

# Norway's efforts to support human rights defenders

*Guide for the foreign service*

Published by:  
Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

This brochure can be ordered from  
[www.publikasjoner.dep.no](http://www.publikasjoner.dep.no)

E-mail: [publikasjonsbestilling@dss.dep.no](mailto:publikasjonsbestilling@dss.dep.no)  
Fax: 22 24 27 86

Print: [www.kursiv.no](http://www.kursiv.no) 12/2010

Photo: Gopal Chitrakar / REUTERS / SCANPIX, Oswaldo Rivas / REUTERS / SCANPIX, EPA/RAHAT DAR / SCANPIX



NORWEGIAN MINISTRY  
OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS



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The protection of human rights is one of the main pillars of Norwegian foreign policy, and providing support for human rights defenders is a central part of these efforts. The objective is that efforts to promote and defend human rights in all parts of the world can be carried out without restrictions or threats to human rights defenders or their families.

Human rights defenders are people who stand up for other people’s rights. By documenting and calling attention to states’ violations of their obligation to promote and respect human rights, they help to enhance the protection of human rights at the local level. Support for human rights defenders is an investment in the rule of law and democracy.

Defending human rights can be difficult and even dangerous, especially for those who are raising human rights issues in their own country. Many receive threats to themselves and their families.

Many of you are involved, in different ways, in our efforts to support human rights defenders, and are doing important work at both country and multilateral level. We know that the attention and support of the international community not only encourages human rights defenders to keep up their efforts, but can also provide effective protection.

When it came to power, this Government signalled that it would strengthen support for human rights defenders, and we want you to give high priority to this work.

We have produced this new set of guidelines with a view to intensifying Norway’s efforts in this area. Our aim has been to provide sound, practical and relevant guidelines that will inspire you in your work. They are primarily intended as a practical guide for local human rights work, but should also form the basis of our efforts in multilateral forums, our human rights dialogues and our consultations at political level.

We ask you all to study these guidelines and make active use of them, and to consider what actions could be relevant in your field and at your place of work.

We look forward to working with you in our continued efforts to support human rights defenders.

Jonas Gahr Støre  
Minister of Foreign Affairs

Erik Solheim  
Minister of the Environment  
and International Development

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**When the rights of human rights defenders are violated, all our rights are put in jeopardy and all of us are made less safe.”**

Kofi Annan, UN Secretary General

### Objective

Protecting human rights defenders is a main priority in Norway's human rights policy. **The overall objective is that efforts to promote and defend human rights in all parts of the world can be carried out without restrictions or threats to human rights defenders or their families.**

At the UN and other international organisations, Norway actively promotes efforts to support human rights defenders. At national level, many Norwegian diplomatic missions are in charge of various measures and joint campaigns with other international actors to support their work. Human rights defenders are important cooperation partners for our diplomatic missions, as they are able to provide insight into and information about local matters.

The main objective of these guidelines is to help the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Norwegian missions to systematise measures and intensify efforts to support human rights defenders and their work.

### Why Norway gives priority to supporting human rights defenders

It is primarily the duty of states to protect, promote and implement their human rights obligations. Human rights defenders play a key role in documenting and calling attention to situations where states do not fulfil this duty and human rights violations are committed. Human rights defenders are often spokespersons for vulnerable and marginalised groups or for people who are not in a position to defend themselves. In many cases they represent grass-roots movements that are working to bring about change within their communities.

Human rights defenders help to ensure justice and to secure the implementation of human rights standards in their country. Supporting their work is an investment in the rule of law and democracy.

## International framework

**“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 1 of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders

The UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders was adopted in 1998 and forms the normative basis for our support for human rights defenders. The declaration establishes that states have a particular responsibility to protect human rights defenders, including from attacks from non-state actors. It underscores that states have an obligation to promote and respect rights that are of key importance to human rights defenders and their work, such as freedom of expression, the right to receive and impart information, and the right to assemble peacefully, and to form associations and non-governmental organisations.

Norway is the main sponsor of the resolutions on human rights defenders that are proposed regularly in the UN Human Rights Council and the UN General Assembly. The resolutions confirm the duty of states to protect human rights defenders and their work. Following a Norwegian initiative, the UN appointed in 2000 a Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders. The Special Rapporteur conducts country visits and raises individual cases with the relevant authorities. She reports regularly to the UN on the situation of human rights defenders.

**“It is the right to defend human rights that is central. Work for human rights defenders is not essentially about their protection, but about assisting them to carry out their activities. They need protection because these activities put them at risk.”**

Conclusion from the international seminar on human rights defenders, Oslo 3-5 September 2010.

## What is a human rights defender?

The term “human rights defender” covers both individuals and groups who work to promote and protect human rights. There is no specific definition of the term. What is most important is the human rights character of the work undertaken.

Human rights defenders work to promote human rights – civil and political as well as economic, social and cultural rights – on behalf of individuals or groups. They include lawyers, activists, journalists, bloggers, authors, health workers, artists, trade union leaders and teachers, to mention some. Human rights defenders address the full range of human rights concerns, for example the use of torture, extrajudicial killings, discrimination, impunity, and the right to health, food or water. Some work for

children’s right to education, others for the right of HIV-positive people to treatment, and yet others document human rights violations in connection with the exploitation of natural resources in areas of conflict.

Actions to promote and protect human rights must not be violent. Guerrilla groups are not therefore covered by the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, even in cases where the group’s aim is to protect a minority that is subject to discrimination.

Neither is a person automatically defined as a human rights defender just because they are prevented from exercising their rights, for example the right of freedom of religion, and are imprisoned in this connection. A person only becomes a human rights defender when they stand up for the rights of a broader group of people and through words or actions publically challenge infringements of these rights.

The extent to which there are **restrictions to human rights defenders’ room for manoeuvre** is an important indicator of the human rights situation and the political situation in general in the country concerned.

The authorities in many countries perceive criticism from human rights defenders not only as unpleasant but also as dangerous. Anyone fighting for democracy and justice will, in many places, be regarded as a threat to the current regime.

In many countries exists a large gap between the protections provided by law and the daily experience of human rights defenders that are subject to attacks, threats and administrative and judicial restrictions. In some countries human rights defenders are tortured, disappear or are killed. There has been a growing trend in recent years to justify restrictive measures applied to the activities of human rights defenders as legal counter-terrorism measures.

Human rights activists may also be under attack from non-state actors, including armed groups, private companies and individuals, for instance community leaders and faith-based groups, as well as the media.

Impunity is an extensive and widespread problem in many countries. The inability or unwillingness to investigate attacks on human rights defenders may be seen as acceptance of such attacks.



Photo: AFP / SCANPIX

## PART I: THE ROLE OF DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS IN THIS WORK

*How can missions support individuals or organisations that are being prevented from carrying out their work to promote human rights and/or are in danger due to these activities?*

### 1. ASCERTAINING THE CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS WORK

*An overview of the situation for human rights defenders provides a good basis for the mission's efforts and for reporting on the general situation in the country and the human rights situation in particular.*

#### Missions should establish the following:

1. Who the human rights defenders – both organisations and individuals – are. Are they part of a national or international network of human rights defenders?
2. The conditions and general climate for human rights work, including any restrictions by the authorities, any reprisals against human rights defenders and any restrictive legislation.
3. The extent to which there is a dialogue between the authorities, human rights defenders and civil society. Do the authorities facilitate the participation of civil society in public consultations, open debates etc.?
4. The authorities' efforts to protect human rights defenders.
5. Whether there are legislative obstacles limiting human rights defenders' independence or right to freedom of association, assembly and expression.
6. The authorities' ability and willingness to investigate attacks against human rights defenders (degree of impunity).
7. The extent to which local UN offices, other international and regional organisations and other countries' missions are working with this issue.

The above points can also be used as talking points in meetings with human rights defenders.



Photo: Human Rights House Foundation

#### Sources that missions should consult:<sup>1</sup>

- Local human rights defenders. National and regional networks of human rights defenders.
- National independent human rights commissions.
- UN offices in the country, in particular the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and/or UN human rights advisers.
- Reports and recommendations from the UN human rights system, in particular the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, and the country's own Universal Periodic Review under the Human Rights Council ([www.upr-info.org](http://www.upr-info.org)).
- Other countries' diplomatic missions.
- Reports and recommendations from regional mechanisms: the Council of Europe, the OSCE, the inter-American and African human rights commissions.
- National public institutions (ministries, ombudsmen, commissions, etc.), national research institutions and universities.
- Speeches and addresses by the authorities in national and international forums.
- Reports on human rights in the local media and international press.
- Norwegian and international human rights organisations working in the country in question.

<sup>1</sup> See appendix II for more links

**“We really believe that many of us would not be alive today, and our organisations would not exist, if there had not been an intensive and sustained engagement from the international community”.**

Human rights defenders from Colombia

## 2. MEASURES

*The missions are to continue to have a key role in the implementation of Norway's human rights policy at country level. Different approaches must always be weighed up against the situation in the country in question. It will often be expedient to coordinate activities with the diplomatic missions of like-minded countries, not least in order to increase the impact.*

### a. Regular contact and exchange of information with human rights defenders

Regular contact with human rights defenders is important in order to understand their situation and develop a relationship of mutual trust where it is natural to share information and contacts. This can also give useful insight into the society, the political situation and other local issues.

*The following measures are easy to implement and have been shown to be very effective in protecting human rights defenders:*

- Invite human rights defenders to meetings at the mission or at a more neutral meeting place.
- Visit human rights defenders at their place of work, and/or take part in field visits to their projects.
- Take part in seminars and meetings arranged by human rights defenders and attend press conferences, also in rural areas.
- Establish meeting places or support seminars for local groups of human rights defenders with a view to competence-building and strengthening contacts between them.

By engaging in such activities, missions make it clear that they recognise human rights defenders and their work. This type of visibility and recognition from the international community is often a form of protection in itself.

However, it is important to bear in mind that some authorities seek to discredit human rights defenders by for instance branding them as agents of other states. In countries where this is an issue, the mission should proceed with caution and listen to the advice of the local human rights defenders.

**“Human rights defenders should not be made visible only when they are arrested or harmed. Their work should be made visible to us all the time. In this way their legitimacy is made plain.”**

*Conclusion from the international seminar on human rights defenders, Oslo 3-5 September 2010.*

### b. Contact with the authorities

#### Day-to-day work

The situation of human rights defenders should be raised with the authorities both in the informal dialogue and under formal political talks. It may be appropriate to work together with other actors to establish a forum for dialogue or to engage a representative of the authorities as a dialogue partner. The mission can also suggest to the Ministry cases that could be taken up in international forums that Norway participates in.

#### Suggestions for talking points with the authorities:

States have the overall responsibility for protecting human rights defenders. The authorities should therefore be encouraged to:

- Publicly acknowledge the role and work of human rights defenders. This is an important part of the state's role as protector. Negative statements and signals on the part of the authorities regarding human rights defenders increase the risk of attacks and threats.
- Ensure that national legislation is in line with international obligations and does not restrict human rights defenders in their work.
- Ensure that all internal security officials, incl. the police, receive human rights training.
- Develop mechanisms for consultation with human rights defenders to identify the need for protection and effective protective measures.
- Involve civil society and human rights defenders in decision processes (national development projects that entail major environmental impact, the development of new legislation on freedom of expression, etc.).
- Establish a contact point for human rights defenders in the central administration and consider the possibility of developing an “early warning” system. Ensure that relevant human rights training is given to all internal security officials.
- Support the role of national human rights institutions in protecting human rights defenders, and strengthen their capacity.
- Direct particular attention to women human rights defenders.
- Ensure that those responsible for attacks on human rights defenders are prosecuted. This also applies to non-governmental actors who may be responsible for attacks. Effective prosecution in such cases is crucial for the protection of human rights defenders. The authorities should also be encouraged to condemn such attacks.
- Invite the UN Special Rapporteur for human rights defenders to visit the country

### Reaction to the authorities in critical cases

In critical situations, where the life or work of a human rights defender is threatened, the mission should consider expressing its concern to the country's authorities.

Possible measures, if informal dialogue is not appropriate or has not been successful:

- Formal enquiries
- Official meetings
- Official protest (démarche). Approval from the Ministry is required.
- Official statements, such as a press release. Again, approval from the Ministry is required.

The mission must examine and verify the facts thoroughly before deciding to issue a démarche, press release or any form of public statement. The planned reaction should be discussed with human rights defenders and local organisations, and should be agreed to by the human rights defender concerned and his or her family.

In many cases, it will be appropriate to work together with like-minded countries, not just in terms of resources, but also in order to have greater impact. In some cases, the need for a rapid decision and the greatest possible flexibility may make it more expedient for Norway to react independently and to make its own statement. The mission must consider the overall situation in terms of what would be best in the individual case and for the individual human rights defender.

After issuing a démarche, the mission should report to the Ministry on the effect, giving its view as to whether this protest should be published.

Whenever an individual case is raised with the authorities, the human rights defender, as well as his or her family and any third party (e.g. an organisation) that has been involved, should be informed.

### c. Observation of court cases, prison visits and visits to persons under house arrest

It can be important that missions are present at court cases involving matters of principle with regard to human rights defenders, in order to observe directly whether fundamental legal safeguards are respected. The mission should inform the Ministry if observation of a court case is deemed appropriate.

Missions are also encouraged to visit human rights defenders in prison or under house arrest. It may also be appropriate to visit the family of an imprisoned human rights defender.

### d. Use of the media

Missions are encouraged to use the media (local papers, press conferences, radio) and other relevant channels of communication (the mission's website, regjeringen.no, press releases from the Ministry) to increase visibility and support for human rights defenders and draw attention to cases that have been raised with the authorities.

### e. Cooperation with international actors at local level

Contact with other diplomatic missions, the UN and international organisations is important in order to share information and to coordinate contact with the authorities.

The mission should take part in the human rights forums of missions of like-minded countries and international organisations with a permanent presence in the country. In countries where no such forums exist, the mission should take the initiative to develop one. Such forums should be used to discuss the situation of human rights defenders, and regular meetings should be arranged between diplomatic missions, international organisations and local human rights defenders.

### f. Cooperation with national human rights institutions

National institutions that monitor human rights can be important sources of information, especially when they have independent status. A national body may be seen as more neutral and more entitled to raise violations of human rights than a Western actor, for example. National human rights commissions have been established in several countries in line with the Paris Principles on National Human Rights Institutions. The national commissions play an important part in the efforts to monitor and protect human rights in the country in question, and missions should therefore collaborate with them.



## **g. Economic support for human rights defenders and their work**

In countries where human rights defenders do not have sufficient economic resources for their work, it may be appropriate to provide funding for them. Grants may be awarded, on application, to support for human rights projects, seminars, building up and strengthening networks of human rights defenders, security training, legal aid, insurances, the development of materials or other activities.

Providing support for human rights defenders is an important part of bilateral development cooperation. Missions are encouraged to make use of the opportunities available under the various budget items to support human rights defenders. National human rights institutions will, in many cases, be important cooperation partners, and may also need economic support.

It is important to bear in mind that economic support from international actors can, in some cases, compromise human rights defenders' work and undermine their credibility in the country concerned.

Funding can be applied to from the Norwegian Human Rights Fund [www.nhrf.no/](http://www.nhrf.no/) for efforts in low- or middle-income countries where the human rights situation is difficult.

## **h. Acute need for protection**

*From time to time, situations arise where a human rights defender and/or his or her family members are at serious risk of death or injury. Involvement in such cases is politically sensitive and requires thorough preparation and careful consideration by the mission.*

### **Need for short-term protection**

Sometimes it may be necessary to provide short-term protection in a safe house or refuge. In such cases it is often advantageous to cooperate with regional networks of human rights defenders as well as with diplomatic missions of like-minded countries.

In certain cases, it may be appropriate to provide financial support or practical assistance to enable the person concerned to move to another part of the country or even another country in the region.

## **Need for more long-term protection**

As a general rule, persons who need to move to another country for reasons of protection should be referred to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) if it is represented in the area.

In exceptional cases, it may be appropriate to help a human rights defender to obtain the right to reside in Norway. However, residence can only be granted within the framework of current Norwegian immigration law.

Normally, an application for asylum or residence on humanitarian grounds must be submitted by a person who is already in Norway. However, refugee status may be granted without the person being in Norway, on the condition that the person is registered as a refugee with the UNHCR.

In accordance with section 35 of the Immigration Act, missions may in exceptional cases request that persons are granted an entry permit to Norway. The conditions are that the person concerned is in serious danger, the Norwegian criteria for asylum are met, and the case is of significance for Norwegian interests. In certain cases, human rights defenders may meet these criteria. See the guidelines set out in circular GI-13/2010 from the Ministry of Justice (Norwegian only).

See Appendix I *Checklist in cases in the event of acute need for protection.*

**“What is important for human rights defenders at risk is not only finding a safe environment to live, but also to keep their human rights work ongoing.”**

Human rights defender from Sri Lanka



Photo: Oswaldo Rivas / REUTERS / SCANPIX

### 3. RISK ASSESSMENT

*Before deciding on any course of action, the mission must consider the possible consequences.*

The mission must consider whether its involvement could lead to reprisals against the human rights defender in question and his or her family. These may be physical (such as death, torture, imprisonment, vandalism, theft, etc.) and/or non-physical (such as threats, harassment, social exclusion, fines, surveillance, loss of employment). The mission must also consider whether intervention could have negative consequences for the human rights defender's work.

The mission should maintain a close dialogue with the person concerned to establish what would be the best form of reaction in each case.

It is important to ensure that there are secure lines of communication between the mission and human rights defenders.

### 4. Human Rights Defenders at particular risk

Diplomatic missions should bear in mind that certain groups of human rights defenders can be at particular risk:

- Women human rights defenders
- Those working for the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people
- Human rights defenders in rural areas. These are often less visible and can therefore be in greater need of protection
- Individuals or groups engaged in issues involving major economic interests
- Those working for the rights of minorities and indigenous peoples

**“[W]omen defenders may arouse more hostility than their male colleagues because as women human rights defenders they may defy cultural, religious or social norms about femininity and the role of women in a particular country or society”**

UN Special Representative of Secretary-General on Human Rights Defenders, Hina Jilani

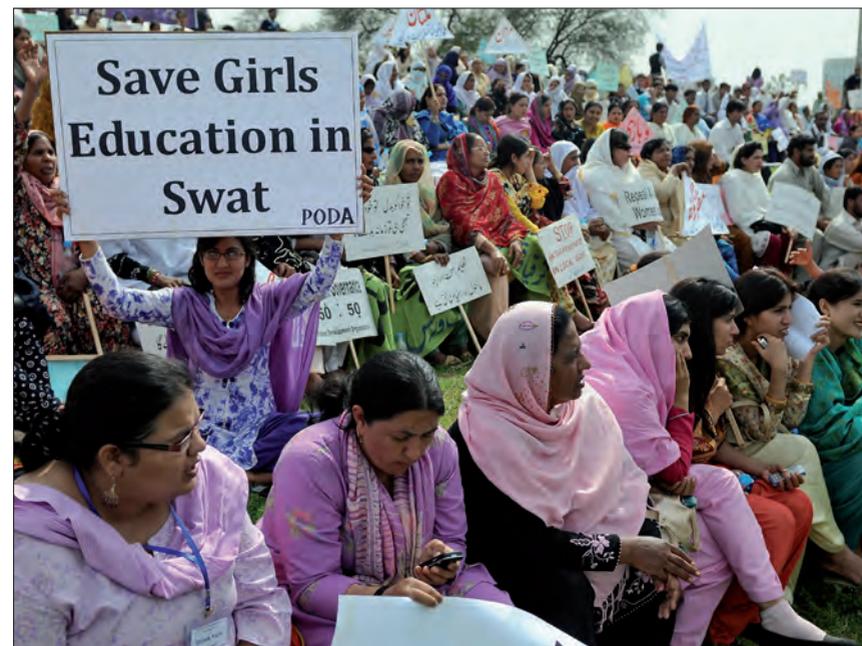


Photo: Farooq NAEEM / AFP / SCANPIX

## 5. RESOURCES AND COMPETENCE-BUILDING

*Diplomatic missions should give priority to supporting human rights defenders.*

Training in the field of human rights and human rights defenders is to be included in the programme of courses offered to foreign service staff both at home and abroad. Missions are to give priority to competence-building in this field for their staff. The Foreign Service Institute (UKS) offers an e-learning course in human rights, as well as other relevant courses.

The use of resources and competence-building initiatives in this field should be considered in connection with the mission's development cooperation. Regional meetings on human rights can be important arenas in this context.

Each mission should have a contact person for human rights at all times. In connection with a change of staff, arrangements should be made to ensure continuity and to maintain networks.



*Demonstration on Sámi (indigenous) land rights in front of the Norwegian Parliament (1979).  
Photo: Ivar Aaserud / VG / SCANPIX*

## 6. REPORTING ROUTINES

*Diplomatic missions are to report on human rights issues in accordance with chapter 7 sections 10 and 12 of the Instructions for the Foreign Service.<sup>1</sup> They are also to describe their human rights activities in their reports on the annual plan.*

- Where relevant, the missions work on human rights defenders should be included in the missions annual plans and in their reports on the annual plan
- In addition to ongoing reporting on current events in the human rights area, missions should include their efforts to support human rights defenders in their six-monthly reports.
- Missions are requested to send a copy of all reports that touch on human rights issues to the Section for Human Rights and Democracy.
- The missions should report yearly on how this guide on human rights defenders has been implemented.

<sup>1</sup> <http://udintra/NR/rdonlyres/D90F1405-60E9-4F4D-819D-63EE6FBA86AF/2550/kap8.htm>  
(Norwegian only)



Photo: Mark Condren



Photo: Mark Condren

## PART II: THE ROLE OF THE MINISTRY

*In its contact with authorities in other countries, Norway should, when appropriate, express concern about the situation of human rights defenders and stress how important it is that the authorities support and facilitate their work and ensure that they are not met with obstacles or attacks.*

### Meetings at political level and political visits

Where relevant, the general situation of human rights defenders and important individual cases should be raised in meetings at political level and on official visits abroad. Information on the situation of human rights defenders in the country in question should be included in the background material for the political leadership. In planning visits by the political leadership, consideration should be given to arranging meetings with representatives of civil society and human rights defenders. As far as possible, meetings with relevant Norwegian NGOs should be arranged before and after a political visit.

### Norway's human rights dialogues and consultations on human rights

The situation of human rights defenders should, as far as possible, be included in Norway's human rights dialogues and consultations on human rights with other countries

### Multilateral forums

When appropriate, the situation of human rights defenders should be raised in Norway's statements at the UN, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and the Council of Europe, and in particular in Norway's

comments and recommendations in connection with the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in the UN Human Rights Council. Furthermore, cooperation with the UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights Defenders and invitations to visit countries should be raised in connection with the UPR of a country where this is a challenge.

### Publicity

Drawing international attention to the situation of human rights defenders will often in itself provide important protection. In cases where Norway has expressed concern at political level about a human rights defender, consideration should always be given to whether this should be made known to the general public (e.g. through a press release or a news item on regjeringen.no). When concern about a human rights defender has been expressed to the authorities in the country concerned, the human rights defender and his or her family should be informed.

### Grants

Grants for projects to support human rights defenders constitute an important tool in the Ministry's work to support human rights defenders. The Ministry's country desks are encouraged to make use of the opportunities to be found under the various budget items to provide support for human rights defenders.

### Division of labour and responsibilities

Section for Human Rights and Democracy:

- Centre of expertise and thematic responsibility for work to support human rights defenders
- Norway's national focal point for human rights defenders
- Provides assistance in urgent cases on request from the Ministry's country desks
- Coordinates Norwegian policy and initiatives on human rights defenders at the UN in consultation with relevant country desks, the Communication Unit, and other relevant Ministry sections and diplomatic missions.

Department for Regional Affairs and Development / Department for Security Policy and the High North / Department for European Affairs and Trade Policy:

- Overall responsibility for the work to support human rights defenders at country level
- Coordination responsibility in individual cases. Coordinates with the Section for Human Rights and Democracy, the Communication Unit and the embassy involved.

Section for Humanitarian Affairs:

- Coordinates the Ministry's processing of cases submitted by a Norwegian embassy in accordance with section 35 of the Immigration Act.
- Contact point for communication with the authorities in other countries. Letters from diplomatic missions to the Ministry should be addressed to the refugee adviser at the Department for UN, Peace and Humanitarian Affairs.

## Appendix I: Checklist in the event of acute need for protection

*It is recommended that you use this checklist to ascertain the conditions under which human rights defenders are working and to identify measures to support human rights defenders in acute need of protection. In order to protect the human rights defender(s) concerned, it is crucial that that information is treated confidentially.*

- 1) **Who:** Name of individual, group or organisation and contact information.  
For individuals: gender, age, nationality, occupation.
- 2) **What and where:** What kind of human rights activities are human rights defenders engaged in? In which town, city or region are they working?
- 3) **Type of incident:** Describe abuse or threats in chronological order. If, for example, the person was imprisoned, what rights did he or she have (access to a lawyer, visits from family) and how were the general conditions in prison? What did the imprisonment lead to (charge, court case, compensation)?
- 4) **Alleged perpetrator:** Government or non-governmental actor? Note details of the person(s) believed to be responsible (number, gender, title, name). Where there any witnesses?
- 5) **Reaction from the authorities:** Has the incident been reported to the authorities, and if so by whom? What was the authorities' response? Has information about the incident been published?
- 6) **Connection between the incident and the victim's human rights activities:** Is there reason to assume that the incident is a reaction to the victim's human rights activities? Have there been previous incidents or threats? Have others in a similar situation been subject to abuse?
- 7) **Source:** If relevant, indicate who has provided the embassy with this information.
- 8) **Contact with the embassy:** Does the embassy know the human rights defender from before? If so, what contact has there been?
- 9) **Recommended action(s):** What risk assessments have been made? What can the embassy do (see section 3 above)? Are there any other actors that the embassy should consider collaborating with?
- 10) **Results of action(s):** Positive and negative consequences (new contacts, new incidents of abuse, security assessments, relations with the authorities, situation for the human rights defender's family).
- 11) **Updates:** Remember to update information if the situation changes.

## Appendix II: Relevant websites and organisations

**International non-governmental actors** with particular focus on human rights defenders:

- The Irish-based organisation *Front Line (International Foundation for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders)* runs a hotline service for human rights defenders, issues urgent appeals and provides emergency support: [www.frontlinedefenders.org](http://www.frontlinedefenders.org)
- *International Federation for Human Rights* publishes annual reports on the situation of human rights defenders in a number of countries  
<http://www.fidh.org/-Human-Rights-Defenders->
- *World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)* issues urgent appeals and provides emergency support. [www.omct.org](http://www.omct.org)
- *International Service for Human Rights*: [www.ishr.ch](http://www.ishr.ch)
- *Human Rights House Network*: [www.humanrightshouse.org](http://www.humanrightshouse.org)
- *Peace Brigades International* can escort and protect human rights defenders in critical situations: [www.peacebrigades.org](http://www.peacebrigades.org)
- *Human Rights First* [www.humanrightsfirst.org](http://www.humanrightsfirst.org)
- *Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)*, <http://www.cpj.org/>
- *Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)*  
[www.forum-asia.org](http://www.forum-asia.org)
- *Amnesty International* [www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org)

### Regional organisations:

*Africa* has its own Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders in Africa under the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.

In *Latin America*, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights has a special unit for human rights defenders.

In *Europe*, the Council of Europe has a Commissioner for Human Rights with a mandate to monitor the situation of human rights defenders. Information can be found on the Commissioner's efforts in this area on the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights website

In *Asia* ASEAN has recently established an intergovernmental human rights commission for Southeast Asia.

In the *Middle East*, there is the Arab Commission on Human Rights under the *Arab League*.

### International organisations:

UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders:  
<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/defenders/index.htm>

The Ministry's webpages on human rights defenders: <http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/ud/selected-topics/human-rights/Human-rights-defenders.html?id=506850>