

10. THE STORY OF MUENI

MY NAME IS MUENI, I AM A FEMINIST AND AN ORGANIZER AT AN ACTIVIST UNION. I'M ALSO AN ARTIST. I VOLUNTEER AT A COMMUNITY-BASED UNION IN MY AREA, THE MUKURU KWA NJENGA COMMUNITY JUSTICE CENTER.



I AM A HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER VOLUNTEER. I FIRST ENCOUNTERED DEFENDERS COALITION THROUGH THE MOVEMENT, AS WE ARE PART OF A LARGER MOVEMENT THAT IS WELL-KNOWN WITHIN THE UNIONS. WE HAD A DEEPER INTERACTION WITH THEM DURING A TRAINING PROGRAM THEY OFFERED TO HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS (HRDS).



I HAVE BEEN ARRESTED A FEW TIMES, AND ONE NOTABLE INSTANCE WAS DURING A PROTEST ON MAY 11, 2022, AGAINST THE HIGH COST OF LIVING



DEFENDERS COALITION PROVIDED LEGAL SUPPORT THROUGHOUT THE LENGTHY LEGAL PROCESS, AND IN DECEMBER 2022, WE MANAGED TO CLEAR OURSELVES OF THE CHARGES WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF HIGHLY QUALIFIED AND CAPABLE LAWYERS.



DEFENDERS COALITION HAS RECENTLY ASSISTED US WITH BAIL, ARREST ISSUES, AND MORE. THEY ARE TRULY SUPPORTIVE OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS. JUST RECENTLY, ON JULY 7, 2023, DURING DEMONSTRATIONS, I WAS ARRESTED ALONG WITH 34 OTHERS, AND DEFENDERS COALITION PAID OUR BAIL

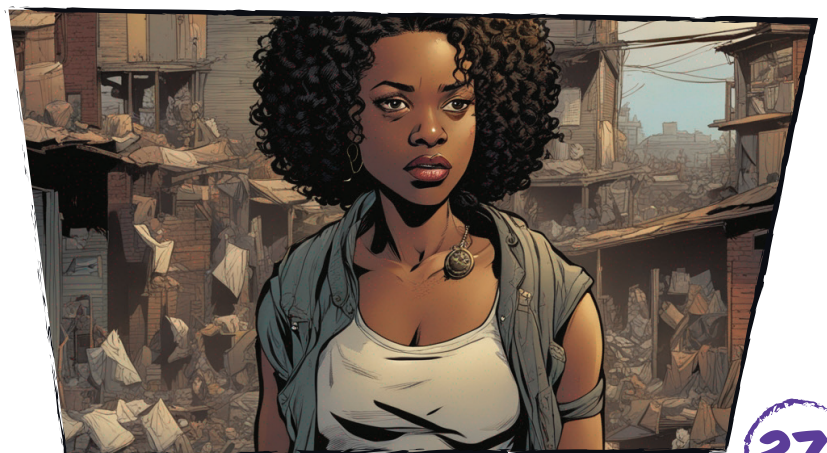
IN 2018, ONE OF THE MOVEMENTS DISCOVERED CASES OF EXTRAJUDICIAL KILLINGS IN OUR INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS. HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS CAME TOGETHER TO ADDRESS THIS ISSUE. SABA SABA DEMONSTRATIONS HAVE BEEN POPULAR SINCE THE 1990S.



WE MOBILIZE TEAMS BY CENTERS, WITH EACH CENTER HAVING AT LEAST TWO REPRESENTATIVES. THESE GROUPS COLLABORATE TO PLAN AND EXECUTE THE PROTESTS. WE SPREAD OUR MESSAGE, AND THE COMMUNITY IS USUALLY INFORMED OF OUR PLANS, MAKING OUR ACTIONS STRATEGIC AND EFFECTIVE.



ONE MAJOR CHALLENGE WE HAVE EXPERIENCED DURING ARRESTS IS THE VIOLENCE, INCLUDING BEATINGS AND INAPPROPRIATE TOUCHING OF WOMEN. THE POLICE DENY US BASIC NECESSITIES.






DURING OUR THREE-DAY DETENTION, THE POLICE DENIED US SANITARY TOWELS, AND SOME WOMEN WERE ON THEIR MENSTRUAL CYCLES. THEY ALSO PREVENTED US FROM USING THE TOILETS, FORCING US TO URINATE IN TRAPEZOID MILK BOXES IN THE CELL. WHEN THEY EVENTUALLY ALLOWED US TO USE THE BATHROOMS, WE HAD TO SHARE THEM WITH MEN. THE BATHROOMS WERE EXTREMELY UNHYGIENIC AND UNSAFE FOR WOMEN TO USE, FILLED WITH URINE FROM THE VERANDA AND BEYOND.

DEFENDERS COALITION HANDLED OUR RELEASE PROCESS AND NOT ONLY PAID OUR BAIL BUT ALSO PROVIDED US WITH FOOD AND ESSENTIALS.



DEFENDERS COALITION HAS BEEN MORE THAN SUPPORTIVE TO US. AS A HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER, I WAKE UP EVERY DAY TO FIGHT FOR OUR RIGHTS. IT IS NEVER EASY; THEY SAY IT'S NOT A WEDDING PARTY, AND THAT'S TRUE. BUT THE REWARD IS FREEDOM.



DID YOU KNOW THAT THE DEFENDERS COALITION IS THE NATIONAL COALITION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN KENYA, A NATIONAL MEMBERSHIP ORGANIZATION ESTABLISHED IN 2007 AND REGISTERED UNDER KENYAN LAW AS A TRUST TO CHAMPION THE SAFETY, SECURITY AND WELLBEING OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS (HRDS)? NOW YOU KNOW

OUR NEXT STORY STRAIGHT OUTTA MAKUENI COUNTY, LET'S GET TO KNOW MUENDO WA KALELI...

DEFENDERS COALITION PROVIDES HRDS WITH TRAINING ON SAFETY AND LEGAL GUIDANCE. EQUIPING THEM WITH GUIDELINES THAT SERVE LOCAL HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS WELL AND ENSURE THEIR SAFETY AT ALL TIMES.