

WOMEN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN AFRICA

RESOLUTION

Considering the specific threats and attacks faced by African Women Human Rights Defenders in their daily activities against the backdrop of increasing religious fundamentalism as well as the security climate in the fight against terrorism;

Further considering that women are still victims of the constraints of culture, traditions and the patriarchal structure of the society which confine them to a limited role and stigmatize them in their daily activities;

Further concerned by the use by State and ever increasing non state actors of repressive methods aimed specifically at Women Human Rights Defenders and by the condition of Women Human Rights Defenders in situations of armed conflict who are particularly exposed to physical, moral and sexual violence that are used by certain aggressors as weapons of war.

Noting the negative perception against Women Human Rights Defenders whose increasing numbers have accentuated fears about any change in the status quo giving rise to accusations that they are promoting western values;

Aware of the need for sensitization and training of Women Defenders in all areas related to their protection and the promotion of their work, particularly the sensitisation of their immediate environment, through the incorporation of instruments for their protection into domestic laws and their access to the media and other means of communication;

Recognising the dire need for Women Human Rights Defenders and their organisations to formulate measures and strategies to strengthen their organisations in areas of training, resources and capacity building especially in monitoring and documenting Human Rights violations;

Decide to strengthen Women Human Rights Defenders by building networks for their support at the national, regional and international levels as a mechanism for their protection as well as a platform to interface with the Special Rapporteur of the African Commission on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR) and the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for human rights defenders.

With a view to more effectively protecting African women human rights defenders, the participants recommend:

To the African Commission on Human and People's Rights to urge its Member States of:

- Strive to end all forms of repression against human rights defenders, particularly women defenders, and guarantee their physical and moral integrity in all aspects of their work;
- Put in place mechanisms designed to ensure full compliance with the provisions of the 1998 Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, the additional Protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of Women and all the regional and international human rights instruments, and to also ratify these instruments, for those states that have not yet done so, as well as ensure their incorporation into domestic laws;
- Extend an open invitation to the Special Rapporteur and the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for human rights defenders to visit their

countries in order to assess the situation of human rights defenders, particularly women defenders;

- Unanimously ratify the Additional Protocol establishing the African Court on Human and People's Rights and adopt a declaration regarding article 34.6 allowing NGOs, individuals and particularly women human rights defenders to directly engage the Court;

To the African Commission on Human and People's Rights to:

- Renew the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders and provide the office with adequate resources to efficiently discharge its mandate;
- Strengthen cooperation between Mme Hina Jilani, UN Special Representative on human rights defenders, with the other intergovernmental mechanisms for the protection of human rights defenders and with the Special Rapporteur on women;

Done in Dakar on 19 November 2004.