



**Submission by the Association for
Progressive Communications to the
Special Rapporteur on human rights
defenders for the Human Rights Council
61st session report “Raising their
voices: HRDs respond to the human
rights crisis”**

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Introduction:

“Our sole existence as political subjects challenges the patriarchal mandates that seek to silence the power of women and sex-gender dissidences.”¹

Over the past decade, feminist movements and women human rights defenders (WHRDs) across the Global South have demonstrated extraordinary resilience in the face of authoritarian repression and sustained funding cuts. They have experienced escalating surveillance, gendered disinformation campaigns, and coordinated efforts that delegitimise their work through online harassment and smear attacks.² The weaponising of sexuality to discredit WHRDs,³ combined with the growing use of artificial intelligence technologies to generate deepfakes and manipulated images,⁴ has added a new layer of violence that is difficult to contest and almost impossible to contain once spread online. These forms of digital repression don't happen in a vacuum; they intersect with political censorship, mass internet shutdowns, and legal crackdowns that force activists into self-censorship in order to preserve their safety. Across regions, targeted attacks on WHRDs have had the cumulative effect of silencing and erasing their voices, whether through state-imposed restrictions, or shadow banning by technology companies that happen very frequently as a strategy of suppression of voices,⁵ or the self-censorship that becomes a survival strategy.

¹ IM-Defensoras. (2024). *Data that Hurt Us, Networks that Save Us: 10+ Years of Attacks against Women Human Rights Defenders in Mesoamerica (2012-2023)*. <https://im-defensoras.org/en/2024/04/resumen-ejecutivo/#los-derechos-que-defendemos>

² IM-Defensoras. (2025, 25 August). [WHRD Alert] MEXICO / Public authorities in Zacatecas seek to discredit woman defender of territory Sandra Miranda through defamation and leaking personal information. <https://im-defensoras.org/en/2025/08/whrd-alert-mexico-public-authorities-in-zacatecas-seek-to-discredit-woman-defender-of-territory-sandra-miranda-through-defamation-and-leaking-personal-information/>

³ Wijesiriwardena, S. (2024). *The machine that fosters shame: The weaponisation of sexuality in anti-gender anti-democracy disinformation*. Association for Progressive Communications. <https://www.apc.org/en/pubs/machine-fosters-shame-weaponisation-sexuality-anti-gender-anti-democracy-disinformation>

⁴ Lakshane, R. (2025, 3 June). AI is exacerbating image-based abuse. *GenderIT.org*. <https://genderit.org/feminist-talk/ai-exacerbating-image-based-abuse>

⁵ Shankar, P., Dixit, P., & Siddiqui, U. (2023, 24 October). Are social media giants censoring pro-Palestine voices amid Israel's war? *Al Jazeera*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2023/10/24/shadowbanning-are-social-media-giants-censoring-pro-palestine-voices>

Evidence from multiple studies highlights this alarming trend. For example, in Pakistan, a 2023 study by Media Matters for Democracy found that eight out of ten women journalists were self-censoring due to the fear of digital and physical violence.⁶ Similarly, a 2024 Citizen Lab study with 85 WHRDs living in exile documented how many were forced to constantly calculate risks, avoiding large gatherings for fear of surveillance, shifting their advocacy into private research and behind-the-scenes organising, or limiting themselves to trusted circles.⁷ The pattern is documented across Africa in APC's 2020 Feminist Internet Research Network (FIRN) study *Alternate Realities, Alternate Internets*. The study, with more than 3,000 respondents, found that 14.5% of women deleted or deactivated their accounts and 12.2% stopped using a digital platform altogether after experiencing online violence.⁸ As the report concluded, "This is not only another form of self-censorship and restrictions on the freedom of expression of women, but also the complete erasure of their digital identities and presence."⁹

In recent years, WHRDs' determination to fight for rights has persisted under unprecedented physical and online threats that are escalating in both volume and severity, while the international protection framework remains profoundly out of step.

- A 2023 survey by Sweden-based Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation found that 75% of WHRD respondents or their organisations experienced threats or harassment – a 15-point increase since 2021 – while nearly 25% received death threats and 37% survived assassination attempts.¹⁰

⁶ Shaukat, A., & Naeem, W. (2023). *Women Journalists and the Double Bind: The Self-Censorship Effect of Online Harassment in Pakistan*. Media Matters for Democracy. <https://mediamatters.pk/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Women-Journalists-and-the-Double-Bind.pdf>

⁷ Aljizawi, N., et al. (2024). *No Escape: The Weaponization of Gender for the Purposes of Digital Transnational Repression*. The Citizen Lab. University No Escape: The Weaponization of Gender for the Purposes of Digital Transnational Repression. <https://citizenlab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Report180-noescape112924.pdf>

⁸ Iyer, N., Nyamwire, B., & Nabulega, S. (2020). *Alternate Realities, Alternate Internets: African Feminist Research for a Feminist Internet*. Pollicy & Association for Progressive Communications. https://www.apc.org/sites/default/files/Report_FINAL.pdf

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Pruthi, C., & Zillén, E. (2023). *The state of women human rights defenders 2023*. Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation. <https://kvinnatillkvinna.org/publications/the-state-of-women-human-rights-defenders-2023/>

- In Mesoamerica, between 2012 and 2023, IM-Defensoras documented over 35,000 attacks against almost 9,000 women defenders and 956 organisations, including 200 killings, highlighting a brutal pattern of systematic violence.¹¹
- In addition to this, digital spaces have become increasingly unsafe for WHRDs. An Economist Intelligence Unit report identified that 38% of women and girls face online violence, including disinformation, defamation and AI-generated deepfakes, while coordinated cyber-harassment tactics like impersonation and doxxing are escalating globally.¹²

Beyond these physical and digital threats, WHRDs face mounting restrictions through financial and political scrutiny. States have weaponised regulation, compliance requirements and vague national security provisions to monitor, stigmatise and criminalise civil society organisations, especially those engaged in gender justice and feminist organising. Registration requirements, banking restrictions and arbitrary audits are increasingly used to choke the financial lifelines of feminist organisations, undermining not only their advocacy but their very existence. In many contexts, authoritarian governments have perfected a dual strategy that is based on silencing WHRDs through online repression while stifling feminist movements through administrative and financial control. In that context, WHRDs speak of isolation and cognitive dissonance as budgets and solidarity shrink.

The safety and sustainability of WHRDs and feminist movements are now even more precarious in light of shrinking financial support. The recent USAID funding cut, combined with a broader shift by many governments away from resourcing gender rights and feminist organisations, has created a critical gap for those on the frontlines. At the very moment when WHRDs are facing escalating repression, including digital surveillance, smear campaigns, criminalisation and political violence, the lifelines that sustain their work are being severed. As APC has warned, “With the upsurge in right-wing politics across the globe, we can expect further clamping down on civic spaces and silencing of civil society and human rights defenders – along with a corresponding

¹¹ IM-Defensoras. (2024, 27 June). Report by IM-Defensoras documents 35,000 attacks against women defenders in the region since 2012. <https://im-defensoras.org/en/2024/06/report-by-im-defensoras-documents-35-000-attacks-against-women-defenders-in-the-region-since-2012/>

¹² <https://onlineviolencewomen.eiu.com/>

decline in funding available for rights work.”¹³ This withdrawal of resources does not only weaken movements’ capacity to resist; it actively emboldens authoritarian states and non-state actors who thrive when feminist voices are marginalised. Without renewed commitments to funding and solidarity, international frameworks risk offering only rhetoric while WHRDs are left to bear the cost of repression in isolation.

In response to these conditions, regional and global feminist networks have sought alternatives that resist both repression and isolation. Feminist initiatives have channelled more flexible core funding to WHRDs and feminist organisations, recognising that survival depends on adaptability and long-term sustainability. Feminist community spaces have created powerful moments, bringing together thousands of feminists from contexts of crisis, from Palestine to Sudan to Myanmar, to collectively reflect on and express solidarity regarding not only the threats they face but also the futures they dare to imagine together. These networks are vital, yet their reach and existence remain fragile in the face of sustained state-corporate partnership and the global retrenchment of funding for gender equality.

This submission, informed by experiences of defenders in the Global South, calls on the Special Rapporteur to highlight that current standards and mechanisms, however principled, risk becoming irrelevant unless they are reimagined to protect those who experience repression not retrospectively, but often every single day. It highlights that while innovative feminist funding models and solidarity networks are beginning to provide some sense of sustainability to grassroots movements, WHRDs remain politically sidelined, chronically underfunded, and digitally and physically targeted. Movements are being forced to navigate simultaneous pressures in the form of violent political repression on the streets, algorithmic harms online, and donor priorities that increasingly shift away from resourcing feminist resistance. It is in this context that we call for recognition of WHRD-led analysis and strategy within the international human rights framework, not as a token voice but as central to the global response to authoritarianism and repression.

¹³ Tariq, N. (2025, 30 May). Global aid in crisis: Can we find sustainability in a precarious funding climate? *Association for Progressive Communications*. <https://www.apc.org/en/blog/global-aid-crisis-can-we-find-sustainability-precarious-funding-climate>

To ground this submission in lived realities, we interviewed three WHRDs from different regions of the Global South. These conversations explored how defenders are experiencing repression today, and sought to respond to the questions listed in the call for inputs. By centring their perspectives and experiences, we aim to offer insights shaped by WHRDs themselves, voices that not only reflect struggles and risks, but also supplement the extensive research that civil society has produced over the years to document and highlight violence against WHRDs.

We interviewed:

Name	Organisation	Country, region	Area of work
Sandra Aceng	Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET), Executive Director	Uganda, East Africa	Women's rights online
Mona Shtaya	Digital Action, Campaigns and Partnerships Director (MENA) and Corporate Engagement Lead	Palestine, SWANA	Digital rights
Anaís Cordova Páez	Taller de Comunicación Mujer, Coordinator of the Navegando Libres programme	Ecuador, South America	Digital rights and feminist internet

Interviews with WHRDs:

What motivates you to uphold, protect or promote human rights? (This may include, for example, work promoting women's rights, LGBTIQ+ rights, rights of minorities, labour rights, environmental rights, children's rights, housing rights, migrants' rights, health rights, etc. – this list is non-exhaustive). Please give examples.

Sandra Aceng:

- What truly motivates me to uphold, protect or promote human rights is my deep commitment to justice, equity, and the belief that every person, regardless of their gender, identity or background, deserves and is entitled to dignity and freedom as a human being.

Mona Shtaya:

- I believe in dignity, safety and equity for everyone, regardless of their race, gender, ethnicity, identity or any other difference. My motivation comes from witnessing systemic inequities in daily life and how they translate across different sectors, and overlap between offline spaces and the online ones. This drives me to uphold, protect and promote digital rights as an integral part of human rights.

Anaís Cordova Pérez:

- Caring for those who care for others is a feminist approach that allows us to generate tools and manage care for defenders and people who are constantly exposed to gender-based violence.

Do you believe your work is contributing to the creation of a more equal, more just or fairer society in which you live? Please give examples for your answer.

Sandra Aceng:

- While growing up and working in Uganda, I have witnessed how systemic inequalities and digital exclusion disproportionately impact women and structurally silenced groups. This has driven my passion to do what I do every day – I challenge the injustices, especially the ones towards women and marginalised groups, and continue to advocate for gender-inclusive and human rights-based approaches to governance, technology and policy.

Mona Shtaya:

- In my work at Digital Action, we see this clearly when looking at tech platforms and how technology has facilitated gender-based violence against women in the SWANA region. As part of our work, we have documented cases, built policy briefs, and hosted survivors of technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) to shed light on its impact in the region. For example, we have documented cases of political activists who were threatened and even killed as a result of TFGBV.
 - On August 19, 2020, Dr. Reham Yacoub, an Iraqi activist involved in the protest movement since 2018, was killed in Basra after months of online defamation and incitement on Facebook, compounded by earlier death threats.
 - Similarly, LGBTQIA+ individuals in the SWANA region face severe online abuse, including harassment, doxxing, extortion, hacked accounts and entrapment, often on Meta-owned platforms.
 - We also documented and hosted Tunisian LGBTQIA+ activist Rania Amadoni, who shared her personal experience with TFGBV at one of our events. Such campaigns fuel discrimination, forcing some to flee their countries, lose jobs, endure violence, and suffer serious mental health impacts.

Anaís Cordova Páez:

- As part of our work in recent years, we have provided feminist support in cases of digital gender-based violence, that is, all forms of violence that occur through technological means. We are committed to creating a feminist internet where diverse voices and technological practices can be constructed in a different way.
- One of the strongest and most transformative components of our work is feminist support through the Navegando Libres helpline,¹⁴ which people can call if they are experiencing digital gender-based violence. Here, we approach each case from a broad psychosocial perspective. For us, we contribute by protecting and caring for caregivers, something that is lacking in capitalist and male-centred societies.

If you live in a country where there is some space to engage in human rights work, how do you believe your society would have developed differently if this work was not permitted?

If you live in a country where there is very limited space for human rights work, how do you try to create more space to do your work? Please give examples.

What is the single biggest risk you face in your work? This could be, for example, financial sustainability, restrictive legislation, a hostile public, physical attack, legal action, criminalisation, unsupportive community/family, media or social media smear campaigns or gendered discrimination (this list is non-exhaustive).

Sandra Aceng:

- As the executive director of the Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET) and a digital rights advocate, I have faced a range of risks that reflect the shrinking civic space in Uganda and beyond. These include restrictive laws and policies, such as the Computer Misuse Act (as amended in 2022) and the Anti-Pornography Act 2014 in Uganda, which have been used to silence dissent and criminalise

¹⁴ <https://navegandolibres.org/>

expression in online spaces, specifically for women and structurally or historically silenced groups or communities.

- Surveillance and threats continue to restrict our operations, including communication monitoring and online activities, which creates an environment of fear and self-censorship. Online harassment and smear campaigns mainly targeting women's rights activists and feminists aimed at discrediting our work and intimidating us into silence.
- Criminalisation and intimidation by state and non-state actors, especially when we speak out against internet shutdowns, LGBTQIA+, gendered disinformation or human rights violations.
- As WOUGNET, we respond by building coalitions, documenting violations, engaging in policy advocacy, and creating safe spaces for women and marginalised or structurally silenced voices online. For example, during the 2021 general elections, WOUGNET documented the gendered impact of internet shutdowns and worked with partners like Access Now, Global Partners Digital and the Digital Human Rights Lab to amplify the voices of women affected.
- Despite the risks, we have continued to advocate for transparency and inclusive digital governance. Our resilience lies in collective and holistic action, feminist solidarity, and an unwavering belief that equality is possible.

Mona Shtaya:

- The digital rights situation in the SWANA region is affected by several challenges that directly impact our work. Restrictive cybercrime laws lead to people being arrested for expressing their opinions, violating fundamental rights and depriving them of free speech. Those laws spread a climate of fear and chilling effect, where the human rights defenders are threatened with being arrested for simply practicing their fundamental rights.
- The failure of tech companies to protect marginalised groups, including women and LGBTQIA+ communities, fuels online harassment, disinformation and smear campaigns, which undermines trust, silences voices, and increases the vulnerability of those we seek to support. Moreover, tech companies' content policies often censor legitimate expression, limiting the space for advocacy and public debate.
- Lastly, surveillance technologies pose another major risk to our work. States in the region weaponise these tools to securitise and militarise public spaces,

leaving human rights defenders feeling constantly threatened and monitored. This creates a pervasive climate of fear that discourages them from mobilising and organising.

Anaís Cordova Pérez:

- Ecuador is a country in crisis on several levels: social, structural and governmental. Over the past two years, we have seen an increase in violence and the erosion of human rights, as well as the dismantling of state structures that promote equality policies and guarantee basic human rights for women, children, LGBTQI+ people, communities, human rights defenders and the general population.
- We are constantly faced with new laws that weaken the state apparatus that guarantees basic rights such as health, education and comprehensive protection, while more money is invested in surveillance, control and weapons.
- In the last year, the Ecuadorian government has passed laws that concern us, such as the Intelligence Law, which allows access to accounts, mobile phones and all types of devices without a warrant or permission from a judge. This not only violates human rights, but also puts human rights defenders at risk and increases the control of a violent state.
- Another law was passed that regulates the flow of money to foundations or collectives working for human rights or the promotion of conservation. This makes our work increasingly precarious, complex and exhausting.

Please describe what piece of human rights work you have carried out or contributed to that you are most proud of over the past five years.

Sandra Aceng:

- One of the most important pieces of human rights work that WOUGNET is proud of is the countering backlash project, which addresses the growing global and regional threats to gender equality, particularly the resurgence of patriarchal narratives and the shrinking of civic space for women and marginalised groups. This is because the project responds to misogyny, xenophobia and homophobia embedded in populist narratives that undermine gender justice.

- The project continues to strengthen the capacities of women's rights organisations, gender justice defenders and civil society to resist backlash and reclaim space for feminist action.
- WOUGNET is co-creating and disseminating evidence-based research and strategies to counter the erosion of gender policies and promote inclusive development. This project also contributes to SDG 5 (gender equality) and SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) by enhancing advocacy, awareness and resilience among vulnerable groups.
- WOUGNET's campaigns during global action days like the 16 Days of Activism [against Gender-Based Violence] have informed the organisation's policy advocacy and capacity-building initiatives around online gender-based violence.

Mona Shtaya:

- One of the most recent campaigns I was part of is the "Year of Democracy" campaign. This campaign, designed and led by Digital Action, aimed to build evidence and advocate for stronger protections of people's fundamental democratic rights in the biggest elections megacycle. In collaboration with our partners in the Global Coalition for Tech Justice (GCTJ) – a coalition of over 270 organisations worldwide – we focused on gathering evidence in Global Majority countries. In the SWANA region specifically, we produced a white paper¹⁵ and election briefs on Tunisia¹⁶ and Jordan,¹⁷ as well as a few policy briefs.

Anaís Cordova Pérez:

- We are proud to have created a line of work in feminist internet where we have promoted reflections on the importance of technology and digital care from a feminist perspective. The digital gender-based violence support line Navegando Libres has been operating since 2017 as a benchmark for comprehensive protection and technopolitical reflection.
- We have conducted gender-focused research to contribute to the generation of knowledge around understanding and eliminating digital violence.

¹⁵ Shtaya, M. (2024). *Tech Harms on People and Elections in the Middle East and North Africa Region*. Global Coalition for Tech Justice. <https://digitalaction.co/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/MENA-white-paper-final-March-2024.pdf>

¹⁶ Global Coalition for Tech Justice. (2024). *Tunisia country briefing*. https://digitalaction.co/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Tunisia-briefing_22-Oct-2024_.pdf

¹⁷ Digital Action. (2024). *Jordan country briefing*. <https://digitalaction.co/jordan-country-briefing/>

- Since 2024, we have been building a community for work and reflection on technology from a transfeminist perspective.

Has your work been impacted by funding cuts in the past 12 months? If so, please describe what these cuts have prevented you from being able to do.

If your work has been impacted by funding cuts, please describe how you are attempting to mitigate the impact of the cuts.

Sandra Aceng:

- Funding cuts and donor conditionalities threaten the sustainability of grassroots feminists and digital rights organisations who are friends and partners of WOUGNET.
- We have seen how [funding] shifts have impacted many of our partners and allies in the digital rights and feminist movements. And what affects our partners inevitably affects us too – whether through reduced collaboration opportunities, limited joint programming, or the emotional toll of seeing vital work struggle to stay afloat.
- Organisations like APC have been incredibly supportive during this time. Through the impact grants and other small-scale funding mechanisms, APC has helped sustain organisations like ours and others in the network, allowing us to continue our advocacy, research and community engagement work despite broader funding challenges.
- Our strategy has been to remain agile: diversifying funding sources, strengthening regional and global partnerships, and investing in capacity building to ensure our team and programmes remain resilient and responsive.

Mona Shtaya:

- Shrinking funding opportunities in the field reduce the resources available to sustain long-term initiatives, making it more difficult to respond to emerging threats and support at-risk communities, as well as affecting the ability to expand the work in the region.

Anaís Cordova Páez:

- There are multiple ways in which funding cuts can affect us; in other words, the impact is not only economic. The precariousness we face as workers is increasing, and it has to do with a system that does not consider the defence of human rights to be hard and ongoing work.
- There are increasingly smaller funds for specific purposes, which prevents organisations from planning for the long term and forces them to live in a constant state of economic alert.
- In Ecuador, a law was recently passed that further regulates the inflow of funds to organisations on the ground by questioning the legality of the money they bring in.
- This is an attempt to destroy the social fabric and what little organisation currently exists to resist the violence and extractivism that the country is experiencing.
- Our strategy is to forge links with other organisations in Latin America so that we can work together and collaborate rather than compete.

Do you think international standards on human rights (as contained in Universal Declaration on Human Rights, ICCPR, ICESCR, HRD Declaration, etc.) are still relevant? Please give a reason for your answer.

Do you think the international human rights mechanisms (for example, UN Treaty Bodies, UN Special Procedures, the UN Human Rights Council, the UPR, the Inter-American Commission and Court on Human Rights, the European Court on Human Rights, the African Commission and Court on Human and Peoples' Rights) are effective in protecting the

work of human rights defenders? If yes, please explain why. If no, please state what you believe may be a more effective way to protect human rights defenders.

Sandra Aceng:

- In my experience and through WOUGNET's advocacy, international human rights standards and mechanisms – such as those of the UN Human Rights Council, Special Rapporteurs, and regional bodies like the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights – have been valuable but not always easily accessible or responsive to grassroots realities.
- These mechanisms are effective in several ways, such as:
 - They provide normative frameworks that guide our advocacy, especially around digital rights, gender justice and freedom of expression.
 - They offer platforms for visibility, allowing us to amplify local issues – like internet shutdowns or online gender-based violence – on global stages.
 - Through coalitions like APC and #KeepItOn, we've been able to submit reports and engage with Special Rapporteurs, which has helped spotlight Uganda's digital rights challenges.

Mona Shtaya:

- The work carried out by the UN, Human Rights Council, regional human rights courts and commissions and Special Rapporteurs is crucial but not sufficient in a sector where tech companies dominate and control people's data and means of communication.
- I strongly believe there should be regulatory frameworks that protect people globally, including those living in countries that are lagging behind in regulating this industry.
- For example, in many SWANA countries, there are no privacy or data protection laws, and cybercrime laws are weaponised to stifle free expression. As a result, people in this region grapple with tech-related harms on a daily basis.

- Therefore, I believe international efforts must take a different approach – one that is more inclusive and prioritises people in Global Majority countries, who are disproportionately affected by the harms caused by tech companies.
- Some initiatives at the UN level, such as the UNESCO guidelines for the governance of digital platforms, are a good starting point. However, as long as these guidelines remain non-binding, companies will not feel the urgency to abide by them.
- Additionally, from the different direct engagement that I've done with the tech companies, I've witnessed their different approach to look at things if they were approached/called out by UNSRs. That said, I think the work is crucial but not enough.

Anaís Cordova Páez:

- I believe that digital or technological gender-based violence is not fully understood in terms of its scope and impact within the UN system.
- Corporations and their techno-solutionist policies have effects within the UN system that are not taken into account and are not observed.
- The influence of corporations within the UN system should be minimised.
- International human rights standards work for us as long as there are joint communication campaigns or advocacy strategies in the region, and/or they are linked to specific ongoing work.

Do you find the international human rights mechanisms, as outlined above, easy to access? Please give reasons for your answers.

Sandra Aceng:

- There are limitations such as the fact that access and engagement with these mechanisms can be resource-intensive and bureaucratic, making it difficult for smaller or underfunded organisations to participate meaningfully.
- There's often a disconnect between international resolutions and national implementation, especially in contexts where civic space is shrinking.

- Follow-up and enforcement of recommendations remain weak, particularly when states are uncooperative or dismissive of international scrutiny.
- To make these mechanisms more effective and accessible, there is a need to:
 - Simplify reporting processes and provide translation and technical support for grassroots groups.
 - Increase funding and capacity building for local organisations to engage with international bodies.
 - Ensure stronger linkages between international mechanisms and national human rights institutions, so that recommendations lead to real change on the ground.
 - Promote regional solidarity and peer accountability, especially within African human rights systems.
- Ultimately, these mechanisms are most powerful when they work in tandem with local movements, amplifying voices from the ground and holding states accountable in ways that are inclusive, transparent and sustained.

What is the most important message that you would like the Special Rapporteur to bring to the international community about human rights and human rights defenders?

Sandra Aceng:

- Women human rights defenders are standing on the frontlines of justice – challenging inequality, defending digital freedoms, and amplifying the voices of the most marginalised. Yet, we do so under increasing threat. From online harassment and smear campaigns to restrictive laws and shrinking civic space, our work is constantly under pressure.
- My message is simple: We need more than solidarity, we need action. Support must go beyond statements. We need:
 - **Flexible, sustained funding** for grassroots feminist organisations.
 - **Protection mechanisms** that respond to the realities of digital and physical threats WHRDs face.

- **Inclusive** international platforms that centre voices from the Global South – not just as participants, but as decision makers.
- **Accountability** for governments and corporations that enable surveillance, censorship and gendered disinformation.

Mona Shtaya:

- Women human rights defenders are on the frontlines, demanding freedom, equity and dignity for all. Yet, we face systemic mechanisms designed to restrict our spaces and silence us – both online and offline. When women human rights defenders are targeted, it threatens and weakens movements for justice everywhere, spreading fear and creating a chilling effect.
- In terms of solutions, I strongly believe in accountability: binding international frameworks should hold both governments and tech companies responsible for enabling or tolerating harassment, hate speech, incitement and violence.
- Emergency protection mechanisms must be available for women human rights defenders whenever they are threatened, smeared or doxxed, alongside accessible legal and moral support.
- Given the shrinking civic space and resources, there should also be dedicated, flexible and core funding for feminist movements and groups working on these issues. This would help sustain their work, expand the movement, and allow more strategic planning and organising, rather than relying solely on short-term crisis response.

Anaís Cordova Páez:

- The first thing I would say is that care work is work, and this is supported by women human rights defenders who also put their bodies on the line in digital spaces, and who are primarily affected by state surveillance and gender-based violence reproduced by digital media.
- I would like to see the UN monitor the effects of corporations on the sovereignty of states related to surveillance and technology.
- In addition, we would like to see more information, research and knowledge production on technology-facilitated violence and its impact on the lives of women human rights defenders.