



Office for Democratic Institutions
and Human Rights

Human Rights Defenders: Monitoring work

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Human Rights Department, Human Rights Defenders Team – Monitoring Portfolio



Human rights monitoring principles

- Do no harm
- Ensure (specific) informed consent
- Respect confidentiality
- Know relevant human rights standards and the context
- Be impartial and objective
- Be accurate and precise
- Be transparent
- Respect security standards
- Maintain integrity and credibility and behave professionally
- Integrate gender and diverse perspectives

Methods and tools of Information gathering

Methods	Tools
Interviews	Questionnaire
Focus Group	Questionnaire
Direct observation	Checklist
Surveys	Questionnaire
Open source	Social media, images, videos...
Desk research	Legal and policy frameworks, practice...
Indicators	

ODIHR's monitoring work on individual cases of defenders at risk and trends

- Do no harm principle and risk assessment
- Assessing impact on affected HRDs
- Interventions: Meetings, letters, tweets, speeches, statements...
- Interviews and consent as the basis of all monitoring work

Assessment visits on human rights defenders

- ODIHR seeks to ensure geographical/regional balance and the coverage of different contexts in the OSCE area;
- **First cycle** launched in 2018 and covered the period 2017-2019 (Montenegro, Mongolia, Georgia, Italy, the Czech Republic);
- **Second cycle** launched in November 2021, covering 2020-now (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Romania, Malta, Estonia).

ODIHR's first assessment cycle on HRDs: Follow-up

- Country reports, shared and discussed with the governments of the five countries visited;
- Follow-up country online meetings with representatives of state bodies, the NHRIs, civil society organizations of the countries covered in the first assessment cycle;
- Publication of the ***Final Report of the First Assessment Cycle***, with recommendations to all 57 OSCE participating States:
<https://www.osce.org/odihr/493867>

Other monitoring work

- Needs assessments of Belarusian HRDs in exile;
- Consultation meetings, in deteriorating or dynamic contexts

Examples of challenges that HRDs face

- Smear campaigns
- Threats, attacks, and lack of accountability
- Criminalization of HRDs and their work
- Judicial harassment, including through SLAPP lawsuits
- Restrictions on freedom of peaceful assembly and of association (e.g., 'foreign agent' laws)
- Increasing number of HRDs unable to operate in their home country
- Lack of meaningful and inclusive participation of civil society in public affairs
- Lack of access to sustainable funding
- Well-being issues

Gender

- Activists for rights of women and LGBTI people face additional challenges in various parts of the world, including through backlash against gender equality
- Smear campaigns, threats and intimidation can be gender-specific
- LGBTI activists are more likely to face physical violence than other incidents
- Men are somewhat more often physically attacked and deprived of liberty than women
- Vast majority of HRDs who are killed are men
- Impact on well-being and requests for psychosocial support?

HRDs in exile

- High risk at home, including past persecution, risk of arrest, etc.
- Some left home with little preparation
- Possibility of acquiring visas
- Crossing the borders safely
- Opening bank accounts
- (Re-)Registering organizations
- Transnational repression
- Impact of home country policies
- Participation in public affairs and co-operation with civil society
- High impact on well-being

Questions or comments?

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