JOINT INITIATIVE FOR PROTECTION OF
WOMEN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS
IN THE ARAB WORLD

PEACE BRIGADES INTERNATIONAL NETHERLANDS/
VROUWEN VOOR VREDE

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Glossary

WHRD's	Women Human Rights Defenders
CSW	UN Committee on the State of Women
UNSC	UN Security Council
UNSCR 1325	UN Security Council Resolution 1325
LAS	League of Arab States
SAF	Sisters' Arab Forum for Human Rights
SOFA	Status of Forces Agreement
SIHA	Strategic Initiative of Women in the Horn of Africa

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DEAR READER,

The Joint Initiative for Protection of Women Human Rights Defenders in the Arab world started in September 2015 and is planned to be rounded up in March 2016.

This report is edited before the end of the project and will still be used during the last phase. It serves different purposes. To facilitate the reading, the report has been divided into four parts, each with its own purpose.

The first part is a progress review on **the Joint Initiative project**; this review is made before the end of the project and will be completed later on, when the project is finished. It ends with a recommendation on the main issues for follow up.

The second part is a **descriptive introduction** to the work and situation of women human rights defenders in 9 countries in the Arab world through a few examples and stories. The purpose of this descriptive chapter is to honour their values and courage and draw a varied and realistic impression of their work and situation. The countries included are Egypt, Sudan, Yemen, Syria, Libya, and the regional level. It ends with a summary in which a typology of the organisations and the elements of a common style in the Arab region are explored.

The third part is a qualitative and quantitative **risk assessment** for women Human Rights Defenders in the Arab region. The assessment is made from a feminist perspective. The main concepts are drawn from meetings with partners in the Netherlands and from Latin American studies on the issue. Priority is given to the practical safety issues discussed more frequently among Women Human Rights Defenders in the Arab region. The chapter ends with a grid of main risks and suggestions for mitigation and further research to be done.

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The fourth part presents an inventory of **protection measures** that increase the safety of Women Human Rights Defenders. It contains mainly quotes from the survey and from the interviews. The concepts of personal resilience and organizational safety are introduced. Chapter 4.2 ends with a grid of protections needs and suggestions on measures. Then, the opinions on the different roles that international mechanisms for protection can play are reviewed.

An executive summary is not provided, but the report ends with a personal epilogue, in which the consultant explains her own learning process and answers the questions why and how it is relevant to support Women Human Rights Defenders in the Arab world. The general conclusions and recommendations are to be found in these 2 pages. A list of references and the text of the survey are attached as annexes.

Thank you Fenna, Florian, Rana, Emmie, Hibaaq, Mekka and Anne, for your continuous practical and moral support. And thank you Rosien, Emma and Inez, for giving me the opportunity to contribute to this inspiring project.

Ermelo, January 15 2016
Joke Oranje

1. PART ONE: THE JOINT INITIATIVE PROJECT

الفصل 1 - الخلفية و المنهجية المستخدمة في هذا التحقيق

Women leaders in the Arab world are increasingly active in the public sphere, challenging society to stand up for democracy, transparency and respect for specific rights that are denied; they participate in peace building activities such as mediation and peace agreements; they are leaders of civil society organisations and Women's organisations. These are risky activities, especially in cases where women are not accepted to act in the public sphere. From earlier reports and studies we learn that there is a need for strategies and policies to better protect them. While protection programmes for Latin American Women Human Rights Defenders have been developed in the last two decades, the consultant found no studies on protection developed specifically to the situation in Arab speaking countries[1].

1.1   THE NEED FOR THE PROJECT

The need for the Join Initiative Project was identified in the transcontinental exchange conference in May 2014 of Women Human Rights Defenders, between Central America and Afghanistan, Palestine and Egypt. The conference was called: "*Strong women, who protects them?*" It had been organized by Peace Brigades International /Netherlands involving their partners in Central America and 6 Dutch partner organisations[2]. It was followed by workshops and the joint drafting[3] of a comprehensive toolkit on WHRD's protection in English and Arabic[4] in 2015. At the conference the question arose if the PBI method of protective accompaniment by foreign volunteers would be applicable in the context of Arab countries. On the other hand, awareness was growing that financing women's organisations in the Arab world involves a responsibility to watch over the safety of the counterpart. The question was raised if and how protection could be provided to Women Human Rights Defenders from outside the country. The most logical step would be, therefor, to ask *them* for an answer in the first place.

The purpose of the Joint Initiative is to improve the safety of Women Human Rights Defenders in the social changes process taking place in the Arab world.

Within this general purpose, the expected results are:

- A consistent, clear, and accepted global impression on the protection needs of Women Human Rights Defenders in the Arab World.
- Opportunities for effective nonviolent protection and safety planning presented to a broader audience of organisations who effectively work in this region.
- Effective cooperation between Dutch organisations proposed to take decisions together on concrete policy initiatives for global protection of Women Human Rights Defenders in the Arab World.

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[1] There are comprehensive overviews on 1325 movements and Human Rights situations in each country*: National Consultations 1325 in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, Yemen,* WILPF, 2012; and Kelly, Sanja and Breslin, Julia, Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa, *Country Reports 18 countries,* Freedom House, 2010

[2] WILPF, Vrouwen voor Vrede, Christian Peace Services, VOND, Stichting NAHID, Sundjata.

[3] Arabesk, Care, Diversity4Change, Foundation Centre for Diasporas Development Work, Multicultural Womens Peace Makers Network, NAP 1325, Oxfam Novib, Platvorm Vrouwen Duurzame Vrede, Politie, Sundjata, Vereniging NEDWORC, VON, Vrouwenorganisatie Nederland Darfur, Vrouwen voor Vrede, Vrouwen voor Vrede Molukken, Women's International league for Peace and Freedom, WO=MEN, Women Peacemakers Program

[4] Boer, Inez de, Strong Women safe in Action, *A comprehensive Guide on WHRD's Protection,* PBI NL 2015

1.2 PARTNERS IN THE JOINT INITIATIVE

Joint Initiative was designed and funded as a joint venture between 2 Dutch peace building organisations and one women's organisation in the MENA region: Peace Brigades International /Netherlands, Vrouwen voor Vrede and Karama.

Peace Brigades International /Netherlands is an international organisation working to open a space for peace in which conflicts can be dealt with non-violently. The best know instrument of PBI is the placement of international teams of volunteers in a fragile country, using methods such as protective accompaniment, peace education, independent observation, risk analysis and safety training. In the Netherlands, PBI NL (www.peacebrigades.nl) involves other Dutch organisations in cooperation around protection of Human Rights Defenders. The work of PBI is supported by a broad international network of UN organizations, embassies and Human Rights Organisations. PBI has consultative status at the Ecosoc.

Vrouwen voor Vrede (www.vrouwenvoorvrede.nl) is known as a broad Dutch women's movement opposing nuclear armament from 1979 on. Currently, is works as an Association with around 500 members and sponsors. Vrouwen voor Vrede encourages women to undertake actions for a peace culture in connection with every living creature; and functions as a contact centre in the (multicultural) peace movement.

The key partner in the Arab world is the regional organization Karama (www.el-karama.org), with offices in Cairo and Amman and partners in Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, New York, Palestine, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia and Yemen. Their specific role in the Joint Initiative for Protection is to provide baseline information on the situation of Women Human Rights Defenders in these countries, and to provide us with meaningful contacts for interviews, group interviews and an online survey. They will help to understand the main regional issues on protection, and they will influence the choice and formulation of protection concepts that are appropriate for the region.

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The project aims at involving 10 to 12 other organisations for development cooperation in the Netherlands who work with Women Human Rights Defenders in the Arab World, with the purpose to consult their counterparts on how they experience their safety and how they would identify protection needs related to their position and work.

1.3 DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

The design of the project considers 6 activities:

- υ Open and maintain a webpage in Arabic on the website of Vrouwen voor Vrede, to enable Arabic speaking women to be informed on some actions and organisations in the Netherlands.
- υ Collect 100 names and email addresses from Dutch NGO's of contacts in Arab countries to be invited to participate in an online survey on protection.
- υ Design and disseminate an online survey among 100 secure contacts in 7 Arab countries.
- υ Consult 24 Women Human Rights Defenders and experts in Egypt and in Sudan through depth interviews.
- υ Draft a provisional report and ask feedback on the report from partner organisations.
- υ Disseminate and discuss the results of the consultation among a broader public.

The activities 1 to 5 were implemented as agreed between September 15 and January 15.

RESULTS OF THE WEBSITE

Vrouwen voor Vrede (Women for Peace in the Netherlands) joined the project "Strong women, who protects them?" by opening a page on their website in Arabic and English, to reach out to Arab speaking women activists who want to work for peace in their country; to open a channel for knowledge sharing on nonviolent action methods; and to support the development of the Joint Initiative Project with news and downloadable documents.

In September a group of volunteers was called together by the webmaster of Vrouwen voor Vrede, Thea Vermeiren, to work out this idea. Yasmin Khalaf Haider, Isra Abdelgabar and Emmie Mesdag joined the group, and Rula Asad agreed to become an advisor of this multi/lingual communication channel. The new webpage went online in October 2014, and posted the following articles:

- υ Welcome and opening
- υ A Year Away From Syria (from internet)
- υ What is the joint initiative project?
- υ A Comprehensive Guide for Protection of WHRD, a toolkit of PBI
- υ Two blogs from Yasmin
- υ Profile of Vrouwen voor Vrede
- υ Two portraits of peace building women leaders in Darfur, Salwa Haroun Imam and Mahasin Ali Abdelgadir
- υ Women's Manifest for Peace in Darfur
- υ Statement of Paris
- υ Resolution 1325 as Starting Point
- υ Article on the White Helmets in Syria
- υ Visionaries, Activists and Professionals Egypt
- υ Women as Leaders: interview with Mekka Abdelkabar
- υ A video clip done for a song on peace from Jerusalem (from internet)
- υ Profile of Peace Brigades International /Netherlands

Also the documents of the Joint Initiative were uploaded to be consulted by the visitors of the website. Until this moment 322 persons visited the special website page. A few reactions were received to congratulate the organisation with this initiative.

After the launch of the website page it became clear that this website-page did not reflect the communication policy of Peace Brigades International /Netherlands. For that reason, the name of PBI as co-responsible for the content was removed, although Vrouwen voor Vrede continues to support and give space to the Joint Initiative project. The special website page still needs some time to be disseminated and to get its final shape. The interaction with Arab-speaking women will be intensified.

RESULTS OF THE MEETINGS WITH DUTCH NGO'S

The purpose of the meetings was to involve other organisations to participate in the project. Some of them were interviewed to explore the nature of their involvement with Women Human Rights Defenders in the Arab world. Some of them were asked to provide some conceptual insights and literature. All of them were asked to provide E-mail addresses of their counterparts in Arab countries to allow us to invite them for the survey on protection. All of them were asked to comment on the report before the final version would be presented to a broader public.

The following organisations were approached, visited or committed through email: CARE: Berlinda Nollen; CORDAID: Sabine Atzei; HIVOS: Juliette Verhoeven, Leonie Grit, Jetteke van der Schatte – Olivier; Coalition for Human Security: Jeanne Abdullah; MWPN, Corrie Oudhoff; NEDWORC:

Marguerite Appel, Jan Reynders; NOVIB: Marleen Nolten, Marjolein Verhoog; PBI: Rosien Herweijer, Isabella Flisi; VOND: Mekka Abdelgabar, Annette Bool; WILPF and Minbuza: Joke Buringa, WILPF International: Laila Alodaat; WO=MEN: Elisabeth van der Steenhoven; WPP: Isabelle Geuskens; ZOA: Corita Corbijn; Clingendael: Elise Feron; Universiteit van Amsterdam (conflictstudies) and PBI: Tara Kenkhuis; Amnesty International, Anita Witlox; Netherlands ambassador in Sudan: Susan Blankhart; Netherlands embassy in Egypt: Salma Kamal El-Fawal. [5]

The organisations welcomed the initiative and cooperated with it:
- υ   More than 100 email addresses were provided
- υ   The meaning of various concept was explored in the interviews:

For example: the difference between military security and human security, the challenge of participation of young activists in existing organisations, the connection between humanitarian aid and peace building by women's groups, special methodologies (like the inter-vision between women's organisations in conflict situations), the position of women's organisations in civil society in Egypt, the geopolitical interests behind the war in Yemen, the masculinity concept explaining the relation between armed conflict and violence against women and the better prospect for reconciliation when women participate, and the comparison of risks for men and women Human Rights Defenders[6].
- υ   Valuable information was provided on security issues in the cooperation with the Arab World:

In the interviews the experiences of NOVIB and HIVOS in the "Women on the Frontline" programme, by the WILPF in their exchange programme for women's organisations in conflict situations and by VOND on their programme for Leadership for Peace in Darfur were discussed. The main problems identified are:

1. EMERGENCY: There are no adequate provisions and or criteria to respond to emergency situations of WHRDs with whom organisations work, like immediate high risk and need for shelter in their own country, a country in the region or even in the Netherlands.
2. TRAVELLING AND VISA: It is a "logistical nightmare" organizing visa and permits for participants in regional meetings on Human Rights. Normally, 30% of the invited participants fail to come because of hindrances and complicated travels they have to make to get their visa.
3. CIBERSECURITY: The e-mail exchange with women's organisations in the Arab world should be encrypted for security in some cases, but this is rarely or irregularly done – there is no agreement on how to handle this risk effectively. The same applies to the casual use of publications and photographs.
4. 1325 WITNESS PROTECTION: From the part of the UN Security Council there are no procedures to protect *witnesses* of violence and mass rape of refugees. Local 1325 committees, who work for the UN resolution 1325, cannot help them if this protection is not secured in the mandate of UN peacekeeping missions.

- υ   A useful list of questions and suggestions on the provisional report of the consultation was given in two meetings, one on December 10, 2015 and one on January 6, 2016.

Unfortunately, there were some limitations to this process, related to the planning of the project. Some of the partners to be approached could not be reached in time and could not attend to crucial meetings.

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[5] Unfortunately, the contact planned with PAX, Protection International, the Red Cross / Crescent Moon and Mama Cash could not be established in time.

[6] The elaboration of this conceptual exploration and clarification is available but has not included in this report.

مبادرة مشتركة ل حماية المدافعين عن حقوق الإنسان للمرأة في العالم العربي

RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

An online survey on safety, security risks, protection of WHRD's in the Arab countries, and the role of international organisations, was prepared by Joke Oranje and Fenna Flietstra. After the preparations, Florian Brekelmans and Rana Noman joined the team for the translation to Arabic and the data review. The survey was launched in English and Arabic on October 1st, 2015. It was closed on January 1st, 2016. The design of the survey was a mix of factual questions, open questions and choices on pre-defined categories.

315 WHRD's and related persons were invited to fill in the survey. We received 51 answers from 10 different countries. Not all responses completed all the questions.

Egypt	9
Sudan	9
Iraq	6
Syria	3
Yemen	3
Morocco	2
Tunisia	2
Jordan	1
Palestine	1
Libya	1
Other, unknown	14

The email addresses of respondents were obtained through the network of PBI, Vrouwen voor Vrede and the other Dutch partners, to guarantee safety through personal links. The respondents were approached by e-mail, informing them about the research and asking for their participation. They were also asked give the email address of other colleagues who would be interested in participating in the survey. In this manner 300 HRDs were approached in 4 weeks.

During the run time of the survey some minor adjustments were made. All these adjustments had to do with the way questions were formulated and were mostly brought to our attention by respondents. The survey itself included a few questions, where the respondents could grade a statement with 3 (familiar with) to 1 (less/not familiar with): this was not always understood correctly. Respondents left these statements blank quite often. For this reason some information was lost. Unfortunately, this part of the design could not be changed at that time.

RESULT OF THE INTERVIEWS

The countries visited in November 2015 were Egypt (Cairo) and Sudan. From all the contacts provided, 23 were interviewed. Some others were approached but not available. The interviews were lightly structured. Apart from trying to understand their situation and their work, there were only three basic questions:

- υ   What do you experience as risks in your work as a Human Rights Defender?
- υ   Which measures do you take for your own protection and for the safety of your organisation?
- υ   What would you expect from international organisations in terms of protection?

The concept of risks was clarified in the interviews. It resulted in a picture of five main risks that are specific for women and relevant to the context in the Arab region. A feminist perspective was used: it was avoided to approach and portray WHRD's mainly as victims of violence. Nevertheless, during

the interviews, much attention was given to sexual harassment and assault. To keep the balance between vulnerability and strength of WHRDs was a continuous challenge.

The most interesting part of the interviews was on protection. Here, again, the feminist perspective was to deconstruct the concept of protection, disentangling it from patriarchal protection and security imposed by military or police. Combined with the results of the survey, many measures were identified that women use to mitigate risks and to keep themselves and their organisations alive. From the 5 possible modalities of international support, field presence of international representatives and knowledge exchange among NGO's was felt as the most urgent now.

1.4 CONCLUSIONS AND THE WAY FORWARD

The expected outputs of project were realized according to the planning. The cooperation between Peace Brigades International /Netherlands, Vrouwen voor Vrede and Karama was effective; even though the organisations didn't know each other very well in the beginning, and had to manage differences in expectations.

From the expected outcomes, the first was realized: a global impression has been given and shared on the protection needs of WHRD in the Arab World. The second is still in process: *to present opportunities for effective nonviolent protection and safety planning to a broader audience of organisations who effectively work in this region*.

A symposium is now prepared for March 3, 2016. Safety issues and protection mechanisms will be discussed and concrete proposals welcomed on the issues identified:

1. EMERGENCY issues and TRAVELLING AND VISA: the case of Yemen
2. CIBER-SECURITY and ORGANISATIONAL SAFETY PLANNING: the case of Egypt
3. WITNESS PROTECTION through UNSCR 1325: the case of Sudan, Darfur.
4. How to be inclusive for YOUNG HRD's: cross cutting

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CONCLUSION 1: We know that there is abundant expertise available in Dutch organisations and some degree of cooperation does exist already for women in the Arab countries. The next challenge is to achieve an effective cooperation model between them to work out and implement concrete policy initiatives in favour of the global safety of Women Human Rights Defenders in the Arab countries.

2. PART TWO: IMPRESSIONS

الفصل 2 - عن النساء المدافعات عن حقوق الإنسان في 6 دول من العالم العربي: دورهن وأمثلة من أعمالهن

The purpose of this descriptive part is to honour the courage of Women Human Rights Defenders in the Arab world and to draw a varied and realistic picture of their situation. Most of the information processed in this chapter comes directly from the notes made during 23 interviews in the region[7]. We asked women activists and women's organisations on the challenges that they meet and how they see their own role.

2.1 THE REGIONAL SITUATION

One of the leading women activists on regional level is Hibaaq Osman. Hibaaq is the founder of Karama, a regional NGO based in Cairo, Egypt, with an office in Amman, Jordan. Operating throughout the MENA region, Karama has built a strong coalition with hundreds of partners in thirteen countries of the Arab world. Since 2005, Karama has taken initiatives for advocacy, knowledge-sharing and policymaking at the national, regional, and international levels. Karama stimulated and supported the production of a series of shadow reports made by national organisations, to international bodies such as the UN Human Rights commission, the UN Commission on the Rights of the Child and the Commission on the State of Women (CSW). Through this process, women's organisations started to form or strengthen national platforms and coalitions to analyse the situation together. Karama introduced the methodology of round table meetings with legislators for constitutions and constitutional reforms in Libya, Yemen, Jordan, Egypt and Morocco, to propose laws in which men and women have equal rights. Some of the recommendations have been adopted in constitutional reform processes and amended in existing constitutions.

In 2013, Karama launched the Arab Regional Network on Women, Peace and Security, in partnership with the UNDP and League of Arab States, in order to foster greater commitment to measurable and time-bound actions in the achievement of peace and equality. To date, only three countries in the region have launched National Action Plans on 1325, and credible forward progress has yet to be achieved on the ground. Women leaders from this Arab Regional Network lobbied for women's participation, inclusion and protection. They participated in high-level discussions on the impact of conflict of women worldwide at the United Nations in New York.

In October 2015, the delegates of the network set out four practical recommendations for the women, peace and security agenda:
- υ Efforts to increase women's political and diplomatic participation need to be strengthened by the introduction of enforceable quotas in parliament and government offices.
- υ Women human rights defenders too often become the targets of violence; courageous women like Salwa Bughaighis and Fariha Al-Berkawi in Libya have been assassinated. The Security Council and international bodies must treat such targeted violence against women as a crime against humanity.
- υ International bodies should provide greater support and partnership to women's participation in peace building at the community level.

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[7] In Egypt depth interviews were conducted with 3 leading Women Human Rights Activists, 2 Women's organisations and with the Netherlands Embassy. In Sudan Interviews were conducted with 2 representatives of Women's organisations, 2 women leaders in Darfur, 2 young women activists, 6 members of a lawyers organisation, 2 UNAMID departments (Civil affairs and Protection), 1 professor at the University of Khartoum (head of the Gender Department) and 1 male Sudanese HRD in temporary shelter outside the country. For Yemen an interview was conducted with 2 WHRD's in Egypt, 1 expert on Yemen and one refugee from Yemen in the Netherlands. Full anonymity was the rule for reporting, with exception of a few very well-known Female activists. For the other countries, written material was used from different sources.

υ   The global trade in arms fuels conflict and violence against women; the flow of weapons needs to be stemmed.

Concerning safety of WHRDs in the region, Hibaaq elaborates: "At the time of the Bejing conference, we felt more secure as we pursued reform. Today, there is a palpable and rising atmosphere of risk. People do not feel safe. They are being killed on normal days, in normal places—after dinner at a hotel, on a bus, in school, even in their own homes. In 1995, we did not know such unimaginable insecurity; we did not imagine that at every turn, our friends or family could be murdered, our own lives threatened or taken from us on whim. The measures taken by the Moslim Brothers in Egypt wounded the heart of women in the whole Arab region, creating an environment of unsafety".

"But we are still there, it is not easy but we lost fear, even if we have to be more careful now: we have to navigate and we need to come up with positive proposals, avoiding complains or accusations. Our challenge is to form a broad and united constituency for ending violence against women."

"What we do on protection is bringing women together, making sure that we are known at international level, being clear about our common purpose and looking after each other as a strong bond. If one of us is arrested, we follow the case closely to see that the person is released again according to the law. Another thing that we learned through the increased insecurity is to accept diversity and divide tasks. Each women leader can do different things. We are not lecturing each other on what to do and how to do it, but we work with a unified vision. Conservative religious women as well as progressive activist each have their value and contribution."

"I am one who supports the call for a Fifth World Conference on Women. There has never been a more crucial time for cross-border solidarity and collaboration in efforts to defend and promote women's rights. The Fifth World Conference will be inclusive for new generations of activists, and build the basis for joint action, dialogue, and collaboration that is a real catalyst for national, regional, and international reform for women."

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2.2   EGYPT

The situation in Egypt is characterized as "after 2011" in contrast with "before 2011". Before the uprising in 2011 the Egypt's women's organisations worked, together with the first lady, for changes in the legislation in order to guarantee equal rights for men and women. Human Rights Defenders, both men and women, were mostly independent professionals who stood for freedom of press and expression. The main risks they encountered were arbitrary attacks against individual Human Rights Defenders, some of them becoming well known for being persecuted.

The uprisings in 2011 and 2012 changed this picture. Women participated in the uprisings and their engagement in public issues became quite visible. They express that *they lost fear*. New, young Human Rights organisations emerged with new methods and a new style of expressing themselves directly through social media on concrete issues. Furthermore, the massive occurrence of gender based violence *in public* was brought to the attention by the media and increased the awareness of the need to stand up against it.

"Since the fall of the Mubarak regime, numerous attacks on (muslim) women participating in demonstrations have been reported. In the early days of rule by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), women who were arrested by the army were forced to undergo "virginity tests" and the first reports of rape by mobs in Tahrir Square emerged. Under the presidency of Mohamed Morsi, cases of sexual assault were systematically reported during mass protests in Tahrir. Survivors and witnesses reported the same pattern: tens of men surrounded the survivors, tore-off their clothes and groped their bodies. Some were raped by multiple perpetrators, who were often armed with sticks,

blades and other weapons. Security forces failed to intervene to protect female protesters, prompting citizen movements to set up their own security patrols.[8]"

The result of the uprising was that the Muslim brotherhood came to power. The first deed of the new government was to present a law to oblige women to use a vail, and to revoke all legislation drafted to stop female genital mutilation. After that, the government reviewed the marital status of women, for example reserve custody over the children only to the husband and lowering the minimum age for marriage to 9 years. Women's organisations are not amused:

"We hate the Muslim brotherhood for what they did, even if we are Muslims ourselves. They took away our dream. We do not want to become like Iran."

While the legislative progress had a setback, the awareness and social concern on gender based violence increased and the visible participation of women in social movements became more common. Those are gains from the revolution that cannot be taken away anymore. And eventually, women's organisations are picking up their work again, trying to organize broader than before, with increased support from international funders. Women's organisations say they are not at risk now, as long as they respect the countries' laws. They believe that the military regime does protect citizens against protesters, bombers and criminals.

The issue of gender based violence (in public) has triggered a broad social concern and it is also in the interest of the government to do something about it. NGO programmes for women empowerment and sexual and reproductive health are developing with support of the Ministry of Solidarity. The risk is, in this context, that women organisations tacitly accept and enforce the dominant paradigm that it is the women who are to blame for "not being educated", not behaving, not being decently dressed or not being virgin for that matter, and for those reasons implicitly accountable for their own violation. A proof of that is that, despite the anger about gender based violence, none of the cases reported were brought to justice. Women's organisations believe that the election and training of female parliamentarians, support programmes for women judges and influencing the new constitution from a gender perspective has to prepare the ground for further actions.

"On 20 October 2015, State security agents prevented the Women's Centre for Guidance and Legal Awareness (WCGLA) from holding a training event on gender equality. The activity was organised in collaboration with Equal Rights Trust. The ban on the WCGLA's training activity comes one day after security forces prevented the Egyptian Centre for Public Policy Studies - ECPPS from holding a workshop on freedom of association with parliamentary candidates.[9]"

This quote supports the general impression is that civil society in Egypt struggles with contradictions that compromise their safety. Other examples:

1) Young women dress as if they were Muslim

While the military regime deposed the Moslim Brotherhood to protect women, most young women in Egypt seem to confess to muslimhood: they started wearing a veil and even the niqaap – even their mothers didn't do that. Wearing a veil is so common now, that it seems to feel safer if you wear it in public places and public transport. "If you don't wear it, people will conclude that you are a foreigner or a Christian". Even students or female professionals prefer to wear the veil over "normal" cloths, in order "not to draw public attention on them". As for the niqaap, it openly shows the

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[8] Egypt keeping women out, *Sexual Violence Against Women in the Public Sphere,* edited by FIDH (International Federation for Human Rights), Nazra for Feminist Studies, New Women Foundation and Uprising of Women in the Arab World, 2014
[9] Press release of the Women's Centre for Guidance and Legal Awareness, October 2015

growing influence of Saudi Arabia, Omam and the Emirates: rich countries where Egyptians can find well paid jobs.

2) Civil society organisations behave as if they need government protection

Before 2011, NGO's could register as a social entity at the Chamber of Commerce. Now they have to register at the Ministry of Solidarity and maintain contact with the security officer of the Ministry that corresponds with their objective, for example Health, or Education. Women's development organisations and Human Rights organisations are persuaded by the security officers to engage in self-control. In practice, it means: (a) not complaining about the limitations that the government imposes them; (b) not disseminating a negative image of the country in the exterior and (c) not cooperating with foreign organisations. If the organisation fails to control itself in the opinion of the security officers, meetings can be cancelled and travelling to conferences abroad blocked by security.

3) The free press limits its own freedom

Two journalists participated in the interviews. They explain that censorship is not only a matter of control from the government. Society in general is turning away from human rights issues, looking away from injustice. There is even a tendency to blame the victim: those who started the uprisings are named as irresponsible activists and wrongdoers by proxy. Those who still insist in touching human rights issues are denounced as traitors by colleagues. A sensitive journalistic research was leaked to security, causing the arrest and interrogation of the researcher; if the Human Rights community would not have paid attention, the person would possibly have disappeared. There is a testimony that in the last years a file of 300 documented cases of disappeared prisoners has been made.

The conclusion is that women human rights defenders in Egypt have been systematically discredited and terrorized by the sexual harassment and assaults in 2012. This has caused more awareness in society of the need to protect them, which opens some space for women´s organisations to go on with their work. But it is a space dominated and limited by patriarchal values keeping women `in their place` as dependents. Meanwhile, contradictions in society lead to tacit repression that prevents civil society to play their role in defending human rights.

2.3   SUDAN

Sudan is known for its civil wars that affected especially the Darfur region and led to the separation of South Sudan[10]. In the nineties the social divide between a traditional Arabic orientation and a secular state was resolved in favour of tradition. Sharia law was introduced in 1968 and rules the country until now. There are still other divides, however, that contribute to the stagnation of democratic decision making in the country. One is the divide between a formal, Arabic oriented State with the rule of law and the many "African" oriented communities in the East, the South and the West of Khartoum, with different peoples, languages and cultures that are ruled by customary law.

"*There is a national dialogue process going on, but it is morally bankrupt: there is no transitional justice being done, there is no independent party leading the so-called dialogue, there is no truth finding, no remorse, no excuses. Negotiations on compensations (from the war in Darfur) can go on for ever and have no winners*."

While in the Arabic orientation the women are seen as dependent in a stable patriarchal system, the African orientation relies on women as one strong (and fairly independent) part in a traditional, mainly rural, task division between men and women.

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[10] While South Sudan cannot be considered to be part of the Arab world, Sudan certainly is if we consider the language, the culture and the critical relations between religion and state building.

The third divide is in the sphere of international relations. Organisations in Darfur welcome international involvement in Human Rights as a positive contribution to combat violence and poverty – while the Sudanese government sees *Human Rights* or *democracy* as a threat against stability and a united Sudan.

Concerning the influence of religion on society and political decision making, a distinction is made by women in Sudan between Islam and political Islam. Sudan is officially a religious led country, but in practice, on community level there are different levels of tolerance and diversity in rules. Islam is accepted by a great majority of the population as spiritual guidance for daily life. While Sudanese scholars dialogue about the advantages of reforming Islam, and if separation of faith and state is feasible in Sudan, there is a growing number of women scholars who are exploring feminist Islam. Gradually, women start to take interest into reading the Koran and in discussing different interpretations. A well-known example and role model for them is Amina Wadud (not a Sudanese)[11].

Political Islam is generally refuted and the risk that IS terrorism will set foot in Sudan is considered to be low. "*They are not serious on Islam; they use it for their own purposes – and they are definitely afraid of the women body and their own sexuality. They are actually causing a divide within Islam, and Sudanese people stopped supporting them*[12]."

In Khartoum, Women Human Rights Defenders can be identified as leaders of national organisations and super-national networks that combine various activities and form coalitions in a concerted attempt to introduce improvements in the sharia law. For example, custody of the children when the couple separates, the minimum age for marriage and the separation of the laws on adultery and rape[13]. The name "Human Rights" is no longer in use however, because it raises unwanted suspicion from security services that the activities would be a subversive hub against the government and the Sudanese unity – which they are not. Even for women's organisations, it is not a good time for politics, as they say. The coherent lobby strategy for constitutional reform is integrated in work for humanitarian services, such as income generating projects for women, adult education and legal aid. Women's organisations are optimistic about the progress of this "soft strategy" and its eventual success, for three reasons. One, on a technical level Women Human Rights organisations and public officers can perfectly work together and identify the same problems to be solved. Two, Sudan recently lifted the quota for women parliamentarians to 30% and this will help to adopt better laws for women, if women's organisations are enabled and allowed to guide them. Three, the awareness on women's rights has increased in society. On the other hand, the organisations know, of course, that the *implementation* of such laws is still a mountain to climb.

Women's organisations complain that it costs them a lot of strategizing to keep their organisation functioning and safe. They have to make impeccable and detailed three monthly reports and register every year again. If they can register within a Ministry like Health or Social Affairs, things can be talked over with them. But if they reach no agreement, or for any other reason, the Humanitarian Assistance Committee (HAC) will invade the office, taking everything with them and closing the door behind them. Facing the situation that 80% of the NGO's have already been closed last 2 years, there is a continuous risk related to receiving foreign money. For example, money that came in from an institute for *democracy development* from the USA has been a reason for suspicion and the assignment of a larger UN grant to build visibility for the women's case is a reason for suspicion. In such situation it becomes difficult to seek exposure or to communicate to a larger audience. This repressive tolerance enforces the generation gap as well.

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[11] Her books include "Qur'an and Woman" (1999) and "Inside the Gender Jihad: Women's Reform in Islam" (2006).
[12] Interview with SIHA (Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa)
[13] Rape is not distinguished from adultery in the law, and adultery is punished as being the responsibility of the woman. A verdict depends on a minimum of 4 eye-witnesses (a woman witness counts as half a witness).

A young activist: "*Sudan is a country where people look for ad-hoc solutions for everything. Women have always demanded their share in the past, they will get that eventually, but they don't show a vision on the future. You can call it a generation gap, the truth is that traditional women's organisations' interventions are not connected to any future aim for the country. At the end of the day, we still find ourselves in an emergency state. We are at a shifting point, women are suffering, we need to present an alternative to political Islam*".

Young activists in Sudan, who try to organise solidarity actions with the poor, feel isolated. Active women are suspected, even if the action is just a solidarity mobilization for people in emergency situations. They are slandered as an unattractive partner for men and as prostitutes. Colleagues will keep them on distance. The university is a high risk place for human rights defenders: there is a security office that harasses students during elections or meetings and keeps doors between faculties closed. Normally young women are arrested on charges of wearing indecent cloths. If there is no other offense for which they can be held, they have to be released within 48 hours. Meanwhile, they risk interrogations, they risk their telephones being investigated for messages and email addresses of friends, and they risk a fine, a guard standing in front of their house, and having to travel to the Security Services every day to report. The body search when they are taken into custody is common practice, even if it is done by a female police officer. "*It is so contradictory! They say you are indecent because you wear trousers. But then they ask you to undress and then they put their hands all over your body to search for hidden weapons. Where are they expecting to find the so-called weapons? Under my skin?*"

In Darfur, Women Human Rights Defenders have a different profile: they work in humanitarian aid organisations, specialized in women development and aiming at empowering women to participate in the peace process and in peace-building. They cooperate with the UN peace keeping forces (UNAMID) and with local government and sheiks. Their work relies to a large extend on voluntary informal engagement of women who have a position as teachers, nurses, humanitarian aid coordinators and/or government or UNAMID personnel. It is a movement towards a "gendered" peace process: women resolve conflicts between tribes and between refugees and villagers; they stimulate dialogue between IDP's and government officers; they challenge security services to guarantee protection for women farmers while they have to leave home. Security risks for them are low, but the hurdles for their work coming from overprotective security officers are considerable. Meanwhile, hundreds of refugees and villagers are killed and raped in tribal clashes. It is a challenge and opportunity for women's organisations to step in and make a case for mutual cooperation to stop the wars and to bring the mass rapes committed on a regular base (both by the government troops and by rebel groups) to justice[14].

Unfortunately, this peace work is not yet able to bridge the political divide between Darfur and Khartoum, not even among civil society actors. The national action plan (NAP) on 1325 has been written by a consultant in Khartoum while groups in Darfur were not consulted; and the Darfurian women's organisations don't position themselves as in the official political agreements between the Sudanese government and the UN Security Council. For the case of the endemic occurrence of mass rapes, Dafurian organisations in Khartoum are willing to commit themselves, but they feel too heavily under suspicion to bring rape cases to justice and they don't form bonds with Sudanese women's organisations to support them. In this way, most groups are trotting on in vicious circles without strategizing together whitin the NAP 1325 framework.

"*In my official position as UNAMID officer I know exactly what has happened (with the mass rape), and who did it, because in my work in the volunteer networks we talk in small groups with all the*

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[14] See the upcoming publication of VOND, "15 portraits of women peace mediators in Darfur"

villagers involved. The families and neighbours of the victims are really supportive, they don't reject the girls anymore, like they used to do. But officially we are not allowed to file complaints and to collect and deliver evidence. This is so terribly frustrating! It goes on and on like that for the last 12 years already. We are so tired in seeing that it doesn't change, despite all our efforts. "

What about the men? All HRD's in the Arab World are at risk. The culture has turned against them. Respondents agree that strengthening mutual solidarity between men and women is part of the protection they need. According to them, The distance is caused by men's (higher) positions they don't want to give up and form their traditional convictions about masculinity. For that reason, women leaders in Darfur frequently invite men to the activities, to take interest in the women's initiatives that are meant for the wellbeing of all.

2.4   YEMEN

The situation in Yemen can best be characterized by the interview with Amal Basha. She is the Chairperson of the Sisters' Arab Forum for Human Rights (SAF) and advisor for the International Coalition on the Criminal Court and for the Ministry of Human Rights in Yemen. In her role as leader of SAF, she defended the rights of women, prisoners and refugees, and she fights for more political freedoms. Previously, she served as program officer for the UNDP, and worked closely with the UN, the International Human Rights Law Group, and the International Committee of the Red Cross Delegation in Yemen. She won the Takreem Arab Women of the Year Award in 2014 and she has 70.000 followers on twitter. In 2015, she spoke at the Women's Power to Stop War Conference, pleading to stop the war against Yemen.

"In my country, with the bombing from Saudi Arabia on our towns, there is a security vacuum now, but there are still activists collecting evidence to denounce war crimes that can be brought to the Geneva Human Rights Council. Civilians are caught between fighting groups and boys show the fragments of cluster bombs that are forbidden. The use of social media makes it possible to keep us more or less updated while we are out of the country. I was prevented from entering the country after I was out on a conference."

"I was still active. We had a colleague assassinated; she was doing research on torture in the prisons. When another person was killed we had to move to a secure place and we did not put the banner outside. We were with a staff of 20, when I left there were only 5 left. We kept low profile but developed a programme on sexual violence. When the Dutch Embassy closed and we couldn't continue to pay the rent, we moved to my own house. My family had to go to refuge."

"I was also involved in the National Dialogue process. The National Dialogue followed the explicitly nonviolent uprising in 2011, to depose president Saleh for his corruption. We didn't want the Muslim brothers to rule our country instead. It went well, we came to an agreement for a temporary government to draft a new constitution, through a presidential council of 5 representatives. We even included a 30% quota for women parliamentarians in the proposal. But then, on the very last moment, the representative from Saudi side was called back and said they wouldn't cooperate. And they started bombing right after that."

"Currently, no one is made accountable for the human losses and injuries from the cluster bombs[15]. The UN Humanitarian Committee was expected to be established in Yemen. But now it is unsafe. And in the area where there is no bombing, the Aden harbour is filled by Al Qaeda and ISIS controlling the

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[15] The Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) is an international treaty that prohibits the use, transfer and stockpile of cluster bombs, a type of explosive weapon which scatters sub-munitions ("bomblets") over an area. The convention was adopted on 30 May 2008 in Dublin, and was opened for signature on 3 December 2008 in Oslo. It entered into force on 1 August 2010, six months after it was ratified by 30 states. As of October 2015, 108 states have signed the treaty and 98 have ratified it or acceded to it.

shipments. While the bombs fall on our cities, the humanitarian goods cannot enter the country because of the risk that they contain weapons for rebels. At the University in Aden, the first thing done is to separate boys and girls: one week is for only girls, next week for only boys. For human rights defenders, the official punishment is 10 years imprisonment and thousand lashes."

"So now I find myself stranded. My life is safe, but my dignity is not safe. I didn't expect it, to be homeless and alone, but I know there are many others like me. I am easily distracted, I feel disoriented. I struggle with a sense of guilt and helplessness. I have no bank account here, I have no car, I am living in the house of someone else. After having survived for months with the few belongings I had with me, one day a suitcase arrived with my clothes. Only then I suddenly realized how attached I am to my own life, my own things."

2.5   SYRIA

Syrian women have demonstrated exceptional creativity and resilience as Human Rights Defenders. An impression on their work is given by an article about 10 ways Syrian women are building peace and democracy in their country[16]. Even if some of these initiatives are no longer possible, their impact on society cannot be overestimated. It is included here because it gives a colourful picture of how women in the Arab world organize, even in extreme circumstances of civil war.

"Despite over three years of violence in their country, ordinary Syrian women from all religions and ethnicities are working to heal their communities and build a peaceful future. The Women For the Future of Syria (WFS) program helps these women leaders build their capacity through trainings, mentoring and networking. The Women for the Future of Syria program, which is also run by Syrian women, helps these local heroines found Peace Circles. Through the Circles women can join together in an organized group. By organizing a group their voices are amplified and they become an unstoppable force. Some examples:

ʊ   Organizing nonviolent protests

Women were among the first to take to the streets in March 2011. Though it's become increasingly dangerous, many have continued these efforts. For instance, young women in Qamishli campaigned for disarmament, hanging posters throughout the city and organizing support via Facebook. As acts of civil disobedience and to draw attention to the suffering in the country, women have glued shut the doors of government buildings and put red dye into public fountains so the water resembles blood. They've held banners outside of Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) centres that say, "You're not going to change our life." Side by side with men, they've kept the revolution in touch with its nonviolent, democratic roots.

ʊ   Distributing and monitoring humanitarian aid

Women are seen as less threatening, so they're often able to transport needed supplies through checkpoints without being searched. An activist who attended one of Inclusive Security's workshops last year lived 60 km from Aleppo and commuted each day to work. When her hometown was shelled, she smuggled medical supplies from Aleppo in her bags. Later, when the city was under Free Syrian Army control, her sister publicly called the local councils to account when the aid supplies they claimed to be distributing didn't match up with what families were receiving. In this way, she ensured families didn't find themselves short on much-needed food or medicine. Many women are also involved with the Local Coordination Committees, co-founded by prominent female activist Razan Zeitouneh. The LCCs, beyond being the primary organizers of continued revolutionary activities, are administering relief and other services in many liberated areas.

ʊ   Establishing safe spaces for women and children

Most schools inside the country were government-run and have been closed for the duration of the conflict. If it weren't for the many temporary schools established by women, traumatized children

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[16] Kristin Williams, 10 ways Women are building Peace and Security in Syria, Institute for Inclusive Security, June 2015

would have nowhere to go. Women have also created art therapy and other programs for psychological healing for citizens of all ages. For instance, through her Foundation to Restore Education and Equality in Syria, Women Waging Peace Network member Rafif Jouejati has set up "Jasmine Tents," safe areas for women inside the country to recover from trauma and learn new job skills.

    υ   Documenting human rights violation

In addition to her work with the LCCs, attorney and activist Razan Zeitouneh founded the Violation Documentation Centre to monitor and report on kidnappings, detentions, disappearances, and murders by armed actors in Syria. Zeitouneh was vocal against both the government and ISIS, which forced her into hiding near Damascus for much of the last year. Her team was one of the first to report on the chemical weapons attack last August. In early December, she, her husband, and two other activists were abducted; their whereabouts are unknown. The VDC continues to document and draw attention to the situation on the ground.

    υ   Securing local-level ceasefires and release of prisoners

In April 2011, 2,000 women and children blocked a highway in Banias and successfully demanded that hundreds of men who had been rounded up in neighbouring villages be released by the government. Since that early protest, women have been leaders on this issue (Rima Fleihan is in charge of negotiating for the opposition in Geneva). Women have also negotiated cessation of hostilities between armed actors on the local level in order to allow aid to pass through these zones. In Zabadani, a Damascus suburb, a group of women pressured the local military council to accept a 20-day ceasefire with regime forces.

    υ   Setting up democratic local elections

Rather than wait for a democratic transition at the national level, Syrian women are busy promoting local and municipal elections. Since the country has experienced dictatorship for 40 years, one woman in a town near Idlib is raising awareness of what free and fair elections entail. She's working with citizens and candidates to explain the electoral process, curtail corruption, and ensure voters know their rights and responsibilities. In Aleppo, female activists also lobbied for women to be guaranteed at least 25% representation in the preparatory committee for local and provincial councils, half of the nominations for candidates, and 25% of the seats in the final election.

    υ   Raising awareness about civil peace

To counteract the prevalent narratives of extremism and sectarianism, women have utilized different platforms to disseminate a message of peace and reconciliation. In Qamishli, students held festivals to promote peace and coexistence between Arabs and Kurds. Women Waging Peace Network member Honey Al Sayed cofounded Radio SouriaLi, which broadcasts on the internet to bypass censors and reach Syrians inside and outside the country. The organization promotes civic engagement, community development, and responsible citizenship, under the motto "Unity in Diversity." Similarly, Reem Halibi started Radio Naseem, the first female-owned independent radio station in Syria, and a women's magazine called Jasmine. Both outlets focus on stories about human rights, women's equality, and political and humanitarian issues.

    υ   Developing plans for a future democratic, pluralistic state

The Day After Project, vice-chaired by Women Waging Peace Network member Afra Jalabi, convened a series of meetings to outline a plan to reconstruct Syria and establish democracy once the country transitions out of conflict. They published a report with recommendations for reforming the security sector, drafting a new constitution, establishing transitional justice mechanisms, setting up free and fair elections, promoting the rule of law, and rebuilding the country's infrastructure. Inside Syria, small groups have gathered to lay out similar roadmaps. Last year, an organization in Qamishli brought together women from different ethnic and religious groups to discuss constitutional reform, especially as relates to family law that discriminates against women. The Syrian Women's League, as part of a Coalition of Syrian Women for Democracy, conducted a comparative assessment of constitutions in the region to establish a set of guiding principles for a new Syrian constitution.

    υ   Participating in the Geneva II peace talks

Eight women are participating on the opposition's negotiating and technical teams, while two women are on the regime's delegation. The female delegates at Geneva are in charge of important portfolios like negotiating prisoner release and humanitarian access to Homs.

υ   Gathering in parallel to the negotiations to demand broader inclusion

Forty-seven prominent women leaders gathered in Geneva in mid-January 2015 to develop and present recommendations to UN Special Envoy Lakhdar Brahimi. In addition to calling for an immediate ceasefire and humanitarian access, they asked that women make up at least 30% of all negotiating teams and demanded a new constitution that guarantees equal citizenship to all Syrian people. Similarly, the Syrian Forum for Peace brought together a diverse group of 60 women in Damascus to develop a Syrian Women's Charter for Peace. It, too, goes beyond a cessation of hostilities to call for safe refugee return, human rights protections, and constitutional reform.

2.6   LIBYA

To characterize the situation in Libya from a women's perspective, a speech of Zahra' Langhi is included here. The speech is not very recent, but it is included to express the importance of moral standards that exists in the Women's movement in Libya and in the Arab region.

Zahra is still active as the Founding Director of Libyan Women's Platform for Peace. The Platform released a crisis response strategy of 11 points to achieve stabilization in Libya at the 59th session of CSW in March 2015. The following paragraphs are a transcript of her speech broadcasted by TEDx-Women on the internet in 2012[17].

"I have never, ever forgotten the words of my grandmother who died in her exile to my father: "Son, resist Gaddafi. Fight him. But don't you ever turn into a Gaddafi-like revolutionary."

Almost two years have passed since the Libyan Revolution broke out, inspired by the waves of mass mobilization in both the Tunisian and the Egyptian revolutions. I joined forces with many other Libyans inside and outside Libya to call for a day of rage and to initiate a revolution against the tyrannical regime of Gaddafi. And there it was, a great revolution. Young Libyan women and men were at the forefront calling for the fall of the regime, raising slogans of freedom, dignity, social justice. They have shown an exemplary bravery in confronting the brutal dictatorship of Gaddafi. They have shown a great sense of solidarity from the far East to the far West to the south. Eventually, after a period of six months of brutal war and a toll rate of almost 50,000 dead, we managed to liberate our country and to topple the tyrant.

However, Gaddafi left behind a heavy burden, a legacy of tyranny, corruption and seeds of diversions. For four decades Gaddafi's tyrannical regime destroyed the infrastructure as well as the culture and the moral fabric of Libyan society. Aware of the devastation and the challenges, I was keen among many other women to rebuild the Libyan civil society, calling for an inclusive and just transition to democracy and national reconciliation. Almost 200 organizations were established in Benghazi during and immediately after the fall of Gaddafi -- almost 300 in Tripoli. After a period of 33 years in exile, I went back to Libya, and with unique enthusiasm, I started organizing workshops on capacity building, on human development of leadership skills. With an amazing group of women, I co-founded the Libyan Women's Platform for Peace, a movement of women, leaders, from different walks of life, to lobby for the socio-political empowerment of women and to lobby for our right for equal participation in building democracy and peace.

I met a very difficult environment in the pre-elections, an environment which was increasingly polarized, an environment which was shaped by the selfish politics of dominance and exclusion. I led an initiative by the Libyan Women's Platform for Peace to lobby for a more inclusive electoral law, a law that would give every citizen, no matter what your background, the right to vote and run, and most importantly to stipulate on political parties the alternation of male and female

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[17] Zahra' Langhi, Why Libya's Revolution Didn't Work, broadcasted by TEDxWomen 2012.

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candidates vertically and horizontally in their lists, creating the zipper list. Eventually, our initiative was adopted and successful. Women won 17.5 percent of the National Congress in the first elections ever in 52 years.

However, bit by bit, the euphoria of the elections, and of the revolution as a whole, was fading out -- for every day we were waking up to the news of violence. One day we wake up to the news of the desecration of ancient mosques and Sufi tombs. On another day we wake up to the news of the murder of the American ambassador and the attack on the consulate. On another day we wake up to the news of the assassination of army officers. And every day, every day we wake up with the rule of the militias and their continuous violations of human rights of prisoners and their disrespect of the rule of law.

Our society, shaped by a revolutionary mind set, became more polarized and has driven away from the ideals and the principles -- freedom, dignity, social justice -- that we first held. Intolerance, exclusion and revenge became the icons of the [aftermath] of the revolution. I am here today not at all to inspire you with our success story of the zipper list and the elections. I'm rather here today to confess that we as a nation took the wrong choice, made the wrong decision. We did not prioritize right. For elections did not bring peace and stability and security in Libya. Did the zipper list and the alternation between female and male candidates bring peace and national reconciliation? No, it didn't. What is it, then? Why does our society continue to be polarized and dominated with selfish politics of dominance and exclusion, by both men and women?

Maybe what was missing was not the women only, but the feminine values of compassion, mercy and inclusion. Our society needs national dialogue and consensus-building more than it needed the elections, which only reinforced polarization and division. Our society needs the qualitative representation of the feminine more than it needs the numerical, quantitative representation of the feminine. We need to stop acting as agents of rage and calling for days of rage. We need to start acting as agents of compassion and mercy. We need to develop a feminine discourse that not only honours but also implements mercy instead of revenge, collaboration instead of competition, inclusion instead of exclusion. These are the ideals that a war-torn Libya needs desperately in order to achieve peace.

Peace has an alchemy, and this alchemy is about the intertwining, the alternation between the feminine and masculine perspectives. That's the real zipper. And we need to establish that existentially before we do so socio-politically. According to a Quranic verse "Salam" -- peace -- "is the word of the all-merciful God, Raheem." In turn, the word "Raheem," which is known in all Abrahamic traditions, has the same root in Arabic as the word "rahem" -- womb -- symbolizing the maternal feminine encompassing all humanity from which the male and the female, from which all tribes, all peoples, have emanated from. And so just as the womb entirely envelopes the embryo, which grows within it, the divine matrix of compassion nourishes the entire existence. Thus we are told that "My mercy encompasses all things." Thus we are told that "My mercy takes precedence over my anger." May we all be granted a grace of mercy."

2.7   SUMMARY AND COMMON FEATURES

There is sufficient evidence to conclude that Women Human Rights Defenders in the Arab world are not just challenging their governments on cases of injustice. They are drafting new legislation, proposing ways to find peace in the region, mediating between parties at war, and organising public actions for solidarity with the poor. Apart from that, they are active in keeping essential life systems such as education, health and social care functioning in difficult circumstances. The context in which they work is dominated by violent and paternalistic social systems that go through a period of transition.

They are a global movement in the Arab region, taking the lead in the moral discourse on human dignity and a better future without fear[18]. A common purpose has been inspired by Bejing and it remains a guiding theme: to stop violence against women.

Their style can be recognized in any of their organisations: connected with each other, well informed, resourceful, peace loving, constructive, documented and active as civil society in dialogue with governments. Various regional networks and think tanks are strongly reaching out to the international level.

Leading women and women's organisations in the Arab region have, despite differences, a common style of working. The following common features have been observed:
- υ Leadership is shared.
- υ Peace, Nonviolence and tolerance for diversity are expressed as guiding values.
- υ They are more concerned in formulating constructive proposals to their own authorities than to put energy in protesting and moving large groups against abuse.
- υ There is a merge of political activities with social activities and professional concern with welfare (sometimes this can be confusing).
- υ Most of the activities are organized ad-hoc and implemented through coalitions that can become very large and powerful.
- υ The style of lobby is a combination of personal engagement, thorough documentation and maintaining and sharing personal access to decision makers.
- υ Networking through telephone is continuous business; the relationships are informal and tagged as friendships; the activists feel responsible to care for each other and to be reliable.

The interviews also give sufficient information to draw a typology of different kinds of women's organisations and the role they are playing in society. The picture of differences may help to understand how to support them in their different organisational models, such as:

- υ Spontaneous movements around direct solutions for current problems, commonly organized by young people, male and female together. The use of social media is paramount. These movements can pop up and go down again, as the organisational structure is not strong. The organizers run a high risk of being tagged as agitators and persecuted through official arrests or the use of criminal gangs.
- υ Traditional women's organisations, linked to strong institutions like international Women's coalitions, the First Lady, the ruling party or a Labour Union. They work under protection of the government on improvements in legislation. They can guarantee continuity. Their limitation is that they seldom work together with young people's movements.
- υ Professional women's organisations and networks. Sometimes these organisations are just networks with international ramifications, but in many cases they are welfare or development NGO's using their expertise to implement projects to can be financed by external sources. These groups are under strong government suspicion after 2011, accused of accepting money to introduce foreign cultures into the region.
- υ Rural development organisations with a gender-agenda and led by women. Especially in rural conflict areas many of these organisations are established to implement humanitarian aid and women's empowerment projects that develop gradually into change agents in their

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[18] It has been tempting to elaborate on additional experiences and observations from other countries as well. Due to quality requirements, it was finally decided not to do so. Other partners are invited to complete the picture by giving their contribution, if they have interesting information on the situation of Women Human Rights Defenders in the other countries in the Arab region.

communities. Their strength is the organizational capacity to help refugees and mobilize rural women. They are building up expertise in mediation and local peace negotiations, under the umbrella of the UN-Security Council Resolution 1325. They are religious and tolerant. Their weakness is the limitation of their scope of influence. They rarely communicate or cooperate with urban or national women's organisations.

υ   Ad hoc coalitions. Coalitions are result oriented and difficult to be persecuted, as they easily disappear again. They work mostly as lobby groups for international human rights monitoring and peace negotiations.

Finally, a general observation on WHRDs: "human rights" is an unwanted concept in the Arab world for many reasons. Many women leaders and women's organisations don't label themselves as Human Rights Defenders. If someday the Arab coalition of Women Human Rights Defenders is established, it should possibly have to adopt another name.

Conclusion 2: The authoritarian and patriarchal social systems in Arab countries are in transition, causing violent clashes and social disruption. Women Human Rights Defenders form a movement of different and scattered organisations that are connected by a common leading moral discourse on human dignity in their own culture. They are our best change for restoring sustainable peace in the region.

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3. PART THREE: SAFETY ASSESSMENT

الفصل 3 - جرد قائمة المخاطر التى قد تواجه النساء في حالات ومواقف مختلفة

The purpose of this part is to work out a qualitative and quantitative risk assessment for women Human Rights Defenders in the Arab region. Such assessment has to be tentative, partial and incomplete, given the limited scope of the consultation done. An holistic and practical analysis of safety problems from a feminist perspective has been analysed for Latin American countries[19], but it is missing in the Arab region. The assessment presented below is strongly based on quotes from the survey and interviews with Women Human Rights Defenders.

3.1   QUOTES FROM WHRDS IN THE ARAB REGION

On the question in the survey "what is your own definition of being safe?" the following answers were collected:

- For me, feeling safe means going in the streets without hearing men calling for me, without thinking that someone will reach out and try to grab a part of my body, without feeling hopeless when I get harassed in the street or in any public place or even in my own place; when I'm looked at as a human being not as a sex machine; when I'm looked at as a capable individual; when I get the right to say no. I feel safe when I am able to choose my own life; I can chose studying over marriage. Safety means equal right and opportunities with men. Safety also means not being threatened and afraid, and to have the opportunity to contribute to social change and be recognized for it.
- To walk without looking behind me. Without being concerned about how someone is looking at me. Doubting, whether he will follow me to know where my house, family or friends residency is. Safety means, to sleep alone without anyone knowing that I am living on my own; so he comes to kill or threaten me. Safety means, to sleep without checking out whether the house door is closed or windows are properly closed. Safety means, not to keep the lights all night on because I am scared. Safety means that I have enough resources that can assist me to keep on working. I do not have to repeat to myself many times, that I need enough resources to keep my job.
- Safety for me means to reach information without being threatened, which sometimes happens; to live in my own country and the country of residency without being pressured by the social community.
- The definition of safety is different from one country to another. The situation in Iraq is somehow different. Violence and war have been destroying the country for more than ten years. Peace for me means that the conflict and violence, that have not excluded anyone, will stop. Peace means that in your country there must be an authority protecting your dignity and your safety.
- To live in a safe place, cautious of my dignity. None of my rights, such as the rights of education and personal decisions, are violated.
- Safety for me is to work in a safe environment, far from threats; to have my own resources that allow me to continue working as WHRD. Safety is to guarantee my protection against any threat. Safety means the existence of laws that protect HRDs. The safety to live in a free, healthy, democratic environment where freedom of expression and receiving information are not barred.
- For me feeling safe means: 1- Kurdistan's borders being protected from the Islamic State (ISIS); 2- Having a social and health insurance; 3- Women having the possibility to report threats and harassment with a quick response from the local police; 4- The existence of a civic legislation that insures me equality.
- I came from Iraq where the people faced international and internal conflict for long time. To feel safe, in my opinion, is to live in peace. You do not need to worry if you go to your work that maybe you do not return home, or you stay home because it is dangerous outside. I will feel safe if there is a strong government and

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[19] Barcia, Imaculada, Our Right To Safety Women Human Rights Defenders' Holistic Approach to Protection WHRDIC/ AWID 2013

they have the power to protect its citizens. I feel safe when we have an effective judicial system.
- Not to be threatened.
- I am safe when I feel safe while walking on the street; when I work without any fear of prosecution.
- I have to add to the definition in the survey: the freedom of movement without a threat.
- To feel safe is to do what I want without fear.
- Being safe means to feel safe emotionally, psychologically, physically and financially. To live in a place where I am appreciated for who I am and don't have to fight for every single right.
- Living without the threat of freedoms being taken away; Having a voice; walking through the streets at any hour without fear of an attack; knowing that the law will protect me; knowing that the law will punish my attacker; knowing that violence against me is a crime.
- For me, being safe means being able to sleep without worrying that security forces might break the door and come and arrest me. It means an end to the intimidation and threats from security agents. I can walk on the street without being followed and can report freely without having to worry that they will come after me. It also means, that the criminal case against me on a charge that I am a ''threat to national security'' is dropped. I am a journalist not a traitor. Most important, it means the safety of my children is guaranteed and that none will harm them to silence me.
- Without fear, be responsible of building your own and your family life. Despite the absence of Law, existence of criminal groups or powerful people, everything you do will be recognized.
- When I sleep and I am able to calm down from all types of dangerous events that might threat me during the day.
- I feel safe when my life and my children's lives are not intimidated. When we can move easily without looking back to see if someone is chasing us. When there is a knock at the door and we do not panic. When my children are late and I do not feel crazy thinking thy might be kidnapped or hurt.
- For me the threats have not been so bad, since Morocco has chosen for years now to engage in a democratic process. However, harassment from bastions of resistance either local or regional have been very organised and active in combating people like me. The harassment has never been life threatening and never from the state but rather from organised groups mainly religious although not official representatives of religion.
- Safety means the feeling of having my own cultural, economic and political rights.
- To live without threats from anyone; to think and work without the fear of being violated.

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- For me, safety is achieved when the basic rights of the society are available: the right of opinion, freedom of thinking and the freedom of expression, freedom of organizing meetings, equality in citizenship and justice.
- Going in and out freely in a safe society.
- I feel safe when I know there is the possibility for others to also be safe.
- For me being safe is "Peace, Unity Development, Women rights and Community Empowerment for All" when I know I have enough resources to do my work and to fulfil the needs of the women we are working with; when I can eat and get treatment without too much hassle. I feel safe when I know that if anything happens to me, I can call for help and receive it quickly, I can be brought to a safe place with my family; safety means my family is protected, and I feel my colleagues and family are behind me. Safety means having health insurance. Safety also means having social protection, receiving recognition for our work, and seeing that there is awareness of the value of our work."
- Safety from war and conflict. Also, safety means securing my family's basic needs on health, education, food and shelter. Safe from violence against me as human being and as woman in particular.
- Being safe means to me that the whole society lives in safety. The whole society is secure, having the basic human rights.
- For me safety is the condition of being protected from risk and violence at home, workplace and among the people I'm working with. Safety means I have secured resources to feed my family and keep them in good quality of life. To be safe, for me, means that my country is free of wars, poverty, and violence.
- To feel safe and having my family and relatives behind me without any worry.
- For me, feeling safe means sleeping without having to worry. And when I 'm working, without feeling intimidated or threatened; and knowing I have enough resources to do my work and to fulfil the needs of the women we are working with. Safety means having a health insurance. Safety also means having social protection, receiving recognition for our work.
- Safety means being able to live your life as you want without having to consider you might risk harm for doing so.
- That I can speak critical words when necessary, without having to "weigh and neutralise" everything I say.
- That my friends trust me in what I am doing; and that I have my passport with me for if anything happens.
- Negative: not being scared. Positive: feeling brave enough to be and express myself

- My feelings towards safety: not to feel threatened or obliged to reveal about my private or general life. To sleep without fear or worries from any scandal or disjunctive allegation by the police. To live healthy and to be productive at work and to benefit a lot of women. Safety means not to be threatened as a woman and walking in the streets without threat. To travel between provinces safely and without fear
- To live in our community safely without sectarian conflict. To live with my family, without threats nor fear of what will be coming next.
- Safety: To feel financially independent and not to rely on others. Safety for me, is to be a decision maker of my life.
- To live safely, to talk and move without fear about my sphere (family, colleagues, neighbours and the public) of any violence that I could be subjected to. To enjoy practicing my rights without banning or threats to my rights. To live without anyone following me or trying to set me with any type of disjunctive allegations. To dream and work to achieve my ambitions without any negative impact. To be active for positive change without being isolated, punished or excluded by absolutism or injustice.
- Feeling safe mean that I have to be able to feel safe at home, on the streets and at office. Feeling safe means that I won't be subjected to any harassment because I work outside the house.
- To sleep without worrying. To receive enough resources to be able to perform efficiently in supporting women.
- Not to be subjected, along with my family, to any type of blackmailing because I am a woman. Not to be kidnapped.
- To dream without worry.

3.2   A FEMINIST TYPOLOGY OF RISKS

The typology presented below elaborates on six different parameters of safety. The choice of those six has been influenced by the literature on safety of WHRD in Latin America, by grouping the quotes just presented, and by elements mentioned most frequently in the interviews. Priority was given to risks that *can* be mitigated by awareness and capacity building.

ONE: WHRD *BEING REPROACHED FOR ACTING IN A PUBLIC SPACE AS A WOMAN*

WHRD's will be incriminated, imprisoned and prosecuted for acting in a public space. If not by law, there can be a strong cultural consensus that women should not be seen and heard in a public space. Most men and women in the Arab culture have been brought up with the idea that women are the ones who are going to take care of children, the family and social life in the community. By consequence, when a woman engages in public and political activism, she risks getting blamed for that because of her gender. It will be said that she's not spending enough time with her children; she's not there when her children and her family need her and she is a shame for the community for introducing new ideas. The underlying assumption is that if a woman lives the role defined for her by patriarchy, she would run no risk, because she is at home where she belongs. Being at risk is, therefore, her own fault. By consequence, if a woman is not at home but in a job, she could be a secretary but not take on a leadership position within an organization. With the role comes the dress: when a woman is arrested by the police for whatever reason, she will be accused – especially in countries with Sharia law - of improper or indecent clothing and kept in custody for that reason. WHRDs have reported that members of security forces and officials in the judicial system processing complaints, often refer to these traditional roles. They question their role as defenders, their autonomy, their public visibility and even their way they are dressed. In some contexts, women's activism may also be used as the basis to accuse them of defending foreign ideals and values and being anti-national, or at being against religion, culture and values.

This risk should not be disregarded or taken lightly. There is little that can be done to the fact that women will face resistance for their gender if they act in a public space, besides denouncing slender. But the impact of this undeserved discrediting can effectively be mitigated if a growing number of women succeed in not *feeling* inadequate or guilty. Some women, who come from a dissident culture, can easily overcome this kind of hurdle. But other women, who depend strongly on

traditional customs, will be easily influenced to feel guilty or ashamed if they engage in human rights activities. Feelings of guilt will increase the suffering, lead to fear and bring down self- confidence, motivation and effectiveness. Talking about it before it is internalized and being encouraged by other women and even by men will make her fearless.

TWO: CRIMINALITY AND INDISCRIMINATE VIOLENCE THAT COMES WITH WAR AND DISRUPTION ITSELF

In all interviews respondents repeated over and again that safety from indiscriminate violence has absolute priority over one's political choice, ideal or commitment to a project. Physical safety comes first and for that reason, military rule was accepted above democratization in Egypt, and the re-election of president Bashir in Sudan has been accepted above justice. Women Human Rights Defenders from higher class tend to have family abroad and can travel when situations become too violent. Even in Darfur, where women leaders decided to counteract violence by starting mediation activities between clashing tribes, physical security limits have to be respected, causing some delays.

At the same time, extreme and uncontrollable risks are regarded as circumstantial by many women activists. The risk to lose hope seems to be larger, however. WHRD's keep seeing each other and engage themselves in activities that dignify human life during disruption: helping the wounded, organizing humanitarian aid, taking local decisions in a democratic way, educating the children. An excellent example of this practice in Syria can be found in part two of the report, at 2.5.

THREE: WHRD'S BEING RESTRICTED IN FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT AND SPEECH FOR BEING A WOMAN

Women's mobility for social action is threatened by sexual harassment and assault. The publications on Egypt and the interviews in Sudan present ample proof of this risk. Even while this is generally known, the range of sexual attacks from subtle to gross, and the impact of each form has to be sufficiently acknowledged to empower women and her environment in applying appropriate protection mechanisms. Close analysis will facilitate practical measures to mitigate the impact of the risk.

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Sexual attacks against WHRDs include:
(a) Verbal abuse based on their sex, verbal intimidation in meetings, social media and on the streets;
(b) Hidden sexual harassment, rape and practices of gender based violence and sexual abuse of children;
(c) Organized public assaults and gang rape;
(d) Harassment and sexual abuse by police and the military;
(e) Indifference of the police and other judicial authorities towards sexual assaults resulting in impunity for perpetrators, even if they and their acts are widely known.

Generally, all these forms of sexual attacks, even if not formally used as repression instrument, do consolidate the power of the attacker over the woman and terrorize them and the ones who care for them. The victim is not only the attacked person, but the whole community around her, men and women. Despite its informality and presumed uncontrolled occurrence, this is exactly the purpose – an atmosphere of fear is created to discourage and subdue those who need social change and who claim their rights peacefully. The message is that women are sexually too "dirty", "shy" or "seductive" to have an opinion; they are tagged as replaceable commodities that should not move by themselves or be heard in public.

Even the milder forms of *verbal abuse* and *intimidation* have specific impact on women's mobility and should be given attention for that reason. Disregard of women's opinions in meetings and threats sent by email or phone to WHRDs often include language referring to her sex. The aim is to discredit the work of WHRDS and delegitimize the public image of women activists in society. Gender-based discrediting of WHRDs can also trigger repression and assault from a broader range of

actors in the community, which increases the vulnerability of WHRDs and can prevent them from coming out for their rights and speaking in public.

"WHRDs are stigmatized with social, degrading stereotypes concerning their sexual life, or are accused that their work for eradicating discrimination against women is against the moral values or the social institutions such as the family"[20].

Sexual harassment and *abuse* in stagnated societies takes the form of "punishment" meant to induce feelings of guilt. Paradoxically, it is often the women or child who feels guilty of being harassed and abused and not the perpetrator. The sexual attack is a consistent social mechanism to transfer guilt for social failure to the victim, who internalizes it. This can have a very serious impact on women and the family and communities in the Arab world, if they continue believing that a women being assaulted by man is a whore by definition and not fit for marriage anymore. Development workers and expatriate helpers who try to understand the value of local culture run the risk of condoning violent sexual practices as "local traditions". They fail to see how a culture of strong gender discrimination is hijacked to work as a mechanism resisting necessary social change.

The third form is *sexual assault in public and gang rapes*. This modality is known to occur especially in conflict situations and in war[21]. The sexual attacks are random, done in mobs and not targeted at any particular person. It is often explained as an outlet for frustrated young men, but at times it is also organized from above and can be understood as punishment against women that dare to play a different role than expected from them. Instead of begin "good" and at service to the existing status quo as mothers, caretakers, educators and health officers, their choice to enjoy themselves, take leadership, to organize public actions or to claim their rights – is considered a blasphemy.

The analysis above indicates how different forms of sexual attack, even subtle verbal attacks, have strong impact on the mobility of Women Human Rights Defenders. It prevents women systematically from coming to predominantly male meetings, from giving their opinion and from being physically present in public places. It is not easy to prevent sexual harassment and assault, and once it happened it is not easy to talk about it, let alone denounce it officially. But it is also known that a supportive environment is necessary to mitigate the long term effect of panic, pain and shock caused by sexual attacks. Simple and straightforward specific measures can be taken, appropriate to the kind of attack. The purpose of these measures should be not to pity the women (again!), but to defend and restore their mobility and self-confidence.

Apart from the shock, sexual attack also impacts family and community relations as research in Congo has shown. It awakens or internalizes feelings of guilt and shame in both women and their male companion and family members for the attack. Sexual attacks are a serious illegal weapon in social conflict, and their impact on the vulnerability of change agents needs strong and immediate measures and further research on the dynamics triggered by it. Research can also facilitate the formulation of appropriate and powerful mechanisms to neutralize this deeper impact. Practical ideas on how to demystify the intimate sexual connotations could be exchanged and disseminated.

On the other hand, the examples of Sudan and Egypt show that, paradoxically, sexual attacks are opportunities for deep social change if they are made visible and discussed openly. Public discourse can transform victims into heroes and dominant actors into idiots. Societies can come to their senses and decide that a line was crossed.

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[20] Inter-American Commission on Human Rights
[21] The occurrence of a series gang rapes in Germany at the end of 2015 gives food for further analysis

FOUR: LOSING THE SUPPORT OF MALE COMPANIONS

Male support is not self-evident when a WHRD is attacked; actually, it is less self-evident than female support for male human rights defenders. Even in situations where the woman is greatly respected by her father, husband or brother, male support from her direct environment tends to fail when things get difficult[21]. The engagement of women for human rights does affect the image and safety of men close to her as well.

This is even more critical for tribal women human rights defenders among refugee communities in the peripheries of the cities or in rural communities. Tribal women and internal refugees have to deal with triple discrimination: for being from a certain tribe, for being women and for belonging to the economically most disadvantaged groups in society. Tribal women leaders risk being tagged as terrorists or witches for engaging in the defence of human rights. Such discrediting can come both from state actors, established civil society and members of their own communities. Additionally, refugees, internal refugee communities and tribal groups are more frequently confronted with *mass* rape committed either by rebels or by government troops. They are normally turned away or not taken seriously, and so these crimes are not investigated.

In the Arab world we rarely heard about work for human rights by tribal/refugee communities, with exception of the women's organisations in Darfur. The explanation can be that in many cases, especially in a rural environment, losing the support of the husband, brother or father means exclusion from the family and this is no viable option for the survival of Women Human Rights Defenders. They have still a mountain to climb to explain their constructive intentions at home and get support from their direct environment. They also need the support from religious organisations. And, of course, of inclusive women's organisations like women's unions and women's sections labour unions. Unfortunately, all these relations are heavily loaded with mistrust in a patriarchal society. More research and activities are needed to breach the gaps that tend to isolate WHRDs from tribal and refugee communities.

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On the positive side is the engagement of women leaders in those communities in humanitarian aid and in 1325 committees[22]. Their work strongly enhances women's rights issues and participation of women in peace building. In training and learning events initiated through those networks, participation of men can make a difference to mitigate the risk of isolation. Participation of religious organisations and the use of religious sources to legitimize human rights activities can also be a strong support. And finally, the presence and engagement of national women's organisations with tribal and refugee women is essential.

FIVE: PROFESSIONAL INTEGRITY BEING QUESTIONED FOR BEING A WOMAN

In Egypt we heard from female journalists who have to defend their position continuously, even against colleagues. In Sudan, female politicians are easily side-lined and replaced by men. In both countries, the position of female councillors and parliamentarians is often too weak to speak up: they are commonly not well informed and they are expected to play "her masters' voice" and not to cross certain lines in order to be respected.

Little is known about professional suspicions against female lawyers, educators and health workers that engage in Human Rights activities. No female professional can escape human rights issues crossing her path, and her professional honour or code can oblige her to take risks. It goes without saying that she needs full support of (male and female) colleagues to avoid that her professionality is questioned through slender of those who profit from the injustice. Especially male colleagues can be

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[22] We refer to the experience of VOND with learning sessions and coaching of 16 women's organisations in Darfur in peace building.

resourceful in disclosing the dirty games in social institutions and teaching female colleagues to navigate through them.

SIX: WHRD'S TARGETED NEGATIVELY AS A FEMINIST

Not many respondents experience being labelled as a feminist, or demanding equal rights for women, as a risk.

This needs an explanation. In some interviews it became clear that being feminist has some added value in Arab countries, especially among the elites. It is a role traditionally known from women's organisations working under the leadership of the first lady in many Arab countries. Feminists are broadly respected – as long as they don't act on immediate issues/demands and don't mobilize broader groups on the streets. How can we explain the prestige of feminists if in many Arab countries the legislation may contradict feminist values? One interpretation would be that law has little authority in those countries anyway, enforcement of the law being just a distant ideal. And of course, feminists don't look like a threat for the system if they limit their influence to pleading for the change of some articles in the law, not opposing the essentially patriarchal power game of joining religion and state building through a sharia law as such.

This limitation and the tacit compromise with a patriarchal power arrangement doesn't mean that their work is less important. They have been effective and well organized in changing laws, demanding equal treatment for men and women. In terms of protection, a fair national legislation ratified by the parliament is the ultimate protection instrument for Women Human Rights Defenders against violence and criminal attacks. This is even more important, when women succeed in connecting their efforts with international agreements and norms on Women's Rights. This gain should never been underestimated as instrument for long term social change.

SEVEN: BEING YOUNG AND CHALLENGING THE SYSTEM

Unfortunately, the survey didn't get sufficient information on young women activists who are arrested and maltreated by the police and security officers, like their male companions. In the survey it is mentioned many times that women fear security people coming after them and following them and we believe this is said mainly by (young) people who travel with public transport or who walk on the streets – not by those who travel by cars. During the interviews the risk of being followed, arrested and searched was well explained by various young interviewees however and the details are explained in part four of the report.

In practice the protective role of the government often becomes a risk to the young people who take organized direct action on concrete injustices. But sometimes it is more extreme. In Lybia, Salwa Bugagish, not so very young, was killed because of her role as leader of the platform of women's organisations. And in Yemen, colleagues of Amal Basha who did research, were killed in the period of national dialogues.

For this kind of risk, networking, communications, cyber security and visibility become important measures to mitigate the effects.

RISK ASSESSMENT IN THE SURVEY: A RISK MATRIX

An overview is presented in the matrix below: which risks are experienced by WHRDs in different countries and how heavy they estimate the risk to be. The respondents could choose, on a scale from 1 to 3 (3 being very relevant and 1 being not/less relevant), which risks were relevant to them[23].

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[23] To calculate the highest risk the figures in column 3 and 2 were summed up, the figure in column 1 subtracted from it.

The result shows that the highest risk was assigned to being reproached by acting in a public space as a woman. The second risk is indiscriminate violence from disruption. The third is not being acknowledged as a professional. The other risks are losing support of male companions and being hindered in the freedom of movement.

RISK MATRIX FOR WHRDs in the ARAB WORLD											
Vulnerabilities	Rate	PER COUNTRY									TOTAL
		Egypt	Sudan	Yemen	Syria	Jordan	Libya	Iraq	Morocco	Other	
Acting in a public space	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	7
	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	0	1	3	13
	3	7	5	1	0	0	0	4	0	1	21
Indiscriminate violence	1	2	2	0	0	1	0	1	2	1	10
	2	2	2	0	0	0	0	4	0	2	12
	3	3	5	2	2	0	1	0	0	4	20
Freedom of movement	1	2	2	0	1	1	1	2	0	0	10
	2	2	6	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	11
	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	8
Losing support of male companion	1	3	3	0	0	0	1	1	1	3	13
	2	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	0	1	9
	3	1	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	1	9
Professional integrity	1	1	4	0	0	0	1	0	0	4	11
	2	2	3	2	1	0	0	2	1	1	14
	3	4	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	12
Being a Feminist	1	1	2	1	1	0	0	2	0	0	8
	2	2	1	0	0	1	1	2	0	1	10
	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	7

3.3   SUMMARY ASSESSMENT

Safety of WHRD's depends on two intertwined elements: the concrete risks and the capacity of the WHRD and her environment to mitigate the impact of these risks. Asking questions to each other about safety is scary, but helps to increase risk awareness and avoid dangerous denial of risks. In the Arab world the risks identified by women are mainly four; generally they know what to do about it.

MAIN RISKS	MITIGATION MEASURES
Being reproached for acting in public as a woman	Socializing, and overcoming feelings of guilt and shame by strong belief in the value of the cause.
Being restricted in freedom of movement and participation because of sexual offense, harassment and assault	Direct family, organisational and public support to mitigate long term impact of this risk; More awareness and knowledge on the dynamics of this weapon of war to prevent and outlaw the use of it effectively.
Indiscriminate violence and war, as physical security is considered an absolute need for women.	Continue acting in smaller spaces and moments that are temporarily safe without losing the purpose of changing society.
Discrediting of professional women for engaging in human rights activities	Support from (male) colleagues; Membership of professional bodies.
The double discrimination patterns that isolate WHRD's for being young, being from a different tribe and/or for being poor;	Strengthen cooperation between the different groups of WHRD's.
Losing support from men, family and close community for that reason.	Involve men, religious organisations, national women's unions and young human rights defenders in learning events together;

Being known as a feminist is less experienced as a risk but rather as a strength. A problem identified however is that some feminist organisations do not challenge the patriarchal system, but concentrate on changing laws one by one.

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CONCLUSION 3: the critical awareness of "blaming the victim" and other guilt mechanism in social systems; and immediate practical support for women in their networks, communities and organisations are essential to mitigate the risk for WHRDs. For that reason it is those networks, communities and organisations that need special attention and protection from the international Community.

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4. PART FOUR: PROTECTIVE MEASURES

الفصل 4 – كيف تقوم المدافعات عن حقوق الإنسان بحماية أنفسهن وحماية بعضهن البعض؟

The purpose of this part is to present an inventory of possible measures to increase the safety of Women Human Rights Defenders. Quotes from the survey and from the interviews are used. At first, interviewees were reluctant to talk about protection, because they deal with imposed safety measures by security officers and they know this doesn't protect them but rather hinders them. But after some explanation, they came up with their own techniques and practices, showing that protection can built up bottom up to become appropriate and useful. Talking about protection helps to visualise strategies that are already being used. It is possible to enhance them and disseminate them in the network.

The chapter starts with quoting how WHRDs in Arab countries care for their individual protection. After that, it is explained how they handle organisational protection. At the end, the things inter-national organisations contribute are listed, and it is discussed if and how more can be done.

4.1   PERSONAL RESILIENCE

How do women keep their self-confidence when they are attacked? This section recalls how WHRD's react to personal threats.

FEELING STRONG

Women testify that *feeling* safe is the most important ground for *being* safe. Feeling strong is the ability to make your own choices. Even if your choice meets resistance from the people around you, you can go on because you have a purpose. It means that you are on equal footing with the people who want to hold you back, and you can negotiate your space.

ʊ   The respondents say that assurance of the value of what they do is important:
"The most significant factor in Human Rights is to work as one team, openness to all opinions and the acceptance of others and their religions; even if I don't believe in your belief."
"I have a strong believe in the noble work I do, so I have confidence and got stronger over the years in dealing with hard situations. I always come out strong and defy dangerous situations."
"I know I will meet resistance again, but I cannot hold myself from doing what I am good at: searching for truth. It gives me satisfaction; it is my profession, my life."
"We are always concerned about the people that suffer so much from discrimination; we have witnessed so much violence; so we do not put our own problems in the first place."
"I want to feel brave enough to be and express myself."
"Safety means receiving recognition for our work, and that people become aware through our work."

ʊ   Then, recognize and being recognized by the national law is a protection shield:
"We are not asking favours. We talk with the governments on an equal footing. Violence against women is not to be accepted by anyone, neither men nor women and certainly not by the police or the judiciary. The constitution is for all citizens, people are waiting for improvements. What we do is cooperating to improve the laws preventing violence against women and making an end to impunity."
"I feel safe when we have an effective judicial system."

"Knowing that the law will protect you, knowing that the law will punish your attacker, knowing that violence against you is a crime."

"Safety means, the criminal case against me on a charge that I am a ''threat to national security'' is dropped. I am a journalist not a traitor."

υ   Another protection is having sufficient resources:

"Safety means that I have enough resources that can assist me to keep on working. I do not have to repeat myself many times, to prove that I need enough resources to keep my job."

"When I know I have enough resources to do my work and to fulfil the needs of the women we are working with."

"Open an international bank account for any emergency. In my case, I didn't expect that I would leave my home. Now I cannot go to my house, I cannot use my car, I cannot access my bank account. I cannot access to my money to get my computer fixed and to buy new clothes. I have to beg for help, even for small issues. This makes me feel continuously insecure."

"When a colleague was assassinated for doing research on torture, I was tired of excuses and so angry, that I wanted to go on, whatever the situation. But after a while I realized: what would the movement really gain if I would knowingly put myself at risk? I'd better be careful, stay alive and prepare for better opportunities."

υ   And finally, fun, a good health and physical condition:

"To take off the negative energy, try to practice sports. In particular, while working in the field your physical health will assist you to manage escaping the police. Dancing, singing and spiritual practice is also good. Taking holidays in the summer and not working during weekends helps to keep your personal resilience."

"I'm going to the gym, cycling, hiking, swimming, eating healthy, spending time with family and take my team out for drinks or dinner."

"Time management is very important in our daily activity. Taking care for the family and going on trips or taking rest is worthy to restore our vitality and vigour."

"Don't work harder than you can and guarantee moments of relaxation."

"You have to feel the fun of being together and belonging to each other because at least you try to do something positive with your life in a bad situation."

"If 50% of your work has to do with security issues, and there is no end to it, there are moments that you really want to quit. It is important not to lose your sense of humour, to laugh and to endure."

SAFETY FOR THE FAMILY

Surprisingly, the safety of the family was mentioned in the survey but not in most of the interviews. This can be interpreted in two ways. Either, the family is not really at risk – for being an extended family. Or, what is more likely, the issue is too sensitive to talk about. If it is sensitive, it would deserve more attention in analysing risk and protection elements related to the family for WHRD's in the Arab world. The same happens, in another way, with close relationships like the husband, the mother, the brother, the father. It seems to be an ignored or hidden issue.

"I warn my neighbour's when I am at risk or when I see unidentified security cars. They don't ask for an explanation, but I know they will be attentive".

"No one will talk with neighbours or even family members on politics, but I can tell them to watch out and to look after my family if something happens. They keep me informed in some indirect way, they know problems can happen to anyone. I leave my telephone number, and make sure they have the addresses of my relatives."

"We used to form a group as family members of a group of political prisoners. If some harm was done to one of them, we would demonstrate as a group in front of the prison without showing our face, and shout the name of the person".

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RESILIENCE FOR WHRD'S IN EXILE

Experience learns that Human Rights Defenders who come for shelter in a foreign country need to take care of their safety in the host society as well. Maybe their life is no longer in danger, but many resources that made or kept them strong have slipped away. Probably, they doubt about the value of her daily activities, they do not know their rights in a new country, they have no income or savings, and their physical health suffers from missing friends and family to relax.

Exile looks like being idle, but it is actually a lot of hard and courageous work, even if the stay is temporary. Commonly, the organisations that provide assistance to guarantee shelter are not really able to help with daily needs. Creating favourable conditions is done with neighbours, friends and acquaintances, basically. A shortlist of suggestions:

- υ Acknowledge the transition: put energy in organizing the daily life, financial situation, legal status, income and housing. But patiently and step by step because normally it is complex, an incredible load of paper work comes with it and she will not always be understood correctly.
- υ Move around, go to meetings, talk with all kinds of people regularly
- υ Do relaxation exercises, (group) sports, making music, following art classes or do voluntary work; that is way to make new friends.
- υ Learn the language.
- υ Ask for help, finding and trusting a few friends to accompany in the transition. If people promise things but forget to call you back, don't take it personal. Life can be very hectic to concerned people and it is no offense to remind them that one needs help.
- υ Don't take political risks in a strange country without consulting native colleagues, but otherwise accept invitations to talk about your country in public: it has a lot of impact.
- υ Seek new alliances to accomplish your dreams, take a broader view, let the past go.

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4.2   STRATEGIES FOR ORGANISATIONAL SAFETY

In part 3 of the report it was concluded that the critical awareness of the guilt mechanism in social systems and immediate practical support for women in their networks, communities and organisations is essential to mitigate the risks that affect WHRDs personally. For that reason it is those networks, communities and organisations that need special attention and protection from the international community. This section is based on the strategies to protect organisations that were elaborated in the interviews and the answers to pre-defined categories in the survey. The quotes show to what extend WHRD's are familiar with 6 basic strategies.

ONE: MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS ON SECURITY

Most Women Human Rights Defenders are familiar with this kind of protection. The following practices were described:

"We are used to security services following us and being always around, whatever we do. So we made a habit of never walking alone, never entering a street without a way out, always checking the room who is there before we get in, and watching our mouth on what we say. And when they approach us to harass us we start to talk very loud, and call our own name so that everyone around is alerted and able to document possible attacks."
"We avoid dependency on one single foreign donor."
"We involve people in what we are doing not to become isolated in the actions that we develop."
"In Sudan, being a human rights defender is a very difficult role for women. Any organized initiative with this name would do more harm than good. If you are known as a human rights defender, you will be understood as an attacker. We relate to traditional women's organisations using their

credibility for your expertise in government circles. Or if you are a Peace Builder or Gender Expert, your good intentions will be better understood."

"If you work within regional coalitions, you will have the protection of a group that will be seen as less antagonistic than Western NGO's."

"We do various different and even unconnected things with our organisation, in various buildings. In none of the buildings we keep all our files and information. If one part of our organisation is attached, the other parts will survive. We diversify our financial streams as well."

TWO: AVOID CONFRONTATION

This is the most popular strategy that we observed in the interviews; but in the survey it is not mentioned as familiar. A few examples of skilled confrontation avoidance:

υ   Hiding your political opinion

Quote from well-known journalist in Sudan: "we have made it a habit for years already not to speak about politics; not even in larger family meetings. Security people are everywhere and you may not be aware of who is working for them. If they consider you as a liability, they will find any reason to arrest or harass you. They will even not arrest you but make sure that you are hindered in your career or in getting things done that you need."

υ   Attending many foreign meetings

If you are the figurehead of your organisation, make sure that you travel regularly outside the country being invited for meetings and having agreed procedures for the person to replace you. Quote from an officer of a women's organisation in Sudan: "our director is abroad very often. That is the way it works: she covers for us with her stories, and we don't "exist" but we keep the work going on."

υ   Keep activities small

A member of a youth organisation: "we combine practical, useful activities with the advocacy. Weave human rights into enjoyable things or in existing official channels, like adult education. An example is the action with the Dutch ambassador. She crossed the Nile swimming with the women sports club, to ask attention the lack of swimming lessons for girls."
An activist: "it is good to have subtle tactics: create common ground, do small things."

υ   Be flexible in a high risk context.

The organisation has to be flexible in choosing slogans, flags and activities that are allowed, even if they are not exactly the same as mentioned in the logical framework. Sometimes it has to be explained both to the donor as to volunteers who put their hopes on the achievements of the organisation, that the organisation cannot follow a straight line in rough weather.

υ   Stimulate and organize solidarity

Sudanese organisation: "NGO's can use each other's registration to invite guests or ask for permits. In this way, organisations help each other to get space for manoeuvring."
An activist from a youth organisation: "We have a tradition of solidarity in Sudan, when something bad happens to someone, all people from the community are called together to help that family. We try to revive that tradition in the urban context. Solidarity actions are very powerful to give people hope and overcome the many divides in our society that cause fear."
UNAMID officer: "Many underlying conflicts can be solved peacefully by the local people themselves if the larger powers do not intervene. For example: the IDP's cannot go back to their homes and their empty villages are now occupied by militia's (rebels). Instead of insisting that they should return, they proposed to exchange use of the farm land with the right to live in their houses."
Quote from Egypt: "We need to be united in our vision and stick together, even the things we do and the ways we do them are very different."

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THREE: REACT TO ATTACKS WITH THE PURPOSE TO DE-ESCALATE THE VIOLENCE

Most respondents of the survey said to be familiar with nonviolent methods. In the interviews, some techniques were mentioned. But some cases were also mentioned, for which no effective way of reacting was found.

υ   Organize accompaniment by non-violent guards and witnesses

Quote from young activists in Egypt: "As the police and the military were not protecting us (women) against sexual harassment and assault by hired gangs on the Tahir Square, we organized a nonviolent guard of friends, that who would intervene immediately the moment we would be approached by those mercenaries. They were wearing special yellow vests and a camera to show that they are together and that they are there for protection and denouncing. We also organized a data-bank to denounce their movements and collecting valid evidence that they were hired by a political party to humiliate us."

"In the Nuba Mountains a group of women coming from a marriage were held by two police officers. They told the group they would take two young ladies with them. The girls said they didn't want to go with them. But they were taken against their will. They run away and reported it to the police station. The police then took a car to the place and ordered the whole group to come to the station. Then it became uproar with all the villagers around the cars preventing the police from leaving."

Young Sudanese dissident: "Under sharia law it is not allowed for men to touch or harass women in public. So we have to be always together with others as witnesses and agree to be witness for each other when they harass us."

υ   Seek protection from the law

Organize witness protection and report objectively on violations of your personal integrity through judicial channels and talk about it.

Quote from the survey: "The organisations talk a lot about combatting early marriage and female genital mutilation without taking any risks. Then, 25 women in Ondurman were raped by a group of soldiers. They came to see us for help, but the police prevented us from acting and told us to stay out of it. We feel very bad about that. "

Member of lawyer's organisation: "there are so many ways to threaten, kill or bribe witnesses, and sometimes the stakes are so high for political prominent figures, that we really need a witness protection programme, which has to be protected, of course. We need to train witnesses to fill in the right forms correctly; we need para-legals to assist them and follow the process. This is one of the most important challenges related to mass rape cases."

We can conclude that basic knowledge on the possibilities of non-violent reactions to attacks is present, and there is a clear need to stick to nonviolence, given the volatile context of violence in which WHRD's work. But there is scarce knowledge of nonviolence as a consistent strategy for social change, including a communication strategy to justify it. Disseminating experiences and training in effective methodolies of nonviolent defence might be quite welcome and effective.

FOUR: ORGANISATIONAL SECURITY PLANNING AND SAFETY TRAININGS

Some respondents in the interviews and in the survey were familiar with this strategy to make their organisations safer. They suggested:

υ   Make sure that your staff knows the details of the registration laws

A youth organisation: "you can register under a different label from what you actually want to achieve. It is very common that organisations are registered for a social, educational or health purpose. This is accepted. But if there is a reason why security doesn't agree with your work, they will close your organisation down, or just not renew your registration next year, or delay in registering you. Without registration, you will not be able to receive money, to get permits for travelling, to hire a place; so it needs due attention. At the end, registration laws are a condition to be protected."

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ʊ   Share a risk analysis meeting with colleague organisations and draw a global organisational security plan with safety trainings

A young women's organisation in Egypt: "we were held at the airport for travelling to an international meeting. We didn't know wat to do. The security service told us to tell nobody, or they would withhold our registration. We feel paralyzed, they gave us no reason for withholding us, and it can happen again at any moment again. If we could have a meeting and a training together with other organisations to figure out how to react together in such cases, that would really help."

ʊ   Form a coalition, an association or a union of professionals that support each other

Quote from students in Sudan: "To pacify the student unrest, the government promised fee-exemption for students from Darfur. But then, they didn't register us if we didn't pay the fee. We had to organize to get our right."

FIVE: COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY STRATEGIES

Visibility strategies are familiar to the respondents. But the systematic use of them is weakened by a dilemma: becoming visible might work as protection, if sufficient support is generated; but it might also work as a risk, when the network of the organisation is too weak. Some concrete examples were mentioned:

ʊ   Learn to communicate with the police and security officers

Quote from a young activist: "I did theatre courses, where I learned that I need to make eye contact and convince the other that I am not lying. When arrested by the police, I cannot show fear; signs of submission or surrender would be very dangerous. To convince them I have to make sure that the things that I say are true, and not to feel bad about the things I don't tell them. I need to communicate continuously and not feel controlled by them."

NGO in Egypt: "we know our security officer very well. He is from the Ministry of Social Affairs, where we are registered. We are always in contact and he knows and appreciates our work. So we tend to listen to him if he shows us some limitations in what we can do."

ʊ   Use and maintain (high-profile) connections

Quote from a Woman Rights Organisation in Egypt: "The military want to show that they follow the rules as stipulated in the law. We are connected as a group to someone at high level to intervene through silent diplomacy immediately when some of us is arrested, showing that we are following up the arrest and monitoring their respect for legal procedures closely. In that way we can be arrested, but we avoid "disappearance" and being killed quietly."

A journalist: "My work with foreign news networks helps to keep me in the spotlight."

ʊ   Use online social media to alert others when you receive a threat

Quote from a young activist in Sudan: "We train for our safety on how to send a very quick alert message when we see police coming. We always alert each other before when we leave for some meeting where we don't know who is there. If one of us is arrested, the others follow it up to make sure that we are released again."

Activist from Yemen: "I always keep my mobile charged so that I can call colleagues for help. In 2011 I was held for investigation, so I pretended that I was calling the driver to ask him to wait for me because of an interview, and my colleague (who was actually called) understood the message and disseminated a press release on my detention, it was published everywhere, so I was released after 3 hours of detention by the National Security."

"I have contacted the CPJ (Committee to Protect Journalists) and update them on my situation."

ʊ   Open spaces for artists to express national feelings and protect them against violence.

Quote from a Member of a Young Peace Association in Yemen: "We want to organize expositions from Yemen young artists in Egypt and the Netherlands, because they explain our situation to the world in a language that everyone can understand."

ʊ   Be aware of cybersecurity and take measures accordingly

Things mentioned: "It is unsafe to carry your cell phone with all your data in it, the more so if it is not locked. All the telephone-numbers and addresses of your friends are in it and they can take your phone and go for them as well. The same holds for the computers in the office, of course. Don't safe files on your computer; change your passwords regularly."

ʊ Address social injustice issues through broader platforms

A University professor in Sudan: "Dafuri women are leaders, but they are closing themselves in trying to solve their own problems, they need to open up to organisations in other parts of Sudan, learn how to trust. In this way they will only harvest more anger and fear. They have to remember that an NGO is not a political party with responsibility for everyone. There has to be some common ground that can unite us. "

A manager of a women's organisation: "All advocacy issues are done through coalitions, because the coalitions themselves are temporary alliances that are not registered and don't need to report on their activities."

Member of a lawyer's organisation: "We need to strengthen women's coalitions reaching an agreement with various political parties on the issues at stake, like we did with raising the quota for women parliamentarians".

ʊ Strategize visibility

Some respondents prefer not to be visible:

"I reduce my appearance in public spaces. In my case I never use to wear hijab, so sometimes I have to cover my face to hide my identity.

"I keep low profile."

A young activist: "the more the (social) media publish on the organisation in an attractive way, mentioning its success, the more protected it will be. Keeping low profile is not sustainable, the organisation has to manage which things are to be disseminated and which things can be continued to be low key."

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SIX: TEMPORARY SAFETY SHELTERS

In high risk situations temporary shelters can be the only way to keep the Human Rights Defender alive. It is a method that needs further analysis. The best shelters are places to hide for a while in the country itself, or in the region. Local shelters are much safer and easier to organise than going suddenly to a foreign place. The latter is impossible to keep secret and gives ground to suspicion.

Quote in Sudan: "We cannot just go in temporary shelter outside the country without a good excuse. Because the moment we come back we will be arrested for having prepared "terrorist activities" during our absence."

PROTECTION GRID OF NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

The safety of persons and organisations depends to a large extend on the proper functioning of national institutions. Distrust in the national institutions can be justified, but the aspired social change includes existing institutions to change and choose sides for a good cause – even massive

National Actors	Do they protect?		
	Yes	Sometimes	no
NGO's and Associations	33	3	0
Law Firms	17	9	7
Government	6	15	12
Police	3	16	11
Religious Organisations	3	14	13
Media			

international pressure would not be sustainable if national institutions are not cooperating. In the survey we asked the respondents whether or not they would expect protection from different institutions. In the grid above the answers are displayed in numbers, representing the *number of respondents* who chose the answer.

The question on media could not be measured, because there was a comment about the kind of media envisaged:
"The media organisations have been mostly pro state and cannot be relied on to inform the public of violations against HRDs."
"Social media such as facebook plays a major role in Egypt"

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Before moving to the role of international organisations, the protection coming from local organisations can be summarized in the following grid of conclusions and recommendations.

PROTECTION NEEDS: CONCLUSIONS	PROTECTION MEANS: RECOMMENDATIONS
For women, feeling strong is an essential element to increase their safety. This includes that they know what their rights are, that they are convinced that the work they do is for a good cause, and having sufficient resources and being in good health and physical conditions.	Women's organisations and networks need to be connected, supported and strengthened by external actors.
There is little direct information how WHRDs in the Arab world deal with threats to their family. The impression is that they prefer not to speak about it.	Risks for family members of WHRD's have to be taken seriously, and information on how they handle their protection has to be collected in a candid way.
In the Arab countries the organisations cannot rely on the protection of the government, police, judicial or religious organisations, or media.	National institutions can change from within if they are consistently influenced and invited to participate in improving human rights.
Attention is given to keep HR organisation safe by methods like avoiding confrontations and relying on communication and visibility strategies among a network of reliable contacts.	A more systematic approach will increase the safety of the organisations, by inter-organisational safety planning workshops sharing informed decisions on safety, and learning nonviolent strategies to answer and de-escalate attacks.
WHRD's who are in exile in another country are meeting heavy challenges.	It is advisable to facilitate temporary safety shelters in the country or in the region and organize some financial support for it

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4.3   THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS IN PROTECTION

THE INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS COMMUNITY

International organisations differ from each other and play different roles, according to their mandate. For example:

- υ   UN organisations set universal norms and establishing targets for human development with consent of all nations; they stimulate implementation and monitor it.
- υ   EU delegations apply a special guide for protecting Human Rights defenders.
- υ   Governments step in to finance projects for global health, environmental maintenance, disaster mitigation and poverty eradication, through bilateral aid and development programmes.
- υ   NGO's in western countries work on Action Plans for 1325, Gender (FLOW), Human Rights and capacity building for peace negotiations in Arab countries ("Women in the Frontline").

This so-called "International Community" is well known by the Women Human Rights Defenders in the Arab world, and appreciated for its principles and moral standards.

For example, the work of the UN is perceived as an important instrument to call for improvement of governance and legislation without attacking the sovereignty of the country. At the same time, the work of an NGO like Amnesty International protects individuals who rely on those universal norms to demand fair and just functioning of government institutions. This combination has inspired human rights activist to remain non-violent and to search for nonviolent interventions with a high visibility factor. Some respondents observed however that its effectiveness can also have contributed to a high level of irritation of the authorities against human rights activists in general, who are suspected of being disloyal to their country and spreading a negative image abroad.

This irritation is extended to the financial and moral support that is being given by embassies and development NGO's to civil society for development projects. Human rights organisations need the money, but having a steady financial relation also entails the risk to be isolated and outlawed in their own country. For Universities, humanitarian assistance and (sexual) health programmes this risk is lower, apparently.

A university scholar in Khartoum observes: "It would be good if foreign organisations would stay away from the political domain and concentrate on the technical domain, even in matters of awareness and rights".

Quote from a Sudanese organisation: "Always remember that you are just an NGO, you are able to name problems, but not to solve them. Be careful. Try to be "invisible". Don't create suspicion. Do no harm. Support Civil Society, but don't label the people you work with."

The financial relation of a foreign organisation with organisations in the Arab countries is not simple at this stage of the transition. Other ways of nurturing a sustainable relationship can be as effective as financing Human Rights projects however. This was explored in the survey and in the interviews.

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ONE: ALLIANCES FOR GENDER SENSITIVE SAFETY PROCEDURES

To protect women's organisations, whether for peace, for women's rights or for practical work in the fields of education and health, funds are required. Traditional funding has become very difficult in quite some countries for political/security reasons, as explained earlier, but also for administrative reasons. Administrating funds for the implementation of projects seems not to be the most adequate modality to support the movement of women that fight for global change in these societies in transition. It is time for exploring alternative mechanisms of investing in Women Human Rights Defenders and in their work.

In the interviews, the application of financing instruments was commented as follows:
"NGO's in Darfur just need computers, computer agility, and internet café's to communicate against rape".
"Organize risk assessment and safety planning workshops as part of the development programmes and humanitarian aid projects".
"Continue to invest in human rights institution building, while activism and protesting is not safe and no longer accepted if it is not institutionally rooted. Institution building goes beyond supporting nongovernmental organisations one by one and issue-by-issue, it needs a multi-stakeholder strategy with sufficient participation of women."

Additional proposals to support women's organisations in the Arab world are:

ʊ Foreign NGO's can prepare for "informal" procedures of financial assistance to local NGO's in arranging temporary shelter for human rights defenders within the country or in the region.

ʊ Foreign NGO's could facilitate the development of courses on safety analysis and planning, protection strategies and nonviolent (civil) defence for women and men, and invite WHRD's regularly to those and other courses, meetings and conferences outside the country.

ʊ Foreign NGO's can develop alliances with NGO's in Arab countries to lobby at high political levels for women participate in peace negotiations, in reconstruction plans and in constitutional reform.

ʊ Foreign NGO's can pressure for procedures that allow quick visa procedures for Human Rights Defenders in Arab countries if they are invited for international meetings fostered by NGO's.

TWO: RESOLUTIONS, SPECIAL RAPPORTEURS AND UN MONITORING COMMITTEES

For WHRD's the most important international resolutions and monitoring instruments are the Declaration on Human Rights, the Committee on the Status of Women and the UNSC Resolution 1325. They make professional and coordinated use of documents, studies and mechanisms around these resolutions. Even in smaller towns and remote regions, committees for 1325 can be formed together with local authorities and this looks quite promising. The expected result of these commissions is that protection is secured for women leaders who work as mediators in armed clashes and for reconstructions programmes. The authority of the UN Security Council can be used to get permission for meetings and dislocations. On the other hand, when it comes to real threats for Women Human Rights Defenders, resolutions do not really help. One feels the distance of the paper work from daily reality: unless people know each other, the resolutions do not guarantee protection.

THREE: PRESENCE IN THE FIELD, MISSIONS, ACCOMPANIMENT

Most respondents mention that presence in the field representing international organisations is the most effective protection instrument. This presence is defined as an increase in international representatives from UN organisations being brought to the Arab world through missions, specific monitoring initiatives and permanent representatives who can be approached in person.

In Sudan, respondents urged to implement the recommendation from an evaluation report on the implementation of resolution 1325:

"*The Secretariat could improve its deployment of women's protection advisors and gender advisors, ensuring such posts are part of a mission's core budget and structured in line with recommendations on gender architecture. Leadership in peacekeeping, peacebuilding and political missions could better integrate such advisors' work in the operational framework of the mission. The UN Security Council could consistently underscore the importance of women's protection advisors' role in coordinating and convening the Monitoring, Analysis and Reporting Arrangements (MARA). It would be useful to recall the initial concept behind appointing women protection advisors, that is, as an operational security role that includes working with military and police counterparts to advise on how the mission could protect women from the wide array of violations they face in conflict. There could be more direct interaction by such advisors, not only with the head of mission but also with force commanders of peacekeeping operations. However, the operational security advisory function is still not a part of the mission response[24]*

A member of a lawyer's organisation defending the rights of mass rape victims in Darfur: "*In the case of the mass rape case in North Darfur, the only international organisation authorized to go into the area with sufficient authority to report to the government and make an end to this abuse, is the UN Security Council*."

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[24] Ten-year Impact Study on Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security in Peacekeeping, 2015. See also: Coomaraswamy, Radhika, Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing Peace, A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325, UN Women 2015

Quote from a peace keeping officer: "*The Mandate of the Peace Forces in Darfur (the SOFA agreement) has to be changed. It needs to guarantee freedom of movement for UN agencies in the country, otherwise we cannot protect refugees who life outside the villages, near their agricultural plots, and not in a camp. And then, the mandate has to be implemented, the implementation has to be imposed by the Security Council.*"

FOUR: MULTIPLICATION OF VISIBILITY AND CAMPAIGNING

As we saw before, visibility is important, but a balance has to be found on what to show and what to develop quietly. Institution building and the development of consistent and result oriented strategies helps find a safe balance. Ideas that came up in the interviews:

υ Smaller Sudanese 1325 committees can form a united network including government officials. Through this liaison they can build up the evidence on gender based violence.

υ Communication: Engage in inter-organisational learning workshops on how to communicate. Women human rights defenders in the Arab world need to become experts and artists in communicating with authorities on an equal footing. The organisations supporting them need to learn from them and with them.

υ Culture: Facilitate art exhibitions and invite artists from Arab countries in international events to combat xenophobia and specific fear from Arab cultures.

υ Foreign NGO's can finance or organize technical assistance in communication to enhance the visibility of WHRD's and launch international campaigns for a good cause.

υ Facilitate exchange workshops of young people to draft visibility campaigns denouncing human rights violations through social media.

FIVE: KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE AND TRAINING

Suggestions that came up during the interviews:

υ Information: Start a well-connected regional online observatory mapping risks for Women Human Rights Defenders in the Arab world. The discrimination of women in the Arab world will not disappear spontaneously; and violence against women will be used as a weapon in war until we stop discrimination by presenting facts and figures.

υ Organize strategy and knowledge exchange workshops for groups of civil society organisations, in which risk assessment and safety planning are discussed among them; provide adequate tools for such workshops; train the trainers.

υ Organize 1325 trainings for the military, the judiciary and the police in various countries, in cooperation with the UNSC and with police and military academies. The systematic training (and accompaniment) of officers who are actually responsible in their country for protection of WHRD's will have significant impact. The officers would be pleased with the opportunity to learn something new and to travel abroad (for example, to South Africa or Kenya).

SUMMARY: THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

The connection to the international community is important for the WHRD's, particularly the various international organisations on Women's Rights, the UN Commission on the Rights of the Child and the UN Security Council. Acknowledging that the support for Human rights activities through projects is not well received in the Arab countries, new modalities are proposed to maintain the connection between the change processes in the country and the moral international standards.

The relative importance of different modalities of international support is rated by the respondents of the survey:

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Which international support is popular?			
	Not important	important	Very important
Gender sensitive safety training	8	5	20
Knowledge exchange	6	0	23
Resolutions and monitoring	7	11	5
International presence in the field	10	7	5
Visibility and communication	11	0	8

CONCLUSION 4:

ʊ Alliances for gender-sensitive safety training: Security and safety can be enhanced through International presence in the field: More frequent presence is requested through missions and delegates in the field that can be personally approached.

ʊ Knowledge exchange: Systematic knowledge exchange on resolution 1325, safety assessment, civil protection strategies and nonviolent methodologies for social change is needed.

ʊ Resolutions and monitoring: The international resolutions are important for step by step improvements, but they are often unable provide help in critical moments or for situations in remote areas.

ʊ Protection can be given by long term alliances between foreign and national organisations, including provisions to be used without delay when the circumstances are favourable or when it is urgently needed.

ʊ Visibility and communication: Visibility campaigns and communication for WHRD's are risky. A broader exposure, a balanced strategy and professional assistance are welcomed.

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5. EPILOGUE

The MENA region and its surroundings are in turmoil. Even knowing that Human Rights are still chronically and seriously violated in Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras and Colombia, the peace movement in Europe, including Peace Brigades International /Netherlands, the NAP 1325 and organisations working on Human Rights or on women in the Arab countries, is challenged to give an answer to the prevention of war in the Middle East, as this affects Europe and the World intensely. All of us who believe in nonviolent conflict resolution should walk our talk and do something, if possibly before armed conflict breaks out and bombs are dropped from the sky, killing humans, animals, threes, buildings and cultural heritage indiscriminately. Destroying, finally, our human dignity.

PRESENTING WOMEN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN THE ARAB REGION

It serves no purpose to be overwhelmed by the news on humanitarian crises, refugees, gender based violence and authoritarian regimes. We'd better turn our eye to people who dedicate their life to maintaining humanity and dignity upright, even in war-heated circumstances. Maybe we see them as heroes, but maybe they are normal people like we, needing some support to hold on. The more I hear and read about women in the Arab region, the more I believe that they are the people who seek peace like us, and who really need support now that their options are being squeezed down to a minimum. They are the ones that will take the lead in guiding the Arab countries through the transition. Their engagement is not limited to women's rights; it involves peace building, civil society activation and keeping social provisions function. Investing in their capacity to change the Arab world from within is worthwhile. For that reason, I couldn't wait to be invited to do a consultation to find out what they do and what they need. Maybe this would give me the opportunity to convince other people, younger more powerful than me, to joint efforts for a concerted effort to protect Women Human Rights Defenders in the Arab world against disruptive circumstances.

But then, of course, things became a bit more complicated. These women are not waiting for idealistic or paternalistic concepts of protection. Their connections with western actors are a risk in itself for them. There are so many risks that cannot be avoided and that they prefer to ignore some and keep going. And of course: they are resourceful enough to give priority to a good neighbour above a far friend.

I became stuck between – on one side – an avalanche of articles describing circumstances that victimize women and extensive manuals with lists of very shallow suggestions on what to do; and – on the other side – the humorous and unpredictable storytelling and anecdotes of strong women in the Arab world. I could see their love for beauty, feel their kindness, hear their laughter, and share their convictions and insecurity. None of this helped to make a logical and readable report. And yet, some insights keep coming up again and again from listening to what their leaders really envisage.

GUIDELINES ON SAFETY AND RISK ASSESSMENTS

The existing descriptions of the Human Rights situation in the Arab countries from before 2011 don't describe the challenges for WHRD's accurately or at all. They are primarily focussed on prison or life danger of individual human rights defenders, and on freedom of press. From documents from Latin America, we learned to analyse safety from a women's perspective, starting with what makes women feel safe. In Sudan the main official reason for arrest is "indecent clothing". In Egypt it is "spreading a bad image from our country". This affects especially young organisations, WHRD's with a tribal background, young activists (students) and artists – and this means that they can become rejected and isolated from recognized Human Rights organisations by a climate of distrust. Being discredited and isolated is exactly the greatest risk for WHRD's in the Arab countries.

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Sexual harassment and assault was the most discussed threat for the safety of Women Human Rights Defenders. This is a remarkable finding, as the consultation consistently avoided to portray women as victims or to stigmatize Arab women as obedient, oppressed subjects hidden behind a vail. Or even worse: portraying women primarily as sexual object or nothing more than that. But women feel very strongly about it, as it limits their freedom of movement. It affects not only them, but their next of kin and the community around them. Surprisingly, in both countries visited, the public harassment and rape of women also became an important subject of social and political concern; in that way it could even become an opportunity for change. But then, more serious attention has to be given to the issue in this context. Most "manuals" for protection treat sexual assault as incidents, but they are not. They are a weapon and we need to know much more on its precise and long term impact on destruction of the freedom activist. How is it build up from "mild" discrediting women in meetings for being a woman up to mass rape? How can it be stopped, how can its effect be nullified? Measures have to be learned to combat it openly and consistently.

WHRD's are not at war with men. It was remarkable that the relationship with the family including the husband (father, brother) was not mentioned in the interviews; it was tagged as a priority in the survey. We can assume that a husband would become protective if his wife engages in dangerous Human Rights activities. And then, what happens next? It is certainly a sensitive issue, and we know that it must be an essential element in the safety of the WHRD. It has to be taken seriously. Information, tools and initiatives to engage men in supporting and participating in and WHRD's activities are urgently needed in the Arab world.

Finally, WHRD's who need to live in exile are at risk. They need to regain their strength and organize their protection again in a new country. WHRD's from Yemen are kept in uncertainty now on their role and perspectives indefinitely.

GUIDELINES ON PROTECTION

There is too much protection spread over women and women's organisations in the Arab world. This protection takes the form of preventing women from moving around, learning and acting in public. To gain self-confidence and focus, women need to meet with each other, find joy in being how they really are and feel, stand up for themselves and become free from protective measures. A Women Human Rights Defender breaks with a paternalistic control system. She makes a choice for universal values and human dignity. That is her most important protection against insecurity and being discredited for being a woman.

To support Women Human Rights Defenders, their organisations have to be protected and strengthened. Their organizations will have to do serious thinking on making safety plans and taking safety measures. In the consultation, respondents came up with various measures for protection of their organisations that they use ad hoc: taking decisions on safety measures, avoiding confrontations, reacting to external attacks, following tips for cybersecurity, agreeing on a visibility and communication strategy, making provisions for shelter. They welcome initiatives to strategize these measures in a more consistent way, through dialogue with other organisations.

Most WHRD's don't trust national protection mechanisms like police and justice. They tend to be less transparent and effective due to conflict and social disruption. On the other hand, social change is not sustainable without change in social institutions. The international human rights documents remain guiding for their functioning. Women's organisations tend to communicate with officers and make use of these documents to present concrete cases and come with proposals for change in these institutions.

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GUIDELINES FOR INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT

The consultation shows that women in the Arab world are in a very volatile situation. Apart from being discriminated, harassed and assaulted, they have reason to fear political Islam as system that will introduce an effective apartheid system for them permanently. They are brave, organized and focussed to keep contact with international organisations, despite all the suspicions against it. Taking into account the high cost of possible social disruption and armed conflict in the Arab countries for the whole world, it would be a good investment for Europe and for the World to cherish a regular and fruitful relationship with Women Human Rights Defenders. After all, they are a well-informed resort for peace negotiations; they are the ones that really want social change to happen without bloodshed; they are keeping social tissue together day by day. It is not expensive or difficult to keep them alive and to strengthen their capacity. They do not need armies, tanks or bombs, but relatively simple, nonviolent and well informed support.

In the consultation, respondents say that international institutions are often built up like ivory towers; they cannot always help in concrete and urgent cases, they don't reach remote areas and their decisions are too slow. General provisions and complex documents and procedures are far away resorts, despite the internet. Women Human Rights Defenders complain that they are ignored by local officers of such institutions. They face hindrances when they apply for visa for a conference. Their financial situation doesn't allow much more than voluntary engagement. The direct and immediate influence of the international organisations for their protection is not guaranteed. They ask for a stronger presence of these organisations and personal contact through missions, representatives, meetings and scholarships and exchange programmes for WHRD's.

The responsibility to guarantee a safety net for women leaders and women's organisations should not be left only to nongovernmental organisations and ad hoc private initiatives with limited means. It has to be planned on a national and global scale, and resources have to be available for it. There are sufficient international resolutions and monitoring mechanisms, but they tend to be scattered and organized by sector. It is an opportunity for nongovernmental organisations to link various mechanisms and innovate a general policy for protection. Among the innovations required are new systems of financing long term alliances and to finance immediate urgent needs through local professional organisations and commercial arrangements.

One case is desperately waiting for innovation: the UN Security Council in Sudan is responsible for protection of internally displaced people in the Darfur region, but this has not prevented mass rape. The peace keeping forces are unable to protect the witnesses that would file complaints against the perpetrators. New mass rapes, hundreds each time, continue to be reported informally on a regular basis. Women Human Rights Organisations are losing their credibility as nothing happens. The only thing they manage to do is bring victims to the hospital, where the doctor will refuse to fill in the form for reporting rape, because it would cost him his life. This cannot be true: someone has to stand up, and no one can do that alone.

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ANNEX I SURVEY

Offline Questionnaire

Women have always been important actors in the promotion of democracy, human rights, and peace building. However, the role of women is rarely acknowledged. On the contrary, often they are criticized by their own family and in the public opinion for acting in the public sphere. Many of them act outside a professional or employment context and for that reason their integrity is easily questioned. They are sexually intimidated and harassed by men to silence them. They are told to put the interest of their family above the cause they defend.

Peace Brigades International has 30 years of experience with nonviolent protection of human rights defenders. We have knowledge about specific safety and protection issues for women. But we have little knowledge of specific conditions in the Arab world. With this survey we want to consult you about your opinion on your safety and protection as a human rights defender with the purpose to advise interested organisations that support women human rights defenders in the Arab world, on adequate safety policies.

HOW TO PARTICIPATE

If you can participate in our online survey (the best option!), please send an email to strongwomen@peacebrigades.nl, and you will get an online form to fill in.

If you prefer to fill it in offline, please, fill in the questionnaire on next pages, save it and send it to strongwomen@peacebrigades.nl.

The survey will be anonymous. We took precautions in the online version to make it impossible from our side to trace down who answered. Your email address will be deleted in our administration as soon as we send you the online version or when we receive your offline questionnaire.

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PROFILE

The term Human Rights Defender refers to different profiles, as for example:

- υ scholars on human rights and democracy
- υ lawyers defending human rights and women's rights
- υ women leaders in communities that resist discrimination, abuse and oppression
- υ lobbyists of women's rights organisations
- υ non-violent activists that unite in public manifestations for democracy, freedom and anti-corruption
- υ peace builders and mediators in tribal or ethnic conflict
- υ humanitarian peace builders during armed conflict or in post-conflict reconstruction

Q1. Would you call yourself a Human Rights Defender, Non-Violent Activist or/and Peace Builder? Please describe your profile in a few words.

Q2. Are you male or female?

| 7 | Male |
| 44 | Female |

Q3. In which country are you operating as a Human Rights Defender?
Egypt: 9 Sudan: 9 Jordan: 1 Yemen: 3 Morocco: 2 Iraq: 6 Syria: 3 Tunisia: 2 Palestine: 1 Libya: 1 Other/Non-MENA: 9

Q4. Would you consider yourself working on community, national/regional or international level?

24	Community level
37	National/Regional level
23	International level

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WOMEN'S PERSPECTIVE ON SAFETY

Julienne Lusenge from Congo defined safety in her situation:
"*For me, feeling safe means sleeping without having to worry, without thinking someone is going to come and break through the door when I'm working, without feeling intimidated or threatened; when I know I have enough resources to do my work and to fulfil the needs of the women we are working with; when I can eat and get treatment without too much hassle. I feel safe when I know that if anything happens to me, I can call for help and receive it quickly, I can be brought to a safe place with my family; safety means my family is protected, and I feel my colleagues and family are behind me. Safety means having health insurance. Safety also means having social protection, receiving recognition for our work, and there is awareness for our work.*" Quote from Barcia, Imaculada, Our Right To Safety, Women Human Rights Defenders' Holistic Approach to Protection, WHRDIC/ AWID, 2013

Q5. What is your own definition of being safe?
[open question, see results in the report, part 3, chapter 3.1]

Specific Risks for Women Human Rights Defenders
"*Women defenders challenge cultural norms and traditions, and confront stereotypes about femininity, sexual orientation and the role and status of women in society. For that reason they are persecuted and attacked for the work they do to promote peace, justice and social change. Like men, they are targeted in response to their work, but attacks on women are often gender-related, including through the use and threat of sexual violence, and verbal abuse and harassment deriving from discriminatory attitudes. The protection offered by police, military and justice is often not safe for women.*" Quote from Women Human Rigths Defenders, Empowering and Protecting the Change-Makers, PBI-UK section, 2012

Q6. We would like to know more about the specific risks for women that you are aware of as a Human Rights Defender. Please rate which situations are putting you at risk (the most) during your work on a scale from 1 (never experienced) to 3 (familiar with).

1	2	3	
10	11	8	Restrictions in the freedom of movement
13	9	9	Acting without the consent of your male companion
7	13	21	Acting and being seen in a public space
8	10	7	Being labelled as a feminist; demanding equal rights for women
11	14	12	Not being acknowledged/supported by a professional organisation
10	12	20	Breakdown of rule of law and indiscriminate violent attacks in the middle of an armed conflict
x	x	x	Other

VULNERABILITY

We call vulnerability the degree to which people are susceptible to threats and dangers. Vulnerability has to do with not being supported by your own family (your parents, brother, husband). It is sometimes related to location: a woman can be especially vulnerable in public places and safer in an office. Vulnerability can include lack of access to resources like a phone, safe ground transportation, or to proper locks on the doors of a house. Vulnerability is related to a lack of networks, shared responses and team work. It has to do with cultural expectations that are against your work. Vulnerability is also personal: risk awareness, fearlessness and proper safety planning. The opposite of vulnerability is resilience. Resilience can be built through training and safety planning to deal with threats and risks. It is the strength and active use of resources of a group or individual to achieve a reasonable degree of security. Quote from: Strong Women safe in Action, A comprehensive Guide on WHRD's Protection, PBI NL, 2015

Q7, Q8 What can you do to be less vulnerable? Fill in which actions you have been taking.

23	I take certain precautions for myself and my family
20	We do risk analysis and take safety measures in our organisation
23	We use our network and engage connections to protect ourselves
11	We work with non-violent guards accompanying us during actions
7	We secure protection from police during our actions and open court cases
24	We target at international visibility and rely on international reporting and diplomacy
	Other, please explain:

PERSONAL RESILIENCE

Self-care and self-defence contribute significantly to personal resilience. Empowerment means gradually achieving physical well-being, a balanced diet, adequate rest, enriching relationships, a balanced prioritization of our time, spiritual grounding and appropriate stress management. The projects we work on are only sustainable if they are congruent with our lives. The challenge is to explore the vital strengths that exist in each one of us, which are a result of our experiences, knowledge, ties, and personal resources. When these strengths become visible and acquire meaning and focus, they become the basis for self-care and self-defence, which are fundamental tools for our human rights work. Quote from CREA , Personal Safety and Security for Women Political Aspirants, A Training manual, 2012

Q9. Please describe your own personal resilience during your work.

MALE SUPPORT

Human Rights Defenders need the support of women. And Women Human Rights Defenders need the acceptance and support of men to be less vulnerable. Violent notions of masculinities are at the core of armed conflict and militarism, with a predominant focus on women as victims or 'add-ons'. We need to address the deeply patriarchal roots of conflict, such as the investments in the military industrial complex rather than in an inclusive labour market, with education and healthcare systems accessible to all. A gender-integrated uprising for peace, democracy and social justice can reclaim the importance of investing in conflict prevention, in nonviolent conflict resolution, in de-escalation of aggression and in re-allocation of excessive military expenditures to social development. From Women's Peace Makers Programme, Policy Brief 2014, Incorporating a Masculinities Perspective

Q11. Do you feel sufficiently accepted and supported by men?

	yes	sometimes	no
In your own family	34	5	1
Colleagues in your organisation	23	14	1
The police	3	9	20
Authorities	3	14	16
Media	12	7	15
Other:			

Q12. Should men feel interested and become stakeholders in the work you are doing? Please explain why.

PROTECTION STRATEGIES

Individuals and groups under threat use different ad hoc measures to deal with perceived risks. These measures vary widely, depending on the specific environment (rural versus urban); the type of threat; the social, financial, and legal resources available; etc. Most ad hoc mechanisms can be implemented immediately and reflect short term objectives; they therefore tend to function like tactical rather than global response strategies. The ad hoc mechanisms at the disposal of human rights defenders generally have few enforcement powers both legally speaking – secondary legislation – and practically, since these bodies lack the necessary resources and cannot generate the political power to ensure adequate protection for defenders. A strategic rather than tactical kind of security planning can be more effective. Quote From Strong Women safe in Action, A comprehensive Guide on WHRD's Protection, PBI NL, 2015; and Quintana, Maria Martin, Best Practices and Lessons Learnt, Protection International, 2012

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Q13. Indicate which strategies you are familiar with:

	yes	A bit	no
Making informed decisions on security (risk analysis)	27	3	3
Avoid confrontation or react to attacks with nonviolent resistance techniques	17	10	4
Draw a global organisational security plan with safety trainings	12	10	8
Communication and visibility strategies	18	9	3
Temporary safety shelters	8	6	13
Other, please explain:			

NATIONAL ACTORS

Religion as an example of support: When dominant powers use religion to maintain control and justify violence against others, the message of peace, present in every religion, is side-lined. Where conservative and fundamentalist views dominate the public discourse, progressive religious

interpretations are increasingly silenced. At the same time, it is the experience of WPP that many women activists find support in their religious beliefs and spirituality, which often sustain them to continue their challenging and dangerous work for peace and women's rights. Quote from Women Peacemakers Programme, policy brief on gender, religion and women's rights.

Q14. From which organisations or institutions in your country could you expect support and protection for Human Rights Defenders?

	yes	sometimes	no
Police	3	16	11
Government	6	15	12
Law Firms	17	9	7
NGO's and Associations	33	3	0
Religious Organisations	3	14	13
Media			
Other, please explain			

INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT

15/16. How would you expect international organisations could protect Women Human Rights Defenders in Arab countries? Please rate on a scale from 1 (not/less important) to 3 (more/very important).

	Not/less important		Very important
Visibility and communication	11	0	8
International presence in the field	10	7	5
Gender sensitive safety training	8	5	20
Resolutions and monitoring	7	11	5
Knowledge exchange	6	0	23

17. Do you have any experience with Dutch organisations? Please share your experience.

Thank you for cooperating with our survey. We would like to repeat again that this survey will be analysed anonymously.
If you want to know more, go to: www.peacebrigades.nl or see our Comprehensive Safety Guide in English and the Arabic at the site of www.VrouwenvoorVrede.nl

18. Would you like to share some more information or remarks and issues?

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