Watch <http://www.hrw.org>
- Lawyers Without Borders <http://lawyerswithoutborders.org>
- Lawyers Committee for Human Rights <http://www.lchr.org>

- The Law Group <http://www.hrlawgroup.org>
- Center for Economic and Social Rights <http://www.cesr.org>
- HR Internet <http://www.hri.ca>
- World Press Freedom <http://www.wpfc.org>
- Article 19 <http://www.article19.org>
- Project Human Rights Education <http://humanrightseducation.org>
- Center for Constitutional Rights <http://www.ccr-ny.org>
- International Commission of Jurists <http://www.icj.org>
- Universal Rights Network <http://www.universalrights.net>
- For NGO reports, see <http://www.hri.ca/fortherecord>