



Ympäristöministeriö  
Miljöministeriet  
Ministry of the Environment



Service

# Supporting Human Rights Defenders Together : Guidelines of the Finnish Foreign Service

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# Updated guidelines (November 2022)

- The Foreign Service published its first guidelines on supporting human rights defenders (HRDs) in 2014.
- The updated guidelines are also intended for authorities and representatives of the private sector and civil society and take into account relevant developments, for example more attention is paid to HRDs' role in protecting the environment.
- The guidelines are relevant and applicable for supporting environmental defenders in the context of public participation in decision-making.
- The guidelines are based on the EU Guidelines on HRDs, the goals of Finland's human rights-based foreign and security policy and the Government's Report on Human Rights Policy (2021). Finland is also committed to supporting environmental human rights defenders under its action plan for climate smart foreign policy.
- Available in English:  
[https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/164904/UM\\_2023\\_11.pdf?sequence=4&isAllowed=y](https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/164904/UM_2023_11.pdf?sequence=4&isAllowed=y)



# Content

- The guidelines describe the activities and status of human rights defenders around the world. They encourage active efforts to support human rights defenders by providing many practical examples from projects supported by Finland.
- The different sections of the guidelines concern issues such as
  - Communicating and cooperating with HRDs
  - Cooperating with other governments, regional intergovernmental organisations
  - Taking human rights defenders into consideration in Team Finland activities
  - Advocacy in the UN and multilateral forum
  - Financial support to HRDs
  - Monitoring and reporting on the situation of HRDs; Indicators for reporting



# Examples of recommended actions to support the participation of HRDs (1/3)

With HRDs:

- **Meet** with human rights defenders and **take part** in events organised by them.
- **Organise** meetings and events on human rights issues and **invite** human rights defenders as speakers. **Pay attention** to the diversity of invited speakers.
- **Ensure the safety of human rights defenders and address their safetyrelated wishes** in the arrangements and communication of in-person and virtual meetings and events.
- **Help** human rights defenders gain access to safe spaces.
- **Monitor** trials of human rights defenders, to the extent possible, and **request information** about or visits with imprisoned or detained human rights defenders. **Note** any strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPP) and how they can be intervened in.
- **Inform** human rights defenders about their rights and the tools available to them.



# Examples of recommended actions to support the participation of HRDs (2/3)

In missions' activities:

- **Include meetings with human rights defenders in itineraries**, including high-level meetings.
- **Support opportunities of civil society**, including representatives of human rights organisations, to participate and advocate in international and regional intergovernmental organisations.
- **Engage civil society's representatives** in projects managed by the mission and ensure that their situation and rights are adequately addressed in them.
- **Cooperate with educational institutions**, for example to organise human rights training for students.
- **Participate in missions and visits** and collect information about the situation of civil society and human rights defenders, **meet with human rights defenders** during such trips.



# Examples of recommended actions to support the participation of HRDs (3/3)

With the private sector:

- **Actively disseminate information** about the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and **highlight their recommendation to consult human rights defenders** as part of corporate due diligence processes.
- **Support** companies in surveying stakeholders (including human rights defenders) and **creating contacts** between companies and local human rights defenders for the purpose of consultation.
- **Encourage host states** to develop national action plans on businesses and human rights, paying attention to human rights defenders.



# Examples of FI supporting HRDs

- Drawing attention to the challenges faced by environmental human rights defenders in high-level speeches.
- Supporting and promoting civil society's participation and right to speak in international arenas, including at meetings of international organisations.
- Promoting HRD participation in high-level panels
- Channeling support to environmental human rights defenders through national and international non-governmental organisations.





# Thank you for your attention!

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