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## REPORT ON THE KILLINGS OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS CONCEPT NOTE

### I. Introduction

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Ms. Mary Lawlor, will dedicate her next thematic report to the issue of killings of human rights defenders. This report will be presented at the 46<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations Human Rights Council in March 2021.

### II. Objectives

In line with the Human Rights Council's request to study trends, developments and challenges to human rights defenders, the Special Rapporteur **will focus her next thematic report on the killings of people who promote and defend human rights.**

The reported numbers of human rights defenders killed are rising, and there is no more direct attack on civil society than the murders of human rights defenders.

The Special Rapporteur has identified the killing of human rights defenders as priority of her work, as outlined in her forthcoming report to the General Assembly (A/75/165), in communications sent to governments and other actors, and during meetings with defenders. She has also held a series of consultations with human rights defenders who have been threatened with death.

#### Specific objectives of the report:

- Assess the nature of risks, threats and patterns of the killing of human rights defenders, from State and non-State actors. Particular emphasis will be provided to:
  - the nature and extent of online and offline death threats issued to human rights defenders;
  - emerging trends and patterns of killings in different regions of the world;
- Identify and explore effective preventive and protection measures and lessons learnt in the protection of human rights defenders. Discuss practical ways to improve their implementation and dissemination.
- Provide a platform for dialogue between stakeholders to share experiences and knowledge across regions;
- Share examples of useful steps taken by States, UN entities, businesses, International Financial Institutions (IFIs), Civil Society Organizations (CSO) and human rights defenders.

### **III. Methods of work**

In order to achieve the specific objectives of the report, different activities and outputs are planned. In particular:

- A questionnaire distributed to relevant stakeholders including UN Member States, international and regional organizations as well as national human rights institutions and civil society will help identify current trends in the killing of human rights defenders, as well as good practices and lessons learnt.
  - All submissions received in Word accessible formats will be published in OHCHR website unless the submitter clearly indicated that they did not wish to have their input be made publicly available when submitting their response.
- Analysis of communications and press releases on human rights defenders killed or threatened with death sent by the mandate to States and other relevant stakeholders.
- Consultations with human rights defenders to collect testimonies and identify common experiences of death threats;
- On-line expert meetings will be held to assist the Special Rapporteur in the identification of recommendations to the different stakeholders involved in the protection of human rights defenders at risk of being killed and on good practices and lessons learnt to prevent killings.
  - The aforementioned consultations and expert meetings will be held following the Chatham House Rule (participants are free to utilize the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s) or of any other participant, may be revealed).

### **IV. Expected Outcomes**

These activities will inform the Special Rapporteur's report to the Human Rights Council in March 2021. They will also provide an opportunity for human rights defenders and experts to meet and exchange experiences and ideas, with a view to strengthening the protection of human rights defenders.

### **V. Contact**

For overall questions regarding the process please contact [defenders@ohchr.org](mailto:defenders@ohchr.org)

### **VI. Background**

The mandate on the situation of human rights defenders was established in 2000 by the Commission on Human Rights, the predecessor of the Human Rights Council, to support the implementation of the 1998 United Nations Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, commonly referred to as the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

In May 2020, Ms. Mary Lawlor (Ireland), was appointed by the Human Rights Council as Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders.

The protection of human rights defenders is the Special Rapporteur's overriding concern. To this end, the Special Rapporteur seeks, receives and examines information on the situation of human rights defenders in order to establish cooperation with Governments and other interested actors and recommend effective strategies to better protect defenders.