



On the Record: Human Rights Defenders (1998)

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This is the fifth issue in this series of On the Record covering the Summit of Human Rights Defenders in Paris, December 8-11. On the Record is a product of The Advocacy Project, an association of individuals established to support advocates in countries in crisis, or transition, using the new information technology.

One more issue is planned for this series. Issue #6 will look in more detail at some of the themes that have emerged from the Summit, and will be sent out within the next few days. The entire series will be posted on our website, together with the three previous series of On the Record produced this year.

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Contents:

- **Amidst Confusion, Summit Calls for Protection of Defenders**
- **Defenders Face Long Haul in Implementing Summit Action Plan**
- **French Proposal for Cyber Castle Stuns Summit**
- **Old-Timers Rock and Roll for Human Rights**
- **Palestinian Hunger Strike Supported**
- **Struggle for Women's Rights Moves into the Private Sphere**
- **Profiles: Libya, Israel, Palestine, and the Philippines**
 - **Libya: Soliman Bouchuiguir – The Libyan League for Human Rights**
 - **Israel: Tamar Pelleg Sryck, Defense Lawyer**
 - **Palestine: Khaleda Jarrar – Addameer Prisoners Support Association**
 - **Philippines: Sister Mariani Dimaranan – Task Force Detainees of the Philippines Texts**
- **Action Plan for Paris Human Rights Defenders Summit**
- **CLADEM Calls for a New Human Rights Declaration for the 21st Century, Drafted from a Gender Perspective**

From the AP Editorial Desk

Amidst Confusion, Summit Calls for Protection of Defenders

Enlarged Steering Committee will refine the Action Plan
by Laurie Wiseberg

The Defenders' Summit ended here Friday (December 11) with a strong call that human rights activists be afforded more protection, but stopped short of formally adopting an ambitious action plan after a confused final plenary session revealed significant concerns with the draft.

The draft plan will now be refined by the 18 members of the Summit Steering Committee, with the addition of five more regional representatives who were elected by impromptu regional caucuses after the closure of the plenary.

This group is to come up with a revised action plan which will take into account two other international non-governmental organization (NGO) meetings earlier this year. These were the Vienna Plus Five International NGO Forum (Ottawa), which brought together 250 human rights activists in June to review progress since the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights, and Forum 98, which took place in Geneva in August to assess the future strategy for human rights NGOs looking to the next millennium.

Initially, it was proposed that these two initiatives would be represented in the follow-up to the Summit action plan. Inexplicably, however, this proposal was not even put to a vote, and the steering committee will merely take account of the Geneva and Ottawa documents. It was not clear whether this reflected a policy or the abrupt closure of the Summit under the pressure of time. Either way, it brought the Summit to a slightly disconcerting close.

The revised action plan is due to be completed by the end of February 1999, and circulated to conference participants and all regional and thematic human rights networks. They will then decide how to implement the action plan in their region or sector. Pierre Sane, secretary-general of Amnesty, expressed the hope that another Defenders' Summit could take place in two years, in the year 2000.

The closing plenary, moderated by Paul Hoffman, chair of Amnesty International USA, was a particularly difficult session, threatening at times to get out of control. For one thing, many human rights defenders, who had traveled thousands of miles, felt that this was their last opportunity to speak about the conditions they faced in their own country, and did so once they had the mike, rather than addressing the action plan.

A defender from Lesotho took the floor to appeal for a condemnation of South Africa's "occupation" of his country. A Camerounian went to the podium to denounce the corruption in his country. "That is why the Rwandan 'genocidaires' fled to Cameroun, knowing they would have sanctuary." A Lebanese defender took the mike to plead for a fairer hearing. "When we describe Israeli violations against the Lebanese, we get strong international solidarity. When we describe the violations of the Syrians or the Lebanese authorities, all we get is silence." An Iranian spoke of the recent arrest of four Iranian journalists. A Paraguayan head of the oldest

human rights commission in Latin America spoke of his years of struggle against the Stroessner dictatorship.

Anyone in the Chair would have found it difficult to interrupt defenders passionately describing assassinations, disappearances, torture, imprisonment, or threats. In addition, there were many differing views about the Action Plan.

For example, while most agreed that the action plan should concentrate on the plight of human rights defenders, Rigoberta Menchu, Nobel laureate from Guatemala, made an impassioned plea for more than a small paragraph on the rights of indigenous peoples – who are often treated as an afterthought. This is "very lukewarm solidarity," she said.

Adolfo Perez Esquivel from Argentina, another Nobel laureate, was troubled that the Summit had not addressed foreign debt. "We have looked at the effect of human rights violations, but not at the structures or causes," he said. "We are like fire brigades, putting out fires when someone sets them behind us." He welcomed the fact that General Pinochet was finally being put in the dock, but warned that "he is not the only one responsible." He had received documentation about Chile that demonstrated US responsibility, he said, and he described the CIA as one of the foremost "terrorist organizations" in the world.

Justine Kiwanuka (Canada) of Disabled People International called for some recognition of the rights of disabled persons. She also noted that the Palais de Chaillot had no facilities for the mobility-impaired, which denied persons with disabilities "the ways and means to participate equally in this Summit."

Aurora Parong of the Philippines noted that the Action Plan spoke about extreme poverty, but did not directly address related issues such as the unequal distribution of wealth between the north and the south, the plunder of resources, the misappropriation of resources (e.g., for a nuclear arms race), or the unbridled behavior of corporations. Prof. Mesfin Wolde Mariam suggested that urging multinational companies to uphold human rights standards is naive: "this is like praying to the devil to save us from hell," he said. Others complained that there was no mention of the World Trade Organization in the Document.

Marco Sassoli, of the International Commission of Jurists, was concerned about how the Steering Committee had moved from a 13-page Action Plan to a second, eight-page document. First off, there was the issue of transparency, he said. Secondly, "we need a precise plan of what is to be done and who is to do it." This was not evident in the action plan being discussed.

Benjamin Schonveld, of the World Organization Against Torture, urged that the Action Plan be rewritten to take into account how technology is currently being used on behalf of human rights defenders. The issue he said, "was good documentation, not good computers per se." Computers, he pointed out, were just a tool in a protection strategy.

All this prompted Pierre Sane, from Amnesty International, to comment (only partly in jest), that it is easier to deal with governments than to get agreement among 300 independent human rights defenders from all regions of the world.

At 6 o'clock, just minutes away from the closing of the plenary, Abdelaziz Bennani of Morocco protested what he felt was a railroading of consensus. "We cannot," he said, "leave this meeting without an Action Plan, even if we have to stay here till midnight to come up with a document."

But Paul Hoffman, in the Chair, was adamant: he would have to close this meeting in ten minutes. The translators (who had provided their time free of charge for the summit) would be leaving. There was a film to see, and supper to be eaten. The Palais de Chaillot (normally a theater) had to be vacated. Hoffman, therefore, called on those who approved of the compromise to stand and applaud. When push came to shove, virtually everyone stood, clapped, and accepted the outcome – without being quite sure what it was.

The 23 members of the new steering committee are: seven defenders chosen from regions prior to the Summit; five defenders from the Latin America, Europe, Asia and the Pacific, the Middle East, and Africa chosen after the Summit; four officials from the four organizations that sponsored the Summit – Amnesty, the International Federation for Human Rights, France-Libertes, and ATD Quart-Monde; seven officers: President – Pierre Sane (Amnesty International); Vice-presidents – Danielle Mitterand (ATD Quart-Monde) and Patrick Baudoin (IFHR); Treasurer – Jean Tonglet (ATD Quart-Monde); Co-moderators – (Paul Hoffman and Fatima M'Baye); Secretary-General – Michel Forst (Amnesty-France).

Defenders Face Long Haul in Implementing Summit Action Plan

The time is ripe for greater NGO co-ordination, but can the human rights movement unite around the protection of defenders?

by Iain Guest

After four days of searing testimony that have dramatically revealed the risks facing human rights activists, the Defenders' Summit came to a close here on Friday, December 11, with a decision to elaborate and refine a three-part draft action plan. But Friday's debate suggested that it will not be easy to maintain the momentum generated here in Paris or unite the international human rights movement around the plan.

The action plan comprises three parts. The first strongly denounces attacks against defenders – attacks which have been graphically described in Paris over the last week.

The second part proposes strategies and campaigns. These include rapid response and urgent actions; developing links with celebrities and journalists; pushing governments to provide asylum and offer refuge to endangered defenders; building alliances with the labor movement; and opening a dialogue with the private sector and international financial institutions (such as the IMF) that are deemed responsible for many of the damaging effects of globalization.

Human rights groups around the world will be encouraged to participate in those campaigns that seem relevant to their particular needs, with priority being given to impunity, extreme poverty, and universal adherence to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The third part of the action plan covers follow-up and implementation of the action plan. This has been handed to the 18-person steering committee set-up for the summit, with the addition of five regional representatives. Twelve are defenders, the remainder represents the four organizations that sponsored the Summit.

The Summit has provided a rich and often poignant portrait of those on the front line of the human rights movement. The testimonies were often wrenching, and they were capped by a memorable moment on Friday when the relatives of the disappeared in Algeria released 300 white balloons against the back-drop of the Eiffel Tower. Each balloon represented a victim of Algeria's hideous war.

But if this summit has talked of disappearances, which have long engaged human rights activists, it has also featured other abuses which have received far less attention: violence against women in the family, extreme poverty, discrimination in the global workplace, and even monitoring human rights on the battlefield.

The Summit also demonstrated the power of the human rights movement, when Amnesty's Pierre Sane and three defenders appeared alongside French president Jacques Chirac at the government ceremony marking December 10, and berated many of France's closest allies for their lamentable record. This was a impressive display of NGO muscle.

It is far less clear, however, whether the Summit will lay the foundation for a global human rights movement based around defenders, as the four sponsoring organizations had certainly hoped. Human rights activists have long dreamed of a unified movement – or at least greater co-ordination – and many feel the time is now ripe. Successful campaigns against landmines and disappearances in Latin America, and on behalf of an international criminal court, have all shown the power of NGO unity. It is also increasingly clear that the Internet is a formidable tool that can provide the glue for human rights co-ordination while at the same time bypassing governments.

But human rights groups are also notoriously competitive and suspicious of each other, and no one underestimates the challenge of pulling them together for anything other than one-off campaigns. Amnesty may be pleading for unity now, but until recently it had the reputation of being the most elite and aloof of them all.

Addressing the summit here on Tuesday (December 8), Amnesty's Secretary-General Pierre Sane said that human rights groups must unite if they are to offset the power of multinational companies and governments, let alone campaign around impunity and globalization, or exchange information when defenders are arrested or disappeared. Sane evoked the vision of a "third" institutional pillar – the NGO equivalent of the Davos symposium for business, and the United Nations (for governments).

After Friday's peculiar session, the question will be whether this summit has generated enough enthusiasm to drive this forward. There are two basic concerns.

The first concerns the notion of "defenders." If anything can unify the movement, it must be the perils faced by those on the front line. Yet the notion of a "defender" is still elusive, and it could become more elusive still, if taken to include anyone who basically tries to improve their own lot in life, including the poor.

As for future campaigns, there will be solid support for building an international campaign on impunity, but less consensus on dealing with governments and multinational companies. Human rights groups have traditionally thrived on opposition to governments. Yet the Action plan implies at least some kind of a kind of partnership with governments in providing better protection to defenders. It also offers a kind of olive branch to the private sector – while severely denouncing the effects of globalization.

Whether or not the summit can build consensus will depend largely on whether this summit is seen as representative, and on the follow up. There were complaints on Friday about the meager presence of interests that have built powerful grass-roots constituencies: the disabled, indigenous peoples, children. In addition, the bulk of the participants were invited as individuals, not as representatives of their organizations. Each of them will now have their own selling job to do with colleagues back home.

There is no doubt that the involvement of Amnesty International and the International Federation for Human Rights – two of the largest international human rights networks – will provide a powerful boost. But Amnesty is the one with resources, and it will come under pressure to take the lead in what could be a long and expensive follow-up. This will not be easy. Amnesty's own activists will need reassuring that the follow-up will not dilute Amnesty's own highly activities. Other prominent organizations, like the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), Human Rights Watch, and the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, will need to be reassured that this not a take-over bid by Amnesty. Finally, some will ask whether more funds should be spent on international networking, at a time when grassroots campaigns need money.

None of this is to minimize the importance of this Summit or the symbolic value of bringing together 300 remarkable individuals around the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and allowing them to exchange views and strategies. Nor is it to say that human rights groups cannot work together: Amnesty, Human Rights Watch, the ICJ, and the Lawyers Committee all threw their expertise and energy into the international campaign to create a criminal court earlier this year. It is quite possible that defenders, impunity, and even asylum could also generate similar cohesion.

But beyond that, it is hard to tell. Certainly, many of the doubts could be laid to rest if the Summit report manages to draw sharp, detailed lessons from the vast range of experiences represented. And if the four organizers are intent on creating a broader foundation, they will certainly have to draw in other NGO initiatives which have the same ultimate goal of pulling together the inspired, but fragmented human rights community. It is, without doubt, a noble and vital goal as human rights enters the era of globalization.

French Proposal for Cyber Castle Stuns Summit

by Laurie S. Wiseberg

The French government has purchased the Voltaire castle in Ferney, a few miles outside of Geneva, Switzerland, "to house a new human rights website" that it is constructing. This site "is to house all human rights documents." It is to be "the" encyclopedia of human rights, and will be called "Encyclopedia of Human Rights Voltaire." Therefore, when anyone is looking for human rights information, they will be told, "Go and consult Voltaire!"

This announcement, was made in an address to a plenary session of the Defender's Summit, by Robert Badinter, former Minister of Justice of France, now a Senator and the Chairman of the French Inter-Ministerial Commission for the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Needless to say, it stunned a number of NGOs.

Despite the enormous amount of work that NGOs have been doing on the Internet, all of these efforts were dismissed as insignificant by Badinter. The Senator mentioned that he had discussed the plan for the Voltaire site with both Mary Robinson and Kofi Annan, who were enthusiastic. He did not, however, consult NGOs, not even those based in France.

NGOs at the Defenders' Summit were disturbed for several reasons. "You don't need a castle to house a website," said one human rights advocate who has spent many years in the area of human rights documentation. "Badinter obviously does not understand what modern information technology is all about," he remarked. "Throwing money at computerization is not how we advance information in human rights," said another information specialist.

Others worry that, in an era of scarce resources, this will be a costly investment – simply reinventing the wheel with no value added. Badinter, for example, erroneously suggested that there is nowhere on the web where one can conveniently get all international human rights treaties. In fact, those treaties are now readily accessible either on the website of the High Commissioner for Human Rights or on the treaties database of the UN's main website, as well as on the sites of various NGOs.

While it is true that there is not much French-language material on the web, there is an enormous amount of human rights information in cyberspace, largely in English. The challenge at the moment is that of mapping the human rights landscape, with gateways, links, and pointers to where vital information can be readily found, NOT consolidating it all in one place.

The launching of the site of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in December 1996 was a major step forward in disseminating UN human rights information. As well, organizations and projects like Human Rights Internet, Project Diana, OneWorld Online, or the American Association for the Advancement of Science, have made major investments in developing roadmaps of human rights material on the web, as well as putting up important material difficult to obtain elsewhere.

Therefore, before investing millions in what appears to be more public relations than information management, the French Government might want to organize a consultation with human rights

NGOs and defenders to find out what their real needs are in the area of information and documentation.

Old-Timers Rock and Roll for Human Rights

by Willem Offenbergh

Perhaps one should never ask a rock artist to change the world. Nevertheless journalists did just that during and after the World Music Concert for Human Rights Defenders, held on Thursday, December 10 at the Bercy Stadium in Paris.

Fifteen thousand attended the concert, held to commemorate the 50th birthday of the Universal Declaration. For some it was déjà-vu, coming ten years after the previous Amnesty-concert. Peter Gabriel was asked to compare the two concerts and decided that it was like "the difference between a one night stand and a lasting relationship." 1988 had been a more intense music experience, he said, because "we had six weeks to rehearse. This time it was very rough, there were quite a few musical mistakes." This seemed to be a reference to Gabriel's impromptu appearance with Youssou N'Dour, although this was definitely a hit with the audience.

It was a trying experience for some of the stars. The hugely popular group Radiohead gave robotic answers at a press conference about their gig with Amnesty. For the two grandfathers of rock, Robert Plant and Jimmy Page (formerly of Led Zeppelin), the challenge was slightly different: getting their elongated guitars around the accoutrements of middle age.

A Senegalese landsman asked Youssou N'Dour if the next concert could take place in Senegal. 'Maybe as soon as the year 2000,' he replied, before posing patiently for pictures with Gabriel, Amnesty's Pierre Sane and Sane's teenage daughter. The young lady was able shake hands backstage with everyone famous, including the omnipresent former French Culture Minister Jacques Lang and His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The Tibetan spiritual leader in his saffron robe competed with Bruce Springsteen for attention from the audience and appeared to win, hands down.

Tracy Chapman and Youssou N'Dour did it best. Chapman (who had not performed in Europe in seven years) humbly offered her services to Amnesty for a follow-up on behalf of human rights activists. Youssou N'Dour played it safe and decided that he was here for music not politics. 'Music is the first and only language that I speak,' he said.

Palestinian Hunger Strike Supported

by Manisha Thomas

Lunch stopped for a minute at the Human Rights Defenders' Summit on Friday (December 11), to show solidarity with the 3,000 Palestinian and other Arab prisoners in Israeli prisons who have been on a hunger strike across Israel and in the Khiam camp in Southern Lebanon since December 5.

The Palestinians are striking to protest the fact that political prisoners are not being released as agreed between Israeli and Palestinian negotiators during the Wye River Accord discussions.

According to defenders here, an oral agreement at Wye was reached that 750 prisoners would be released. Two hundred and fifty prisoners have since been freed, but only one hundred of them were political prisoners (released near the end of their sentences); the other one hundred and fifty were common criminals.

Of the prisoners being held in Israel, 75 are "administrative detainees," which means that they are being held without trial. The rest have been tried and sentenced. Some have been imprisoned for 25 years. Those detained in southern Lebanon are being held in Khiam camp without trial, without being charged, and are not allowed visitors. The closure of the camp is being demanded by the hunger strikers.

Many human rights groups feel that Israeli legislation allows for the use of "moderate physical pressures" against Palestinian prisoners. (See accompanying article on Khaleda Jarrar below). They are also concerned that Israeli forces took Palestinian prisoners back with them when they redeployed in 1995, in violation of the Geneva Convention which says that political prisoners must be near their families.

Prison visits are limited by the fact that only immediate family members are allowed to visit. Not only do they need special permission, which can take a month to obtain, but permission is only granted to those under 16 or over 40. Each time the prisoner is transferred to another prison – which often happens – another application must be made. (See below for profiles of Israeli and Palestinian defenders)

Struggle for Women's Rights Moves into the Private Sphere

by Teresa Crawford

The international struggle for women's rights must move into the private sphere of marriage, property, culture, family, and inheritance, according to defenders who addressed a working group on women at the Summit in Paris last week.

The working group was an opportunity to assess the state of women's rights, and the challenges facing those who defend them. Some progress has certainly been made. For example, the draft statute of the International Criminal Court would make rape, forced prostitution, trafficking in women and children, and forced pregnancy both crimes against humanity and war crimes. Speakers also praised the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

At the same time, however, CEDAW suffers from more reservations than any other major human rights treaty (116) and most of these reservations concern the "private" sphere. An optional protocol is currently being drafted to CEDAW that would permit individual complaints to be lodged against governments by individuals, but one never knows when the draft will be done. African defenders reminded the working group that many governments sign on to treaties "to look good," but do little more than pay lip service to implementation.

Implementation requires a profound change of attitude at the level of family and community. For example, cultural traditions still penalize women heavily. One speaker said that the practice of

bride-burning (suttee) still continues in the Indian province of Rajasthan. Nasra Abubakar, from Kenya, spoke movingly about the horrors of female genital mutilation (FGM), which is still practiced widely in Somalia in spite of having no basis in Islamic law. As a victim of this practice herself, her work takes on added poignancy. Yet the practice is still supported by many women, who view FGM as a rite of passage or entry into society. Polyana Mangwiro talked of the dangerous and lonely task that faces gays in Zimbabwe, whose president, Robert Mugabe, has openly disparaged homosexuality, virtually inviting discrimination.

Others argued that economic globalization and the free market are taking a disproportionate toll on women. Karim Firoze Fawzia, from the Bangladeshi National Women Lawyers Association, now fears for her life after being attacked for her work on behalf of garment workers in Bangladesh (They number 1.3 million, and most are women.). She has already been assaulted in her office, had her sari ripped off, and petrol thrown on her. International business, she said, is partly to blame, yet the officials pretend business is above the law so they may preserve the relationship. "We are wearing the clothes of these women who have no rights."

Some speakers blamed the "patriarchal system," and argued that the language of the Plan of Action should show more deference to the perspective of women, particularly women in communities. This was echoed by one speaker in the plenary, who called to task the drafters of the Plan of Action and the Declaration for portraying defenders as warriors.

A UN expert on CEDAW, Aurora de Dios, recalled that women also face problems in developed countries. She asked the group to guess in which country a woman suffered from violence every 20 minutes. No one guessed that the country was Sweden. She said that Russian women were being "trafficked" from Russia into the brothel trade in northern Norway. This, she said, was particularly disturbing because the Russian women are some of the most well educated in the world thanks to the Communist system, which afforded women many educational opportunities. But because of the collapse of the Russian economy, they are forced to resort to this work to survive; so even education has not rescued them from the inhumane values of global capitalism.

Some spoke of the "intersectionality" or "triple repression" they encounter as women, poor women, and women of color. A defender from Mali blamed the IMF Adjustment Program in Mali for forcing governments to cut social programs, so undermining the ability of women to feed their families. Ellen Barry, director of Legal Services for Prisoners with Children in the United States, reminded the group that women in the United States are not immune from the abuses of governments, and made the plea for incarcerated women in the United States who, because of their race and class, make up a disproportionate share of prisoners. She called the prison industrial complex in the United States a new form of slavery and commented that the American culture's feelings about criminals is so deeply ingrained that it is almost as though women expect to be treated cruelly.

In a particularly powerful intervention, Raquel Tigallo, of the Philippines, called for there to be more care in the way that human rights defenders document abuses – survivors are often compelled to relate their ordeal with little regard to the horrors of the disclosure. The burden of responsibility to disclose lies on the shoulders of the victims without enough concern placed on their right to safety and privacy. Tigallo also expressed concern at the impact on the defenders'

mental health. She felt that daily exposure to suffering leads some defenders to trivialize the violations and lose sight of just how difficult it is for the victims to relive the experience. She felt that there should not just be legal support for defenders and survivors, but also psychological support.

The rights of disabled were also evoked in the context of women's rights. One defender noted that disabled and mentally-ill women are increasingly being forced to undergo forced sterilization.

All this served a valuable purpose in exposing abuses, which are increasingly in the private sphere of women's lives, that do not receive enough attention, but it was less clear about what could be done. CLADEM (The Latin America and Caribbean Committee for the Defense of Women's Rights) has issued a brief declaration of human rights, written from the gender perspective, in an attempt to reconceptualize what human rights means. The text was handed to the United Nations General Assembly on December 10, and had been submitted to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson. (See below for the text.)

But the working group was also clear that women cannot rely on declarations to free them from discrimination, abuse, and violence. Cultural constraints make the job all the more difficult as women are not only working against the force of the state, but also against their culture. Finding allies to aid in this struggle is crucial, as Abubakar found working in Somalia against FGM. Her group has involved Muslim holy men in a re-education campaign to explain to people that FGM is against Islamic law. In patriarchal societies, men's voices carry more weight than women's, so their impact is greater than if the group was working alone. It is lesson in co-operation, but also a sad commentary that women's voices alone are not enough to realize their human rights.

As Indai Sajor, the group rapporteur, said in summing up, emancipation has never been given to women. Women, she said, had to seize it.

Profiles: Libya, Israel, Palestine, and the Philippines

Libya: Soliman Bouchuiguir – The Libyan League for Human Rights by Willem Offenber

He was hitchhiking in Belgium, sometime in the 60s, when a big Cadillac stopped at the roadside. The driver was friendly and fascinated to hear about his young hitch-hiker from Libya (at the time, longhaired like most of his soixante-huitards-compatriots.) As the conversation developed, the young Libyan realized, to his amazement, that he had received a lift from no one less than the king of Belgium. When they parted he stammered: "merci Majeste!"

Soliman Bouchuiguir, 55, told this story over lunch in the lobby of the Palais de Chaillot. He represents the Libyan League for Human Rights, and repeatedly presses the organization's booklet in my hand. It is entitled "Basic Documents in English and Arabic" and has a map of Libya on the cover with a superimposed flame that symbolizes the Universal Declaration.

He points at the preface and the announcement of the League's establishment on March 2, 1989. There are four signatories. All were forced into exile. One of them, Mansour Kikhia, has since been killed by the Libyan authorities when he returned home. "Nobody in this building even knows his name," says Bouchuiguir, as he looks at the hundreds of fellow defenders at lunch.

Kikhia was kicked out of the Libya University in 1976 like Bouchuiguir. "The Revolutionary Progressive Committee," a fanatical group that supported the Libyan leader Khaddafi and was modeled on the Chinese Red Guards, had marked them both as anti-revolutionaries. They fled the country soon afterwards.

His friend went back to his death, but Bouchuiguir remained in exile. He moved to Geneva, where he became an international civil servant working for the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). Using the city on the lake as his base, he co-founded the League in '89 on the premise that Libya should not only accede to human rights covenants, but abide by their principles. He sums up the main violations in his country as absence of freedom of expression, political prisoners, unfair trials, torture and mistreatment, disappearances, and extra-judicial executions. A new law was recently adopted, making it easier to apply the death penalty to Muslim fundamentalists.

Independent Libyan defenders face some daunting practical problems. It is impossible for them to work inside Libya itself, but it is also hard to leave. Even if they do make it out, how can they find a country of asylum? Libya has been considered a pariah-state for decades, but the European Union has made no effort to offer a refuge to Libyan defenders. Bouchuiguir is a lucky exception. He is one of the few defenders in a position to pay for his own ticket, and he has used this Summit – like other meetings – to put Libya and his organization on the map.

Israel/Palestine

In 1980, Order 396 was passed in Israel giving military commanders the power to jail any Palestinian for six months without a trial. The sentence can be extended indefinitely at the end of the six months. Following the bombings in Israel last year, the number of administrative detainees rose to 500. Currently, it stands at 75. The following two stories profile the work of two women, an Israeli and a Palestinian, working to defend the human rights of prisoners in Israel and the occupied territories.

Israel: Tamar Pelleg Sryck, Defense Lawyer

by Manisha Thomas

Tamar Pelleg Sryck decided in her 50s to change jobs. She is now in her second career, working as a defense lawyer in the occupied territories. A philosophy professor for many years, Sryck was nearing retirement when changes started happening in the college in which she was teaching. Although it was a government college, the school had been free to decide the curriculum. Then the government decided that there should be lessons taught at the college on Jewish culture. The aim was decidedly nationalist.

Rather than teaching such lessons, Sryck went to law school part-time and embarked on her second career. She joined the Association for Civil Rights for which she worked until 1995. When the Intifada (Palestinian uprising) broke out, she began working in Gaza, defending Palestinians in Israeli courts. Sryck sees the situation in the occupied territories as "terrible violations" that are clearly intended to disinherit the Palestinian people. She grieves at the divisions that exist between Israelis and Palestinians, and views Israeli settlements as entirely alien. Palestinian buildings are colors and shapes that fit into the landscape, whereas the Israeli settlements stand out and seem out of place. While this is an aesthetic observation, it also indicates that the Israeli settlements do not belong.

When Sryck arrived in Israel at the age of 16, she was not aware that she was moving into someone else's country. She drifted to the left and joined the Communist Party. She realized that the party was not prepared to take a stand against Israel's immigration policy, which she considers "discriminatory" because it allows any Jew to get Israeli citizenship, and subsequently quit.

In December 1987, just after the Intifada broke out, the Association for Civil Rights asked for a volunteer to go to Gaza to defend Palestinians. Sryck was the only one to offer. She met with Palestinian lawyers who were receptive of her presence and work. One lawyer in particular, Raji Sourani, insisted that she return to Gaza. The two began working on behalf of Palestinians whose bones had been deliberately broken (During the Intifada, Prime Minister Rabin gave the order to break the bones of protesting Palestinians instead of shooting them.). Since Sourani, a Palestinian, had no access to Israeli courts, he would prepare the cases and Sryck would take them to the Israeli courts. In March of 1988 Sourani was arrested by the Israeli authorities and taken to the new Nakeb prison. Sourani was beaten, shackled, and kept in isolation for a week.

Sryck left the Association for Civil Rights in 1995 when it decided there was no need for her to continue working in the occupied territories and suggested she work on other projects.

She continues her work with administrative detainees. Even while she was attending the Defenders' Summit last week, she received an email from a colleague informing her that the appeal of Osama Barham, an administrative detainee, had been rejected. Barham is a moderate Palestinian who was arrested 6 years ago for allegedly being a leader of the Jihad Islami. He has declared that he is for peaceful negotiations, against the use of violence, and that he wants Israelis and Palestinians to live side-by-side.

When Sryck issued Barham's appeal on November 24, an Israeli philosophy professor testified on his behalf and eight legal claims based on previous High Court decisions were presented in favor of his release. But the military judge had a secret file from the Secret Service, which supported another extension of Barham's administrative detention. Given that Barham has been in prison for 6 years, Sryck does not understand how he could be considered a security threat.

Sryck is also working on the case of Salah Shehadeh in Gaza, a social worker and founder of Hamas in 1988. Like most other Hamas members, he was arrested, tried, received a stiff sentence (10 years in prison and a fine to be paid at the end). Since Shehadeh did not have the money to pay the fine, he had to stay in prison for an extra six months. Two weeks before his release, he

was given an administrative detention order. The appeal was lost and Shehadeh remains in prison. He claims to have no political affiliations: the fact that Hamas declined to pay his fine suggests that he is no longer with Hamas.

Sryck thinks that being an "older Jewish woman" probably provides her with protection. Yes, there is tolerance in Israeli society, she says, but it comes partly from apathy. Few Israelis really care that she is defending Palestinians from their own government.

Palestine: Khaleda Jarrar – Addameer Prisoners Support Association

by Manisha Thomas

Khaleda Jarrar has been defending human rights for over 10 years. She first came face to face with the law in Israel in 1989 when marching in a Women's Day celebration, and ended up as one of 22 people under arrest. Jarrar spent a month in jail without going to trial. She was later told that she had received a one-month sentence and that if she participated in any demonstrations over the following three years, she would be sentenced to one year in prison.

Jarrar continues to defend women's rights, while at the same time working as executive director of Addameer Prisoners Support Association in the West Bank. Addameer was established in 1992. Its staff of five and 20 volunteers provide legal assistance to prisoners who have been victims of torture, administrative detainees, and those who are being held without trial.

It covers the two jurisdictions of the Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority. There are abuses, "administrative detention," and torture on both sides. The Palestinian Authority (under the Palestinian State of Security Council) arrests and detains without trial. In some cases, the Israelis will deny prisoners access to lawyers. Administrative detainees are allowed to file an appeal, but often the reason for their arrest is not made public at trial.

The only legal recourse against torture is through appeal to the High Court of Israel. However, in Israel, according to Marco Sassoli, executive secretary of the International Commission of Jurists, the Supreme Court and the High Court of Justice have ruled that in some cases, the use of "moderate physical pressure" is necessitated. While what exactly is entailed in the definition of "moderate physical pressure" remains secret, the use of such pressure on so-called terrorists flies in the face of the presumption of innocence. The Courts have ruled that terrorists put the interrogator in a state of necessity that warrants the use of moderate physical pressure. While there is no legislation condoning this practice, the rulings of the courts provide interrogators with enough justification to continue applying the pressure. The International Committee of the Red Cross published a press release a few years ago stating that the practice of using such pressure continues.

It is difficult work. Human rights defenders face threats and the possibility of arrest. They are not always free to talk about violations. The local press will not always publicize cases of human rights abuses out of fear, and the authorities make travel difficult for all Palestinians. Jarrar was only given permission to attend the Defenders' Summit after the intervention of the French government.

Before coming to the Summit, Jarrar participated in a press conference, held by Addameer, calling for the release of Palestinian political prisoners. Over 3,000 Palestinian and Arab prisoners in Israeli jails have been on a hunger strike since December 5. There was hope that President Clinton's recent visit to Israel would result in their release.

Philippines: Sister Mariani Dimaranan – Task Force Detainees of the Philippines

by Manisha Thomas

Sister Mariani Dimaranan headed one of Asia's foremost human rights groups, the Task Force Detainees of the Philippines, for 20 years, from 1976 to 1996. Like so many other defenders, she was introduced to her calling in the worst possible way.

In October 1973, the Association of Mother Superiors of the Philippines decided to conduct a survey about the effects of martial law on the poor, especially farmers. Sister Dimaranan, who was teaching in a college at the time, was asked to work on the survey. One Saturday morning, when she had planned to do her laundry before working on the assignment, she found herself face to face with military officers who had apparently entered the compound of the college at 9:00 pm the previous night.

Since Sister Dimaranan was teaching the Chinese history, it was not surprising that the officers found books about Mao and other Chinese leaders in her office. But this was the era of rabid anti-Communism in Marcos' Philippines. She was summoned by the military officers and shown a list of the books and periodicals in her office. They asked her if the list was correct and then had her sign to verify that it was. Before signing, she drew a line below the last entry to ensure that no other books would later be added.

A few days later, she received an "invitation" to visit the military camp. Under martial law there was no way she could refuse to "accept." She arrived on a Saturday, as she had been told to do, but no one would attend to her. They would not let her return home, forcing her to sleep in the compound until Monday.

On Monday, the interrogation began. They had a list of 52 questions that they repeated for eight to nine days. Sister Dimaranan was accused of being a communist, of financing an underground movement, of writing articles against President Marcos, of editing articles in newspapers, and of managing an international network. She denied all the charges, but to no avail. At the end of the interrogation, she was allowed to check the transcripts of the records. On the transcripts, she changed those parts that were not accurate and then signed them.

Instead of being released, she was sent to a detention camp for 47 days. The first day, Sister Dimaranan was put in a separate room from the other prisoners. On the walls were blood stains and the phrase "Now I will tell the truth." Out of fear that she might be raped or given an injection of truth serum, she tore a string from her mosquito net and tied it to the door knob and then to her arm so that she would know if anyone tried to enter during the night.

The interrogation continued over the next 10 days. At the end, she was transferred to the regular camp where there were 33 other women and their children. During this time, she was able to talk

to the prisoners about their experiences. Many had been tortured and raped. Yet the conditions in the prison were very orderly. Everyone worked together, dividing the chores to be done.

Sister Dimaranan was finally released on December 6. That same month, the Task Force Detainees of the Philippines was formed by the Mother Superiors and she was asked to participate. By 1975, she was asked to work full-time on the Task Force and, a year later, was elected Chair.

The Task Force works for the release of prisoners and helps to send their children to school. There are currently about 150 to 200 "political" prisoners in the Philippines – down from the 1,000 to 2,000 during martial law, but still unacceptable.

The Task Force is based in Quezon City, but works throughout the Philippines. The work has taken its toll on Sister Dimaranan, who has had a bypass operation. She has stepped down as chair of the Task Force in 1996, but still sits on the Advisory Council of the Asian Human Rights Commission based in Hong Kong.

- Address: Task Force Detainees of the Philippines, #45 St. Mary's Street, Cubao, Quezon City, Philippines

Texts

Action Plan for Paris Human Rights Defenders Summit

Introduction

We, the participants at the Human Rights Defenders Summit held in Paris in December 1998, have adopted this Action Plan, in conjunction with the Paris Declaration and the Grievance List. This Plan builds on the Declaration on the Rights of Human Rights Defenders (DRHRD), adopted on 10 December 1998 by the UN General Assembly.

We believe an Action Plan for the protection of human rights defenders to be necessary in order to provide a common basis of work for defenders throughout the world. The present Action Plan aims to improve the protection of human rights defenders and to set out coordinated campaigns to help realize the objectives of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

This Plan draws on the considerable experience of many human rights defenders in accompaniment techniques, lobbying, international law and communications. The Summit hopes that implementation of the Plan will help spread human rights defense activities throughout the world, including wherever defenders are still targets of repression.

Bearing in mind the indivisibility of human rights, human rights defenders should enhance solidarity among all those working for human rights, whatever the focus of their activities. Mutual support and the development of common understandings bridging the gaps between different fields of activism are key to the protection and strengthening of the worldwide human rights movement.

Part 1: Protection of Human Rights Defenders

1.1 Action by Human Rights Groups

Detailed recommendations on the protection of human rights defenders have been developed by regional conferences held in recent years(1). Recognizing the need to refer to these recommendations, the participants at the Summit highlight the following elements:

Human rights defenders will co-operate to develop national plans of action for the protection of human rights defenders, on the basis of the detailed recommendations from regional conferences.

Wherever this is in the interest of victims, activists will publicly denounce attacks against other human rights defenders and contribute to improved rapid response mechanisms by promoting the use of existing rapid response methods among human rights organizations or groups in vulnerable communities and among groups at risk of threats or harassment (such as labour unions, social workers, etc).

These protection strategies should emphasize, as relevant, international accompaniment techniques, including short-term physical accompaniment (visits to remote areas, phone hot-lines, urgent action networks), political accompaniment (such as lobbying of diplomatic missions), and long-term accompaniment (including development of links with threatened communities). In addition, Human rights defenders will cooperate with any existing international accompaniment programmes.

Human rights organisations will systematically take into account gender-based persecution in all debates and actions regarding the protection and respect of human rights. They will strive to increase the presence of women in NGOs and networks of protection of human rights defenders at all levels of responsibility and in proportion to the place of women in grassroots actions. They will develop and implement mechanisms of protection which take into account the various forms of harassment and violence directed against women defenders. They will adopt a vocabulary and language of human rights which take into account the experiences of women and women human rights defenders in order to fully integrate women's rights within human rights.

Part 3

Human rights defenders will develop contacts and early warning networks with journalists, policy-makers and personalities prepared to take action at short notice. These contacts should ensure that relevant officials (ombudsmen, sympathetic parliamentarians, etc) are contacted quickly in case of emergency.

In developing protection strategies, human rights defenders will address, wherever relevant, abuses committed by non-state actors. They will also address any need for trauma and relief support for victims of human rights violations. Where relevant, they will develop co-operation with the labor movement in protection activities.

As a last resort, accompaniment should help facilitate the departure from the country of those in imminent danger, when circumstances indicate that this is the only available course of action. To

this end human rights defenders will establish procedures for immediate and coordinated action between international groups and press governments to guarantee the right to refuge and asylum for those forced to leave their country in relation with their human rights activities. They will also consider short-term "refuge" programs for activists forced to leave their country in situations where the threat against them is not expected to last for an extended period, and where the activists expect to be able to return to their country when the immediate threat against them disappears.

Human rights defenders will urge diplomats to request information from their host government about the situation of human rights defenders who have been or are at risk of being detained, "disappeared", killed or otherwise subjected to human rights violations; they should follow up this information, make it public and seek their government's intervention. When possible and consistent with their campaigning objectives, activists will increase the pressure on diplomatic representatives to attend campaigning events, particularly those where human rights defenders face specific risks. Diplomatic representatives should also be urged to coordinate visits to human rights defenders by their country's high-profile personalities, legal scholars and journalists.

Human rights defenders will build and strengthen national, regional and worldwide mechanisms to exchange experience and coordinate action against impunity. These mechanisms will research information about those responsible for human rights violations, especially crimes against humanity, and seek to bring them to justice.

NGOs will develop national and regional cooperation programs aimed at supporting the communications and computer needs of human rights defenders, seeking greater exposure in the media, and obtaining increased access to funding by public and private donors.

Human rights defenders will assist children and young people in organizing for the protection of their rights; by so doing they will promote the development of future generations of human rights defenders.

Human rights defenders will develop pilot projects, in cooperation with existing mechanisms, using information technology for the assistance of defenders at risk, linking defenders to trained groups of volunteers around the world, whose members will be responsible for keeping a permanent 'vigil'.

1.2 Government lobbying

The Summit participants agree to make the following demands on governments worldwide:

- To bring their legislation and practice into line with international human rights standards, and in particular guarantee freedom of association in their Constitution and laws, and ensure that human rights defenders are able to set up and maintain human rights organizations at all times, including under states of emergency.
- To ensure that all law enforcement officials respect all their obligations under international human rights standards and internationally recognised norms.

- To ensure that human rights defenders are guaranteed the right to assembly and must be able to carry out public campaigning activities in conformity with international human rights standards.
- To ensure that the right of human rights defenders to seek, receive and use funds freely is protected and its exercise governed by transparent rules consistent with the rights and freedoms enshrined in international human rights standards.
- To guarantee the freedom of movement and travel of all human rights defenders, both within their own country and internationally.
- To ensure that human rights defenders have access to domestic redress and compensation procedures when they are victims of human rights violations, and to facilitate access by all to international human rights mechanisms, including UN organs, treaty bodies and regional intergovernmental agencies.
- To follow up the adoption of the DRHRD with effective implementation of all their commitments and to ensure that all officials know about their obligations under this and other international human rights instruments, and receive adequate education and training.
- To ensure that those responsible for human rights violation are brought to justice. In particular, it is essential that governments develop effective witness protection mechanisms to ensure that human rights defenders, and those on behalf of whom they work, are protected from harassment and retribution when they seek to end impunity for perpetrators of human rights violations.
- To ensure that official aid programs contribute to human rights protection, respect local needs without distorting priorities, and are open to public scrutiny.
- To facilitate visits by human rights defenders to prisons, police stations, military bases and any other places of detention, and to provide clear and timely information about prisoners and about places of detention.
- To step up the fight against impunity by denying amnesties to those responsible for crimes against humanity and by including in their legislation provisions the principle of universal jurisdiction, criminalizing grave violations of human rights such as "disappearances", torture, genocide and crimes against humanity. All states should sign and ratify without reservation the statute of the International Criminal Court and international conventions on the prevention of genocide, on the imprescribability of crimes of war and crimes against humanity. Governments must deny the status of refugee and must not grant political asylum to those responsible for grave violations of human rights. They should not grant them diplomatic immunity.

1.3 Lobbying of Companies and International Labor Organizations

- Human rights defenders will demand that economic actors, including international agencies involved with the regulation of industry and trade:
- Adopt an explicit company policy on human rights which includes public support for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and for the DRHRD, and International Labour Organization conventions. In particular, companies should carry out audits of their activities to assess any way in which they may impinge on human rights, and ensure that

they remedy any such infringements. Companies should respect the human rights of their employees, including their freedom of association; they should ensure that company staff are never complicit in human rights abuses.

- Ensure that all their security arrangements protect human rights and are consistent with international standards for law enforcement. Any security personnel employed or contracted should be adequately trained, including in measures to prevent excessive force as well as torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. Companies should ensure they do not hire security personnel who have been responsible for human rights violations. Any complaint about security procedures or personnel should be promptly and independently investigated. Companies which supply military, security or police products or services should take stringent steps to prevent those products and services from being misused to commit human rights violations and be held morally and legally responsible for any such misuse or abuse.
- Ensure that their operations do not have a negative impact on the enjoyment of human rights by the communities in which they operate. This should include a willingness to meet with community leaders, voluntary and women's organizations to discuss the role of the company within the broader community, and a commitment to respect and safeguard the collective rights of peoples of the areas where they have activities.
- Ensure that their policies and practices prevent discrimination based on ethnic origin, sex, colour, language, national or social origin, economic status, religion, political or other conscientiously held beliefs, sexual orientation, birth or other status. They must resist any pressure to discriminate against employees who are human rights defenders.
- Never use chattel slaves, forced labour, bonded child labourers or coerced prison labour. They should ensure that suppliers, partners or contractors do not use such labour. They should cooperate with human rights defenders involved in alleviating the plight of forced or bonded labourers.
- Develop ethical business thinking and support activities and organizations which promote human rights, and do so in ways that never interfere with the work of human rights activists. They should do so by setting up independent channels, such as foundations, to support education, training or citizenship programs which incorporate human rights issues and organizations which defend human rights. Media companies, in particular, should be urged to give increased coverage to the activities of human rights defenders at risk. Corporate support for human rights work should never take a form which could compromise the independence of human rights organizations or influence the targets of campaigns.
- Develop programmes of support for human rights defenders, such as assistance to grass-roots organizations dedicated to the defence of human rights. Information technology and telecommunications companies, in particular, should develop programs of support for the needs of human rights defenders. Such donations should be provided under fair procedures and should not involve any undue interference on the part of the company in the activities of the human rights defenders. Companies should contribute to human rights education and training programs and provide public support, where necessary, for the activities of human rights defenders.

1.4 Lobbying of Intergovernmental Organizations

Activists and NGOs will demand that intergovernmental organizations, UN agencies, treaty bodies and human rights mechanisms:

- Integrate fully the protection of human rights defenders in their work; and ensure in particular that the UN Commission on Human Rights and regional human rights bodies cover specifically the protection of human rights defenders, and that the protection of human rights defenders is retained as a specific agenda item under which they report on the implementation of the provisions of the DRHRD.
- Remind states that they have the primary responsibility in implementing the DRHRD process and ensure that human rights defenders in all countries have full access to UN human rights reporting and monitoring mechanisms.
- Ensure that specialized intergovernmental organizations, such as UN agencies, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, bring their activities into full compliance with international human rights standards, in particular in relation to programs for the development of state institutions, project finance and the provision of training. They should hold systematic consultations with defenders on these issues.
- Adopt, as a matter of priority, The UN Principles and basic guidelines on the right of victims of violations of human rights to obtain reparation, develop further work towards ending impunity for perpetrators of human rights violations, and adopt an international convention against forced disappearances.

Part 2: Campaigning Activities

The worldwide human rights defence movement, rooted in resistance to oppression and destitution, is moving towards preventing human rights violations, and is seeking to develop its influence on national and international policy-making and implementation in relation to all human rights. The present activity plan outlines areas in which human rights defenders agree to work in common in the coming years, and which cover issues of concern to human rights defenders throughout the world.

2.1 Raising Universal Awareness of the UDHR

It is crucial to the protection of defenders that they do not remain an isolated minority trying to protect, sometimes at great risk to themselves, the rights of the many. To get to the stage where all citizens are capable of defending their own rights, a concerted action to bring human rights education to them all should be initiated. It is proposed to:

Campaign for all government agencies to display the text of the UDHR, in all the relevant languages, in every official building around the world and on official Internet sites, and to print the UDHR in official documents such as passports, police and court summonses, census forms, voter registration documents, etc.

Press education authorities in all countries to make human rights education an integral part of teaching at all levels, and to introduce training on human rights protection in all institutions aimed at training civil servants, law enforcement and judicial officials.

Develop pilot programs in all regions of the world to raise awareness of human rights among the most deprived social groups. Specific training materials and methods should be developed,

wherever necessary. Funding should be sought from governments, intergovernmental organizations and the corporate sector.

2.2 Campaign Against Extreme Poverty

The proposed campaign would aim at giving effective recognition and support as human rights defenders to those who to fight against extreme poverty - most of whom are deprived of the means of defence that better-off activists have - and at seeking recognition of the human rights dimension of their struggle for dignity, autonomy and legal protection.

The campaign may aim towards the development of an international convention on the elimination of extreme poverty, and towards the elimination of all discrimination based on poverty.

2.3 Campaign Against Impunity

The fight against impunity is at the core of the full respect of all human rights. There are no human rights while there is impunity. Human rights defenders will launch a campaign against impunity, aiming at raising awareness worldwide about the causes of impunity and their effects on victims and societies, at bringing to justice those responsible for human rights violations, at exposing the facts about past human rights violations, and at bringing compensation to the victims.

The campaign will develop in-depth arguments to counteract those used to justify impunity, which should never be a means of reconciliation nor a precondition to a peace settlement. NGOs will coordinate national and international efforts to mobilize people, denounce violations, and take action against perpetrators.

2.4 Technology Assistance for Human Rights Defenders

New communications technologies will increasingly allow activists to stay in touch with each other and to protect each other more effectively. The promise of a mass market in satellite phones combined with mature pager technology and ever-increasing broadcast capabilities of the Internet allow us to imagine a possible future Instant Action Network fully exploiting leading-edge technology in support the work of Human Right Defenders. For example, immediately after an activist issues a distress signal, a pre-briefed group of supporters are paged and an alert is issued on the Internet, including perhaps live sound from the scene of the incident.

2.5 Other Campaigns

It is suggested that other campaign themes be considered by the Summit: themes could include racism, children's rights, human rights in armed conflict situations.

Part 3: Coordination of Action

The protection of human rights defenders can be taken further by enabling activists to fight back against harassment or threat, by taking legal action, individually or collectively, and by widening their support base and linking up with each other. The Summit participants agree to establish a coordination structure to organize the follow-up of the decisions they have taken, including this Plan of Action. They ask the Steering Committee to propose an outline for such a structure.

The structure should organize its work so as to ensure that decisions made are followed up and that information is shared among all participants in a timely manner. It could seek financial and human resources for the implementation of this plan. The structure should act in coordination with, and reinforce, existing programs; it should ensure that its activities complement to those of existing structures at local, national, regional and worldwide levels.

Action Plan Appendix

Amnesty International

Amnesty International has agreed to carry out the follow-up work for the Action Plan adopted at the Bogota Conference on the Protection of Human Rights Defenders. However AI will not be able to carry out the follow-up and implementation of the Paris Summit Plan of Action. For this reason, AI proposes the establishment of an implementation structure separate from the organizing NGOs, but placed under their control.

AI therefore proposes that an international Foundation for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders be established, with the primary objective of ensuring the financing and implementation of the Summit Plan of Action.

The mandate and operating principles of this institution need to be defined in the near future.

ATD Fourth World

The ATD Fourth World movement wishes to ensure that, through the Plan of Action detailed above, the Summit of Human Rights Defenders marks a new stage in the mobilization of human rights defenders on behalf of all those whose rights are the least protected and who suffer the most enduring violations of all their rights. They are those peoples around the world who, suffering from extreme poverty, call on us always to deepen our understanding of human rights as based on the equal dignity of all human beings and on the indivisibility of all human rights.

It is therefore crucial, in the ATD Movement's eyes, to establish a follow-up procedure for the Summit. The ATD Movement believes that this procedure must maintain the flexibility which allowed the Summit to be organized in the first place. The procedure must provide support for existing activities, especially the smallest and least-reported ones. The follow-up procedure should not, in our view, take over activities decided at local level; on the contrary it should relay these activities and enhance their influence, in particular by ensuring that they are heard of in all international institutions.

In this context, the ATD Movement may propose that all interested defenders take part in the Permanent Forum on Extreme Poverty in the World, a network developed and maintained by the Movement to contribute to the sharing of experience, mutual support and solidarity among all those around the world who struggle against destitution. This network could, among other things, contribute to the activities of the UN Commission on Human Rights on human rights and on extreme poverty, as well as contribute to the UN Decade for the Elimination of Poverty and to the UN Day for the Elimination of Poverty, held on 17 October every year since 1987.

FIDH

The International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH) recommends that a detailed study be carried out of the necessary procedures for the follow-up and implementation of the Plan of Action, including such procedures, mandate and operating methods.

FIDH considers that the success of our worldwide campaign to protect human rights defenders is rooted in particular in the complementarity, diversity and flexibility of the activities carried out at all levels.

The above is the lesson from the operation the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, established 18 months ago by FIDH and the World Organization Against Torture (Organisation Mondiale Contre la Torture, OMCT). This programme has been developed on the basis of recommendations made by, and in partnership with, member organizations of FIDH and OMCT. One of its main directions of work is to seek complementarity with other NGO activities, to increase the efficacy of our common action. Moreover, it is essential to the Observatory's work to involve local human rights defenders wherever possible and at all stages of the activities carried out.

We strongly advise that the follow-up procedure developed by the Summit should be based on the same criteria as those outlined above, including complementarity and partnership with those already working in the relevant fields at the local, regional and international levels.

Should Summit participants so wish, FIDH and OMCT would be willing to consider ways to involve the Observatory, in coordination with other specialised NGOs, in the follow-up of the Summit – this however is not the Observatory's original mission.

In any event, FIDH proposes that, at the present time, the enlarged follow-up procedure be entitled A Summit International Follow-up Committee, until Summit participants themselves (individuals and NGOs) decide on its mandate, its operations and working methods.

France Liberties

France Libertes believes that an Action Plan follow-up and implementation procedure must be discussed and established during the Summit. France Libertes proposes that this discussion should take into account the existing regional networks so as to clearly define the follow-up procedures. The Summit should designate a provisional international committee, with

representatives from all continents; this committee should report on action to be taken within at most one year.

France Libertes will make its own network of contacts available to the participants, if they so wish.

(1) These conferences included Bogota (Colombia), 1996 ; Lund (Sweden), 1997 ; Geneva (Switzerland), 1998 ; Johannesburg (South Africa), 1998 ; Beyrouth (Lebanon), 1998.

CLADEM Calls for a New Human Rights Declaration for the 21st Century, Drafted from a Gender Perspective

CLADEM - the Latin America and Caribbean Committee for the Defense of Women's Rights - is seeking support and comments on the draft of a human rights declaration from a gender perspective. The document has been presented to the UN General Assembly and the UN and Human Rights Committee in Geneva (E/CN.4/1998/NGO/3) in the hope that it be considered in the drafting of a declaration for the XXI century.

The aim is to create a new and broader legal tool from a gender perspective which takes into account the rights of women, indigenous people, homosexual and lesbians, children, older people, the handicapped and all other groups which have been restricted by the concept of "human being" as contained in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. CLADEM invites anyone interested to contact CLADEM's regional headquarters in Lima, Peru.

This Declaration includes an Introduction, Preamble and articles grouped together by five main subject areas:

I. The Right to Identity and Citizenship: Among other proposals, we set forth the right to citizen identity with no regard to civil status, sex, sexual orientation, race, ethnic or social origin or any other condition.

II. The Right to Peace and to a Life Free From Violence: We propose guaranteeing the right to a life free from violence, both in public as well as private areas; the participation of women in the solution of armed conflicts and in the construction of Peace.

III. Sexual and Reproductive Rights: Reproductive autonomy and self-determination in relation to one's sexuality are keystones in this area. This includes the right to not suffer discrimination for one's sexual orientation and the right to have a safe and legal abortion.

IV. The Right to Development: In this section we set forth among other proposals, the right to enjoy the benefits of human development and the complete fulfillment of economic, social and cultural rights, including physical and mental health, education, work, adequate housing, nourishing security, equal and fair access to the land, credit, technology, potable water and energy. Furthermore, we state each woman and man's right to raise and educate sons and daughters, do housework, and to provide for the needs of the family, even after a divorce.

V. Environmental Rights: where we state that all women and men have the right to a sustainable environment and that equality of gender is one of the basis to achieve said sustainable development and moreover, the conservation of the environment.

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