

## **CEDAW | Promote and protect the rights of women human rights defenders**

30.10.2020

**In a collective civil society statement presented at the 77<sup>th</sup> session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) - held online, ISHR and partners called on the Committee to ensure that women human rights defenders remain central.**



The contribution of ISHR and partners\* to the [collective NGO statement](#) emphasised the way the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated systems of oppression and thereby increased threats and attacks faced by women human rights defenders, and called on CEDAW to ensure its critical voice remains part of global concerns regarding the situation of women human rights defenders.

This contribution on women human rights defenders is set out below:

*In addition to threats and attacks facing all defenders, WHRDs are exposed to specific risks and challenges, driven by structural inequity related to gender and sexuality. Those working on sexual and reproductive health and rights, denouncing actions of extractive industries, and facing multiple forms of discrimination face heightened threats and attacks from both state and non-state actors, sometimes from within their communities.*

*The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated systems of oppression and racism. We have witnessed increased threats and attacks against WHRDs, including domestic violence, physical attacks and killings, increased online harassment, and derogatory and stigmatizing language. WHRDs have lost their livelihoods, access to health services have reduced and been excluded from participating in pandemic responses. Opportunism and politicization of the pandemic have exacerbated violent conflicts and risks faced by WHRDs working in and on conflict to build peace. Action to address the pandemic must be comprehensive and systemic, applying a feminist, rights-based, intersectional lens.*

*We welcome WHRD references by CEDAW in various concluding observations and general recommendations. Despite these significant developments, we urge CEDAW to continue action to promote and protect WHRDs' rights and add its critical voice to the growing consensus of concern regarding the situation of WHRDs.*

The full collective civil society statement [is available here](#) and can be [watched here](#).

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Photo: Screenshot from UN WebTV

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