**About Defenders Coalition**

Defenders Coalition is a national organization, established in 2007, whose mission is to strengthen the capacity of HRDs to work effectively in Kenya and to reduce their vulnerability to the risk of persecution. The organization has a track record of advocating for a favorable legal and policy environment for the protection of HRDs in Kenya, conducting preventive security management training, and offering support to HRDs in distress through legal, medical, and psychosocial support. Defenders Coalition’s mission is to champion for safety, security, and well-being of Human Rights.

1. **#NiMamaNetwork**

*Recognizes the work of women human rights defenders: All women and girls who work for human rights, all people who defend the rights of women and girls, and all people who defend the rights to be free from discrimination and violence based on gender and sexuality.*

**#NiMamaNet,** which is a national network of Women Human Rights Defenders, is convened by the Defenders Coalition and advocates for gender justice and women rights through

* Skills-building in advocacy
* Documenting rights violations
* Economic empowerment
* Enhancing personal safety
* Offering timely intervention on safety and wellbeing.

1. **WHO ARE WHRDS?**

These are women and girls who act to promote or protect human rights and people of all genders who defends the human rights of women or works to advance rights related to gender equality – collectively known as “women human rights defenders” (WHRDs).

It also includes any civil society actors who may not self-identify as human rights defenders or those who work on non-traditional human rights fields (journalists, health workers, environmental activists, peacebuilders, private actors, development and humanitarian actors, etc.). It includes lesbian, gay, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) activists, as issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity are part of achieving gender equality.

1. **ARE WHRDS LEGALLY RECOGNIZED?**

WHRDs act under the protection of the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, otherwise known as the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders of 1998.

1. **WHAT RISKS DO THEY FACE?**

WHRDs face all of the same risks and violations as human rights defenders generally. However, the consequences of these violations are often gender-specific for WHRDs due to the prevailing social and cultural norms in a given context.

WHRDs can also face additional gender-specific threats and violence, in both public and private spheres, such as

* Gendered verbal abuse (online and offline),
* sexual harassment, rape and sexual violence,
* Attacks on family members and close relatives.
* Psychosocial attacks, threats, torture,
* Unlawful arrests /detention,
* Killings and forced disappearances.
* Aside from gender, other aspects of their identities, such as age, religion, ethnicity, class, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity, and the ways in which these aspects intersect shape the risks and violations that they are exposed to.

1. **WHRDS NEED YOUR SUPPORT**

You can enhance the working environment of WHRDs by:

* Recognizing the unique and gendered risks and threats faced by women human rights defenders.
* Supporting the organising and work of local protection and emergency organisations and networks, and mechanism such as networks of safe houses.
* Publicly condemn human rights violations and abuses and investigate smear campaigns and online harassment against WHRDs.
* Building capacities of WHRDs and WHRD-led organizations to safely and effectively conduct their human rights work.
* Facilitating and fund women’s rights activists’ presence in regional and international fora (such as the EU, AU and the UN) in order to strategically push back anti-gender forces’ presence in these spaces. It is important to form strategic coalitions to strengthen the space for independent civil society.

**Join the Defenders Coalition in working towards the elimination of intimidation, violence, stigmatization, ostracism and delegitimization of the work of WHRDs for the effectiveness, and innovation in advancing gender justice and women rights.**

1. **DID YOU KNOW!**

**STATES HAVE OBLIGATIONS TO RESPECT, PROTECT AND FULFIL THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS**

**RESPECT ;**States should refrain from criminalizing and stigmatizing WHRDs, including those working on sexual and reproductive health and rights. Public recognition of the legitimacy of the work of WHRDs is a first step to preventing or reducing threats and attacks against them.

**PROTECT** The obligation to protect requires States to exercise due diligence in preventing, punishing and redressing harm caused by private parties,32 which includes ensuring that women defenders are able to access justice and receive protection from harassment, threats, retaliation and violence.

**FULFIL** States should provide a safe and enabling environment for WHRDs to be able to do their work. State authorities should, in consultation with WHRDs, establish effective and gender sensitive online and offline protection mechanisms to facilitate their work, promote projects to improve and further develop the documentation of cases of violations against WHRDs, and allocate increased resources towards local WHRDs and for their immediate protection from physical and psychological attacks.