

**Question for oral answer O-000101/2017  
to the Commission**

Rule 128

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**Subject:** Situation of Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) and their support by the EU

Support for human rights defenders (HRDs) is a long-established component and a major priority of the EU's external human rights policy. The European Parliament has been a long-time advocate of a comprehensive EU policy on HRDs and has actively contributed to the shaping thereof in many of its resolutions, most recently in its Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World for 2016. Today, EU support is all the more important as the environment in which HRDs operate is increasingly restrictive, political and civil society space is shrinking in many countries and HRDs have been facing a growing number of threats.

Women human rights defenders (WHRDs) face unique gender-based obstacles and threats in their work. This may start with resistance from their family or community to their leadership role due to stereotypes about women's work and place in society, and can lead to unequal access to resources, networks and economic and social systems for their protection and in support of their work. In addition, WHRDs often endure the types of attacks traditionally perpetrated against women such as rape, sexualised defamation campaigns and acid attacks, as well as threats or harm to their children or family and aggression from their partners or communities. In every region of the world, women's participation in the political and social spheres is threatened by this discrimination and violence, and even more so in the case of WHRDs. As HRDs are at the nexus of efforts to attain sustainable development and societal resilience, it is crucial that strategies be implemented to provide gender-sensitive support to WHRDs. Accordingly, the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders recognise that support for HRDs requires a gender perspective.

What mechanisms and policies has the Commission put in place to ensure gender-sensitive protection and support for WHRDs at risk?

In the context of the review of the EIDHR and the upcoming MFF, how will the Commission prioritise investment to support and protect HRDs, and specifically WHRDs, by giving them visible political support and recognition, in particular by means of urgent grants under the EIDHR emergency fund for human rights defenders at risk?

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