



THE OBSERVATORY
for the Protection of
Human Rights Defenders

Follow up from the 12th Inter-Mechanisms Meeting:

Securing the release of human rights defenders
arbitrarily detained





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Introduction

On 24 and 25 November 2025, the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (“the Observatory”), a partnership between the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) and the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) since 1997, convened the 12th edition of the Inter-Mechanism Meeting (IMM) in Brussels, Belgium. IMMs are regular meetings organised by the Observatory, gathering regional and international human rights defenders’ (HRDs) protection mechanisms, state representatives, EU officials, civil society, human rights practitioners and rights holders to facilitate results-oriented discussions on advancing protection for HRDs worldwide.

The topic of the 12th IMM was *Strengthening Collective Responses to the Arbitrary Detention of Human Rights Defenders*. During the two-day meeting, participants discussed, through case-based learning and direct engagement with survivors, what concrete actions can be taken individually and collectively to secure the release of HRDs arbitrarily detained.

The event drew on several cases from OMCT’s [#FacesofHope](#) campaign, bringing together individuals closely connected to HRDs arbitrarily detained – such as family members, lawyers and representatives of accompanying local organisations – with international human rights mechanisms, state representatives and EU officials.¹

This follow-up paper presents the results of the discussion held, offering a series of recommendations to all relevant stakeholders in order to achieve the release of HRDs arbitrarily detained. This is intended as a living document, which may be expanded or updated in the future as new best practices and recommendations are identified.

At the 12th IMM, participants committed to align efforts and take coordinated action for the release of HRDs arbitrarily detained.² The meeting culminated in a joint statement by international and regional human rights experts.³

1. Concrete cases from Belarus, Nicaragua, Togo and Tunisia were discussed. At the time of drafting this report, four HRDs who had been criminalised in connection with these cases have been released. Two of them have been detained for over five years. Such releases come following a long-standing commitment by various stakeholders to highlight the arbitrary nature of their detention and to pursue their release through advocacy, legal and diplomatic strategies, underscoring the need for a collective and multi-faceted approach to the issue of arbitrary detention of HRDs.

2. See OMCT Blog, *Strengthening the Collective Response to Human Rights Defenders’ Arbitrary Detention*. 17 December 2025.

At: <https://www.omct.org/en/resources/blog/-12imm-strengthening-collective-response-to-defenders-detention>

3. It is time to release all human rights defenders and end their prolonged detention. At: <https://www.omct.org/en/resources/statements/it-is-time-to-release-all-human-rights-defenders-and-end-their-prolonged-detention>

Background

The arbitrary detention of HRDs, also referred to as “censorship by detention”, is a growing state practice to obstruct the peaceful defence of human rights, limit civic activism and silence dissent. Arbitrary detention is often preceded or accompanied by other forms of violation against HRDs, including stigmatisation, smear campaigns and toxic political narratives about human rights activism, leading to restrictive legal and policy frameworks that enable criminalisation. Censorship by detention is particularly prominent in contexts characterised by a lack of judicial independence, but it also occurs in supposedly democratic countries. In recent years, criminalisation and arbitrary detention have consistently been reported as the greatest risk facing HRDs worldwide. Since December 2024, the SOS-Defenders platform, created under the auspices of the Observatory, is collecting cases of HRDs arbitrarily detained with the objective of quantifying the phenomenon on a global scale and coordinating joint action among civil society organisations (CSOs) and other partners for their liberation.⁴ Since 1997, the Observatory has also routinely published urgent alerts on instances of harassment against HRDs and CSOs, including on HRDs in and at risk of arbitrary detention. All the alerts are published on the website of the Observatory,⁵ as well as on the respective websites of FIDH and OMCT. Such alerts are sent out to institutional mechanisms, influential stakeholders and anyone interested in mobilising on the topic.⁶

Arbitrary detention does not only affect the HRDs who suffer it, but also has secondary effects on their families, communities, fellow HRDs, movements and organisations, and the wider society. Families are often deprived of an essential source of livelihood and face substantial expenses for legal defence, family visits and the sustenance of their detained relatives. Fellow HRDs, as well as anyone who wants to engage in civic participation, are intimidated and discouraged from continuing their work through the fostering of a climate of fear. Potential or young HRDs are demoralised to engage in activism and to sustain those struggles. Communities lose their advocates and become more vulnerable to abuse. As such, censorship by detention raises the cost of defending human rights, hinders accountability and facilitates further human rights violations. When HRDs are detained, society as a whole loses out.

Over the decades, repressive governments have used all sorts of tools to arbitrarily detain HRDs, from the misuse of anti-terrorism and national security laws to the adoption of new, particularly restrictive laws that effectively criminalise the legitimate defence of human rights, the abusive use of preventive detention, the staging of sham trials, and detentions that fall outside any legal framework without even the slightest attempt to justify them. As the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders clearly put it in her 2021 report, states detain HRDs “because they want to, and because they can”.⁷ Because the work of HRDs acts as a barrier against those who wish to operate outside the rule of law, reminding them of the obligations that states have under human rights law.

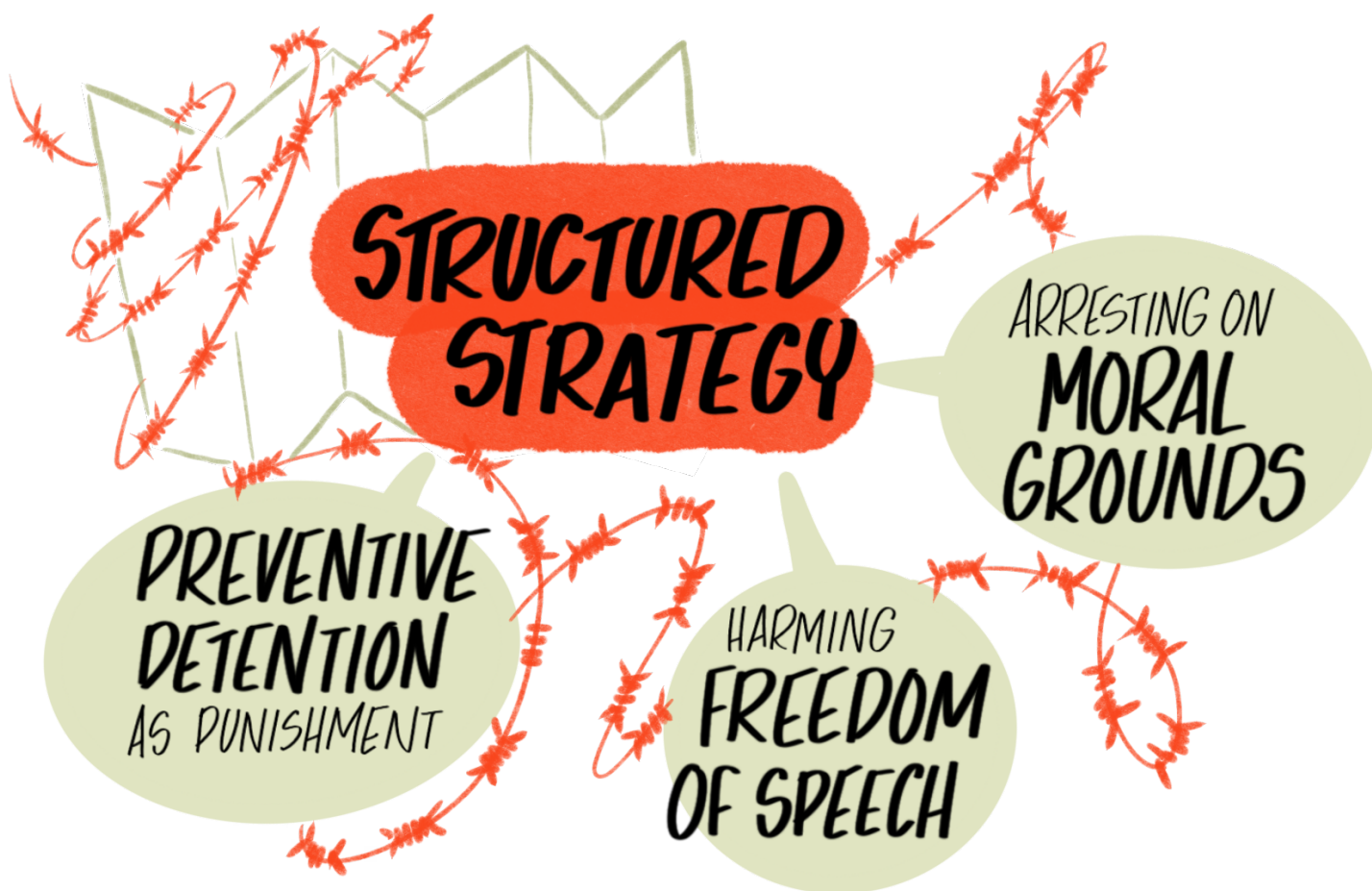
Some HRDs are detained for only a few hours or days. Others remain detained, even without any conviction, for prolonged periods of months or years, sometimes exceeding a decade. While detained, HRDs are at heightened risk of ill-treatment and torture, used as a disciplinary tool to further silence them. HRDs are often subjected to harsh detention regimes, such as incommunicado detention, detention in maximum security prisons or in facilities far from their place of residence that further separate them from their families and loved ones. Authorities retaliate by denying them access to communication, psychosocial and medical care, and sometimes even water and food. When dealing with HRDs, repressive governments not only use detention as punishment, they also apply punishment in detention.

4. The SOS-Defenders platform is available at: <https://sos-defenders.org/en/>

5. At: www.observatoryfordefenders.org

6. Interested stakeholders can sign up to the Observatory mailing list at: <https://landing.mailerlite.com/webforms/landing/h1i6e7>

7. *States in denial: the long-term detention of human rights defenders*, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Mary Lawlor, A/143/76, paragraph 23. At: <https://docs.un.org/en/A/143/76>



Intersectionality

Censorship by detention often occurs within a broader context of discrimination, where HRDs are detained not only for what they do but also for who they are or are perceived to be. Unequal power relations based on grounds such as sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC), ethnic origin or religion shape both the risks that HRDs face and the forms of violence used against them. Women HRDs (WHRDs), LGBTQIA+ defenders, indigenous leaders or defenders of religious minorities are often targeted in gendered and identity-based ways.

The intersection between human rights defence and the identity of HRDs increases their vulnerability. WHRDs, for example, are regularly targeted with gender-specific smear campaigns that portray them as “immoral”, “disobedient”, or as “bad” mothers, wives or daughters who threaten social harmony founded on patriarchal family structures. LGBTQIA+ defenders are depicted as “promiscuous”, “disease carriers” or a “threat” to the natural development of children based on concepts of heteronormativity and binarism. Similarly, the harassment of racialised and indigenous defenders is often enabled by the historical, colonial and racist marginalisation of these communities. Minority rights defenders are stigmatised through processes of othering, which characterise their identity as different and further isolate them from the majority of society.

Intersectionality also shapes the treatment that HRDs receive in detention. Women and LGBTQIA+ defenders are often victims of sexual harassment or threatened with sexual abuse. WHRDs are deprived of menstrual products and adequate reproductive and sexual health services. Trans defenders may face denial of gender-affirming healthcare, be placed in detention facilities that do not correspond to their gender identity and be subjected to degrading searches and abuse. Racialised defenders are often subjected to discriminatory treatment both prior to and during detention, including racial profiling, racialised verbal abuse, and disproportionate use of force during arrest and detention, reflecting broader patterns of structural racism within criminal justice systems.

Indigenous and minority rights defenders are often denied culturally or religiously appropriate food and services, and may be refused interpretation or accompaniment in their own languages during judicial proceedings. Parent HRDs are frequently denied family visits, disrupting essential care relations between them, their children and dependants. In many cases, authorities also deliberately detain HRDs far from their home communities, making it extremely difficult and costly for families and lawyers to visit them. For indigenous defenders in particular, this distance severs them from vital cultural, social and linguistic relations.

In this sense, censorship by detention reflects and exacerbates pre-existing forms of structural violence, discrimination and marginalisation.

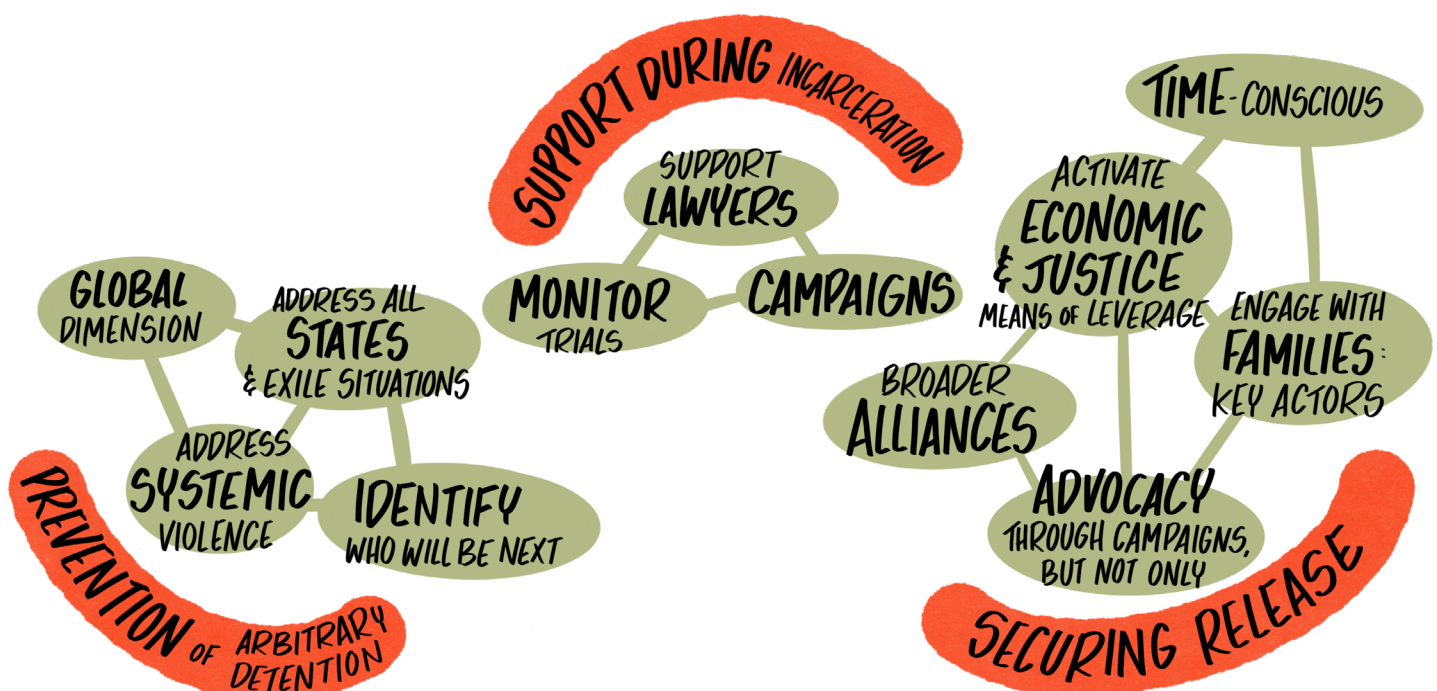
Collective strategy and recommendations

Censorship by detention persists because repressive governments perceive it as a relatively “cheap” tactic that is highly effective in hindering the action of HRDs. Far too often, in fact, perpetrators are not held accountable and governments get away with it. International responses are fragmented, accountability mechanisms are slow or weak, and societies increasingly normalise repression in a global context of erosion of the rule of law and shrinking civic space. As long as the costs of censorship by detention remain low and its benefits high, repressive governments will continue to use it to limit civic activism and silence dissent.

The discussions held during the 12th IMM made it clear that no single actor can, on their own, secure the release of HRDs arbitrarily detained. With many states disengaging from human rights commitments and adopting increasingly authoritarian practices in the name of national security, countering censorship by detention requires a coordinated and sustained collective strategy. Pressure at all levels – from international mechanisms and organisations, other governments, civil society and the families of HRDs, among others – is necessary to strip away the façade of national security and make censorship by detention an unaffordable liability for governments.

Documentation and visibility are the primary tools to raise awareness of censorship by detention and generate solidarity for HRDs arbitrarily detained. In the current context, however, they may not be sufficient in shifting the cost-benefit analysis of repressive governments. They must be complemented by instruments that give appropriate legal weight to the arbitrary nature of this practice, by political and economic pressure capable of influencing the behaviour of perpetrators, and by adequate resources to ensure the survival and resilience of CSOs and HRDs. If the arbitrary detention of HRDs is met with a coordinated, multi-stakeholder global response, we can move beyond reactive efforts and implement proactive deterrence that will soon make this practice a thing of the past.

Civil society, human rights protection mechanisms, governments, international organisations and donors all have a role to play to raise the cost of censorship by detention and secure the release of HRDs arbitrarily detained. In some cases, this role may be performed individually due to the specific mandate of each actor. In other cases, joint action can be taken. Below is a more detailed list of recommendations on how each actor can contribute to this collective effort.



Civil society

- **Document:**

- o Document cases of arbitrary detention of HRDs, through initiatives such as the Observatory and SOS-Defenders, to bring visibility to the phenomenon and track and quantify trends in repression.

- **Advocate, campaign and mobilise:**

- o Expose censorship by detention and denounce states that use it to silence HRDs and obstruct human rights work.
- o Tell the true story of HRDs arbitrarily detained, highlight the positive impact of their work on the communities they represent and denounce the violations they suffer.
- o Mobilise public opinion for the release of HRDs arbitrarily detained.

- **Support families:**

- o Stand alongside families who denounce the arbitrary detention of their relatives and may suffer reprisals for doing so.
- o Expand family-centred advocacy by systematically engaging, with their consent, family members in campaigns and advocacy initiatives for the release of HRDs arbitrarily detained.

- **Support human rights mechanisms:**

- o Routinely submit information regarding the arbitrary detention of HRDs, so that human rights mechanisms can be aware of it and take appropriate action.
- o When states refuse or deliberately delay issuing invitations to allow mandate holders to conduct visits, invite them as experts to enable mandate holders to visit countries and obtain first-hand information about the arbitrary detention of HRDs.

Human rights mechanisms

- **Coordinate:**

- o Issue joint communications in cases where the arbitrary detention of HRDs relates to the mandate of several mechanisms and mandate holders.
- o Take coordinated action between the UN and regional mechanisms to exert more effective pressure on states practicing censorship by detention.

- **Engage locally:**

- o Carry out country visits, when these fall within the scope of your mandate. Meet HRDs and local civil society to gain a better understanding of the situation on the ground and give visibility to their advocacy.
- o Coordinate with other HRDs' mandate holders before and after country visits, to follow-up on each other's country recommendations.
- o Encourage other stakeholders, such as human rights ambassadors, to conduct country visits.
- o Denounce states' refusal or delays in issuing invitations for country visits.



- **Be consistent:**

- o Strengthen a human rights-based policy at the domestic level to avoid conveying the impression of applying double standards. Refrain from criminalising HRDs at home while calling for the release of those arbitrarily detained abroad.
- o Adopt and implement human rights-based foreign policies.

- **Build networks:**

- o Appoint human rights ambassadors and facilitate regular engagement and exchange among them, strengthening relationships so that urgent action can be mobilised quickly in cases of arbitrary detention of HRDs.
- o Participate in multi-stakeholder initiatives aimed at securing the release of HRDs, such as those undertaken in partnership with civil society and human rights mechanisms.

- **Take diplomatic action:**

- o Use quiet diplomacy, political negotiations, bilateral and multilateral talks to raise cases of HRDs arbitrarily detained and demand their release.
- o When HRDs have dual nationality, negotiate extradition to the other country of nationality in lieu of imprisonment.
- o Exercise diplomatic pressure for countries to issue invitations to mandate holders to carry out country visits.

- **Protect the international human rights architecture:**

- o Support the existing human rights mechanisms and civil society organisations, including financially through international development aid, to counter the erosion of the rule of law and make them more effective for the release of HRDs arbitrarily detained.

INTERNATIONAL
SUPPORT & DIPLOMACY



FOCUS ON
VULNERABLE
GROUPS

States and international organisations

- **Stand firm in the face of growing authoritarianism:**
 - o Reiterate the importance of political commitment to human rights and the rule of law during a time of widespread disengagement.
 - o Adopt resolutions and statements condemning censorship by detention and demanding the release of HRDs arbitrarily detained.
- **Use political and economic leverage:**
 - o Leverage countries' geopolitical interests to create opportunities for dialogue regarding the release of HRDs arbitrarily detained.
 - o Require the inclusion in political and economic agreements of human rights clauses together with enforcement measures in case of violation.
 - o Stop providing political and financial support and cooperation to states that practice censorship by detention.
 - o Apply targeted and segmented sanctions (such as individual sanctions, travel bans, assets freezes) against government officials responsible for the arbitrary detention of HRDs. Refrain from adopting broad sanctions that harm entire populations, and ultimately local civil society and HRDs.

Donors

- **Do not back down:**
 - o Continue supporting local civil society to preserve civic space and empower action for the release of HRDs arbitrarily detained.
- **Adapt:**
 - o In contexts of closed civic space, support HRDs and CSOs in exile so that they can safely continue their human rights work and keep advocating for the release of HRDs arbitrarily detained in the country.

Multi-stakeholder – what we can do together

- **Give recognition:**

- o Name the names of HRDs arbitrarily detained, making sure that they are recognised as HRDs according to the international definition, from which specific rights and guarantees derive.
- o Acknowledge intersectionality when HRDs are arbitrarily detained not only for what they do but also for who they are or are perceived to be.
- o Promote awards, publications and high-visibility recognition of HRDs to strengthen the legitimacy of their role and increase public support for their release.

- **Expose:**

- o Conduct public outreach to counter toxic narratives on the work of HRDs and increase public support for the release of those arbitrarily detained.
- o Engage with independent journalists who can tell the true story of HRDs and report on the retaliatory and arbitrary nature of their detention.
- o Use social media to denounce states that practice censorship by detention, giving visibility to HRDs arbitrarily detained and inflicting reputational damage to the perpetrators.

- **Advocate:**

- o Raise the cases of HRDs arbitrarily detained in relevant international fora and call for their release.

- **Be present where it matters most:**

- o Engage in formal and informal events, forums, gatherings, consultations and meetings with HRDs whenever possible in order to hear directly from them, express solidarity and build lasting partnerships.
- o Monitor trials against HRDs and denounce violations of fair trial standards.
- o Visit HRDs in detention and denounce situations of torture and ill-treatment.
- o Engage with families and local networks to support the demand for the release of HRDs arbitrarily detained.

- **Make good use of available legal and quasi-legal tools:**

- o Submit individual complaints to the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD), so that the WGAD can render an opinion on the arbitrary nature of the deprivation of liberty of HRDs.
- o Request the granting of protective measures offered by regional mechanisms, such as the precautionary measures granted by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) and the provisional measures adopted by the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (AfCHPR).⁸

- **Strengthen coordination and collaboration:**

- o Participate in and support collective initiatives aimed at documenting cases of HRDs arbitrarily detained and advocating for their release, such as SOS-Defenders.
- o Build spaces for exchange and feedback, such as IMMs, meet regularly, assess active cases and coordinate who does what in each case.

8. Although these measures are not specifically designed to secure the release of HRDs arbitrarily detained, they have often proved useful in improving their conditions of detention and preventing further harm.

- o Create multi-stakeholder rapid response mechanisms able to mobilise legal, media and diplomatic support in the hours immediately following the arrest of HRDs in order to put pressure on local authorities.
- o Synchronise multi-stakeholder messaging by coordinating public statements and media interventions and promoting targeted coverage at crucial moments, such as before hearings or in case of deterioration of health conditions in detention.
- o Conduct outreach towards actors that are not traditionally involved in the protection of HRDs, such as companies and financial institutions, to encourage them to incorporate human rights considerations into their decision-making and thereby increase pressure on local authorities.

**NEVER
FORGET
DEFENDERS'
NAMES**

**& ALSO NAME
PERPETRATORS**

The need for context-sensitive application

While all the above actions may be useful in securing the release of HRDs arbitrarily detained, their feasibility and effectiveness are also influenced by local contexts and the individual situation of HRDs, particularly with regard to the state of civic space in each country and the length of the arbitrary detention to which the HRD is subjected. Participants in the 12th IMM underscored the importance of taking these factors into account and adapting the implementation of the recommendations accordingly.

The state of civic space in the country

In contexts where civic space is restricted or even closed, some actions may not be feasible or they may irritate authorities and thus aggravate the situation of HRDs. It is therefore important to select the tools to be used in accordance with the state of civic space in each country.

In countries with open civic space, action can primarily rely on local civil society to conduct national advocacy, monitor trials and obtain the support of independent media in exposing the arbitrary detention of HRDs. At the same time, public diplomacy efforts, statements by human rights mechanisms and international organisations, awards and recognitions are more likely to succeed in stimulating a public debate that exerts pressure on local authorities.

In contexts where civic space is restricted, local civil society may suffer retaliation for engaging in public advocacy and may be prevented from accessing courts to monitor trials. In these cases, it could continue to document arbitrary detentions of HRDs, while relying on international actors to carry out advocacy, observe trials and take diplomatic action towards local authorities.

In countries with closed civic space, where civil society cannot operate safely and independent media are suppressed, efforts to secure the release of HRDs arbitrarily detained primarily rely on external leverage. The adoption of targeted sanctions, combined with international advocacy and diplomatic pressure, can raise the cost of censorship by detention and discourage governments from continuing to use it.

Short-term vs. longer-term detention

Equally important is to tailor action according to the length of the arbitrary detention to which HRDs are subjected. Distinguishing between short and longer-term detention is not merely a matter of duration, but of purpose, structure and impact.

Short-term detention – which in the most minor cases may last only a few hours or days – is primarily a tool of intimidation, designed to disrupt activism and signal state power. It is often used to break up protests and public assemblies. In several cases, defenders are released without formal charges or prosecution. The goal is to intimidate HRDs, deterring them from pursuing their activities, but without generating the international outcry that can result from longer-term detention.

On the contrary, medium and long-term detention – the latter intended as detention lasting at least ten years⁹ – serve a different purpose. They are not an episodic tactic but a structural instrument designed to dismantle civil society, crush hope, and inflict lasting psychological and physical harm on HRDs. It is in such cases that governments deploy their arsenal of repressive laws, vague provisions and violations of fair trial standards, as well as smear campaigns portraying HRDs as criminals to legitimise their detention to public opinion.

9. See *States in denial: the long-term detention of human rights defenders*, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Mary Lawlor, A/143/76, paragraph 47. At: <https://docs.un.org/en/A/143/76>.

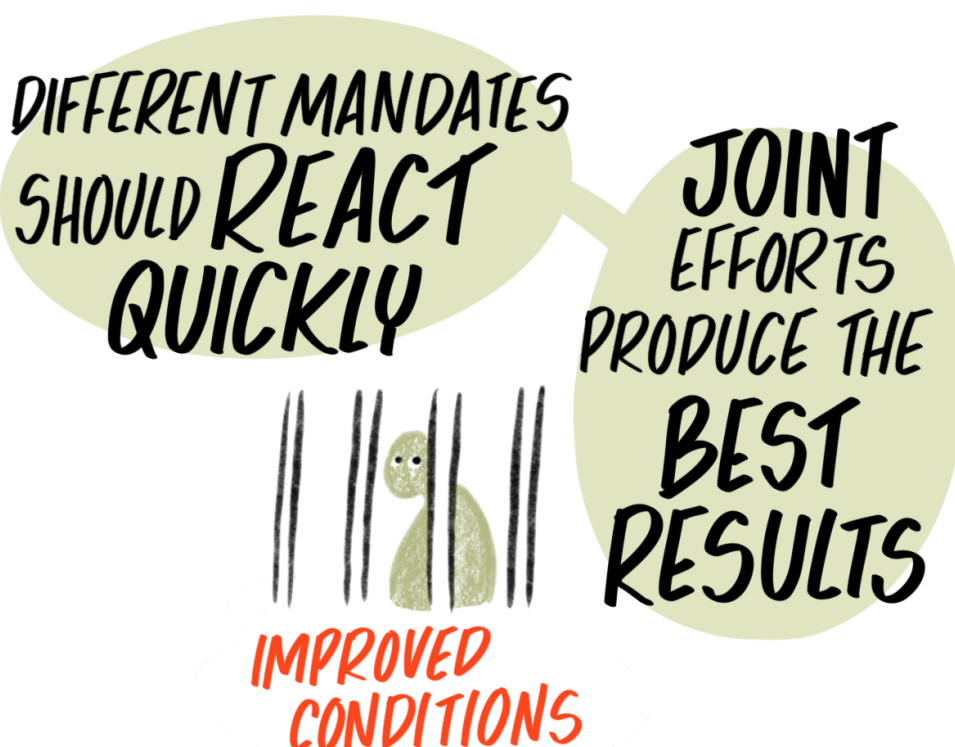
Longer-term detention often targets the most prominent HRDs, those able to lead and inspire entire movements. This decapitates movements, weakens the institutional memory of civil society and sends a clear message to other HRDs: if the most prominent and visible among them can be arrested and detained for years, the same can happen to all the others. Defending human rights comes at a very high cost, and repression starts to be normalised. As such, longer-term detention not only targets individual HRDs but also undermines civil society as a whole.

Cases of short-term detention usually receive good media coverage due to the event of the arrest itself, which inevitably generates an interest and triggers reactions. When coordinated pressure is exercised swiftly, responsible authorities may conclude that continued detention carries higher costs than release. In such cases, rapid, multi-stakeholder response can contribute to securing the release of the HRD.

On the contrary, cases of longer-term detention present a more complex advocacy challenge as attention tends to fade over time. In the absence of new developments, attention shifts to other events and HRDs end up being forgotten. This makes it less costly for the government to continue their detention and exposes HRDs to further abuse. The challenge in cases of longer-term detention is thus to maintain attention over time, especially when legal avenues have been exhausted and the judgment is final.

When dealing with longer-term detention, action must be structured around sustainability. It is particularly in these cases that building networks and coalitions can be helpful, so that each actor can push forward with the action when another has limited capacity or starts to experience fatigue. Equally important is supporting families, who may be exhausted both financially and psychologically, and preserving the narrative about the legitimacy of HRDs' work, in order to prevent smear campaigns from being successful. Experience shows that even in cases of longer-term detention, sustained and coordinated pressure can yield results, including sentence reductions or presidential pardons. Although such outcomes may not guarantee full justice, as they do not recognise the arbitrariness of the detention or provide compensation to HRDs, they nevertheless achieve the fundamental objective of freeing them and allowing HRDs to return to their communities.

Ultimately, the distinction between short-term and longer-term detention underscores the need for tailored action. Short-term detention requires rapid mobilisation, such as immediate calls by civil society organisations, regional and international human rights mechanisms and diplomats, to prevent it from becoming protracted and entrenched. Longer-term detention requires strategic planning, sustainability and solidarity to prevent abandonment. In both cases, coordinated collective action remains essential. Every HRD arbitrarily detained deserves our utmost commitment to secure their release; no case should be considered hopeless.



Post-detention support

Securing the release of HRDs arbitrarily detained is crucial in order to return them to their communities. However, sometimes criminalisation does not end with release. Some HRDs are released temporarily, while charges against them remain pending and they can be re-arrested at any time. In such cases, it is important to continue denouncing their judicial harassment, to provide legal support and to demand that the charges be dropped entirely.

HRDs who have experienced arbitrary detention often emerge with both physical and emotional wounds that require medical and psychosocial support after release. The very fact of having been detained, especially when accompanied by smear campaigns, can lead to stigmatisation and damage their reputation, making it difficult for HRDs to access employment and causing their economic and social marginalisation. Probation measures, the freezing of bank accounts or travel bans can have an equally significant impact on the ability of released HRDs to earn a living. For others, the context remains unsafe after release and they may need protection measures against harassment and surveillance – up to relocation to another region or country, when it is no longer possible to continue living and working safely in their place of origin.

Although release is essential to enable HRDs to rebuild their lives, it does not mark the end of the journey. Continued support is needed to ensure their full rehabilitation and reintegration into society, so that they can continue to defend human rights safely and contribute to a fair, democratic and sustainable development in which no one is left behind.

Establishing the facts

Investigative and trial observation missions - Through activities ranging from sending trial observers to organising international investigative missions, FIDH has developed rigorous and impartial procedures to establish facts and responsibility.

Experts sent to the field give their time to FIDH on a voluntary basis.

FIDH has conducted more than 1,500 missions in over 100 countries in the past 25 years. These activities reinforce FIDH's alert and advocacy campaigns.

Supporting civil society

Training and exchanges - FIDH organises numerous activities in partnership with its member organisations, in the countries in which they are based. The core aim is to strengthen the influence and capacity of human rights activists to boost changes at the local level.

Mobilising the international community

Permanent lobbying before intergovernmental bodies - FIDH supports its member organisations and local partners in their efforts before intergovernmental organisations. FIDH alerts international bodies to violations of human rights and refers individual cases to them.

FIDH also takes part in the development of international legal instruments.

Informing and reporting

Mobilising public opinion - FIDH informs and mobilises public opinion. Press releases, press conferences, open letters to authorities, mission reports, urgent appeals, petitions, campaigns, website... FIDH makes full use of all means of communication to raise awareness of human rights violations.

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Created in 1985, the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) works for, with and through an international coalition of over 200 non-governmental organisations - the SOS -Torture Network - fighting torture, summary executions, enforced disappearances, arbitrary detentions, and all other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment in the world and fighting for the protection of human rights defenders.

Assisting and supporting victims

OMCT supports victims of torture to obtain justice and reparation, including rehabilitation. This support takes the form of legal, medical and social emergency assistance, submitting complaints to regional and international human rights mechanisms and urgent interventions. OMCT pays particular attention to certain categories of victims, such as women and children.

Preventing torture and fighting against impunity

Together with its local partners, OMCT advocates for the effective implementation, on the ground, of international standards against torture. OMCT is also working for the optimal use of international human rights mechanisms, in particular the United Nations Committee Against Torture, so that it can become more effective.

Protecting human rights defenders

Often those who defend human rights and fight against torture are threatened. That is why OMCT places their protection at the heart of its mission, through alerts, activities of prevention, advocacy and awareness raising as well as direct support.

Accompanying and strengthening organisations in the field

OMCT provides its members with the tools and services that enable them to carry out their work and strengthen their capacity and effectiveness in the fight against torture. OMCT presence in Tunisia is part of its commitment to supporting civil society in the process of transition to the rule of law and respect for the absolute prohibition of torture.

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Activities of the Observatory

The Observatory is an action programme based on the belief that strengthened cooperation and solidarity among human rights defenders and their organisations will contribute to break the isolation they are faced with. It is also based on the absolute necessity to establish a systematic response from NGOs and the international community to the repression of which defenders are victims.

With this aim, the Observatory seeks to establish:

- > A mechanism of systematic alert of the international community on cases of harassment and repression of defenders of human rights and fundamental freedoms, particularly when they require urgent intervention;
- > The observation of judicial proceedings, and whenever necessary, direct legal assistance;
- > International missions of investigation and solidarity;
- > A personalised assistance as concrete as possible, including material support, with the aim of ensuring the security of the defenders victims of serious violations;
- > The preparation, publication and world-wide dissemination of reports on violations of the rights and freedoms of individuals or organisations working for human rights around the world;
- > Sustained action with the United Nations and more particularly the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, and when necessary with geographic and thematic Special Rapporteurs and Working Groups;
- > Sustained lobbying with various regional and international intergovernmental institutions, especially the Organisation of American States (OAS), the African Union (AU), the European Union (EU), the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the Council of Europe, the International Organisation of the Francophonie (OIF), the Commonwealth, the League of Arab States, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

The Observatory's activities are based on consultation and co-operation with national, regional, and international non-governmental organisations.

With efficiency as its primary objective, the Observatory has adopted flexible criteria to examine the admissibility of cases that are communicated to it, based on the "operational definition" of human rights defenders adopted by FIDH and OMCT: "Each person victim or at risk of being the victim of reprisals, harassment or violations, due to his or her commitment, exercised individually or in association with others, in conformity with international instruments of protection of human rights, to the promotion and realisation of the rights recognised by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and guaranteed by the different international instruments".

To ensure its activities of alert and mobilisation, the Observatory has established a system of communication devoted to defenders in danger.

This system, called Emergency Line, can be reached through:

E-MAIL: alert@observatoryfordefenders.org

FIDH TEL: + 33 1 43 55 25 18

OMCT TEL: + 41 22 809 49 39



More matchings