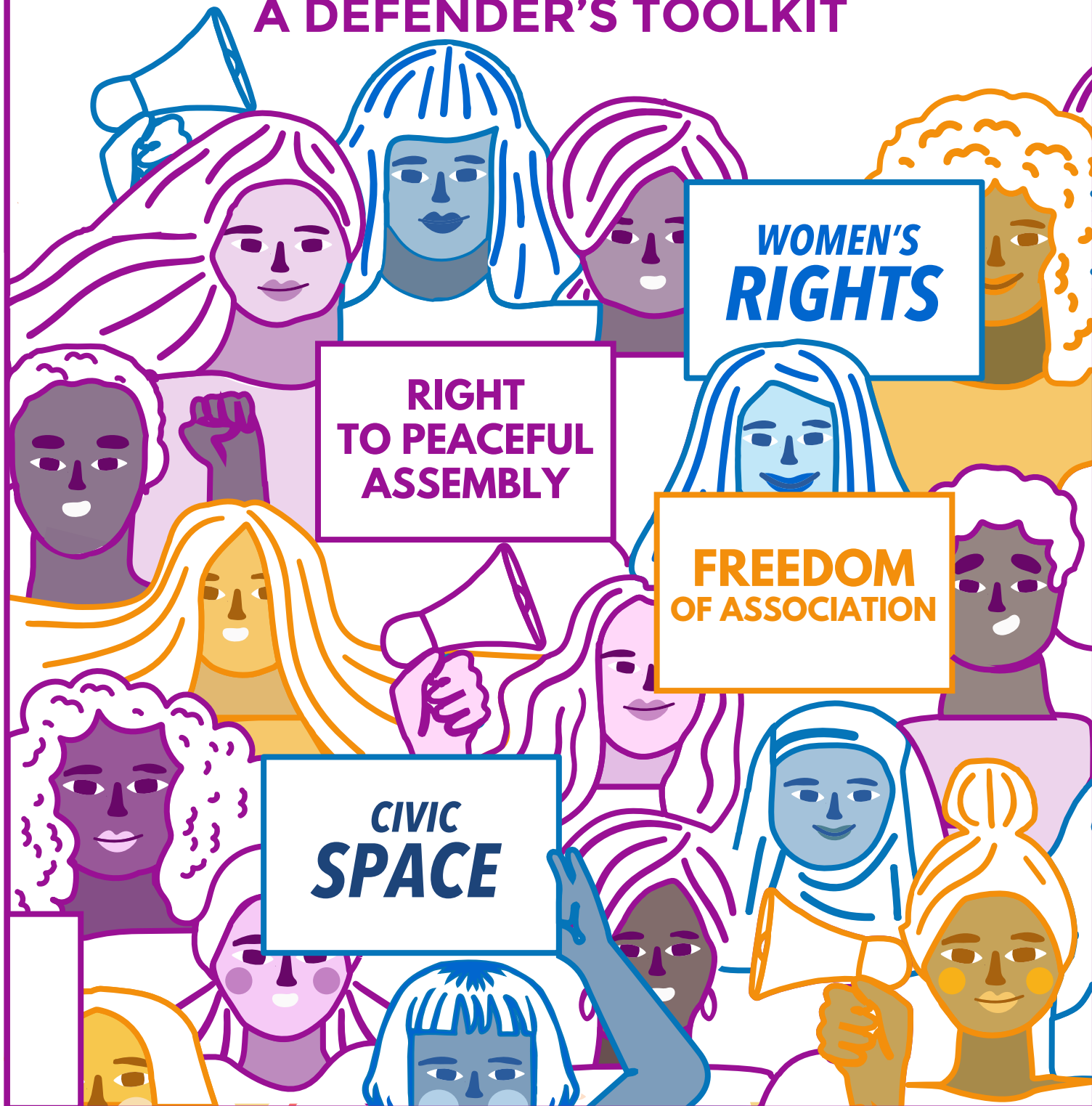


THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND GIRLS TO PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY AND ASSOCIATION

A DEFENDER'S TOOLKIT





Clément Nyaletsossi VOULE

Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association

Clément Nyaletsossi Voule was appointed as United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association and took up his functions in April 2018.

Mr. Voule is a jurist and human rights defender with over 30 years of experience promoting human rights in Africa and across the world. He was an Expert Member of the Working Group on Extractive Industries, Environment and Human Rights Violations of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights from 2011 to 2020. He also is a research fellow at the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights.

Prior to his appointment, he was Advocacy Director for Africa at the International Service for Human Rights (ISHR), where he also led ISHR's program to support human rights defenders working in States in transition. He served as Secretary-general of Amnesty International Togo (2000 – 2006). He is also a founding member of the West African Human Rights Defenders Network.

Over the years, he has advised a number of international, regional and national entities on human rights issues. Most notably, he has extensive experience engaging with the UN and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) to strengthen their work protecting human rights defenders and fundamental freedoms.

Mr. Voule has a Law degree from the University of Benin, Togo. He holds a master's degree in Fundamental Rights from Nantes University in France, and a master's Diploma in International Law in Armed Conflict from the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies at the University of Geneva in Switzerland.



The United Nations Special Rapporteur, Clément N. Voule, presents this toolkit to support civil society efforts to advocate for women's full enjoyment of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association. The toolkit serves as a practical companion to Special Rapporteur Voule's 2020 report to the United Nations General Assembly, "[Celebrating Women in Activism and Civil Society](#)", which calls on States, business enterprises, international organizations, civil society actors and the donor community to accelerate efforts to ensure women in all their diversity can fully and equally exercise their fundamental freedoms.

The toolkit is the first resource of its kind, intended for use by women human rights defenders and their allies at the grassroots, national, and regional level. It provides an overview of the obligations of States and business enterprises to respect, protect, and fulfil the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association for all women and girls and includes examples of violations documented by the Special Rapporteur in his thematic report. The toolkit transforms the recommendations made in the 2020 report into a series of action strategies on how to increase support for women-led movements and organizations, including in times of crises.

The Special Rapporteur expresses his deepest gratitude to the women human rights defenders, women-led organizations and movements who shared their expertise and lived experiences for the development of the 2020 report and this accompanying Toolkit. The Special Rapporteur also expresses his gratitude to the Ford Foundation, the Solidarity Center and the International Centre for Not-For-Profit Law (ICNL) for supporting the development of this publication. He extends his appreciation to Inmaculada Barcia for the research assistance she provided in preparation of this toolkit.

For more information on the Toolkit, please contact: freeassembly@ohchr.org or visit the Special Rapporteur's website: www.freeassemblyandassociation.net

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KNOW YOUR RIGHTS TO FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION AND ASSEMBLY (FOAA)

The rights of women to form and join associations and to peacefully assemble is recognized in numerous international and regional treaties and declarations. Most of these treaties and declarations recognize the rights to peaceful assembly and of association for all individuals but include in a separate article the obligation of States to guarantee these rights without discrimination on the basis of sex or gender.

Other treaties such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women specifically recognize the rights of women to associate and peacefully assemble.

What human rights instruments protect freedom of assembly?

The right of women to peacefully assemble is protected under eight major international human rights documents: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 20); the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Article 21); the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Article 8); the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (Article 7); the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Article 5); the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Article 29); the Convention on the Right of the Child (Article 15); and the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders (Articles 5 and 12).

Regional treaties such as the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (Article 11); the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (Article 11); the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (Article 8); the Arab Charter on Human Rights (Article 28); and the American Convention on Human Rights (Article 15) also protect freedom of assembly. This right is also protected in ILO Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize Convention (No. 87).

What human rights instruments protect freedom of association?

The rights of women to form and join associations is explicitly recognized in five major international human rights documents: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 20); the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Article 22); the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Article 8); the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (Article 7); and the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders (Article 5).

Article 22 of the ICCPR in particular recognizes that "Everyone shall have the right to freedom of association with others, including the right to form and join trade unions for the protection of his interests". Regional treaties such as the European Convention on Human Rights (Article 11); the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (Article 10); the American Convention on Human Rights (Article 16); and the Arab Charter on

Human Rights (Article 28) also protect freedom of association.

The following ILO Conventions protect women workers' rights to organize and to collective bargaining:

- ILO Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize Convention (No. 87)
- ILO Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining Convention (No. 98)
- ILO Domestic Workers Convention (No. 189)
- ILO Violence and Harassment Convention (No. 190)

What activities are protected under the right to freedom of assembly?

Freedom of assembly protects the right to prepare and hold assemblies and to act collectively, as long as these activities are exercised peacefully.

The peacefulness of assemblies should always be presumed.

Individuals may cease to enjoy the right to peaceful assembly only if they use physical force that would likely result in the injury or death of others or seriously damage property. Sporadic violence, however, does not make the entire assembly non-peaceful. Assemblies can only be considered "not peaceful" when there is widespread and serious violence.

The organizers of a peaceful assembly should not be held responsible for the violent behavior of others. Assemblies cannot be considered illegal when the violence comes from government representatives, people acting on their behalf or members of the public.

The right to peaceful assembly also protects digital activities, including access to the internet and social media platforms to organize, disseminate and monitor assemblies.

States cannot restrict digital activities related to the rights to peaceful assembly and association without justification. Limitations to the use of digital technologies must be necessary and proportionate. States must also ensure that the activities of private actors such as digital technology companies do not unlawfully restrict the exercise of the users' rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.

What activities are protected under the right to freedom of association?

Freedom of association protects the right to form or join a group of like-minded people to pursue common interests, including the promotion and protection of human rights.

For example, freedom of association protects an individual's right to form and join organizations, as well as the right of groups to speak out against militarization, discriminatory policing, economic inequality and advance human rights and gender equality.

The right to freedom of association also protects activities online. States cannot restrict activities related to the rights of assembly or association without justification. Limitations to the use of digital technologies should be an exception.

States must also ensure that the activities of private actors such as digital technology companies do not unlawfully restrict the exercise of the users' rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.



Is funding part of the right to freedom of association?

Access to funding is also an essential component of the right to freedom of association. Without funding, women’s ability to organize, mobilize and implement activities is limited.

States are not required to provide funding but should not unduly interfere with an association’s ability to seek, receive, and use funding. Restrictions to the ability to access foreign resources can only be placed under very specific and limited circumstances.

For example, States should not establish outright prohibitions to access funding; require CSOs to obtain Government approval prior to receiving funding; require the transfer of funds to a centralized Government fund; or ban foreign-funded CSOs from engaging in human rights advocacy. States should not stigmatize or delegitimize the work of foreign-funded CSOs by requiring them to register as “foreign agents”; or impose criminal penalties for their failure to comply with these funding constraints.

What type of assemblies are protected?

Demonstrations, protests, marches, meetings, parades, rallies, sit-ins, vigils and, *inter alia*, picket lines. These can include activities held outdoors, indoors or online, as well as in public and private spaces.

What type of associations are protected?

Social movements, grassroots organizations, community-based organizations, women’s organizations, non-governmental organizations, cooperatives, political parties, trade unions, and other organizations concerned with public and political life.

Associations do not need to be officially registered to be protected and to carry out their collective activities.

Can the right to freedom of assembly be limited by the State?

States can impose certain restrictions to the right to freedom of assembly in cases necessary to protect national security, public safety, public order, the protection of public health or morals, or the protection of rights and freedoms of others. These restrictions are the exception and must be provided by law.

Because the right to assembly is fundamental for all individuals to participate in a democratic society, any restrictions on this right must be necessary and proportionate. For example, States cannot restrict the right to assembly to repress political opposition, to prevent peaceful challenges to authorities, or to limit calls for democratic changes of government.

Protection of morals should be based on the principles of pluralism and non-discrimination. For example, restrictions should not be used to promote a single religious tradition or to oppose expressions of sexual orientation or gender identity.

Blanket bans of assemblies are disproportionate and prohibitions of assemblies should be used as a measure of last resort.





Can the right to freedom of association be limited by the State?

States can limit the right to freedom of association in exceptional cases where there are concerns related to security, public safety, public order, the protection of public health or morals, or the protection of rights and freedoms of others.

Because the right to association is fundamental for all individuals to participate in a democratic society, any restrictions on this right must be necessary and proportionate. For example, States cannot limit or prohibit the work of organizations because they criticize the government or its policies, or because they publicize human rights violations perpetrated by authorities.

In general, States must refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of an association and respect associations' right to privacy. For example, States should not request that organizations submit workplans for approval.

Regarding protection of morals, States cannot prohibit associations that peacefully promote ideas, even if those ideas offend the government or any particular group. A democratic society requires a plurality of organizations, including those that may be perceived as taking controversial positions in some contexts, such as organizations working on sexual and reproductive rights.

Suspension and involuntarily dissolution of an association should only be possible when there is a clear and imminent danger resulting in a flagrant violation of national law, in compliance with international human rights law. Such measures should also be proportional to the legitimate aim pursued and used only when softer measures would be insufficient. These drastic measures should be taken only by independent and impartial courts.

Can I form and join associations and assemblies?

Everyone enjoys the same right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association. This includes:

- ✓ **All women without any discrimination**, including girls and transgender and intersex persons who identify as women and gender non-conforming persons affected by social constructions of women;
- ✓ **Women of all ages and backgrounds who are part of civil society organizations**, feminist movements, girl-led movements, women-led organizations or workers associations and unions, including domestic workers, rural women, indigenous women, women with disabilities, women working in female-dominated industries and women working at home;
- ✓ **Women human rights defenders**, including women working with groups and associations that are not formally recognized by the State, and who work on rights of persons who are criminalized;
- ✓ **Non-citizen women**, including migrant women (documented or undocumented), women who are asylum seekers and refugee and stateless women.

What are the obligations of States?

States have an obligation to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of women to enjoy the freedom of peaceful assembly and of association *without discrimination* on the basis of sex and gender. States must also remove obstacles that obstruct the ability of women to join together to participate in all aspects of public life.

- ✓ **RESPECT.** States have to eliminate or change discriminatory laws that prevent women in all their diversity from fully and effectively enjoying these rights.
- ✓ **PROTECT.** States have an obligation to (1) protect women from threats and attacks by public authorities, enterprises or private individuals for exercising these rights in public and private spaces; and (2) investigate and address any violations committed by any actor against women exercising these rights.
- ✓ **FULFIL.** States must adopt measures to promote an enabling environment for the exercise of the right of peaceful assembly and association by all women, and put in place measures and institutional frameworks that facilitate women's participation in peaceful assemblies and in non-governmental organizations and associations, including political parties, trade unions, professional or industry associations, women's organizations, community-based organizations and other organizations concerned with public and political life.

What are the obligations of private enterprises?

The Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights establish that all businesses (1) have a responsibility to respect and protect women's rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; (2) must act with due diligence and carefully assess the potential adverse impact of their activities to prevent the violations of these rights; and (3) need to provide women with effective remedies for violations connected to their operations and activities.

Digital technology companies, in particular social media companies, need to address online gender-based violence against women exercising their rights to peaceful assembly and of association, including women human rights defenders and women trade union members.



WHEN ARE WOMEN'S RIGHTS TO ASSOCIATE AND PEACEFULLY ASSEMBLE VIOLATED?

People of all genders face well-documented threats to the exercise of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association. However, women also experience distinct and differentiated violations of these rights, which are rooted in harmful gender stereotypes and discrimination based on sex and gender.

Women in civil society are at a higher risk of facing restrictions and violations to their rights to freely associate and peacefully assemble, because their actions are perceived as challenging accepted traditions, cultural values and religious beliefs about the role of women in society and within the family.

Women who exercise these rights are frequent targets of attacks, including gender-based violence by State and non-State actors, which sometimes can take extreme forms such as harassment and sexual abuse.

Women's rights to association and peaceful assembly are violated:

WHEN YOU FACE VIOLENCE AT HOME FOR YOUR ACTIVISM

- ✓ Many of the obstacles and violations of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association that women face happen at home, in the family and in the community where women continue to be punished for their participation in public life.
- ✓ Women and girls may be accused of being “bad mothers”, “bad daughters” or “promiscuous” for exercising their rights to organize and assemble and are often discouraged from or targeted for participating in collective public actions or movements.
- ✓ Reprisals at home and in the community for women's activism may include gender-based violence such as domestic violence and sexual abuse.

REMEMBER! *States have an obligation to protect women from violence at home.*

WHEN YOUR FAMILY IS ATTACKED BECAUSE OF THE WORK YOU DO AS AN ACTIVIST

- ✓ Women activists often face threats and attacks against their family members, including their children, partners and relatives.
- ✓ These attacks use women's roles as mothers and caregivers to punish them and force them to stay silent and give up their activism.
- ✓ These pressures give rise to guilt and affect women's health and well-being.

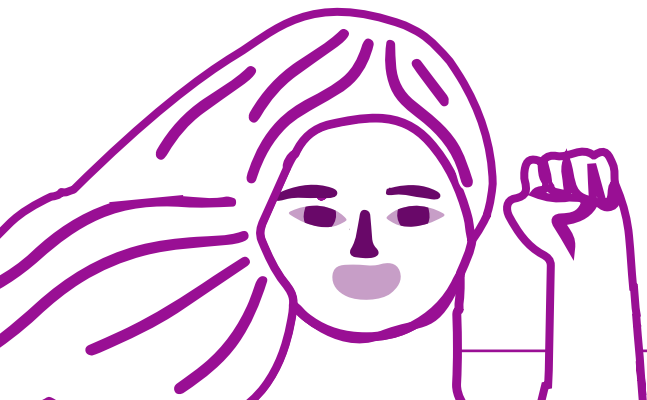


REMEMBER! *States have an obligation to investigate these violations and provide gender-responsive protection for women activists to be able to continue with their work.*

WHEN YOU ARE ASSAULTED WHILE DEMONSTRATING IN A PUBLIC SPACE

- ✓ Women face higher risks of sexual harassment and gender-based violence when participating in collective public actions, including during peaceful protest and demonstrations. This form of harassment includes inappropriate touching, unnecessary strip searches, threat of rape, rape, forced nudity, and gendered and sexist insults.
- ✓ Attacks may be perpetrated by law enforcement as well as by private individuals, including counter-protesters, employers, private security guards and health service providers.
- ✓ These attacks are used to discourage other women and their networks, collectives and movements from participating in collective actions.

REMEMBER! *States have an obligation to prevent, investigate, prosecute, and punish acts of gender-based violence.*



**WHEN LAWS
LIMIT YOUR
MOBILITY
OR CAPACITY
TO FORM
OR JOIN AN
ORGANIZATION**

- ✓ Some countries have laws and practices, such as guardianship systems, that limit women's capacity to obtain a passport or travel without a male guardian.
- ✓ Laws can also prevent women from accessing credit, signing contracts, opening bank accounts, or registering a business or organization in the same way as men.
- ✓ These laws and practices discriminate against women and violate their right to participate in public life.



REMEMBER! *States have an obligation to eliminate laws and practices that discriminate against women within and outside the family, including religious laws.*

**WHEN YOU
CANNOT
ACCESS
FUNDING
FOR YOUR
WORK**

- ✓ Restrictive legislation that requires associations to obtain permission from authorities to receive or use funds, or to report on all funds received from foreign sources, is used to deny women's organizations access to foreign funds and exert control over their internal activities.
- ✓ The ability of women's organizations to access funding is also affected by restrictions on the grounds of national security or counter-terrorism and bans from engaging in specific areas of work (i.e. abortion).
- ✓ These laws particularly impact women's organizations, especially those working on sexual and reproductive rights, sexual orientation and gender identity rights and sex workers' rights, as well as women that belong to minority groups or women perceived as promoting views that threaten "religious" or "national" values.

REMEMBER! *Access to funding is an essential component of the right to freedom of association and is protected under international law.*

2 • When are women’s rights to associate and peacefully assemble violated?

WHEN YOU ARE PREVENTED FROM ORGANIZING AND DEFENDING YOUR RIGHTS AT WORK

- ✓ Women working in the informal sector often work in dangerous and abusive working conditions but have little to no opportunity to join trade unions or to participate in strikes to protect or improve their working conditions.
- ✓ The informal sector includes women working in garment factories, domestic workers, farm workers, street vendors, sex workers, waste-pickers, and more.
- ✓ Migrant women workers, especially those with irregular status, are particularly at risk.
- ✓ Without the right to peacefully assemble and associate, women workers have little ability to change abusive working conditions, like working long hours for low salaries in unsafe and unhealthy environments, risking disease, injury and death.



REMEMBER! *The right to form and to join trade unions is recognized under international human law, including ILO conventions.*

WHEN YOU FACE VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT IN THE WORLD OF WORK

- ✓ Women are disproportionately impacted by discrimination, gender-based violence, and threats of violence for advocating for their rights at work.
- ✓ Women workers who protest in public spaces are often targeted and subjected to sexual assault, loss of jobs, death threats, and social stigmatization by employers and their representatives.
- ✓ Many women, especially in the informal sector, experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination because of their migration status, or because of their race or ethnicity.

REMEMBER! *The newly adopted ILO Convention 190 requires States to prohibit workplace violence and to take preventive measures.*

2 • When are women’s rights to associate and peacefully assemble violated?

WHEN YOUR ACTIVITIES ARE CRIMINALIZED FOR DEFENDING WOMEN’S RIGHTS

- ✓ Women activists working on sexual and reproductive health and rights have been charged with violating public morality laws.
- ✓ Women human rights defenders have been falsely accused of engaging in adultery and prostitution or in terrorist activities.
- ✓ Arrest and judicial harassment are used against women human rights defenders to intimidate and dissuade them from continuing with their activism, collective mobilization, and human rights work.

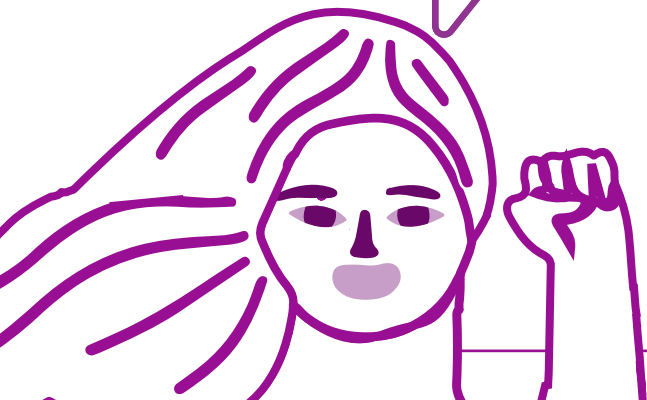


REMEMBER! *States should refrain from criminalizing legitimate activities defending women’s rights and gender equality.*

WHEN YOU ARE MARGINALIZED OR PREVENTED FROM TAKING UP LEADERSHIP POSITIONS WITHIN CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS AND UNIONS

- ✓ Women are marginalized and excluded from decision-making spaces and leadership roles within civil society organizations, social movements, and trade unions.
- ✓ Women may be characterized as “ineffective leaders”, “difficult”, “lacking experience”, or “inherently vulnerable” and their contribution to civil society not recognized or remunerated.
- ✓ The disproportionate amount of unpaid care and domestic work carried out by women and girls globally leaves them with limited time to engage in activism and civil society work, including in trade unions.

REMEMBER! *States have an obligation to take measures to eliminate laws, regulations, and practices that discriminate against women.*



**WHEN YOU
ARE
ATTACKED
ON SOCIAL
MEDIA OR
YOUR
ACCESS IS
RESTRICTED**

- ✓ The lack of access to mobile phones and other digital devices, online security tools and the high cost of mobile data are significant obstacles to women's ability to organize, connect with networks, and access information.
- ✓ When connected online, women activists are confronted with online attacks and harassment, including the dissemination of sexualized pictures, the spreading of discrediting information, the dissemination of violent hate messages, and threatening messages on social networks.
- ✓ Efforts by social media companies and States have been insufficient to keep women online organizing activities safe.



REMEMBER! *States and businesses have an obligation to respect, protect, and fulfill women's rights to organize and act collectively online and address gender-specific forms of online violence.*

WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO MONITOR AND DOCUMENT VIOLATIONS OF THESE RIGHTS?



TO BETTER UNDERSTAND GENDERED-SPECIFIC VIOLATIONS

Women activists, women workers, and women's organizations and movements face specific forms of discrimination and violence such as gender-based violence, rape, sexual harassment, and exclusion from spaces to prevent women from mobilizing and building collective power. It is important to understand that these restrictions, discrimination, and violence comes from the State, as well as from families and communities. Sometimes it comes from within their own movements and organizations. Monitoring and documenting this violence is the first step to ensuring that it does not remain invisible and continue to be perpetuated.



TO DEVELOP GENDERED SPECIFIC RESPONSES

Documenting can have many purposes, from developing an urgent action campaign, to sending a communication to the Special Rapporteur, to building a legal case or supporting and empowering survivors. To develop effective gender-responsive responses, we must understand the specific forms of violence against women in civil society as well as the different impact of this violence on their lives, their organizations, and communities.



TO JUSTIFY THE NEED FOR FUNDING

Donors are important partners for women's organizations and movements. By monitoring and documenting discrimination and violence against women, these social movements provide the donor community with the evidence and analyses required to understand the scale of the problem. Having more data and analysis is critical to justify specific funding needs.

FIVE ACTIONS TO SUPPORT WOMEN-LED MOVEMENTS AND ORGANIZATIONS

The rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association are central to the existence and functioning of women-led movements and organizations. There are a number of actions that you can take to support women in the exercise of these rights:

1 *SAFE AND ENABLING ENVIRONMENT*

EMPOWERING WOMEN'S COLLECTIVE ACTION



National Legal frameworks must protect, promote, and facilitate the rights to FoAA for everyone without discrimination. A safe and enabling environment that supports women's collective action:

- ⇒ Ensures women can freely form and operate NGOs, including unions;
- ⇒ Enables women to organize, disseminate, participate in and monitor peaceful assemblies, including those advocating for women's rights;
- ⇒ Provides protection and accountability for gender-based violence and other attacks, including those committed online, such as reprisals for exercising their rights;
- ⇒ Guarantees the meaningful participation of women in peace agreements and rebuilding strategies and negotiations;
- ⇒ Facilitates women's participation in national, regional, and international processes, including at the United Nations;
- ⇒ Supports women's participation in public life through social media.

WAYS FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION TO CONTRIBUTE TO AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

- 1** Advocate for the elimination of laws and practices that restrict the ability of women to mobilize and join civil society organizations and trade unions.
- 2** Ask government officials to adopt legal protections against sexual harassment at work and in public places.
- 3** Demand quotas to ensure the representation of women in meetings, peace agreements and negotiations.
- 4** Collect data on gender-based violence and smear campaigns about women activists in traditional and digital media, and send the information to the Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association.
- 5** Speak up about intimidation and reprisals against women human rights defenders participating in decision making forums, including UN meetings and events.



2 RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

**ACCESS TO
FUNDING IS
CENTRAL TO
WOMEN'S
COLLECTIVE
ORGANIZING**

Access to funding is a fundamental part of the right to association. However, studies show that women-led organizations and movements, in particular grass roots groups from the global south, are disproportionately underfunded. Providing financial support for women's organizations and movements is central to the sustainability of their work, which can only be achieved by:



- ⇒ Prioritizing long-term commitments to gender equality and the empowerment of all women;
- ⇒ Making structural changes in funding modalities to ensure flexibility;
- ⇒ Removing restrictive legislation that impacts the ability of women's organizations to access funds.

WAYS FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION TO ENGAGE WITH DONORS ON INCREASING FUNDING TO WOMEN-LED MOVEMENTS

- 1** Understand the specific obstacles faced by women's organizations to access funding.
- 2** Ask governments and private donors to ensure a percentage of core funding for women's organizations, in particular those working at the local level.
- 3** Discuss with donors the need for multi-year, core and flexible funding to support movement-building and women's organizations.
- 4** Facilitate access of women from grassroots organizations to discussions with donors.
- 5** Support the development of independent women's funds.

3 RECOGNITION

**RECOGNITION
CAN SHIFT
PUBLIC
UNDERSTANDING**



Women's long history of activism, collective organizing, and participation in social movements has been and continues to be fundamental to democracy, sustainable development, and peace.

- ⇒ Women inspired and led millions of people to join democratic movements and revolutions in Sudan, Lebanon, Algeria, Chile, Iraq, Nicaragua, and Myanmar;
- ⇒ Women's organizing against inequality, rising fundamentalisms, and corruption have made democracies more inclusive of diverse voices, in particular of those who are more discriminated against and often left behind—Black women are leading the racial justice movement around the world;
- ⇒ Building broad coalitions and networks have enabled women to challenge traditional and family norms and practices that prevented women's participation in public life. Intergenerational women in Chile, Ireland, Mexico, Poland, South Korea, Timor-Leste, and the United States united to protect sexual and reproductive rights.
- ⇒ Women in civil society, social movements, and women's feminist movements have challenged the way people think about gender and power around the world, and have inspired local and national movements. The #MeToo movement has triggered major reforms in law and practice;
- ⇒ Women's movements and coalitions have succeeded in mobilizing people across the globe to demand urgent climate action and adopt measures to protect life on this planet and our natural resources. More and more indigenous and rural women are taking up positions of leadership in these movements.

Building positive narratives about women's contribution in all these areas can contribute to 1) shifting public understanding of women's role in public life; 2) challenging how people think about gender and dismantling stereotypes; 3) countering negative narratives and adding credibility to women's organizing; and 4) enhancing protection through public support.

4 INTERSECTIONALITY

**CHALLENGE
MULTIPLE
AND
INTERSECTING
FORMS OF
DISCRIMINATION**

Women experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and marginalization, including on the basis of their race, color, ethnicity, age, sex, language, religion or belief, political or other opinion, national or social origin, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity, legal status and minority, indigenous or other status. Supporting women’s organizing requires:



- ⇒ Taking into account the multiple identities of women and how those identities impact their participation in public life;
- ⇒ Challenging racism, homophobia, xenophobia, and other forms of oppression and discrimination that along with patriarchy exclude women from organizing and demonstrating in public spaces;
- ⇒ Leaving no one behind—including a diversity of voices to ensure representation of different groups of women that encompass rural, migrant, disabled, indigenous, Afro-Decedent, young, and trans women.

WAYS FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION TO ELEVATE THE WORK OF WOMEN IN CIVIL SOCIETY

- 1** Publicly recognize in reports, statements, and press releases the crucial work that women’s organizations and movements carry out as part of the larger human rights community.
- 2** Challenge assumptions and stereotypes that discriminate against women and limit their role to the family and community.
- 3** Celebrate the commemoration of international days, such as International Women’s Day and WHRDs day, raising the visibility of the work carried out by women’s organizations and movements.
- 4** Join public campaigns that support the work of women’s organizations and amplify their voices.

5 COMMITMENT

**MAKE HUMAN
RIGHTS
MOVEMENTS
ACCOUNTABLE!**



Civil society organizations and social movements continue to be reluctant to address gender-based discrimination, violence, and the marginalization of women in their own structures and practices. While there are a growing number of women in unions and civil society organizations, this has not translated into access to positions of power for women within these groups. Making human rights organizations and movements accountable requires:

- ⇒ A commitment to achieve gender parity in management leadership in human rights organizations and trade unions by 2030, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals;
- ⇒ The adoption of policies that prevent and respond to sexual harassment and gender and intersectional discrimination across organizations;
- ⇒ Building solidarity with and among women's groups and feminist movements, including those defending women's rights and gender equality, as well as between the feminist movements and other social justice movements.

WAYS FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION TO ADDRESS GENDER EQUALITY AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS MOVEMENT:

- 1** Establish specific quotas and targets to increase women's representation, in particular in leadership and management positions.
- 2** Revise recruitment and promotion policies and practices to give priority to qualified women applicants and staff.
- 3** Adopt a zero-tolerance policy for discrimination and harassment in the workplace and include it in the induction training.
- 4** Ask management to issue a statement reaffirming the organization's commitments to gender parity and gender equality as well as the need for all staff to ensure a respectful work environment.
- 5** Don't be silent! Create spaces for staff to dialogue and reflect on organizational culture and unacceptable behavior.

WOMEN'S RIGHT TO ORGANIZE AND ASSEMBLE IN THE WORLD OF WORK

Women workers have been central in the fight against long hours for low wages, unsafe and unhealthy work environments, as well as exploitative conditions, including trafficking and slavery-like practices in many countries around the world. However, discrimination, abuse, and relegation to jobs at the bottom of the global economy undermine women workers' ability to join trade unions and strike to defend their interests.

Did you know that 92 per cent of informal workers are estimated to be women in developing countries?

Women working in the informal economy are excluded from the protection of labor laws and often work in precarious and exploitative conditions.

Even when women workers are able to form and join trade unions, they report threats of violence, harassment, and other reprisals for labor organizing.

What key actions can support women's right to organize and assemble in the world of work?

Advocate for inclusive labor laws that guarantee the rights of women working in the informal sector.

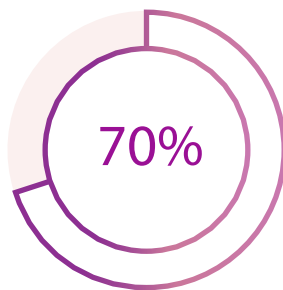
Join the campaign for the ratification of ILO Convention 190, which requires States to prohibit violence and harassment in the workplace and to take preventive measures. The Convention protects women from gender-based violence and harassment and includes women working in the informal sector.



WOMEN'S RIGHT TO ASSOCIATE AND ASSEMBLE IN THE CONTEXT OF CRISIS, SUCH AS COVID 19

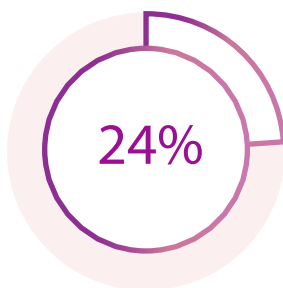
COVID-19 has increased the risk of attacks against women exercising their rights to peaceful assembly and association with the misuse of emergency measures enforcing stay-at-home orders and limiting public gatherings.

Around the world, the pandemic has put increasing demands on women and girls to care for families and the sick, and left mostly female essential workers unable to mobilize to demand equipment for themselves and their families.



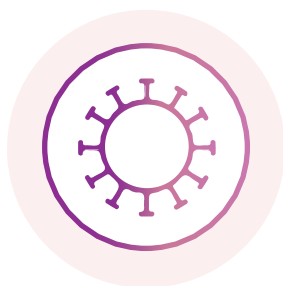
Did you know that women represent more than 70 per cent of the global health and social care workforce responding to the pandemic?

They are nurses, midwives and health workers, and community organizers. Local women's organizations have also been front-line responders to increased domestic violence during the pandemic. The ability of women to work collectively and organize their communities has been central to these efforts.



Did you know that women only represent on average a mere 24 percent of task forces and national-level decision-making bodies on COVID-19?

Although women are at the forefront of the COVID-19 response, they are being excluded from the decision-making processes addressing the impact of the pandemic.











What key actions can support women's right to organize and assemble in the context of COVID 19?

Advocate for women human rights defenders and women's organizations to have equal opportunities to play leadership roles and participate in decision-making recovery efforts. Without women's representation, COVID-19 efforts will likely overlook women's needs.







Ask donors to guarantee that health crises do not take away resources from women-led programs supporting women most at risk, gender equality, social protection, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and gender-based violence services, particularly at the grass-roots level.

RESOURCES

1 ***KNOW YOUR RIGHTS TO FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION AND ASSEMBLY (FOAA)***

-  Celebrating women in activism and civil society: the enjoyment of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association by women and girls, A/75/184, 20 July 2020, Section II.
-  Human Rights Committee, general comment No. 37 (2020) on the right of peaceful assembly (article 21).
-  Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, general recommendation No. 35 on gender-based violence against women, updating general recommendation No. 19.
-  Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, general recommendation No. 23 (1997) on women in political and public life.
-  Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, general recommendation No. 28 (2010) on the core obligations of States parties under article 2 of the Convention.
-  General principles on protecting civic space and the right to access resources, Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association.
-  Checklist: 10 principles for the proper management of assemblies, Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association.
-  Commentary to the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders: an essential guide to the right to defend human rights, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders.









2 **WHEN ARE WOMEN'S RIGHTS TO ASSOCIATE AND ASSEMBLY VIOLATED?**

-  Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Margaret Sekaggya, A/HRC/16/44, 20 December 2010.
-  The exercise of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association in the digital age, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, A/HRC/41/41, 17 May 2019.
-  Our rights, our safety: resources for women human rights defenders, Jass Associates, 2020.
-  Gendering Documentation: A Manual For and About Women Human Rights Defenders, Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition (WHRD-IC), 2015.
-  Monitoring and protecting the human rights of women, chapter 28, OHCHR.
-  CIVICUS Monitor (2021) National Civic Space Ratings, available at: <http://www.monitor.civicus.org> (Accessed: 2021-05-10).






3 FIVE ACTIONS TO SUPPORT WOMEN-LED MOVEMENTS AND ORGANIZATIONS




→ SAFE AND ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

-  Practical recommendations for the creation and maintenance of a safe and enabling environment for civil society, based on good practices and lessons learned, Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, A/HRC/32/20, 11 April 2016.
-  Elements of a safe and enabling environment for human rights defenders, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Margaret Sekaggya, A/HRC/25/55, 23 December 2013.
-  Making Change Happen, Rethinking Protection, Power, and Movements: Lessons from Women Human Rights Defenders in Mesoamerica, JASS Associates, 2017.
-  Our Right to Safety: Women Human Rights Defenders' Holistic Approach to Protection, AWID and Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition (WHRD-IC), 2014
-  Enabling Environment Guidelines for the United Nations System, United Nations, 2019.
-  Intimidation and reprisals for cooperation with the United Nations in the field of human rights, OHCHR, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Reprisals/Pages/Reprisals>.
-  Reprisals Handbook, International Service for Human Rights (ISHR), 2018.
-  Nothing will be decided for us without us, FRIDA'S PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE DATA & TECHNOLOGY, FRIDA, 2020.




→ **RESOURCE MOBILIZATION**

-  Moving more money to the drivers of change: how bilateral and multilateral funders can resource feminist movements, november 2020, awid and mama cash with support from the count me in consortium.
-  Collective change: the value of mobilizing local resources for women's rights in the global south and east case studies of ten women's funds, international network of women's funds, mama cash and the international human rights funders group, 2015.
-  Feminist funding principles, astraea lesbian foundation for justice.



→ **RECOGNITION**

-  Eight ways you can be a women's rights advocate today, and every day, UN Women, 2018.
-  Campaigns #DefendHer Standing together for Justice, Global Fund for Women, JASS and MADRE.
-  How Media can be more Inclusive Brussels Binder Beyond Toolbox, available at <https://toolbox.brusselsbinder.org/media/>.




→ **INTERSECTIONALITY**

-  Why diversity at your events matters, Brussels Binder Beyond Toolbox, available at <https://toolbox.brusselsbinder.org/diversity/>.
-  Intersectionality 101: what is it and why is it important? Womenkind Worldwide, 2019.
-  Intersectionality Matters! African American Policy Forum, Kimberlé Crenshaw, 2021 (Podcast).




→ **COMMITMENT**

-  OHCHR and IOM, [video on unconscious bias in recruitment](#), 2017.
-  Sample Sexual Harassment Policy, ILO, available at https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-suva/documents/policy/wcms_407364.pdf.

4 WOMEN'S RIGHT TO ORGANIZE AND ASSEMBLY IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID 19

-  Covid-19 and Freedom of Assembly and Association: ten key principles reminding States of their human rights obligations during the pandemic, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association.
-  COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker, UN Women and UNDP.
-  COVID-19 and women's human rights: guidance, OHCHR.

5 WOMEN'S RIGHT TO ORGANIZE AND ASSEMBLY IN THE WORLD OF WORK

-  Women's human rights in the changing world of work, Reimagining the world of work so it is equal for everyone, United Nations Working Group on Discrimination Against Women and Girls. Available at: <https://unworkinggroupwomenandgirls.org/>
-  Report on women's human rights in the changing world of work, Working Group on discrimination against women and girls, [A/HRC/44/51](https://www.unhcr.org/refugees/44/51), 16 April 2020.
-  SAFETY AND DIGNITY AT WORK, A Guide to the 2019 ILO Violence and Harassment Convention, Human Rights Watch, 2020.

