LIFE IN EXILE:

A Comprehensive investigation of the challenges facing and support provided to human rights defenders in long-term relocation

INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACHR</td>
<td>African Commission for Human Rights</td>
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<tr>
<td>AICHR</td>
<td>ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAHR</td>
<td>Centre for Applied Human Rights</td>
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<tr>
<td>COHOM</td>
<td>European Council Working Group on Human Rights</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>EIDHR</td>
<td>European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights</td>
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<td>EUTRP</td>
<td>European Union Temporary Relocation Platform</td>
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<td>FIDH</td>
<td>International Federation for Human Rights</td>
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<td>HR</td>
<td>Human rights</td>
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<td>HRD</td>
<td>Human rights defender</td>
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<td>Human Rights House Network</td>
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<td>Inter-American Commission on Human Rights</td>
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<td>International Cities of Refuge Network</td>
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<td>IPHR</td>
<td>International Partnership for Human Rights</td>
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<tr>
<td>LGBTIQ+</td>
<td>Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer and more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSCE</td>
<td>Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe</td>
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<tr>
<td>OSCE/ODIHR</td>
<td>OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PACE</td>
<td>Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNHCR</td>
<td>United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees</td>
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<td>UNICORE</td>
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<td>WHRDs</td>
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Foreword

Since its establishment fifteen years ago, IPHR has been working hand in hand with human rights defenders (HRDs) and civil society groups from Central Asia, the South Caucasus, and Eastern Europe to seek accountability for human rights violations and war crimes, ensure justice for victims, and improve human rights protection. Our vision of an enabling civil society environment remains as important as ever as we witness a deterioration in the space for civil society to operate across the region, resulting in the increasing necessity of interventions to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our partners.

In these turbulent times marked by the global decline of democracy, rising authoritarianism, and increasing inequality, indeed the world has become an increasingly unsafe place for individuals fighting for human rights, justice, and the rule of law. Not only in our region, but across the world, HRDs are increasingly targeted for their efforts to shed light on human rights violations and demand accountability for perpetrators. In addition to a humanitarian catastrophe on an enormous scale, the onslaught of Russia’s full-scale war against Ukraine has also resulted in an unprecedented assault on Ukrainian HRDs, with activists being subjected to abductions, incommunicado detention, torture, enforced disappearances, targeted attacks, and extrajudicial executions - a stark reminder of the levels that the persecution of HRDs can reach. Many persecuted HRDs around the world are ultimately left with little choice but to leave their homes and seek relocation abroad.

Taking account of this reality, in the last two years, our work has evolved to include providing ad hoc relocation assistance to dozens of HRDs. In so doing, it became apparent to us how much more needed to be done across various areas of life to help those HRDs fleeing their countries, ranging from addressing immediate practical issues, such as finding accommodation, to more complicated issues such as obtaining legal status, making a living, and adapting emotionally to life in exile. We often felt that the help that we could offer was not enough and that we needed to better coordinate with other support-providers. At the same time, we saw that these organisations likewise often struggled with limited resources or faced bureaucratic and political constraints on their work.

The targeted research which became the basis of this report aimed to identify the key needs and challenges faced by HRDs living in long-term relocation and exile. We believe that there are important lessons to be learned from the experience of those interviewed for this report – both for support-providers working with HRDs in exile and for other HRDs who, similar to those whom we interviewed, often struggle to settle in and adapt after arriving in Europe.

We endure everything - war, suffering, exile.
It’s the transition from one state to another that is terrible. The time to settle in.

Georges Perros, Le Nouveau Commerce

The report covers questions related to all stages of exile - from ‘Why leave?’ to ‘Why not return?’. It stands out clearly that personal safety concerns arising from threats of physical violence, intimidation, targeted attacks, judicial harassment, and other forms of persecution are the main factors that, on the one hand, drive HRDs to seek relocation and, on the other hand, make it impossible for them to go back home. The report finds a need for a more holistic, coordinated, and empathetic approach to supporting HRDs in exile in adapting to their new situation at the practical, legal, emotional, and other levels - from the very first moment of their arrival in their country of relocation. We look forward to following up on the implementation of the recommendations set out in this report together with others engaged in this field.
In the meantime, and in parallel to developing this report, IPHR has taken further steps to help HRDs in exile. In 2022, we established a resource hub within our Tbilisi office to coordinate efforts to provide legal, informational, and technical support to activists who have been forced to flee their countries. Today, we are in the process of establishing a rest and respite centre for human rights activists and artists in exile and temporary relocation. The project began with the securing of a so-called ‘one-euro house’ in rural Sicily. Renovation work is currently underway and we hope to start receiving HRDs there as of 2024 where they will have opportunities to receive individual coaching and capacity-building support aimed at helping them to continue their work in safety, as well as a chance to decompress in a beautiful part of the world. Our dream is that this project will help HRDs in exile to reinvent themselves and open doors to new life opportunities for them.

This report, the first of its kind for IPHR, would not have been possible without the advice and support of a host of specialised protection organisations and experts from the field who have contributed greatly to its realisation. I wish to thank them, as well as all the more than 140 HRDs who accepted our requests to participate in lengthy interviews or responded to our extensive questionnaire. We are extremely grateful to them all for their time and for trusting in us enough to share their experiences, impressions, and recommendations with us. I also wish to thank all the staff at IPHR who put so much time and energy into listening to, reading, and analysing the responses received from HRDs throughout this project. Thank you all for your hard work and dedication!

Finally, I wish to pay tribute to all the HRDs around the world who have had to leave their country - and often also their loved ones - to find safety abroad and to be able to continue their fight for human rights, justice and democracy. This report is dedicated to them.

Brigitte Dufour
Director of IPHR
Report structure

The report is structured in a manner which aims to facilitate both a thorough understanding of the topic and ease of navigation for readers.

The report commences with a list of acronyms and abbreviations employed throughout, ensuring clarity for readers unfamiliar with specific terminology. The foreword follows.

- **Chapter 1** provides an executive summary of the report. It is subdivided into sections discussing the report’s background, research design, key findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

- **Chapter 2** gives a detailed introduction to the report, covering its background, purpose, target groups, final beneficiaries, key definitions, and a reflection on the report’s structural layout.

- **Chapter 3** delves into the research design and methodology. It elaborates on the methods used, such as desk research, roundtables, focus groups, in-depth interviews, and online surveys. Additionally, it sheds light on the intersectional approach adopted for participant selection and data analysis, culminating in the synthesis and triangulation of results.

- **Chapter 4** revolves around ethical considerations, addressing vital issues of informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and cultural sensitivity.

- **Chapter 5**, titled ‘Limitations’, offers a candid reflection on potential biases, challenges, and constraints encountered during the research process. This includes geographical, profiling, and time-related limitations, along with several other potential biases that might have influenced the results.

- **Chapter 6** presents the findings of the research. It begins with an overview of existing support programmes and the existing support system for HRDs at risk, provides insights from focus groups, and delves deeply into the experiences and insights of key interview and online survey respondents. This chapter meticulously captures various facets of the lives and challenges of HRDs in exile.

- **Chapter 7** draws conclusions based on the findings. It offers a summary of the pivotal discoveries, including factors driving HRDs into exile to gaps in the support system and an overview of the implications of the findings for those operating support systems.

- **Chapter 8** lays out recommendations. These are tailored for diverse stakeholders, including state parties, HRDs in exile, NGOs, and donors. The recommendations are holistic, covering policy implications, adaptation strategies, and guidance for those at risk.

- Finally, **Chapter 9** houses the report’s annexes, comprising supplementary materials and tools, such as a list of participating organisations, sources consulted during desk research, and guides and questionnaires utilised during the research process.
1. Executive summary

1.1. Background, purpose, and research design

In recent years, the world has borne witness to a worsening global recession of democracy, with democratic values and institutions increasingly under siege from malicious actors in various positions of power, extending beyond those formally in government and including individuals belonging to wider political and economic elites. This wave of democratic decline and rising authoritarianism has been accompanied by increasing threats to those who have sought to push back against autocratic actors and defend the universal values of human rights and liberal democracy, among them human rights defenders. In this context, a plethora of mechanisms have emerged which today provide various degrees and types of support to human rights defenders who face such extreme risks in their home countries that they are driven to temporarily relocate to another. Yet, in the absence of any significant positive change in many of the countries from which HRDs have been forced to flee, questions are emerging as to the adequacy of temporary relocation, which rarely envisages relocations lasting longer than six months, given that a significant proportion of relocated HRDs – left without the possibility of safe return to their home country – end up living in long-term exile extending multiple years.1

Taking account of this reality, International Partnership for Human Rights (IPHR) set out in October 2022 to conduct a review of the current landscape of support on offer to HRDs facing long-term exile, identifying both the key needs of this group and the gaps in support provision, with a view to producing an evidence-based document that can guide efforts to improve this type of long-term support in the coming years. Though anecdotally, those working in the protection field often cite similar challenges, until now, research on these issues has been scattered, sporadic, often limited in geographic and thematic focus, and never consolidated.

HRDs living in exile face unique challenges. Operating out of a foreign country, they are frequently isolated, lacking the support networks they would have benefited from in their home countries, and face difficulties coordinating work with colleagues who may remain in their home country or be scattered abroad. A lack of key language skills may present further problems, increasing feelings of isolation by preventing exiles from integrating into their new surroundings and complicating various administrative and other processes, including finding work that both aligns with exiles’ professional profiles and allows them to support themselves financially in the long term. Ultimately, this report aims to explore these and other commonly reported challenges and, in so doing, establish an empirical foundation for efforts to improve support provision and reinforce the resilience of HRDs in long-term exile and render their work more sustainable.

To address this challenge, IPHR undertook a study which combined both qualitative and quantitative methods, including: desk research; a roundtable event and focus groups; in-depth semi-structured interviews with HRDs in exile/relocation; and an online survey among HRDs in exile. A balance between qualitative and quantitative methods helped to ensure well-rounded and multifaceted collection of the available data. Data collected via the methods listed was then analysed and synthesised in this report and serves as a basis for its recommendations. In total, the research team conducted focus groups including 26 key stakeholders from the protection community, conducted interviews with 43 HRDs in exile,2 and collected online survey responses from a further 98 HRDs. The data collected via these meth-

1 By way of example, Belarus’ fraudulent presidential election, which sparked a wave of protests the crackdown against which resulted in a mass exodus of Belarusian civil society, now took place more than three years ago. Today, a significant part of Belarusian civil society remains in exile throughout Europe, with little prospect of their safe return to the country in the near future.

2 Readers should note that data from only 39 of these interviews has been included in the present report. The reasons for the exclusion of the four other interviews are detailed in Section 3.3.
1.2. Summary of key findings

1.2.1. OVERVIEW OF EXISTING SUPPORT MECHANISMS

Despite the establishment of various national and international protection mechanisms for HRDs following the adoption of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, defenders still encounter significant challenges in accessing timely, appropriate, and effective protection. These obstacles arise from a lack of awareness and understanding of the vital role played by HRDs, limited resources and capacity within existing protection mechanisms, and political resistance or indifference towards human rights issues in certain countries.

While states bear fundamental responsibility for protecting HRDs, the situation of the latter often remains precarious and, at times, life-threatening. Factors such as a lack of political will, criminalisation by the state, an atmosphere of impunity, ineffective national protection mechanisms, and corruption all contribute to the difficulties faced by defenders worldwide. To ensure the effective implementation of protection measures, states must collaborate with defenders, consult with civil society, and involve these groups in the formulation and execution of protection policies and actions.

Inequality in access to protection mechanisms disproportionately affects rural HRDs and those outside major cities. This includes HRDs with limited incomes, who cannot afford to travel, and women human rights defenders whose movements are often restricted in traditional societies. Individuals with limited computer literacy or who lack access to information and communications technology and/or the internet, people engaged in human rights work who may not identify as defenders, young people, and other vulnerable groups also face unique challenges. The presence of gatekeepers further exacerbates this issue.

Visas play a crucial role in ensuring the security and protection of HRDs facing serious threats, enabling them to conduct their crucial human rights activities in greater safety. The international human rights community has widely recognised the importance of visas, especially multiple-entry visas, as a core element of an effective security strategy. Such visas allow HRDs to assess and manage the level of risk they face in their work and provide the flexibility to move in and out of their country without resorting to seeking permanent asylum in face of heightened threats.

Yet, in spite of apparent political commitment and existing guidelines, the EU’s support for HRDs is not consistently reflected in current EU visa policies and practices, resulting in difficulties for HRDs worldwide to obtain Schengen Area visas readily or predictably. Challenges in terms of visa applications include extensive document requirements, lengthy procedures, and security risks associated with data-sharing. Additionally, family members and partners of HRDs, as well as LGBTIQ+ defenders, encounter further difficulties in obtaining visas.

Temporary relocation programmes, meanwhile, having initially been conceived as a preventive measure to protect HRDs from potential danger or to provide respite in a secure environment, have evolved over time. Unfortunately, despite an increasing diversity and number of relocation programmes, available places are insufficient to meet the growing needs of HRDs. The advancement of authoritarianism worldwide has led to shrinking space for civil society and heightened dangers for HRDs in many countries. As the number of HRDs in need of temporary or permanent relocation continues to rise, existing relocation programmes in Europe are struggling to keep up with escalating demand. Moreover, these programmes often fail to provide comprehensive solutions for HRDs whose return to their country remains unsafe.
even after a prolonged period abroad. Consequently, HRDs in exile face significant barriers in terms of accessing support services, including language barriers, lack of information, and discrimination, particularly when not recognised as refugees or residing in countries with inadequate protection mechanisms. Many HRDs in exile have no choice but to apply for refugee status and make use of support programmes and services designed for refugees or asylum seekers.

Addressing these challenges requires more comprehensive and sustainable long-term relocation solutions, enhanced coordination among support programmes, and specific attention paid to the unique needs of HRDs in exile. By providing effective assistance, Europe can play a crucial role in safeguarding human rights and ensuring the safety and continuity of HRDs’ essential work.

1.2.2. FACTORS DRIVING HRDS INTO EXILE

The primary factors driving HRDs into exile or relocation vary widely, with personal safety concerns arising from threats of physical violence, intimidation, or targeted attacks being paramount. Legal persecution, manifesting as arbitrary arrests, unfair trials, or criminalisation of their work, also induce HRDs to seek refuge outside their home countries. A majority of HRDs who participated in this study identified threats such as these as their primary reasons for fleeing. Threats were categorised as physical, verbal, digital, and psychological and were often persistent, and in certain instances, triggered by specific events. Judicial persecution, including active cases or fear of such, was the second most common reason for HRDs to leave. This often overlapped with other threats, including surveillance and restrictive laws. The largest demographics among this group were individuals aged 35-44 and women, suggesting that this group is particularly vulnerable to judicial persecution. The third most common reason was an inability to return to their home countries, usually stemming from immediate threats. Safety and security were also frequently mentioned, usually tied to the first two reasons – threats and judicial persecution. Some HRDs chose exile as a means to start anew, viewing relocation as more sustainable than remaining in-country.

1.2.3. ACCESSIBILITY OF SUPPORT PROVIDED BY HOSTING STATES

The accessibility of state services for HRDs in exile depends on several factors, including the country of exile and the legal status of the HRDs. Out of the 39 interview respondents, 28 reported receiving some form of state support, such as legal or medical aid, financial and housing assistance, educational opportunities, and integration support. The duration and type of support differed based on individual circumstances and ranged from only one month to as many as five years. Legal status was found to significantly affect the nature of support received. For instance, those with refugee status were eligible for benefits such as state medical services and unemployment benefits.

Figure 1. Accessibility of State Support
However, difficulties arose when obtaining legal documentation, and the support available varied between host countries and even within the countries themselves. Ease of access to state services was rated between 1 (impossible) and 5 (very easy) and varied depending on individual experiences and the country of exile. Countries like Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Ireland, and Norway were rated highest in terms of accessibility of state-supported services, while Belgium scored particularly poorly. Language barriers were identified as one significant obstacle. By consequence, countries where English was an official language or where information was readily available in English scored higher in terms of accessibility.

Eleven interview respondents and the majority of survey respondents reported having not received any form of state support. Hence, it appears that even in instances where some form of state support may be available, many HRDs remain unaware of such services and consequently do not benefit from them.

1.2.4. ACCESSIBILITY OF SUPPORT PROVIDED BY NGOS

The majority of interview respondents reported receiving some form of assistance from NGOs, commonly financial. This support, too, varied in duration and type. Satisfaction also varied, with some respondents citing a lack of personal attention from support providers and access being highly dependent on the individual assigned to manage a specific case. Pre-existing connections in the host country played a significant role in terms of discovering and accessing services, with high-profile individuals finding it easier to secure protection and/or funding. A regional bias in NGO focus was noted, with some respondents reporting a perception that their regions are of low priority as compared to some others.

The majority of survey respondents also reported receiving NGO support, with the most common forms being financial aid and housing assistance. Access to NGO support was generally rated positively, but dissatisfaction was noted among those who received short-term support, suggesting a possible correlation between support duration and perceived accessibility. Further research is needed to explore this relationship and guide future support provision.

1.2.5. HRDS’ EXPERIENCES OF WORKING AND LIVING IN EXILE

Despite the upheaval, the majority of respondents continued their work in exile, driven by their commitment to the cause, guilt felt for leaving their home countries, and a sense of responsibility towards the vulnerable communities they’d previously supported.

Figure 2. Continuation of Human Rights Work

Upon relocation, most HRDs had to adjust their practices, including overcoming bureaucratic hurdles, and altering their geographical and thematic scopes. Many transitioned to more technical roles due to the restrictions imposed by exile and modifying their focus in response to new community needs or...
contexts. The scope of work often shifted to encompass diaspora communities or broader regional concerns.

HRDs face numerous challenges in exile, such as language barriers, mental health issues, concern for left-behind families and colleagues, financial struggles, loss of organisational structure, and disconnect from their home countries. Language barriers and difficulty with integration led some to consider other professions. The emotional toll of their experiences and their work also impacted their mental health and ability to continue their work in the field.

While upholding their dedication to human rights, some HRDs in exile diversified their roles, pursuing interests such as podcasting, psychology, art, and business. A few even took on roles unrelated to human rights due to situational factors.

Financially, most survey respondents identified human rights work as their primary source of income. Being in exile prompted many HRDs to consider alternative careers, yet many remained committed to their cause. Those dedicated solely to human rights work often contributed on a volunteer basis or continued work on limited pay for their home-country-based organisations. Those HRDs who reported considering alternative professions maintained a focus on human rights, but adapted their roles to allow them to engage in other income-generating activities in order to overcome financial difficulties.

1.2.6. PROSPECTS AND WILLINGNESS TO RETURN HOME

Willingness and other factors influencing exiled individuals' decisions to return home varied. Of the respondents to this study, 22 out of the 39 interviewed and 63 out of the 98 surveyed expressed a willingness to return, provided favourable circumstances. Six interviewees and 22 survey respondents were unsure, while the remainder (11 interviewees and 13 survey respondents) did not intend to return. Age, gender, and country of exile did not significantly affect these responses.

![Figure 3. Willingness to Return Home (Survey Responses)](image)

Those identifying as exiles and wanting to return home, even if not permanently, viewed this as unlikely in the near term due to the lack of positive change in their country of origin. The main motivation for wanting to return was a commitment to societal change, emotional ties, and potential political shifts. Many felt a sense of duty to address issues such as human rights abuses and corruption. Emotional drivers, including homesickness and personal relationships, were also prominent.
Those uncertain about returning cited reasons such as safety concerns, political instability, mental health issues, and uncertain conditions. Stated preconditions for return often included political change and safety assurances. The legal environment and challenges related to starting over in a new country were also cited as influencing factors.

Individuals not willing to return cited ongoing safety threats, mistrust of their governments, and oppressive political regimes. They saw no forthcoming positive change and felt that returning would expose them to the same risks that initially caused their exile. This group often included individuals who had established new lives in their countries of exile, with many unwilling to face past traumas once more, particularly if they had families in their new home country.

1.2.7. GAPS IN THE SUPPORT SYSTEM FOR THE EXILED HRDS

The key findings of this study indicate a strong call from respondents for improved support from host governments and more effective cooperation between NGOs and the state. Recommendations includes streamlined processes for HRDs and journalists seeking refugee status and easier access to vital services. The clarity and accessibility of information about these support services were identified as needing significant improvement, with NGOs urged to bolster their efforts to promote their services.

Participants also underscored a need for robust institutional support and sustainable funding for exiled HRDs. Issues such as difficulties with registration and barriers to accessing funding were highlighted as particular concerns. Networking and community-building also emerged as vital components for successful integration of HRDs into their new environments. Participants spoke about the need for safe spaces where they could communicate and collaborate.

The findings also revealed a need for dedicated training programmes and capacity-building initiatives. These measures would equip HRDs with necessary skills and knowledge, enabling them to continue their important work while in exile. Respondents suggested the establishment of refugee-led organisations and an approach to supporting exiled HRDs that is more closely integrated with local charities to ensure its comprehensive nature.

Concerns were raised about the challenges exiled HRDs face in finding suitable employment in host countries. This highlighted a potential need for additional assistance to help exiles acquire new job skills. Participants identified a crucial need for assistance with learning local languages, cultural integration, and navigating complex bureaucratic processes.

On the legal front, HRDs noted the difficulties of understanding and navigating immigration legislation, alongside the need for assistance with legal processes such as NGO registration. Access to healthcare – and particularly mental health support – emerged as a key need due to the unique psychological challenges faced by HRDs.

The study identified gaps in support for the families of HRDs and elderly defenders, who are often unable to claim pensions and are compelled to continue their advocacy work despite their age. A recurring theme was the necessity for enduring and strategic support that extends beyond short-term interventions, including measures to ensure HRDs’ long-term financial stability and sustainability. Indeed, to ensure long-term sustainability, the importance of proactive planning for the eventual cessation of financial aid and the devising of realistic strategies for continuing work was emphasised.

HRDs also expressed concerns over their safety upon relocation, particularly when moved to neighbouring countries. They advocated for improved safety measures to alleviate constant feelings of fear.

Finally, the study highlighted a demand for increased empathy and more effective communication on
the part of support providers. Respondents described a need for more efficient emergency response and general improvements to the communication practices of human rights organisations.

Figure 4. Lack of Human Rights Support in Relocation/Exile

These findings underline the diverse needs of HRDs in exile and highlight the areas that NGOs, governments, and other stakeholders should primarily focus on with regards to improving support provision in the coming years.

1.3. Conclusions and recommendations

The findings of this research bear significant implications for systems supporting HRDs in exile, shedding light on systemic shortcomings and how they might be ameliorated. In sum, the research team identified a demand for more holistic, long-term, tailored, and empathetic approaches to support provision.

With regards to HRDs in relocation more broadly, the research uncovered a pronounced disparity in terms of access to protection mechanisms, demanding better targeted interventions to reach women HRDs, those living in rural areas, the economically disadvantaged, and other vulnerable groups. Moreover, the research also underscored the critical role of visas for HRDs at risk and highlighted a growing need for simplified procedures to allow HRDs to obtain multiple-entry visas to the European Union, providing a vital lifeline in emergency situations. Moreover, access to healthcare was also raised as a key concern for many HRDs in exile. In particular, adequate access to mental health support was identified as a key gap in existing support – something which should be a cause for concern given the significant psychological pressures and traumas to which many relocated HRDs have been subjected as a direct and indirect result of their human rights work. Such a gap is of particular concern with regards to those in long-term exile, as a failure to provide necessary treatment for various physical and mental ailments can exacerbate this group’s existing struggles.

Looking specifically at the long-term perspective, the research findings confirmed the frequent mismatching of short-term solutions with long-term problems. There is a critical need for support systems to broaden their focus from reactive emergency support to proactively offer long-term sustainable solutions to HRDs who are likely to remain in exile well beyond the typical six months of most relocation programmes. Key among the types of support that should be considered in such forward-looking packages is integration assistance (including language support, cultural orientation, and professional development) to allow HRDs in long-term exile to meaningfully adapt to their new context and eventually achieve self-sufficiency. In addition, respondents cited overly complex and bureaucratic
administrative and legal procedures in their host countries as significant obstacles to their integration. In particular, HRDs in exile often struggle to navigate processes required to secure a legal status in their host country or establish a local organisation to continue their human rights work.

Addressing these and other shortcomings identified through the research will demand the collective efforts of a wide selection of stakeholders, including state, non-state, and supranational actors. Section 8 of this report enumerates a comprehensive list of recommendations to each of these groups. For state actors, key among these recommendations is to reform visa and immigration processes – on the one hand, to offer ‘protection’ visas that would offer HRDs in exile an alternative to asylum and, on the other, to minimise the hurdles currently faced by relocated HRDs to obtain a legal status in a host country – or to at least provide greater support to those attempting to navigate such processes. Likewise, at the European level, the most critical reforms necessary are at the level of visas (suggested reforms are outlined in detail in Section 8.2). Non-state support providers, meanwhile, should take more efforts to support HRDs’ integration into the societies of their host countries. Such support might take a variety of forms, such as assistance learning local languages, professional development support to help HRDs to acquire the skills necessary to contribute to local human rights initiatives, and administrative/institutional support to exile-led organisations which frequently face obstacles to registration, opening bank accounts, and acquiring sustained funding.
2. Introduction

2.1. Background

The past two decades have seen a rise in persecution of human rights defenders (HRDs) for their legitimate work to protect and promote human rights in their respective countries and internationally. HRDs have been harassed, prosecuted, tortured, imprisoned, killed, and forcibly disappeared. Such violations may stem from state actors and non-state actors alike, with the latter group including corporate interests and criminal organisations. In some cases, human rights defenders may be targeted because they are working on issues considered sensitive by those in power or because they are seen as a threat to the interests of those in power. The broad scope of HRDs’ work and the long arm of the state means they may be at risk of human rights violations in various settings, including in their home countries, in other countries where they work or to which they travel, and online.

In his report to the 75th Session of the UN General Assembly in 2019, Michel Forst, the then-UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders, noted the systemic nature of such violations: “These violations are not sporadic or isolated. Rather, they are part of systematic patterns that are intended to intimidate and silence the critical voices of human rights defenders, undermine their organisational movements and discourage other individuals from defending human rights.”

According to Front Line Defenders’ Global Analysis 2022, at least 401 defenders across 26 countries were killed in retaliation for their peaceful work in 2022. The analysis is based on over 1,500 incidents reported to Front Line Defenders throughout the year. These predominantly included instances of arrest or detention (making up 19.5% of reports), legal proceedings (14.2%), physical attacks (12.8%), death threats (10.9%), and surveillance (9.6%). The nature of these threats varied across regions. In Asia and the Pacific, as well as the Americas, death threats were most common, whereas, in Africa, arrest and detention was the primary concern. For HRDs in the regions of Europe and Central Asia (ECA) and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), legal actions were the primary issues.

When it comes to WHRDs, death threats were notably frequent, ranking as the third most common violation against this group. Meanwhile, trans and gender variant / gender nonconforming HRDs reported physical violence as the violation they faced most often.

The sectors of human rights defence most frequently targeted in 2022 included those focusing on the rights related to the environment, land, and indigenous peoples (accounting for 11% of all reports); freedom of expression (10%); protest movements and freedom of assembly (9%); women’s rights (7%); and issues related to impunity and access to justice (6%).

Within Europe itself, the situation of human rights defenders has worsened on account of various crises, including growing inequality in many European societies, the emerging environmental crises caused by climate change, the global health crisis caused by COVID-19, the rise of right-wing populist governments and anti-democratic or anti-immigrant political agendas, and an unprecedented crackdown on human rights, with large-scale reprisals against HRDs in countries such as Russia and Belarus.

Russia’s unprovoked full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 resulted in at least the loss of life of

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3  Situation of human rights defenders : note / by the Secretary-General, A/74/159, https://digitallibrary.un.org/re-
cord/3824600?ln=en, last accessed on 19 May 2023

4  Front Line Defenders, Global analysis 2022, https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/sites/default/files/1535_- 
fld_ga23_web.pdf
9,000 Ukrainian civilians, among them HRDs, journalists, volunteers, and civil society activists who lost their lives as a result of indiscriminate shelling, targeted attacks, extrajudicial executions, and enforced disappearances. HRDs and their relatives have been reported as disappeared or abducted and detained incommunicado in areas of Ukraine under the occupation of Russian forces and their proxies, enduring interrogation, intimidation, torture, and/or other forms of inhuman or degrading treatment while in detention.

HRDs’ work often carries such a significant risk that many have found themselves compelled to leave their homes, either on a temporary or permanent basis.

While there are no definitive statistics detailing the exact number of HRDs in exile or relocation, considering broader trends in global forced displacement is instructive. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) highlighted that, by the end of 2022, a staggering 108.4 million people worldwide found themselves forcibly displaced due to factors such as persecution, conflict, violence, and human rights violations. This figure marked an increase of 19 million from 2021, representing the largest annual upsurge documented by the UNHCR. In Europe alone, the number of forcibly displaced and stateless people rose to 21.8 million by the end of 2022.

Given the escalating persecution of HRDs by oppressive regimes globally, it’s reasonable to infer that the number of HRDs seeking refuge through relocation or exile has similarly grown.

HRDs living in exile face unique challenges. Operating out of a foreign country, they are frequently isolated, lacking the support networks they would have benefited from in their home countries, and face difficulties coordinating work with colleagues who may remain in their home country or be scattered abroad. A lack of key language skills may present further problems, increasing feelings of isolation by preventing exiles from integrating into their new surroundings and complicating various administrative and other processes, including finding work that would allow exiles to support themselves financially in the long term.

Various governments and organisations seek to offer support to HRDs in exile. Often this support is extended not only to HRDs, but also to their family members who may be targeted by oppressive regimes in their home countries. However, despite a multitude of existing programmes, HRDs commonly report that support is insufficient and that they continue to face obstacles which prevent them from effectively adapting to exile and undermine their long-term self-sufficiency.

As the fabric of democratic values is threatened globally, the preservation and support of the HRD community has become paramount. Their stories, struggles, and sacrifices underscore a pressing need for the international community to re-evaluate and strengthen mechanisms to ensure their safety, wellbeing, and continued capacity to operate. The task at hand is not merely about protecting individuals but preserving the very ideals that sustain a just and equitable world. The urgency to address this cannot be understated, especially in a global landscape where fundamental rights and freedoms are increasingly under siege.

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7 https://reporting.unhcr.org/operational/regions/europe
2.2. Purpose, target groups, and final beneficiaries

The overall purpose of this research is to contribute to the long-term self-sufficiency of human rights defenders (HRDs) living in exile, as well as the sustainability of their work. The primary focus of the research was HRDs living in exile or relocation in Europe.

More specifically, the research sought to:

1. Establish the key needs of and challenges faced by HRDs living in long-term exile; and

2. On this basis, provide evidence-based recommendations to enhance the relevance and effectiveness of support offered to exiled HRDs by various organisations.

The main target groups are the scores of HRDs forced to leave their home countries due to repressive government action against civil society. Targets also include relevant civil society organisations and policymakers at the national, regional, and international levels.

The final beneficiaries of the research are the victims of repression whose rights will be better protected thanks to the increased capacity of HRDs to work effectively and autonomously from exile.

2.3. Key definitions

The following key terms, underlying all findings and recommendations, are used throughout the entire report: human rights defender, exile, and relocation.

IPHR’s research team understands the term “human rights defender” in accordance with the provisions of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, adopted by consensus by the UN General Assembly in 1998, and the OSCE/ODIHR Guidelines on the Protection of Human Rights Defenders.

In line with these documents, human rights defenders are people who peacefully act – individually or in association with others – to promote and to strive for the protection and realisation of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the local, national, regional, and international levels.

Human rights work is often driven by strong personal beliefs and a commitment to social justice, environmental protection, resistance against oppression, religious convictions, and more. HRDs can be journalists, lawyers, trade unionists, youth leaders, humanitarian workers, community leaders, and others. Some temporarily engage in human rights advocacy, while others dedicate their entire lives to this cause. HRDs may do human rights work professionally, while others volunteer their efforts. Some individuals may qualify as HRDs without being aware of the specific term, using other descriptors, such as ‘dissident’, ‘activist’, ‘environmentalist’, or ‘humanitarian’. HRDs can work at the local, national, and international levels.

Both ‘exile’ and ‘relocation’ refer to situations where individuals or groups are moved or move from one place to another, but they differ in terms of their nature, reasons, and the amount of agency involved. Generally, exile implies forced displacement from one’s country, especially for political reasons, often for a long period of time or permanently. On the other hand, relocation generally refers to the act of moving from one place to another, often for practical or personal reasons. While it can be

forced, as in the case of eminent domain or displacement due to war, relocation can also be voluntary. People might relocate for a new job, to be closer to family, or for a change of scenery. In many cases of relocation, the people moving retain the right to return to their original location.

For the purposes of this research, both 'exile' and 'relocation' are understood as referring to moving to another country due to significant risks to a person's safety, freedom, health, and life due to their engagement in human rights work.

However, exile also means being compelled to leave one's country indefinitely and not being able to safely return. Relocation tends to refer to a more temporary solution, usually extending not more than several months, until a risk faced at home dissolves partly or fully.

The interview and survey respondents' answers to a question on whether they considered themselves to be in exile or relocation revealed that the respondents shared this understanding (see Section 6.3.3 below).
To address the issues described above, IPHR has undertaken a study that combines qualitative and quantitative methods, including: desk research; a roundtable event and focus groups; in-depth semi-structured interviews with HRDs in exile/relocation; and an online survey among HRDs in exile. The balance between qualitative and quantitative methods has helped ensure well-rounded and multifaceted collection of the available data. Data collected via the methods listed was then analysed and synthesised in this report and serves as a basis for recommendations.

3. Research design and methodology

To address the issues described above, IPHR has undertaken a study that combines qualitative and quantitative methods, including: desk research; a roundtable event and focus groups; in-depth semi-structured interviews with HRDs in exile/relocation; and an online survey among HRDs in exile. The balance between qualitative and quantitative methods has helped ensure well-rounded and multifaceted collection of the available data. Data collected via the methods listed was then analysed and synthesised in this report and serves as a basis for recommendations.

3.1. Desk research

The initial purpose of our desk research was to identify the most active local and international organisations providing support to exiled HRDs. Simultaneously, we aimed to undertake a comprehensive review of previous research on the topic, pinpointing the various types of support and developing a corresponding typology.

Our research team utilised open sources, such as the websites of support-provider organisations and institutions, as well as reports from researchers and national and international organisations.

The desk research encountered several limitations. Information on websites often does not fully encapsulate the breadth and depth of many organisations’ operations due to the sensitive nature of their work. Disclosure of this information can put both beneficiaries and providers at risk. As such, some organisations operating in highly sensitive contexts were left out of our mapping exercise.

In some cases, relocation programmes may not be publicly advertised if spaces are reserved for emergencies, close partners at risk, or other confidential considerations. Consequently, the actual diversity and scope of support programmes may not be reflected in its totality in our findings. For instance, protection or emergency grants might encompass financial assistance for relocation, including additional support services such as training, advocacy, and family assistance.

Despite these limitations, our research team deliberately privileged open-source information, as this is the information that HRDs would have available to them when seeking out support.

‘Relocation support’ is a term that is interpreted differently by various actors. Some organisations might solely provide financial assistance for HRDs in relocation scenarios. In contrast, others can be deeply involved throughout the entire relocation process, including identifying safe travel routes, assisting with visas, and offering continued support inside the host country.

Reviewing previous research on this subject proved challenging and time-demanding. A number of valuable reports and studies concerning at-risk HRDs were not immediately discoverable through standard search methods. At the same time, while individual reports often provided a wealth of new references, broadening the base of existing research to review, practical considerations demanded that the team restrict the scope of the review to only the most relevant items. Yet, surprisingly, in spite of an apparent abundance of research on at-risk HRDs, the research team found a notable dearth of studies specifically focusing on support for exiled HRDs.

Given these challenges, the desk research’s focus was adjusted. It served to lay a practical foundation for the primary research, offering an up-to-date snapshot of current initiatives. The preliminary findings from this review were instrumental in shaping our research direction. These insights were presented at a kick-off roundtable that brought together NGO representatives deeply involved in HRD exile and
relocation support programmes. This ensured that our research aligned with current realities and the pressing concerns of field experts.

The weaknesses identified in the support system for at-risk HRDs during our desk research were substantiated by other data collection methods, such as focus groups, individual interviews, and an online survey. Common themes and trends identified in one phase often echoed or were further elucidated in subsequent phases, providing a more detailed understanding of the overarching issues.

In sum, the outcomes of the desk research not only provided a foundational framework for understanding the current landscape of HRD support but, when synthesised with data collected through interviews and surveys, offered a comprehensive view of the challenges and nuances of supporting HRDs in exile in Europe.

3.2. Roundtable and focus groups

The desk research was followed by a roundtable event which brought together 26 key NGO actors implementing support programmes for HRDs in exile in various countries. The NGO actors were identified via the framework of the European Union Temporary Relocation Platform (EUTRP) with which IPHR collaborates, IPHR’s own experiences with relocation support and support of HRDs at risk, and the research team’s personal contacts within the HRD support system.

The event was held in Brussels, Belgium, in December 2022, and provided an opportunity for the participants to share their experiences, ideas, and practices.

The preliminary findings of the desk research served as a starting point for the discussion, allowing the participants to provide initial feedback that helped to steer the later stages of the research. Discussions held within the framework of the event focused on such issues as challenges and risks faced by HRDs in exile/relocation, the sustainability of human rights work in exile and how it can be achieved, safety and wellbeing in exile, and the current operational context and opportunities facing exiled HRDs.

Three focus groups were held as part of the roundtable. The purpose of the focus groups was to collect participants’ insights and recommendations regarding the research and how to make it beneficial for relevant stakeholders.

Participants in all focus groups were asked the same three questions and each participant provided a response. The analysis of opinions shared during the focus groups is presented in the Findings section of this report.

3.3. In-depth semi-structured interviews

In-depth semi-structured interviews with exiled/relocated HRDs were used as a primary method to collect detailed information about their perspectives on and experiences of going and living in exile/relocation. Purposive sampling was used to identify the interview participants. The respondents were to meet the following selection criteria:

- Regional representation in terms of country of origin, covering MENA, Central and South Africa, Central and Eastern Europe, Latin America, and Asia;
- Positive or negative instances of resilience in exile/relocation
- Being in exile for at least two years; and
- Emphasis on vulnerable groups of HRDs (women with children, LGBTQ+, etc.).
Initially, the research envisaged 50 such interviews. To ensure as broad representation as possible, the research team reached out to all roundtable participants for recommendations and appealed to their own broad networks to identify potential respondents. As a result, a list of 105 individuals broadly corresponding to the selection criteria was compiled and interviews were held with all those who responded to an interview request (46 interviews in total, of which 39 have been included in the present analysis).  

A guide was developed for the interviews (see Annex IV for details) to ensure comparability of data. The guide included a combination of open-ended and closed questions to facilitate meaningful data collection. Thematically, the interviews consisted of two parts: context and circumstances prior and leading to exile/relocation and experiences in exile/relocation.  

Despite the smaller number of interviews ultimately conducted, the data reached saturation before the interview period was concluded. The term ‘data saturation’ here indicates that the research team began to observe recurring patterns in the information provided by the respondents. Essentially, toward the later stages of the interview process, the team was no longer obtaining novel insights but was rather receiving additional examples of similar situations reported by earlier respondents. This repetitiveness suggested that the research team had sufficiently covered the breadth of experiences and views related to the research topic, affirming that additional interviews would be unlikely to introduce new themes or concepts.

### 3.4. Online survey

To complement the data obtained via the in-depth interviews (as a qualitative data collection method), an online survey was designed as a quantitative method to reach out to a larger number of HRDs living in exile/relocation. The survey questionnaire followed the same logic and structure as the in-depth interviews but asked more closed questions and offered an opportunity to comment on some responses (see Annex IV). Only closed questions were mandatory.

The survey was self-administered and respondents were invited via IPHR’s own network of contacts, its partner organisations, and via HRDs in various countries. For this reason, some responses were received from HRDs in exile/relocation in countries outside of Europe. Their responses were still included in the analysis, as they offered some valuable insights and experiences. Altogether, 98 responses were collected, with the majority of respondents also answering the open-ended questions.

### 3.5. Intersectionality in participant selection and data analysis

In our research, we took efforts to incorporate an intersectional approach, bringing in participants from varied geographical regions and identity groups, including women with children and LGBTIQ+ individuals. This allowed us to capture a broad range of experiences, contributing to our understanding of the exile/relocation phenomenon.

While we did aim to consider how various identity aspects intersect and influence each participant’s

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10 It should be noted that data from four of these interviews has not been included in this report. Difficulties encountered in terms of reaching out to HRDs from Latin America meant that the interviews with the four respondents from this region were conducted very late in the research cycle. As a result, it was not feasible to include analysis of this data as an integral part of the present report. At time of publication, a separate comparative analysis considering the situation of HRDs in exile originating from Latin America is being prepared for inclusion as a standalone section that will feature in an updated version of the report that will be published in the coming weeks.
experience, our capacity to delve deeply into this aspect was limited. Nonetheless, our modest intersectional analysis did provide us some additional insights into the experiences of HRDs in exile/relocation.

At the same time, responses were mostly consistent across demographic groups. The analysis of the data also showed that there were no significant differences in the responses of those who were interviewed and those who completed the survey. This suggests that the two methods of data collection were equally effective in capturing the views of the respondents. This uniformity across diverse backgrounds underscores the potential universality of the observed patterns and attitudes, making the study’s findings more broadly applicable. Any differences observed in the responses from certain groups have been specifically highlighted in the findings below.

3.6. Synthesis and triangulation of results

The data collected through the various methods described was synthesised and triangulated to ensure that the findings were robust and reliable. The roundtable meeting and focus groups with support-providers yielded valuable insights for the research methodology and potential gaps in support. The desk research helped contextualise the findings of the interviews and survey. The interviews and survey provided rich data on the experiences of HRDs in exile/relocation.

The findings from the different methods were triangulated to ensure that they were consistent. For example, the findings from the interviews and survey were consistent in terms of the challenges that HRDs in exile/relocation face, such as financial insecurity, social isolation, and lack of access to legal services. The findings were also consistent in terms of recommendations for improving support for HRDs in exile/relocation, such as increasing financial assistance, providing more opportunities for social integration, and improving access to legal services.

The synthesis and triangulation of the results helped ensure that the findings of the research were reliable and credible and that research limitations were mitigated. The findings may therefore be used to inform the development of policies and programmes to support HRDs in exile/relocation in Europe.
4. Ethical considerations

Informed Consent

The principle of informed consent was stringently applied in all interactions with participants throughout the research. Before participation, each participant was given a clear and comprehensible overview of the research purpose, methodology, expected outcomes, and potential risks. They were informed about their rights, including their freedom to withdraw from the research at any time and to decline to answer any questions they were not comfortable with. Only after obtaining a verbal agreement indicating their understanding and willingness to participate in the study were the participants involved in the research process.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

Confidentiality was a key concern due to the sensitive nature of the research subject matter. To protect the participants’ privacy, the research team took every possible measure to ensure that the data collected was securely stored and accessed only by authorised researchers. Participants’ names and other identifiable information were replaced with unique identifiers during the transcription process to maintain anonymity. Direct quotations used in the presentation of the findings have been carefully anonymised to ensure that they cannot be traced back to any individual participant.

Cultural Sensitivity

Recognising the diverse cultural backgrounds of the HRDs in exile, the research team made sure to approach each interview and interaction with the utmost respect for their cultures, beliefs, and traditions. Every effort was made to minimise any potential for cultural bias or misunderstanding. Whenever possible, translators were involved to facilitate better understanding and communication.
5. Limitations

Geographic focus

Our research primarily targeted HRDs in relocation/exile in Europe, where conditions are generally more favourable for this group. We managed to engage this group for in-depth interviews, but maintaining this geographic scope for the online survey was challenging due to its self-administered nature. Despite this limitation, we ultimately included responses from HRDs based outside of Europe, as their reported experiences did not show significant differences. However, it is worth acknowledging that variations in socio-political contexts across different regions may have influenced the experiences and responses of the HRDs.

Profiling limitations

The profiling selection criteria were ambitious, aiming for broad regional representation and emphasising vulnerable HRD groups. However, due to the lack of a database on HRDs in exile/relocation—a necessary measure to protect them from oppressive entities—the research team could not fully meet these criteria. We contacted over 100 potential interviewees, but only 41 responded. The team reached data saturation (i.e., no new substantive information was revealed) well before reaching the target of 50 conducted interviews. Thus, it’s important to recognise that the findings may not fully represent the unique experiences and challenges of certain underrepresented regions or vulnerable groups.

Limitations of the desk research

As detailed earlier in the methodology section, our desk research encountered certain challenges that bear emphasising for clarity in this section. The representativeness of our findings could have been influenced by the inherent discreetness of some organisations’ online profiles, especially those operating in sensitive contexts. Not all relocation efforts, particularly those set aside for emergencies or specific collaborations, were made public. The variable interpretations of ‘relocation support’ across different entities added a layer of complexity to our understanding. Additionally, while there is an abundance of research on HRDs at risk, our effort to zero in on support for exiled HRDs unveiled a notable scarcity. Although we expanded our review’s scope upon discovering reports not easily accessible through standard search methods, we couldn’t cover every related document. It’s crucial for readers to bear these constraints in mind while interpreting our research findings.

Time limitations

The profiling and geographic challenges mentioned led to an extension of the research timeline to allow for more comprehensive gathering of data. However, it was decided against further extension, as no new information seemed likely to be obtained (as described above), while further potential respondents appeared unlikely to participate (as described below).

Capacity limitations

The research team faced linguistic limitations in the research. It was not feasible to offer the survey in all potentially beneficial languages, such as Arabic or Spanish. This limitation may have influenced the extent to which HRDs could fully express their experiences or understand the questions, possibly leading to inaccuracies in the responses, while also precluding some HRDs from participating.

Reluctance to participate

Although we hoped for a snowball effect by which interviewed HRDs would suggest additional potential
participants, this did not materialise to a significant extent. HRDs often hesitated to recommend others, possibly due to concerns about exposing their peers to potential risk. Many of the individuals suggested as potential respondents were likewise hesitant to share their experiences with an organisation unfamiliar to them, likely for similar reasons. This could have led to an underrepresentation of certain experiences or perspectives.

**Availability bias**

The primary source of contacts was through service providers, something which inherently skewed the sample towards HRDs who had received some level of support. This bias may have limited the research exposure to HRDs who lacked support entirely, potentially leaving some aspects of their challenges underrepresented in the findings.

**Potential response bias**

The sensitive nature of the research topic may have influenced the level of disclosure from some HRDs. Despite assurances of confidentiality and anonymity, some HRDs may have been reticent to fully share their experiences out of fear of potential repercussions. In addition, the online survey relied on self-reported data, which may be influenced by recall bias and/or social desirability bias.

**Lack of comparative analysis**

The research concentrated specifically on HRDs in exile or relocation and did not include a comparative analysis with HRDs who are at risk but not in exile. Although the research team did analyse existing studies and reports on support systems for HRDs at risk as part of the desk research, the report's conclusions and recommendations are specifically tailored towards HRDs who are either already in exile/relocation or contemplating these options.
6. Findings

6.1. Support system for HRDs in exile

As we delve into the findings of our research, it's imperative to frame our understanding within the multifaceted support system for HRDs in exile. To provide an informative perspective, we commence with an exploration of the overarching protection mechanisms available to all HRDs, irrespective of their operational contexts, be it at home, in exile, or during relocation. This overarching view not only serves to highlight the vast landscape of support but also to underscore some discernible gaps that particularly affect exiled HRDs. Following this, we go into the specifics of relocation and exile as they emerge as critical components of the protection framework for HRDs facing heightened risks. As we navigate further, our focus sharpens on to the intricacies of relocation programmes operating in Europe, offering insights into their operational dynamics. Concluding this section, we turn our lens specifically towards the sparse, yet significant, support structures expressly crafted for HRDs in exile.

6.1.1. OVERVIEW OF EXISTING PROTECTION MECHANISMS FOR HRDS

6.1.1.1. Intergovernmental and national protection mechanisms

Since the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders in 1998 and the recognition of the essential role of HRDs and the specific risks they face due to their legitimate and peaceful human rights work, several protection mechanisms have been created and developed at national, regional, and international levels. These protection mechanisms have taken various forms, including specific legislation or policies, state and inter-governmental institutions, special mandates under international organisations, and civil society initiatives.

In 2000, the UN Human Rights Commission established the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders.11 This mandate aims to promote the effective implementation of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, study developments and challenges related to the right to promote and protect human rights and recommend effective strategies for better protection of human rights defenders. The Special Rapporteur also integrates a gender perspective and focuses on women human rights defenders. Furthermore, in 2013, the UN General Assembly passed the first ever Resolution on the Protection of Women Human Rights Defenders.12

In 2022, the first Special Rapporteur on Environmental Defenders was elected under the Aarhus Convention.13 This significant development reflects the growing recognition of the unique challenges faced by those who defend the environment and the need for specific measures to protect their rights.

In addition, there are also regional human rights mechanisms, such as the African Commission for Human Rights (ACHR), the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), and the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR). While these mechanisms do not focus only on HRDs, at least two of them have instruments for HRD protection. Hence, in 2004, the ACHR adopted its first Resolution on the Protection of African Human Rights Defenders,14 which introduced the post of a Special Rapporteur for Human Rights Defenders in Africa. In 2001, the IAHCR created the IAHCR Human Rights Defenders Unit.15 The AICHR has been involved in initiatives related to human rights education,

14 https://www.refworld.org/docid/5194a0c84.html
capacity-building, and dialogue on human rights issues in the region, though has attracted significant criticism from some quarters, including due to its perceived weakness by comparison to other regional mechanisms.\(^\text{16}\)

In 2004, the **European Union (EU)** adopted the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders\(^\text{17}\) with the aim of enhancing the protection of HRDs in third countries. These guidelines enable the EU to intervene on behalf of HRDs facing risks and provide them with practical support, including emergency aid. Although the EU guidelines are not legally binding, they signify a robust political commitment from EU Member States. The European Council Working Group on Human Rights (COHOM) Task Force on HRDs continually reviews the implementation of the guidelines.

The EU’s dedication to promoting the work of HRDs is further reinforced by its financial support through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR),\(^\text{18}\) established by the European Parliament and the Council in December 2006 and managed by the European Commission. The EIDHR enables the provision of financial support for activities aimed at strengthening democracy and human rights worldwide.

In 2023, the EU outlined its approach to human rights defenders through Council Conclusions on the Role of Civic Space in Protecting and Promoting Fundamental Rights in the EU.\(^\text{19}\)

In 2008, the **Council of Europe** adopted the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders\(^\text{20}\), which strengthens the role of the European Commissioner for Human Rights.\(^\text{21}\) Additionally, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) has a General Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders, operating under the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights, who make recommendations for their protection and promotion.

**The Organisation for Cooperation and Security in Europe (OSCE)** adopted Guidelines on the Protection of Human Rights Defenders\(^\text{22}\) in 2014. These guidelines focus on safeguarding the human rights of those at risk due to their human rights work and do not create new standards or ‘special’ rights for human rights defenders.

Several countries in Europe have also established national protection mechanisms. For instance, in 2013, Switzerland’s Federal Department of Foreign Affairs published the Swiss Guidelines on the Protection of Human Rights Defenders,\(^\text{23}\) aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of Swiss diplomats in improving the protection of human rights defenders. The same year, the United Kingdom issued its first National Action Plan to implement the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights,\(^\text{24}\) which included measures to strengthen support for defenders engaged in business and human rights issues.

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\(^{19}\) https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=090000016805d3e5


\(^{21}\) https://coe.int/en/web/commissioner/human-rights-defenders

\(^{22}\) https://www.osce.org/odihr/guidelines-on-the-protection-of-human-rights-defenders


\(^{24}\) https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bhr-action-plan
6.1.1.2. CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING PROTECTION MECHANISMS FOR HRDS

Despite the proliferation of national and international protection mechanisms since the adoption of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, HRDs at risk still face challenges in accessing timely, appropriate, and efficient protection. These challenges can be attributed to a need for more awareness and understanding of the role and importance of HRDs, limited resources and capacity within existing protection mechanisms, and political resistance or indifference towards human rights issues in some countries. States have a fundamental responsibility to protect HRDs, but their situation remains challenging and sometimes lethal. Factors such as lack of political will, state criminalisation, impunity, ineffective national mechanisms, and corruption contribute to the challenges faced by defenders worldwide.

Both national and international protection mechanisms have been subject to criticism over the years. These critiques predominantly revolve around the following:

- **Inequality in access**: Rural HRDs and those based outside major urban centres are disproportionately affected. This group also encompasses HRDs with low incomes who cannot afford to travel and WHRDs whose movements are often restricted in traditional societies. This also includes individuals with limited computer literacy or who lack access to information and communications technology and/or the internet, people engaged in human rights work who may not identify as defenders, young people, and vulnerable groups. The presence of gatekeepers further compounds this problem.

- **Insufficient dialogue**: There exists a notable communication gap between policymakers, human rights stakeholders, implementers of protection mechanisms, and HRDs themselves.\(^\text{25}\)

- **Language barriers**: Limited knowledge of English or the main regional languages can restrict HRDs' understanding of their rights and available resources.

- **Lack of a holistic approach to the protection of HRDs**: Protection measures often focus on physical security but may neglect other vital aspects such as psychological support, legal assistance, financial stability and support for HRDs' wellbeing.

- **Unequal access in terms of location**: Many nations do not have laws or other structures that recognise and defend the rights of HRDs. As a result, there are gaps in protection, making HRDs in those areas particularly susceptible to danger and assault.

- **Underrepresentation**: The HRD-focused segments of the ecosystem of human rights institutions are frequently underrepresented and underfunded.

Despite the extensive criticisms, many of these issues persist largely unaddressed, casting a shadow over the effectiveness and inclusivity of the protection mechanisms in place.

6.1.1.3. COLLECTIVE PROTECTION

The very title of the ‘UN Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups, and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms’ sets the international standard by which HRDs can be individuals but also groups or associations, which also encompasses communities and networks.

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When there is a strong, supportive, and well-organised social fabric, it is more difficult for perpetrators of violence to intimidate, divide, or quell resistance. A community-based, collective protection model activates a network of immediate support based on the culture, capacities, and existing resources in the places and organisations where defenders work.

In Europe, various human rights groups have developed innovative collective protection strategies in particularly hostile contexts, such as the Joint Mobile Group in Chechnya (Russia) or Crimean Solidarity in occupied Crimea (Ukraine). These examples demonstrate the adaptability and relevance of collective protection measures beyond specific regions.

The relocation and exile of individual HRDs constitute integral elements of a collective protection strategy. The departure of an HRD reverberates across various spheres, impacting not only family members and the communities they serve but also the victims of human rights abuses and their colleagues. This

30 https://crimean-solidarity.org
process necessitates the backing of solidarity networks within both the HRD’s home country and the destination of relocation or exile. Additionally, we are encountering more and more instances where entire human rights collectives are compelled to relocate due to security threats.

Specific solidarity initiatives have been created for situations of increased risk where HRDs or members of their families need to leave their home countries. Urgent or temporary relocation programmes, human rights fellowships, and shelters are among the initiatives designed to support and protect defenders during times of heightened danger.

As HRDs face diverse threats, collective protection mechanisms established by civil societies in different countries are vital in fostering resilience, ensuring sustainability, and reinforcing the global human rights movement. The strength of solidarity among human rights defenders contributes to their ability to navigate challenges, uphold human rights, and bring about positive change in societies worldwide.

6.1.1.4. Wellbeing as a collective protection strategy

Many HRDs operate in challenging environments where external support structures, such as counselling or psychological assistance, are limited or non-existent. In some cases, defenders may not even be aware of the importance of psychological wellbeing in their work.

Initially, self-care was seen as an individual protection strategy, but the perception has evolved. Self-care has expanded to encompass overall wellbeing, including the support and involvement of one’s immediate circle, communities, and human rights community networks. It goes beyond a medical approach and recognises a variety of wellbeing tactics and techniques. Protection of HRDs is approached as a holistic matter encompassing different aspects of security: physical, digital, financial, psychosocial, and more.

HRDs who relocate are exposed to heightened vulnerabilities, considering that relocation frequently arises as a security measure in response to escalating risks. Departing entails disengagement from a familiar setting and the severing of social ties. The process of travel itself can be anxiety-inducing due to border crossings and security control procedures. Adapting to a new society may present formidable challenges, potentially exacerbating the emotional toll of exile. According to a report by Freedom House, ‘HRDs often find themselves isolated and bored during [exile], which can lead to depression when coupled with the stress of having had to flee’.31

In Eastern Europe and Central Asia, a shift towards a greater emphasis on wellbeing has resulted from efforts by many organisations. The growth in the number of shelters and temporary relocation programmes and the establishment of the first regional shelter, Tbilisi Shelter City in Georgia, played an important role, as hundreds of HRDs from the region benefited from rest and respite, training programmes, and psychological support. The idea that human rights work has a psychological cost and HRDs should be treated like other caregiving professionals gradually moved from a radical notion to becoming more widely accepted. LGBTIQ+ organisations in the region have led the way in developing diverse programmes and training.32


Individual wellbeing is now understood as a collective responsibility. It is recognised that self-care is not solely a personal concern but also a collective protection strategy and a political act. By prioritising their wellbeing, HRDs can contribute to the sustainability and effectiveness of their activism and the realisation of progressive changes for their communities.33

6.1.2. RELOCATION AND EXILE IN EUROPE AS PART OF THE PROTECTION SYSTEM

Initially, temporary relocation was conceived as a preventive measure to protect HRDs from potential danger, respond to recent escalated threats, or provide HRDs with a period of respite in a secure environment. Many international non-governmental organisations developed short-term programmes to accommodate HRDs in European countries and, in some cases, these programmes were implemented in agreement with national authorities who issued short-term visas. Over time, the concept of temporary relocation evolved to include the family members of HRDs, eventually including a psychosocial component and finally offering longer-term programmes tailored to specific groups of HRDs such as scholars, journalists, artists, and lawyers to better meet their needs while in relocation.

To facilitate access to the EU specifically for HRDs under pressure and at risk, several EU Member States have implemented relevant practices and initiatives. Relocation initiatives currently exist in Czechia, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, and Sweden. HRDs at risk are being accommodated to some extent in 18 Member States, including through city-led, academia-led, or civil society-led initiatives.34 These initiatives aim to offer safe havens for HRDs facing threats and persecution, but demand often exceeds available resources and places, highlighting the urgent need for more comprehensive and robust support mechanisms for HRDs in Europe.

In response to regional displacement dynamics in Belarus and Russia, regional human rights hubs have been set up in neighbouring countries, such as Armenia, Czechia, Georgia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland. These countries have either introduced favourable visa regimes for HRDs or maintain a visa-free regime with the countries of origin. The hubs offer a range of support measures and are endorsed by local and/or international human rights organisations. A prominent example is the Freedom House Vilnius office, which has successfully advocated vis-à-vis the Lithuanian authorities on behalf of both emergency and long-stay visas. The office has established an important precedent in supporting individual HRDs and entire human rights NGOs in exile, serving as an inspirational model for other organisations.

However, despite the increasing number and diversity of relocation programmes, available places remain insufficient to meet the growing needs of HRDs. A study commissioned by the European Commission in 2012 concluded that ‘the magnitude of the need for shelter was significant, and the reception structure in the EU was limited, representing fewer than 200 temporary shelters annually across all EU 27 countries, leading to waiting lists for many HRDs’.

As the number of HRDs35 in need of temporary or permanent relocation is constantly increasing, the existing relocation programmes in Europe cannot keep up with the rising demand. Furthermore, many existing relocation programmes struggle to accommodate and provide solutions for HRDs whose return to their country remains unsafe even after a long-term relocation. Supporting exile is a complex legal

process, requiring a range of services that most existing human rights NGOs currently lack. This underscores the urgent need for more comprehensive and robust support mechanisms for HRDs in exile.

6.1.2.1. THE DIFFICULT VISA QUESTION

For HRDs facing heightened risks, obtaining a visa to a European territory is crucial for their security and protection. Such visas empower them to conduct their human rights activities with greater safety and protection. The international human rights defender community widely acknowledges visas, especially multiple-entry visas, as a vital component of a comprehensive security strategy. Such visas allow defenders to assess and manage the level of risk they face in their work and enable them to move in and out of their country without being forced to seek permanent asylum in the face of aggravated threats.

European Union

Despite political commitments and existing guidelines, the EU and its Member States’ support for HRDs is not consistently reflected in current EU visa policies and practices. This results in difficulties for HRDs around the world to access Schengen Area visas readily and predictably.36

While the EU Visa Code outlines the visa application and issuance procedures, it currently allows Member States considerable discretion in adhering to the 2008 Guidelines on the Mobility of Human Rights Defenders. Though the EU acknowledges the pivotal role HRDs play in driving change in third countries, it hasn’t specifically catered to their visa requirements. This oversight hinders the effective execution of the EU’s external human rights policy.

Securing visas for HRDs presents significant challenges, especially in urgent relocation scenarios. Visa processes often demand a plethora of documents that HRDs may struggle to provide. For instance, due to their activism, some HRDs may be refused a passport — a vital document for travel. Moreover, some HRDs, because of their work, are wrongly criminalised and subsequently listed on Interpol databases, complicating travel substantially. Sharing information with third-party service providers can introduce safety concerns for HRDs in specific countries. Additionally, HRDs residing in remote locations or those who are not fluent in an official EU language may find it tough to access legal resources and assistance.37

The family members and partners of HRDs, who often face similar risks and require relocation, encounter even greater difficulties in obtaining visas. Another specific challenge pertains to LGBTIQ+ defenders, who commonly struggle to provide proof of marriage, resulting in a lack of official documentation to support their partner’s visa application.

A study titled ‘Human rights defenders in EU visa policy: Recommendations for reform’ by the CEELI Institute highlights the discord between two sets of EU policies: human rights policy and visa policy. The study proposes the explicit inclusion of HRDs as a category entitled to certain visa facilitations, aligning with existing practices. Granting short-term visas to HRDs does not pose immigration risks, as

‘studies have shown that the implementation of visa facilitation schemes by some Member States has not resulted in an abuse of the asylum system by HRDs’. Implementing visa facilitation schemes for HRDs provides temporary respite during times of danger while allowing HRDs to return home when it is safe to do so.38

Despite some arguing that amendments to the EU’s visa policy are unnecessary, evidence shows that the current policy’s discretion is vague and reliant on undefined opportunities for modification in visa processes for humanitarian reasons or justified cases of urgency. Some Member States further limit their discretion by outsourcing visa applications to external service providers. The lack of specific visa schemes for HRDs and the absence of a coordinated approach among Member States hinder efficient visa processes. Addressing these issues is crucial to ensure consistent and practical visa access for HRDs.

To facilitate greater use of the flexibility offered under existing EU law, the European Commission could compile a dedicated catalogue of the various options available to HRDs to come and stay lawfully in the EU. This catalogue, translated into relevant languages and made available online, would help HRDs access the information they need through platforms such ProtectDefenders.eu.39

There is an increasing understanding of the critical relocation needs of HRDs and of facilitating the access of HRDs to visas and residence permits across European institutions.

In February 2022, ProtectDefenders.eu and various human rights organisations jointly urged all EU actors to establish measures that create a supportive framework for HRDs to obtain visas for the EU. The proposed measures include the introduction of a facilitated procedure for HRDs within the EU Visa Code, with defined criteria and elements, and incorporating instructions into the EU Visa Handbook for granting facilitations to HRDs and their family members. Additionally, they emphasised the need to amend legal instruments on visas, including the Visa Code, and to introduce amendments to the Temporary Protection Directive to grant temporary protection status to at-risk defenders within the EU. Consistent policies and guidelines are needed to promptly recognise the right of HRDs to access visas and fully utilise existing prerogatives to urgently ensure visa access for those facing severe threats. ProtectDefenders.eu and the other signatory organisations expressed their commitment to collaborating with all EU public actors at every level to implement this enabling framework for HRDs’ visa access in the EU.40

In the recent Report on the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders,41 the European Parliament emphasises the importance of visas as a key protection tool for HRDs at risk. It recommends to the European Commission to play a proactive role in establishing an EU-wide multiple-entry visa scheme

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for this group. It reaffirms that Member States should facilitate the issuance of visas procedurally, ensuring swift and accessible processes, and structurally, by creating a specific category in the EU Visa Code for HRDs at risk and providing dedicated instructions in the EU Visa Code Handbook. The Commission and the Member States should increase the provision of temporary protection and shelter for HRDs at risk and their families, while encouraging further efforts on relocation involving regional and local authorities. Special assistance should be established for practical support to facilitate temporary stays, work, and mobility of HRDs and their families in the EU. The relevant EU delegation should monitor the return and security situation of HRDs returning to their countries of origin. Short-term, multiple-entry visas should be facilitated for HRDs travelling to Europe for advocacy or professional training purposes.

The Commission and the Member States should actively engage and consult with HRDs who have already relocated to the EU on designing and implementing HRD relocation programmes and regional initiatives, considering the specific realities and needs faced by HRDs in third countries.

**Council of Europe**

In the report based on the findings of the HRD roundtable organised by the Office of the Council of Europe (CoE) High Commissioner for Human Rights titled ‘Human rights defenders in the Council of Europe area in times of crises’ held in October 2022, the participants urged CoE States to adopt and implement comprehensive and sustainable relocation policies for HRDs leaving their countries. This should include access to emergency visas and travel documents at diplomatic and consular services and their representative offices, not only in their country of origin but also in host and third countries. Relocation policies should ensure access to stable residence and social benefits for HRDs and their family members in the host country. States should create an enabling environment that allows HRDs to resume their legitimate civil society activities in the host country, facilitating the registration of new legal entities and access to funding while providing adequate safeguards, such as personal data protection, tailored to their particular situations. Additionally, adequate safeguards against extradition and other risks faced by HRDs from Russia and Belarus should be provided.42

**Special treatment for Ukrainian refugees**

In response to the grave danger posed by Russia’s aggression against Ukraine, as well as citizens of neighbouring countries within the Eastern Partnership, the European Union has taken decisive action by activating the EU Temporary Protection Directive. This directive grants Ukrainians the opportunity to settle in the EU, providing them with essential rights and services.

As a result of the directive, Ukrainians now have the right to work, travel, and access various services throughout the EU. All four EU Member States bordering Ukraine have successfully transposed the Temporary Protection Directive and integrated the implementing decision into their national law. As beneficiaries of temporary protection, individuals are granted residence permits valid for one year, with the possibility of extension for up to three years.

Moreover, these beneficiaries are entitled to a range of rights and benefits, including access to employment opportunities, accommodation or housing assistance, social welfare support, and medical care. Children are guaranteed access to education, and families have the right to reunite within the EU.

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42 Human Rights Defenders in the Council of Europe area in times of crisis, Round table with HRDs organised by the office of Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Dublin, 24-25 October 2022, Report published in March 2023, https://rm.coe.int/report-on-the-round-table-human-rights-de-
To facilitate their integration further, beneficiaries also gain access to banking services and enjoy the freedom to travel within the EU for up to 90 days within any 180-day period.

The impact of this special regime has been significant, with the European Union Agency for Asylum reporting that, as of 28 April 2022, over 2.3 million individuals fleeing Ukraine have registered for protection in the EU. This exceptional regime greatly benefited the Ukrainian human rights community. For their part, HRDs who were forced to relocate were able to continue their human rights work and those who decided to stay in Ukraine were able to send their families to safe havens.

6.1.2.2. Beyond immediate shelter: Long-term challenges for HRDs

HRDs, acting as community leaders, play a pivotal role in fostering social change and democratisation in their home countries. Yet, in nations with intense repression, long-term or permanent relocation—effectively exile—emerges as the sole viable option for HRDs.

Most relocation programmes were built on the premise that HRDs would gradually lose their expertise and community connections if they worked extensively in exile. Consequently, these programmes typically last between three and six months.

Studies suggest that the longer an HRD stays far from their home country, the less likely they are to return immediately after their temporary stay ends. However, the situation is more nuanced if continued relocation support is provided or a new programme is identified.43

While short-term visas provide HRDs some respite, those facing acute threats require longer-term permits to continue their activities and build capacity while in exile. Short-term relocation programmes may offer insufficient time for HRDs to adapt to changes in the security situation back home, leading some to seek multiple shelter providers or even apply for asylum, which can limit their ability to carry out human rights work during the asylum application process.

Currently, only a limited number of European states issue residence permits to human rights defenders. When HRDs need a longer-term stay, their main option is often to apply for international protection, but this can hinder their human rights work due to restrictions on travel and employment during the application process.

Visa regimes play a crucial role in determining which at-risk HRDs can be sheltered within existing temporary relocation programmes. The possibility of longer-term ‘protection’ visas within these programmes might eliminate the need for HRDs to seek asylum.

Despite international organisations recognising HRDs as a critical social group and advocating for supportive frameworks for their safety and effectiveness, there is a notable lack of comprehensive studies addressing the challenges faced by displaced HRDs in exile. The struggles of these defenders in obtaining legal statuses, continuing their activities, and integrating into their host countries are not thoroughly explored in available documents. While various reports mention ongoing threats faced by HRDs in exile, there is a dearth of specific guidelines or resources to address their unique challenges during the migration process.

A report titled ‘Exiled and in Limbo’ by Defend Defenders provides rare insights into the challenges faced by HRDs in exile in Kenya, Uganda, and Rwanda. The findings highlight difficulties such as limited access to support networks due to isolation. The report also offers a resource guide which identifies organisations specialising in refugee and human rights issues, providing tailored services to HRDs in Kampala, Kigali, and Nairobi.

Overall, the lack of specific documentation addressing the unique challenges faced by HRDs during their migration processes adds complexity to their difficulties. This scarcity of guidelines and other resources hinders the ability of HRDs to migrate, adapt, and continue their activities remotely, impacting the sustainability of human rights movements in the face of anti-democratic forces.

6.1.3. OVERVIEW OF EXISTING RELOCATION PROGRAMMES OPERATING IN EUROPE

Several European countries have implemented temporary residency programmes that allow HRDs to reside temporarily in a specific country, providing them with a safe haven to continue their work, attend training events, or engage in advocacy efforts. These temporary residency programmes offer protection and support to HRDs while the situations in their home countries are addressed.

This overview presents a mapping of active local and international organisations based in Europe that offer support for the relocation of HRDs. The list of organisations was compiled from information shared during a meeting of service providers organised by IPHR in Brussels in December 2022. The focus is on European organisations, excluding those based outside of Europe that operate worldwide but also provide support for HRD relocation in Europe, such as Urgent Action Fund and others.

The main purpose is to examine the relocation programmes and services available for HRDs in Europe, specifically provided by Europe-based organisations. We identified 37 entities, most of them international human rights organisations, that provide HRDs with different types of support linked to relocation. Some of them are part of larger networks, for example, the European Union Temporary Relocation Platform and ProtectDefenders.eu, or themselves represent a network of organisations, such as the Human Rights House Foundation, or joint initiatives, such as The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders. Networks such as ICORN or City Shelters are particularly difficult to describe, as services provided depend on the specific place of shelter.

6.1.3.1. Networks and relocation platforms

Several organisations are part of larger networks, such as Human Rights Houses in various countries or European Shelter Cities, allowing for greater coordination and creative solutions in case of the impossibility of return after a short-term relocation.

For example, ProtectDefenders.eu is an EU mechanism that serves as the coordinating body for the EU Temporary Relocation Platform. This platform is a network of entities that offer temporary relocation services to HRDs facing risks and their families. It brings together non-governmental organi-
sations, EU institutions, universities, and other educational institutions. It unites supportive organisations within a single network, facilitating the coordination of support programmes, and serves as a centralised channel for accessing all available support programmes, streamlining the orientation and searching process for those in need.

The **Lifeline Embattled CSO Assistance Fund** is a consortium of seven international non-governmental organisations. It provides emergency assistance grants (for office security / training, medical expenses, legal representation, prison visits, trial monitoring, temporary relocation, equipment replacement, and other urgent expenses), rapid advocacy, and resiliency grants (digital, physical, and psychosocial protection training, legal training and direct aid, establishing a temporary offshore hub, and developing peer-to-peer protection networks) to civil society organisations facing threats because of their human rights work.

The **Human Rights House Network (HRHN)** is a coalition of human rights organisations based across various countries. The structure and focus of each national entity reflects local needs and local contexts. Several Human Rights Houses, such as **Human Rights House Tbilisi**, implement relocation programmes and provide other support services to HRDs in relocation or exile. The network provides possibilities for relocation in countries where it has members.

As several long-term relocation cases continue to be dealt with through multiple short-term solutions offered in the absence of long-term sustainable solutions, networking and coordination among service providers is crucial.

### 6.1.3.2. Protection fellowships for HRDs

Several European countries involve universities in providing temporary shelter to HRDs and scholars at risk through fellowship programmes. These programmes, often run by international NGOs, offer HRDs a safe place on- or off-campus for a duration ranging from six months to two years. We identified two fellowship programmes for HRDs.

For example, the **Centre for Applied Human Rights (CAHR)** at the University of York in the UK operates a fellowship programme which welcomes at-risk HRDs to participate in training and education initiatives. The program not only offers a period of rest for HRDs but also aims to enhance their capacity and equip them with tools they can use upon their return. Originally designed for stays of three to six months, the CAHR is now seeking to extend the fellowship to up to two years due to an increased number of defenders from particularly challenging security contexts.

Another notable initiative is the **Scottish Human Rights Defenders Fellowship** established in 2018. It offers a temporary relocation programme at the University of Dundee, which recently increased from three to six months to support at-risk HRDs worldwide. The fellowship focuses on enhancing defenders’ resilience, knowledge, and networks through diverse opportunities in research, capacity-building, advocacy, and holistic security.

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[46] https://www.csolifeline.org
[47] https://www.york.ac.uk/cahr/
6.1.3.3. Shelters

Shelter initiatives provide HRDs at risk with a temporary place to stay and recover for a period anywhere from one month to several years. In such places, HRDs ‘are safe, can rely on solidarity and receive support tailored to their needs’.  

The International Cities of Refuge Network (ICORN), the largest European initiative, was created in Norway in 2006 and is an independent network of cities and regions offering shelter to writers and artists at risk, advancing freedom of expression, defending democratic values, and promoting international solidarity. ICORN Member Cities offer long-term, but temporary, shelter to those put at risk as a direct consequence of their creative activities. To date, more than 80 cities have joined ICORN.

The EU Shelter City Initiative was launched in 2009. In its Resolution of 17 June 2010 on EU Policies in Favour of Human Rights Defenders, the European Parliament called on the Council and the European Commission to prepare and execute specific measures to ease access to Europe for HRDs. It also reiterated its request for Member States to develop a coordinated policy on the issuing of emergency visas for HRDs and members of their families and emphasised the need to accompany these emergency visas with measures of temporary protection and shelter in Europe, possibly providing financial resources and housing to shelter HRDs, as well as accompanying programmes (human rights activities, lecturing in European universities, and language courses). The EU Shelter City Initiative was intended to provide only temporary relocation, without access to asylum procedures or permanent residence. In practice, ‘only a small number of HRDs relocating to existing shelter initiatives have had little choice but to apply for asylum or move to another shelter programme or another country due to continued risk’.  

Justice & Peace Netherlands established the Shelter City initiative in 2012 as a practical and approachable way to assist HRDs in danger. The various Shelter City hosts provide HRDs in danger with a secure and motivating environment where they can recharge, receive specialised support, and interact with allies to strengthen their local actions for change. Currently, there are a total of 22 Shelter Cities in the Netherlands, Georgia, Tanzania, Benin, Costa Rica, Nepal, the United Kingdom, and France. Tbilisi Shelter City, created in 2016, significantly changed the landscape of human rights organisations in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, as it was able to offer a three-month break and provide training, medical, and psychosocial support to a significant number of HRDs from the region every year. The initiative also contributed to enhancing coordination and cooperation between regional human rights organisations. The team has recently opened new shelter programmes in two other Georgian cities – Batumi and Telavi.

Research commissioned by the European Commission in 2012, mapping the temporary shelter initiatives for HRDs within and outside the EU, revealed the importance of diversity in such initiatives to cater to the specific needs of individual HRDs, making flexibility essential in providing tailored and comprehensive responses. The research stressed that shelter should be seen as a last resort, with support to HRDs in their country of origin or subregion being the preferred option, as most defenders wish to

49 Shelter City, https://sheltercity.org/human-rights-defenders/#:%3A:__text__=What%20does%20Shelter%20City%20do%3F%3bsupport%20tailored%20to%20their%20needs
remain close to their activities if possible. Nevertheless, not all subregions had adequate solutions for HRDs requiring relocation or safe havens. In 2012, the need for shelter was already significant and the EU was able to offer fewer than 200 temporary shelters, leading to waiting lists for many HRDs. Since 2012, the coordination between different shelters and relocation initiatives increased thanks to regular meetings and enhanced coordination through the EU Temporary Relocation Platform, and the number of places in shelters increased. However, the current offer still cannot meet the demand boosted by the increasingly challenging security environment for HRDs.

6.1.3.4. Deciphering HRD support: Diversity, definitions, and dilemmas

The range of programmes supporting the relocation of HRDs encompasses the following main types:

- Financial assistance for relocation through grants, without logistical support;
- Rest and respite programmes that can also be used as emergency relocation solutions, offering more than just financial assistance;
- Relocation programmes with logistical assistance, which may include help with identifying safe options, visa issuance, transportation, housing in the new location, connecting with relevant local partners, and providing support to HRDs and their family members in the host country;
- Fellowships with universities or other host organisations, providing both financial and practical support; and
- Shelters offering financial assistance and practical support, along with training, linguistic, or other courses, medical and psychosocial aid, networking opportunities, and coaching.

According to open-source information, types of support offered are largely similar across most organisations. The three most commonly provided types of support are financial assistance for various protection needs (24 out of 37), advocacy (22 out of 37), and relocation (16 out of 37).

However, there is no standardised vocabulary, making it difficult to understand the scope of protection programmes. Some organisations advertise ‘emergency grants’, although the emergency nature of the situation is not always required and these grants may also cover more routine security needs. Additionally, some organisations distinguish between individual grants and grants provided to organisations, while others make vague reference to ‘financial assistance’ without providing further details. This lack of consistency has resulted in each organisation developing its own terminology, causing confusion.

Financial support programmes generally offer a fast, flexible, and creative approach to supporting individual or collective strategies. However, the scope and variety of eligible protection needs are rarely clearly defined in information made publicly available, resulting in a lack of transparency which can present challenges for those seeking to learn more about what a specific programme can offer in a particular case.

Organisations that include HRD relocation in their support programmes usually provide financial support but are rarely involved in legal and logistical support. During our meetings, several relocation providers confessed that relocation-related logistics are time-consuming and often emergency-driven, limiting their capacity to assist to only a few cases per year. On the other hand, some organisations
actively engaged in providing visa and logistical support do not publicise this information.

Most support organisations offer short-term relocation programmes, typically lasting from 3 to 6 months, and their support is limited to just one intervention per defender. This can result in a chain of relocations for the same HRD, coordinated by multiple NGOs. Apart from financial assistance, other common support programmes include legal aid, medical aid, security training, and psychosocial assistance.

6.1.4. SUPPORT PROGRAMMES FOR HRDS IN EXILE

Only one organisation on our list, the International Federation of Journalists, explicitly mentions settlement in exile as one of the possible destinations of its safety fund support. No organisation on our list specifically focuses on exile, despite the increased needs of HRDs unable to return to their countries. Most international support programmes are designed for temporary relocation and have limited resources, affecting their ability to provide comprehensive and long-term support to HRDs in exile. Consequently, HRDs in exile face barriers to accessing support services, such as a lack of information, language barriers, and discrimination; they need help obtaining protection and security, particularly if they are not recognised as refugees or reside in countries without robust protection mechanisms.

As there are no other choices, HRDs in exile are obliged to use support programmes and services for people seeking refugee or asylum status and will have to go through the same processes as this latter group as a result. Brussels, for example, remains an attractive city for HRDs in exile and refugees from different countries due to the concentration of EU institutions in the city and there are a large number of non-governmental organisations present that provide support programmes for those seeking international protection. The Agentschap Integratie & Inburgering is a Flemish regional governmental agency that helps arrivals in Belgium with integration, civic integration, and orientation and provides the following support: Dutch language courses, social integration classes covering life, housing, and work in Belgium; legal assistance in immigration and private international law and a related helpdesk; a programme which may involve a buddy scheme, work placement in an organisation or company, voluntary work, or an alternative; individual counselling; and social interpreting and translation.

It is also common that some non-governmental organisations, with the agreement and close cooperation of local municipalities, organise support programmes for refugees and asylum seekers, which are accessible to HRDs in exile as well. One example is Programma Integra in Italy, which, in agreement with Rome’s municipality, manages a Migration, Asylum, and Social Integration Centre. Programma Integra organises Italian language courses and vocational training courses for migrants and refugees, promotes cultural events such as book presentations, screenings of short and feature films, and exhibitions about immigration, international protection, human rights, and intercultural dialogue. The project University Corridors for Refugees (UNICORE) offers opportunities for refugees currently residing in Kenya, Niger, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe to continue their higher education in Italy, which can also be an option for HRDs at risk.

52 https://www.ifj.org/safety-fund
54 https://www.programmaintegra.it/eng/
55 https://universitycorridors.unhcr.it
Support in exile should be provided to enable HRDs to effectively continue their human rights work while remaining in a place of safety. Such support measures require sustainable funding and include the provision of housing and access to healthcare for HRDs and members of their families (including partners of LGBTIQ+ defenders), employment, capacity-building, advocacy assistance, the possibility to set up a non-governmental organisation and to receive funding for its activities, and measures for rest and respite, including trauma relief and psychological support.

Overall, to better support HRDs at risk, there is a pressing need for more comprehensive and sustainable long-term relocation solutions, greater coordination among support programmes, and an increased focus on addressing the unique challenges faced by HRDs in exile. By providing effective assistance, Europe can play a crucial role in safeguarding human rights and ensuring the safety and continuity of HRDs' crucial work.

6.2. Focus groups

The focus groups held with organisations providing support to HRDs in exile/relocation established a general framework for the entire research. They highlighted some of the most important issues that were later reiterated in the interviews and online survey responses.

6.2.1. EXILED HRDS AND NGOS: SUSTAINABILITY CHALLENGES AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS

The initial hypothesis of this research was that individual HRDs and human rights NGOs in exile rely heavily on relocation and emergency support, raising questions about their long-term sustainability.

Of the 18 participants, five agreed with the initial hypothesis, while one disagreed. The majority of participants, however, did not directly address whether HRDs and NGOs rely too heavily on relocation and emergency support. Instead, they emphasised the limitations of existing support systems. They highlighted issues such as the lack of preparedness for exile, difficulties in distinguishing between short-term relocation and long-term exile, and the changing needs of HRDs over time.

One participant pointed out that the question of sustainability oversimplifies the complex reality of being an HRD in exile. They highlighted that becoming an HRD in exile is not a clear-cut transition from being an HRD in their home country. HRDs often leave their countries without knowing whether they will be able to return and their needs in terms of assistance vary depending on different circumstances. Therefore, assessing sustainability should take into account various factors, including the timeframe in question and the evolving situations of specific HRDs.

“The question feels very black and white. First, you’re a human rights defender in your country and then you are a human rights defender in exile. So, when we talk about sustainability, the question implies that there’s no different degrees of what might happen. You leave your country not knowing whether you go back (...) And of course, the situation changes and you need different kinds of assistance depending on different moments (...) It is in a way sustainable at that precise moment and the HRD probably doesn’t know yet what would happen next. Will he or she go back or not? So, I do feel that probably when it comes to arguing whether it is sustainable, one should also look at what time frame, etc.

Focus Group Participant G3S4
While many participants agreed that the current situation of HRDs is not sustainable, they did not directly link it to their reliance on support programmes. Instead, they emphasised the increasing number of HRDs, human rights NGOs, and pro-democracy communities seeking refuge abroad. Understanding how relocation programmes for HRDs fit into the broader context of state-provided refugee services emerged as a crucial aspect of the discussion.

6.2.2. FACTORS THAT AFFECT THE SUSTAINABILITY OF HRDS IN EXILE

Short-term solutions, long-term challenges

Many participants mentioned that relocation programmes for HRDs were originally designed for short-term purposes, typically ranging from three to six months, to provide them with respite, training, and research opportunities before returning to their home countries. However, the reality is that many HRDs are unable to return due to safety concerns, leading to a cycle of transitioning from one short-term assistance programme to another. This lack of sustainable solutions poses challenges for both the HRDs and the organisations supporting them.

“
Sometimes, we know that a beneficiary could not return, but we want to help, that’s how they end up with short-term solutions.

Focus Group Participant G1S6

In some cases, it’s very clear from the beginning that the relocation is not a temporary relocation and the person is relocating for a longer time. Then it’s very important to have that discussion from the very start (...) “Hey, we know that this is not going to be a temporary relocation, but our support is only for three or six months. What’s the plan?” And usually people don’t have a plan and then, of course, (...) there is a risk of depending on the organisations which provide for three months and then they go to the next one.

Focus Group Participant G1S2

There was consensus among the participants that protection should not only focus on temporary relocation but also explore sustainable support mechanisms for HRDs in exile. This includes understanding the challenges faced by those who have been in exile for an extended period and their experiences transitioning into new roles or integrating into different organisations. The participants emphasised the need to map organisations that provide long-term support and resources beyond emergency relocation.

The participants stressed the importance of collaboration among organisations that support HRDs in exile. They suggested creating a network or database that highlights organisations’ areas of expertise, services, and points of contact. This would facilitate coordination, prevent duplication of efforts, and enhance efficiency in providing support to HRDs across different regions. While participants expressed the need for transparency and sharing information about organisations and services, they also acknowledged the security concerns associated with openly listing all organisations involved in HRD support. Finding a balance between transparency and safeguarding sensitive information was deemed essential.
Lack of security planning prior to relocation

Despite the availability of risk assessment and security planning trainings for HRDs, many participants acknowledged that HRDs often lack a comprehensive plan when it comes to relocation. While emergency relocations are challenging to predict and plan for, it is essential for human rights organisations to encourage HRDs to consider relocation as a potential scenario and include it in their security plans. This preparation can involve identifying potential host countries, establishing alliances, and ensuring that legal documents are in order.

Participants acknowledged that security planning can be challenging in situations of uncertainty, such as armed conflict zones and emergency situations. Factors such as the presence of armed groups, displacement of people, and limited resources make it difficult to have concrete relocation conversations. There is uncertainty regarding the duration of relocation, whether it will be short- or long-term, and the specific services that can be provided.

“
When you want to relocate a HRD from a conflict region it is difficult to have a pure relocation conversation, because it is like today there is an armed group taking the territory, then it is refugees who are going to another place (...) Of course, [we] have [a] form where we say you have to agree that you will go back to your country. But to be honest, we are not sure. And we do not know that these are going to be temporary and we do not know how long it is going to take. So, for us, it is difficult to plan whether it is going to be a long-term or short-term relocation; which services we are going to provide.

Focus Group Participant G1S6

Safe return to home country is not guaranteed; some defenders have been relocated from country to country due to the worsening situation of the host country.

Focus Group Participant G2S2

Insufficient funding and lack of flexibility

The focus group participants consistently highlighted insufficient funds as a major challenge. Many mentioned the limited financial resources available to support exiled HRDs, often leading to the referral of defenders in need to other organisations with similar mandates. As authoritarianism advances, the number of HRDs in exile, along with refugees and other migrants, is increasing, yet the funds available to support them remain largely inadequate. Existing programmes often fall short in terms of meeting longer-term relocation needs.

“The need quite outstrips the resources that are available and many of these programmes are not fit for supporting longer-term relocation.”

Focus Group Participant G1S7
Participants highlighted instances where activists faced immediate threats or emergencies, such as mass killings during protests, leaving them in urgent need of assistance. However, there is a lack of readily available funds to provide immediate support or intervention. In such cases, support organisations have to apply for funds, which can delay the provision of assistance. This raises the need for sustained funding that goes beyond short-term emergency funds, as situations requiring relocation may extend for longer durations than initially anticipated.

The financial burden associated with relocation makes it an impossible scenario for many defenders. Financial considerations are often dealt with through ad hoc solutions. Participants emphasised the importance of local and international donors treating the physical security needs of NGOs as part of core funding. They suggested that donors should recognise that institutional funding should not only cover operational expenses but also include provisions for physical security.

The participants further highlighted the importance of flexible funding that goes beyond partial coverage and takes into account the specific circumstances and requirements of HRDs.

In some cases, providing HRDs with a fixed monthly stipend or income was suggested as a more effective approach. This type of financial support allows HRDs to have greater autonomy and control over their finances, leading to better integration and adaptation in their new environment. It provides them with the means to cover their living expenses and offers stability during the challenging period of exile.

Rather than focusing solely on emergency support, participants suggested providing HRDs with professional development funds that enable them to continue their work and engage with organisations and activists on the ground. This approach helps HRDs establish connections, expand their networks, and contribute to their field of expertise. It recognises the individuality of each HRD’s situation and allows for tailored support and planning for their future endeavours.

Lack of involvement of family members

The involvement of family members in the relocation process was highlighted as an important consideration. While HRDs themselves may be more accustomed to the idea of relocation due to their activism and the risks they face, their family members are often unprepared for such a possibility. It was emphasised that family members should be actively included in relocation plans to ensure their preparedness and to address their concerns.

“It is important to involve family members in relocation plans, to prepare them for a possibility of relocation if [a] HRD is arrested, to connect them to the relevant people and to involve them [in the] decisionmaking process.”

Focus Group Participant G1S4

Involving family members in the relocation process serves multiple purposes. Firstly, it helps prepare them for the potential need to relocate if the HRD is arrested or faces imminent danger. By being provided with information, connected to relevant individuals or organisations, and involved in the decisionmak-
ing process, family members can better understand the situation and actively contribute to planning.

Furthermore, when HRDs are relocated with their families, they tend to experience less stress about their loved ones who remain in their home country. Knowing that their family members are safe and with them in the new location allows HRDs to focus on adapting to their new reality and continuing their activism with a greater peace of mind.

**Trauma of exile**

Many difficulties and challenges associated with going into exile are of a psychological nature. The decision to seek exile can be traumatic in itself and the subsequent process of leaving one’s home country and starting a new life in a different place can cause confusion, a sense of loss, disorientation, denial, and other emotional and psychological reactions. This experience varies from person to person, but it often involves phases of confusion and depression.

> There is some research already done on this very difficult process of having been made to seek exile (...) Even this decision (...) is traumatising to start with and then it’s a trajectory. It’s different from person to person, but there is a lot of confusion, loss, reorientation, and denial, wishful thinking, and a lot of these things. But I think these are phases that come and go and then they often face depression. And then it’s important to come up again to be able to reorient them.

*Focus Group Participant G3S2*

One of the factors that makes the experience particularly challenging for HRDs is the deep connection between their passion for human rights work and their personal identity. The trauma they experience is exacerbated by the fact that their activism is closely tied to their sense of self. Additionally, HRDs often live with constant stress and pressure, which further compounds these psychological challenges.

Support programmes and organisations that aim to assist HRDs in relocation may not always be well-equipped to deal with the psychological trauma associated with the process. While their intentions may be good, they may lack the necessary training or resources to address the emotional needs of HRDs effectively.

However, despite the difficulties, it is important to plan for worst-case scenarios and prepare for the possibility of relocation. While this planning can be psychologically difficult and triggering, it can also provide a sense of preparedness and help HRDs cope with uncertainty.

**Initial support and tailored assistance in the country of exile or relocation**

The availability of initial support in the host country is crucial for the successful integration of HRDs into their new environment. Participants stressed the importance of tailoring support and resources to individual HRDs and their unique circumstances. Acknowledging the diversity of experiences and contexts is crucial for effective assistance.
People cannot adapt, people need much more support and resources – not only financial – to sustain themselves.

Focus Group Participant G2S6

This support should encompass various aspects, including financial assistance, legal and medical expenses, housing, education for children, employment opportunities, asylum applications, and access to specialists such as lawyers, doctors, and/or psychologists. The provision of translation services can also be important for HRDs who may not be fluent in local languages in their host country.

Financial support plays a significant role in enabling HRDs to sustain themselves during the initial period of relocation, especially if they are moving to countries where the cost of living is higher than in their country of origin, such as those in the European Union.

The initial basic support is needed, especially if people are relocated from third countries to the European Union because it will be much more expensive to live here.

Focus Group Participant G3S3

In situations of uncertainty, where the relocation country may not be safe or other factors necessitate relocation to a different country, the role of the host organisation becomes crucial. They can assist HRDs in developing a safe return plan or an action plan for the initial three months when it is clear that returning to their home country is not possible. This plan helps HRDs identify realistic options and goals for their stay, considering factors such as available resources, possibilities for social integration, and professional opportunities.

The duration of support provided to HRDs in exile may vary based on individual circumstances and needs. While initial support typically spans a few months, longer-term support, extending to one year or more, is often necessary for HRDs to adapt to their new realities, acquire necessary skills, and become independent. This extended support contributes to the sustainability of HRDs in their new environments and facilitates their social integration.

Overall, tailored assistance and support during the initial stages of relocation are essential for HRDs to establish themselves in the host country, address their immediate needs, and lay the foundation for a successful transition and long-term integration. This could include support for exploring alternative career paths and connecting with local human rights organisations.

In some cases, HRDs may choose to work in a profession outside of human rights, as it can offer better financial stability and sustainability. This decision may be driven by the need to support themselves and their families in their new country. For example, an HRD mentioned in the discussions that some individuals opt to work as electricians in the EU, where they can find better job opportunities and higher incomes.
To facilitate this transition, participants emphasised the need for internships, vocational training programmes, and assistance in connecting HRDs with relevant local organisations or networks. These initiatives can help HRDs explore new career options, acquire necessary skills, and integrate into the local job market. Additionally, providing support with job placement and funding opportunities outside the human rights field can contribute to the long-term stability and self-sufficiency of HRDs in their country of exile.

**Dependency on support**

Focus group participants pointed out the potential issue of support creating dependency among some HRDs in exile. They noted that in some cases, individuals may become reliant on ongoing support without actively seeking employment or training opportunities.

This dependency can hinder the process of integration and self-sufficiency in the new country. If HRDs rely solely on external support without taking steps to adapt to their new environment, such as learning a local language or familiarising themselves with the culture, it may limit their long-term prospects for independence and successful integration.

> Support gives aid dependency. Some people just re-apply for short-term support over and over again without looking for a job or training opportunity.

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**Cultural and integration challenges**

Participants highlighted significant challenges related to culture and integration when it comes to successful relocation or exile. Several factors were mentioned, including the cultural background of the HRD, language barriers, religious differences, and socio-economic connections.

It was emphasised that consideration should be given to the cultural background of HRDs when determining their relocation destination. Placing HRDs in a country that aligns with their cultural, religious, and political beliefs can help reduce additional layers of frustration and stress during the initial stages of relocation.

> It is always very important to bear in mind, as the partner organisation, the cultural background of the HRDs; where to offer them to relocate. Sometimes I understand the situation is, like, you have to decide in 24 hours. So, there is no luxury [of] thinking: “Is this country better or that country better?” But having this in mind is very important. For example, [an] HRD from a Muslim country doesn’t end up in a strictly conservative Catholic country because that would add an additional layer of frustration and stress at the beginning.

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Focus Group Participant G153
The availability of support networks and connections, including family and other individuals from the HRD’s home country or region, can also play a significant role in their successful integration. Relocating an entire organisation together may provide a stronger support system for HRDs, compared to an individual HRD being alone without familial or organisational support.

“When you relocated the whole organisation to a completely different country with a different language and culture, it seems a bit easier for them to cope with the challenges than for an individual person to be completely alone and even without a family.”

Focus Group Participant G3S5

The examples provided also highlighted the importance of considering the specificities of each region or continent when designing relocation programmes. Considering factors such as financial implications, cultural displacement, language, and values, can help to design programmes that create solutions closer to HRDs’ home countries or regions. This can help to facilitate integration and make the relocation process more manageable for HRDs.

Inequality in access to support

The issue of inequality in access to support programmes for HRDs was acknowledged by participants, with some expressing concerns that heads of NGOs, higher-level management, and public figures may have easier access to such programmes compared to other HRDs.

Participants noted that access to support programmes often depends on various conditions and circumstances. Some HRDs may have advantages in terms of links with organisations that have sufficient resources to operate outside their home countries. This could be due to their networks, visibility, or connections within the human rights community.

Many participants expressed a desire for a more systematic approach to categorising and organising information. They mentioned the importance of having a centralised resource that presents a list of issues, organisations, and services available to HRDs in exile. This would help HRDs to quickly identify relevant support and resources. The participants emphasised the value of having a comprehensive overview that covers different aspects of assistance, including legal support, cyber security, physical protection, and funding options for projects. While participants expressed the need for transparency and sharing information about organisations and services, they also acknowledged security concerns associated with openly listing all organisations involved in HRD support. Finding a balance between transparency and safeguarding sensitive information was deemed essential.

Relocation of entire organisations

The focus group participants generally agreed that a three-month support period is not sufficient for successful adaptation and sustainability of individual HRDs. They need more time to navigate the new environment. This includes considerations such as finding employment opportunities, reshaping their human rights work, and determining how their organisations can continue their operations. There are positive examples of relocating whole organisations, which allows HRDs to keep their jobs and immediately creates a support environment for HRDs.
6.3. Key respondents’ insights and online survey results

6.3.1. GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE RESPONDENTS

Gender, age, and family status

Among the 39 interview respondents, 21 were women, 14 were men, three reported having other gender identities, and one preferred not to disclose their gender. The biggest age group was 35-44 years old (18 respondents); the second was 45-54 (9 respondents); the third was 25-34 years old (7 respondents); 2 respondents were in the age group 55-64; and age groups 18-24 and 65+ had 1 respondent each. Slightly over half of interview respondents (20 out of 39) were in exile/relocation without their families, 18 were with their families, and one with only part of their family. In both groups (those staying with and without their families), women were the majority (12 and 9, respectively) compared to men (5 and 7, respectively). Other respondents preferred not to disclose their gender.

Among the 98 survey respondents, 46 identified as male, 43 as female, 3 preferred not to say, 2 identified as non-binary, 2 as queer, and 2 as transgender persons. Similarly to the interview respondents, the largest age group was 35-44 years old (38 respondents). The second largest was 25-34 (29 respondents), followed by 45-54 (18 respondents), 55-64 (8 respondents), 18-24 (4 respondents), and 1 respondent in the 65+ group. Forty-one survey respondents were in exile/relocation with their families (23 male, 16 female, and 2 LGBTIQ+), 38 were without their families (17 female, 16 male, 4 LGBTIQ+, and 1 preferred not to disclose their gender), 13 respondents had only part of their families with them (9 female, 2 male, and 1 who preferred not to disclose their gender), and 6 reported not having any family (4 male, 1 female, and 1 who preferred not to disclose their gender).
Organisational affiliation and experience in the field of human rights

The majority of both interview and survey respondents were part of an organisation (25 and 74 respondents, respectively). Among them, 16 interview respondents and 39 survey respondents held top management positions. Twenty-one interview respondents and 13 survey respondents were working individually at the time they went into exile/relocation. As explained in the methodology section, the prevalence of respondents affiliated with organisations and holding top positions there could be due to recommendations primarily coming from support providers who may often be in communication with the organisations’ leaders. It may also be a result of the fact that the leaders may sometimes be more high-profile and subject to greater threats.

Most respondents had 7-10 years of experience in the field of human rights (36 interview and 66 survey respondents), followed by 3-5 years of experience (1 interview respondent and 13 survey respondents), and 5-7 years of experience (1 interview respondent and 11 survey respondents).
Though these latter two countries were outside the scope of the profile initially targeted by the research time, the experiences the interviewees reported were substantially similar to those in exile in Europe, such that it was decided to include this data in the final analysis nonetheless.

Country of origin and country of exile

Both interview and survey respondents represented a wide range of countries. The country from which the largest single number of respondents originated was Russia (7), otherwise, there were between one and three respondents from each country represented. The regions most represented in the interviews were among those on which IPHR typically focuses much of its core work: Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus, and MENA. There were also several respondents from Southeast and Central Asia. Similarly, the largest group of survey respondents was from Russia (19), while the joint second largest were from Belarus and South Sudan (both 10), while Burundi was in the fourth position (8).

As for the country of exile, HRDs living in 14 different European countries, as well as the United States and Uganda, were interviewed. The three most common countries of exile among interview respondents were Germany (6 interview respondents), France (5), and Belgium (4). With regards to survey respondents, the research team received completed questionnaires from individuals living in exile in 33 countries in Europe, the Americas, Africa, and Asia. The two most common countries of exile for survey respondents were Lithuania and Germany (both 9 respondents), while the third most common was Belgium (8).

Though these latter two countries were outside the scope of the profile initially targeted by the research time, the experiences the interviewees reported were substantially similar to those in exile in Europe, such that it was decided to include this data in the final analysis nonetheless.
Figure 14. Country of Origin

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Reasons for HRDs leaving their home countries can vary considerably. Personal safety concerns are often paramount, as HRDs face threats of physical violence, intimidation, or targeted attacks. To safeguard themselves and their loved ones, leaving to seek refuge outside their country can become necessary. Legal persecution can also be a reason for HRDs to leave, as they face arbitrary arrests, unfair trials, or the criminalisation of their work.

Departing to another country can allow HRDs to escape unjust legal systems. They are also exposed to constant surveillance, harassment, and threats, often without recourse or support. Hence finding a safer environment becomes the imperative to their own survival and that of those close to them. Moreover, HRDs may choose to relocate to continue their human rights work in a more conducive environment, as the space for civic engagement continues to shrink and restrictions on activism increase. The safety and wellbeing of their family and loved ones are also significant considerations as they may be subject to reprisals.

Sometimes, a temporary relocation may become a permanent solution, resulting in long-term exile. Going into exile may also be a strategic, conscious choice for some HRDs, enabling them to sustain their work and raise international awareness of human rights issues.

The question about the main reasons for going into exile or relocation was asked only during the interviews. The primary reason to flee for 35 of the 39 interview respondents was the threats they faced in their home country. These threats generally fall into one of the following categories: physical, verbal, digital, contextual, or psychological threats. Physical threats involve constant danger, violence, and even death. Respondents provided examples such as friends being chased and arrested, office raids, attempted stabbings, and being targeted (often physically) by religious groups. Verbal threats included harassment, intimidation, public vilification, and death threats. Digital threats involved online surveillance, hacking, and cyberattacks, compromising communications and personal safety. Psychological threats encompassed constant fears of being under surveillance and being pursued, stress, trauma, and other mental health impacts.

These threats were often ongoing over a period of time due to the nature of the work undertaken by HRDs. However, in certain cases, a specific event could act as a catalyst, triggering harassment and presenting immediate dangers (participating in a protest, helping activists to leave the country, making a speech criticising the regime, and so on).

One of the areas of work of our organisation is countering violent extremism. And I was the core of an assessment report that our organisation published on extremism in my country. Three years after that, we were targeted very heavily by religious groups on the ground and pressured by the government into shutting down our organisation. So, after that, [...] I myself and my colleagues [...] received hundreds of death threats and the government announced that they are investigating us for blasphemy and apostasy. And currently there is an internal governmental report which has concluded with or without a trial that we are apostates and that we should be killed.

Interview Respondent № 4, originally from South Asia
Mainly, I considered going into relocation, but not into exile. In 2015-2016, LGBT human rights defenders went into relocation specifically because we were harassed by law enforcement. Back in 2015-2016, I was still able to live in the country, even though I was targeted and alienated [...] I left for [Europe] to study for the first time. And, since then, gain some regional experience. However, I was still a part of [the] LGBT grass+ roots movement. In 2020, I started to work on [...] cases of torture and their docu+ mentation and, since then, I am not able to go back.

Interview Respondent № 6, originally from Central and Eastern Europe

Judicial persecution, including active cases against the respondents or fear of such persecution, ranks as the second most common reason for relocation and was cited by 31 of the 39 interview respondents. This factor often overlaps with other threats. These individuals faced surveillance and restrictions imposed by propaganda and censorship laws. Contextual threats arose from an environment characterised by oppressive laws, government crackdowns, and limited opportunities for activism. Consequently, the respondents had to deal with criminal charges, travel bans, designation as foreign agents, and persecution by both the government and nationalist organisations. Some respondents also had cases fabricated against them, being labelled as terrorists or enemies of the state. This created an atmosphere of constant risk, with looming dangers of arrest and imprisonment.

Of the 31 individuals who cited judicial persecution as their primary reason for leaving their country, the most common age group was 35-44. By gender, this group consisted of 18 women, 10 men, and 3 individuals who preferred not to disclose their gender. The majority of these individuals (23 out of 31) were affiliated with an organisation or initiative, while the remaining 7 were individual HRDs. The high number of individuals affiliated with organisations or initiatives suggests that governments may target such groups specifically. The gender breakdown also indicates that women are particularly vulnerable to judicial persecution.

In some cases, charges had already been pressed before the HRD left their country. However, more often, they found out about fabricated cases from a trusted source and chose not to return to their home country. The lack of a possibility to return was the third most common reason for going into exile. Many of the people who relocated due to immediate threats were not able to go back to their home country afterwards.

In the last two years I lost my job. The pressure was a lot and it was not a normal life. I was sick. In 2008, [I] was invited to [give] a speech at [the UN Commission on the Status of Woman] in [New York City]. About stonings in [MENA]. When I returned to my country [I] thought they would arrest me [...] it was exactly before the presidential elections, so it was a crackdown on civil society. I went to a poetry festival [...] and was outside of the country and then got messages that they were fabricating the case against me. That’s when I decided to relocate.

Interview Respondent № 11, originally from MENA
For me, the distinction is quite clear. Relocation means going back home. And exile means that you can't go back. Basically, you have no chance because you are facing a different risk.

Interview Respondent № 7, originally from East Asia

In total, 31 of the 39 interview respondents considered themselves to be in exile, while 4 considered themselves to be in relocation and 4 were unsure.

Among those who considered themselves in exile, most interviewees (24 of the 31) have been outside their home country for more than 3 years (mostly 3-5 years), the remaining 7 respondents had been in exile for less than 3 years (mostly 1-2 years).

For 15 of the interview respondents, their decision to leave their country eventually became a perma-
As I said, [the] decision of going [into] exile - it was not directly taken. It took time. First, it was unsafe and I felt targeted, so I left. It was without a plan, thinking it was not long term. It was just being away for a while. Maybe the things would calm down and I can go back. But, then, because I had a criminal case against me - and it took over 1.5 years to be looked at - during that time, I tried to settle down. At a certain point I had to look at [a] longer perspective and [the] safer option.

Interview Respondent № 2, originally from MENA

Figure 16. Exile vs. Relocation (Survey Responses)

Among the 31 interview respondents who considered themselves in exile, the distribution of their legal statuses was as follows: 17 had already received refugee status, 7 had obtained permanent residency, 3 were seeking asylum, and the remaining respondents had diverse legal statuses, including subsidiary protection, special permits, short-term visas, and work permits.

Among the 4 respondents who considered themselves to be in relocation, their legal documentation varied. Some had student visas, others held humanitarian visas, while some possessed temporary residence permits and subsidiary protection status.

Those interview respondents who could not place themselves into either category found it challenging to articulate their specific circumstances as they felt they didn’t fit into the conventional definitions of relocation or exile. Their legal documentation also varied, including humanitarian visas, residency permits, and work permits.

Among the 98 survey respondents, 61 considered themselves in exile and 32 in relocation, while 3 were unsure. A plurality (22 of the 61) of those considering themselves in exile had been outside their home country for more than 5 years. Ten respondents had been in exile for less than a year. The remainder had been in exile 2-4 years. In terms of legal status, the largest group among survey respondents in exile (24 of the 61) was those with refugee status, 14 held residency permits, 9 were seeking asylum, 9 had visas ranging in duration from less than a year to 3 years, 2 had subsidiary protection, 2 were undocumented migrants (from South Africa and Uganda), and 1 had conditional residency.
Only 6 of the 32 survey respondents who identified as being in relocation had been in relocation for more than 5 years. The majority (13 of the 32) had relocated within the past year. This may suggest that, in addition to the element of choice, exile and relocation differ in terms of their duration. Of 32 in relocation, 12 held a residence permit, 11 had some type of visa (for 5 of the 11, this was a short-term visa valid for less than a year), 2 were seeking asylum, 2 had received refugee status, and 4 were undocumented migrants (from South Sudan, Afghanistan, Zimbabwe, and Russia), while 1 respondent chose not to disclose their status.

6.3.4. ACCESSIBILITY OF EXISTING SUPPORT PROVIDED BY HOST STATES AND NGOS

An essential part of the interview and survey questions was dedicated to evaluating the accessibility of services provided by states and NGOs.

Accessibility of State Services

In total, 28 of 39 interview respondents confirmed that they had received some form of support from the authorities in the countries they resided in. This support was diverse in its nature and covered various aspects of life. The commonly listed forms of support were legal aid, medical aid, financial assistance, housing assistance (including free accommodation, shelter, or financial support for accommodation), access to education (educational courses, skills enrichment, etc.), assistance with schooling for children (often beginning immediately upon arrival in the country of exile), and integration support (such as language courses and networking opportunities). In some cases, HRDs also mentioned receiving police protection in response to continued surveillance and threats even after relocating.

The duration of the support varied, lasting from 1 month to up to 5 years, depending on the nature of the assistance provided. For example, language courses were sometimes supported for up to six months or a year, while unemployment benefits were paid for as long as 18 months in some cases. Occasionally, support provided overlapped or continued on from another form, with one type of assistance beginning once another had ended.

The nature of the support provided was heavily dependent on the legal status of the HRDs. At the time of the interviews, 13 of the 28 interview respondents who had received some form of state support had been granted refugee status, 2 were seeking asylum, 6 had some type of residence permit (work, study, etc.), 2 had already received citizenship, and the remainder were residing in their country of residence on various humanitarian/subsidiary visas and other legal grounds. Those who had received refugee status were now eligible for unemployment benefits as financial support from their countries of exile. Only after receiving the status could they access state medical services in full.

Nine of these 28 respondents mentioned experiencing difficulties obtaining legal documents. Among them, 6 were alone in exile, while 3 were with their families. The respondents reporting such difficulties resided in Belgium, Lithuania, Ireland, Germany, Spain, and the UK. Some respondents from Belarus, in particular, mentioned being in a difficult situation at the time of the interviews with regards to their visas. They had relocated without knowing that their stay abroad would extend into a long-term exile and were now approaching the end of their passports’ validity, but were unable to renew their travel documents due to legal cases being pressed against them by the Belarusian authorities.

The nature of the support also varied depending on the countries of exile. Some European states have
bigger support mechanisms in place, while others lack even basic integration programmes. Some respondents noted that integration programmes differed even within the countries themselves.

“France is a socially very developed country. There is a lot of support provided by the state. I feel the support and I know my rights.”

Interview Respondent № 30, originally from Central and Eastern Europe

“I have a lot of experience with refugees now and I can compare. In Norway, they don’t take so many refugees like in Germany, for example, but the ones they receive, they get so much protection and support. They take as [many] as they have capacity and provide good care.”

Interview Respondent № 13, originally from MENA

“You know, Switzerland is very specific country. It’s [...] federal. And each Canton is like [a] small [country]. They have different laws and situations [...] And they also have different programmes and different rules. And I was one of the good ones, maybe. I got support for five years. But, I worked also the same time [...] I got good money [...] but as I was [...] with my ex-husband, our cost still was more than I earned. And that’s why they still supported us. Now I work and I don’t get any social support.”

Interview Respondent № 12, originally from the South Caucasus

Interview respondents were asked to rate the ease of access to state-provided services on a scale ranging from 1 (impossible) to 5 (very easy). The responses varied, not only based on the countries of exile, but also on the personal experiences of HRDs. For instance, one respondent who relocated to France and already held refugee status rated ease of access at 4 (easy), while another who was an asylum seeker rated it at 1 (impossible). Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Ireland, and Norway ranked among the highest in terms of accessibility of state-supported services (receiving average ratings of at least 4.5). In contrast, HRDs who received state-provided services in Belgium rated accessibility very poorly.

Language barriers were identified as among the most significant obstacles interview respondents faced in terms of access to state-provided services, as the majority of information of these services was usually only available in the host country’s official languages. As a result, countries with English as an official language (Ireland, the United Kingdom, etc.) received a higher accessibility ranking.

Eleven interview respondents, meanwhile, reporting having not received any kind of state support. Among these, 2 respondents did not seek state services, as they were on a work residency, and 1 respondent was not aware of such services, as a support-provider NGO was fulfilling their needs.

Unlike the interview respondents, the majority of survey respondents (55 out of 98) stated that they had not received any form of state support. The reason for this disparity is not immediately apparent as survey and interview respondents shared largely similar profiles. Future research may benefit from conducting deeper demographic analysis when considering factors influencing access to state support.
ed support, and 14 were not aware of whether such services existed. A plurality of those who received state assistance had their families covered as well (13 of the 29). Thirteen were refugee status holders, 8 were residence permit holders, 2 were persons seeking asylum, and the rest resided on the basis of different types of visas. The length of the support provided to the survey respondents varied from 1 month up to 5 years. When asked to rate the accessibility of the support provided by the state, Germany received the highest ranking, with 3 respondents rating accessibility at 5, while France received the lowest ranking, being rate as 1 or 2 by 3 respondents. The most common types of state support received were integration support, financial assistance, legal and medical aid, housing assistance, assistance with schooling for children, and access to education. Integration support helped many respondents adapt to their new surroundings. Financial assistance was also frequently provided to allow respondents to meet their basic needs.

**Accessibility of NGO services**

Interview respondents were asked to share their thoughts on the accessibility of NGO services. The majority of respondents (35 out of 39) reported receiving assistance from NGOs. Three respondents did...
not receive such support. In addition, one respondent was unsure of the existence of such services. One of the possible explanations for such a high proportion of those receiving NGO support may be due to the fact that all the interview respondents were recommended by support-providing NGOs.

Among those who reported receiving support from NGOs, 31 respondents specifically mentioned that the support was primarily of a financial nature in a variety of forms. The most frequently cited types of support were financial (26), legal aid (18), housing assistance (13), integration (9), medical aid (8), rehabilitation/psychosocial support (6), and assistance with schooling for children (5). Thirteen interview respondents received long-term assistance (all lasting more than one year) from NGOs. Short-term NGO support (less than a year in duration) was provided to 22 respondents, with 16 of them supported by more than 2 NGOs. The support received varied, with different types of services provided by each NGO. Ad hoc grants and one-off requests mostly covered financial needs or psychosocial support.

When asked to assess the ease of access to the NGO support they’d received on a scale from 1 (impossible) to 5 (very easy), 16 respondents rated it as easy, while 11 rated it as very easy. Eight respondents rated accessibility as 3, 2 respondents rated it as 2, and 1 respondent rated it as 1. Reasons given for dissatisfaction with NGO support included lack of attention and responsiveness, an absence of human touch, and a feeling that HRDs were treated as cases to be handled rather than human beings. Respondents also noted that the ease of access to services hinged significantly on the person handling their specific case.

"It is very much depending [on] the person, [on] the coordinator who is responsible for your life. Sometimes it was very easy and very clear. The coordinator was great, was so committed and supportive. When he left, after that, the replacement was not very good. So it really depends on the person."

Interview Respondent № 11, originally from MENA

Reflecting on their ratings, the majority of respondents (27 of 35) highlighted that their pre-existing connections and networks in the country of exile were instrumental. This factor arose not only in the context of discovering existing services, but also in actually accessing them. Of those who had such prior connections, most were representatives of human rights organisations (20 of 27), while seven were individual HRDs. Being a public figure, activist, journalist, or someone well known tended to strengthen their case and facilitate access to protection or funding. Conversely, when an HRD was unknown, obtaining protection or funding posed a challenge.

"No, for both, it’s not easy [accessibility of state and NGO services]. It’s not structured. My work and relationships before leaving the country helped me. It was with a hustle, but it was relatively easy for me because of the connections."

Interview Respondent № 2, originally from MENA
The procedures are okay, but there’s a challenge in that […] no one knows you. So, it is very difficult for you to access the support […] Taking into consideration […] other people […] with no access to the websites. They don’t publish their works on [a] website. They don’t have, you know, the social media things where people can know about your work, but only people who visit you, who knows your work. So, it will be very difficult [for them]

Interview Respondent № 38, originally from Sub-Saharan Africa

Respondents also mentioned the geographic focuses of certain NGOs, with some NGOs giving priority and greater advantages to HRDs originating from certain countries and regions.

I know for a fact that, for them, Asia support is very limited [in terms of] the amount that they can spend on one individual.

Interview Respondent № 4, originally from South Asia

I have a feeling that my country and human rights defenders from my country - they are not their priority.

Interview Respondent № 12, originally from the South Caucasus

The majority of the survey respondents (58 out of 98) received some support from NGOs. Among the remaining respondents, 32 stated that they had not received any NGO support, while 8 were unsure if such support was available to them.

Among those who received NGO support, 20 of the 58 reported receiving assistance from at least two NGOs. Eighteen respondents were supported by three NGOs, while 13 were supported by a single NGO. The remaining responses varied, with some receiving support from four or five NGOs and others unable to recall the exact number.
The duration of NGO support varied. For 13 of the 58 respondents, the support lasted 2-3 months and, for 12 respondents, it lasted 5-6 months. For 8 respondents, support lasted between six months and a year. The remaining responses ranged from very short term (1-2 months) to very long term (more than five years).

The most widespread type of support provided by NGOs was financial assistance (with 43 of the 58 receiving this form of support), followed by housing assistance (21), psychological aid (18), legal aid (17), medical aid (16), digital security (11), physical security (7), access to a workspace (6), rehabilitation (6), and integration (5).

The ease of access to NGO support was generally rated positively by the survey respondents. Nineteen respondents gave a rating of 4 (easy) and 15 respondents gave the highest rating of 5 (very easy). However, 10 respondents rated accessibility as 2 and 3 respondents gave it a rating of 1.
It is a big struggle. I left a very big responsibility in my country when we left. Part of me is guilty [for] leaving because I know the work that I left behind.

— Interview Respondent № 28, originally from Southeast Asia

Interestingly, respondents who rated accessibility as poor primarily received short-term support, ranging from 3 months to less than a month. In contrast, those who rated accessibility higher tended to have received support for periods exceeding 6 months. This suggests a correlation between the length of support received and the perception of its accessibility. It could be that extended support enables individuals to navigate and understand the system better, thus improving their perception of accessibility. Alternatively, it may indicate that those with better access to these services are more likely to receive long-term support.

6.3.5. OVERVIEW OF EXPERIENCES OF HRDS LIVING IN EXILE/RELOCATION

Continuation of human rights work in exile/relocation

All 39 interview respondents and 90 of the 98 survey respondents continued their human rights work after relocating or going into exile. This persistence was linked to several key factors, including a firm commitment to the cause, feelings of guilt for leaving their home countries, and a sense of responsibility towards vulnerable communities they had previously supported.
Unwavering commitment to human rights was a common thread, with many respondents viewing this work as more than just a job, but rather a part of their identity. As one participant put it as follows:

“Cliche as it may sound, but I think that this is a very purpose of my being...it was not a question for me to do human rights work.”

Interview Respondent № 29, originally from Southeast Asia

Moreover, a commitment to supporting vulnerable communities remained strong among the respondents. While their roles may have changed, their mission to help populations such as LGBTIQ+ individuals, people with disabilities, and political prisoners remained the same, often because they were well known within these communities and people would turn to them for assistance.

“Yes, of course I continue. Just my contract with [the] LGBT organisation just ended in the end of last year, but now I consult [for] people from time to time. [A lot] of people remember me and text me and, of course, I say, “Okay, guys, I will provide [for] you.” Yeah. Because it was LGBT people, drug users, and transgender people and for these categories, you know [...] it’s really important to know with whom they talk. So that’s why I can’t say, “Okay, guys, my contract is finished, so, goodbye.” I try to help them if they need some support, legal support, consultations.”

Interview Respondent № 20, originally from Central and Eastern Europe

Changes in human rights work in exile

Of the 39 interview respondents, 34 had to make adjustments to their human rights work after relocating. In addition, 68 of the 89 survey respondents who answered the question likewise reported making changes in their work. These alterations mainly involved bureaucratic matters such as registration and setting up bank accounts, along with changes in their work’s geographic and thematic scope.

Many had to transition from on-the-ground advocacy to more technical, analytical, or international roles due to limitations imposed by exile. Respondents’ focus areas also shifted in response to changing community needs or as a consequence of their new location. Some diversified their advocacy areas, incorporating issues not previously focused on in their home countries. Some respondents reported adjusting their work methods, including moving towards administrative and fundraising roles.

“When I came to exile [...] the focus changed a bit [...] The need was more on the evacuation and protection work, which I did, which I still continue to work on.”

Interview Respondent № 5, originally from Southeast Asia
I can’t access physically to the places I used to go. I do things online. It has narrowed my field of work.

Interview Respondent № 39, originally from Sub-Saharan Africa

While not being totally detached, it is impossible to do factfinding missions or assist someone in prison being away.

Interview Respondent № 28, originally from Southeast Asia

The geographical scope of [the] work often shifted from a country-focused scope to working with wider diaspora communities or a regional focus, including working on international human rights violations. For instance, one respondent said the following:

If, before, the work was more country focused, now supporting [people from my country] worldwide due to the current situation in the country [is the focus].

Interview Respondent № 30, originally from Central and Eastern Europe

Some respondents successfully incorporated their human rights focus into new roles not explicitly centred around human rights, such as working with asylum seekers or creating academic courses focused on human rights.

I am teaching in a [...] Human Rights Master, you know, which all help[s] human rights defender[s] to continue their education.

Interview Respondent № 26, originally from MENA

Many had to move their operations online due to a lack of physical access to the communities they served. This reliance on technology included organising activities and providing assistance remotely. This physical distance also affected their ability to carry out factfinding missions or assist individuals in prison, forcing them to reconsider their advocacy and community work approaches.

I can’t access physically to the places I used to go. I do things online. It has narrowed my field of work.

Interview Respondent № 39, originally from Sub-Saharan Africa

While not being totally detached, it is impossible to do factfinding missions or assist someone in prison being away.

Interview Respondent № 28, originally from Southeast Asia
Of the five individuals who did not alter their work, three were researchers who said they could carry on with their work from anywhere in the world provided they had internet access. In one instance, an entire organisation relocated, resulting in minimal changes to its structure. The primary adjustments they encountered were bureaucratic, involving tasks such as registration, setting up bank accounts, and so on.

**Challenges in continuing human rights work in exile**

The respondents faced numerous challenges when conducting human rights work in exile, including language barriers, mental health issues, concern for family and colleagues, financial struggles, loss of organisational structure, and being disconnected from their home countries.

Language barriers often impeded their work, leading many to consider other professions. Adapting to a new language and culture, integrating into their host communities, and facing racism or xenophobia, presented significant obstacles.

“Yes, I tried several other things. Language is a barrier and integration is hard. Lithuania is also a very racist country where, if you speak Russian, people will be rude to you.”

*Interview Respondent № 3, originally from Central Asia*

In many cases, emotional and psychological toll of exiles’ experiences, along with the stress of their work, impacted their mental health and ability to continue.

“I’m just simply traumatised, like, what’s happening in Ukraine. I’m half Ukrainian, right? But I’m not going there even though I do have experience with torture and war crime[s] documentation, but I’m not doing it because I’m just so traumatised.”

*Interview Respondent № 6, originally from Central and Eastern Europe*

Respondents also expressed concerns for the safety of their families and colleagues remaining in their home countries, with one respondent saying:

“My family is still in my home country, so I have to be careful what I write.”

*Interview Respondent № 10, originally from South Asia*

The loss of organisational structure and resources, as well as financial difficulties, also posed challenges. Respondents reported struggling to find work and funding to continue their activities, as well as difficul-
ties navigating the working environment and unfamiliar requirements in their host countries, with ex-managers highlighting a serious need for more sustainable funding and institutional support.

“I lost this organisational structure. I lost this chain of command with the organisation, [...] most financial resources, the human resources, [...] the system of the organisation.”

Interview Respondent № 5, originally from South Asia

“I’ve been trying to get funding for our organisation to get paid for my work and moving out of the social support system here and it has been impossible.”

Interview Respondent № 4, originally from South Asia

A significant issue raising was a feeling of disconnect from respondents’ home countries, due to both safety concerns and geographical distance. A lack of contact with those still in-country created difficulties in terms of staying informed about developing situations back home and maintaining vital social connections. In some instances, entire organisations had relocated, leaving no on-the-ground contacts to provide reliable information.

Diversification of roles and challenges for HRDs in exile

While maintaining their dedication to human rights, some defenders in exile explored other interests such as podcasting, psychology, art, and business, providing therapeutic outlets and sometimes opportunities to becoming more financially autonomous. Some pursued further education or developed skills in areas such as cultural studies, anti-racism work, and political activism.

“I have the plans to [do] my Master’s or [a] PhD in the university here in sociology and become a gender researcher.”

Interview Respondent № 36, originally from Central and Eastern Europe

Numerous respondents have also engaged in local activism within their host countries. On the other hand, the circumstances of exile compelled some to adopt temporary professions unrelated to human rights, including manual labour jobs or more managerial roles, while some respondents occasionally paused their human rights work due to factors including the COVID-19 pandemic.

In certain situations, individuals found themselves starting anew or occupying entry-level positions in organisations due to their unfamiliarity with the culture and traditions of Western organisations. Respondents also reported making efforts to confront and challenge prevalent stereotypes about refugees in their new locations, working to prove their capacity to contribute beyond low-skilled employment.
better support mechanisms in place, while others lack even basic integration programmes. Some respondents noted that integration programmes differed even within the countries themselves.

“It was always important for me to do something for society. Actually, maybe I [...] considered doing something else. I think I do political activism here. Yesterday, for example, we had the demonstration [for] 8 March. I am also part of [a] feminist movement here. I [gave] a speech about the rights of refugees.

Interview Respondent № 12, originally from the South Caucasus

I was working as a delivery man, before, to just continue my life because I didn't have any financial support.

Interview Respondent № 23, originally from MENA

Yes. I had this experience when I couldn't continue my work on this human rights informational sector of things. So, I was working [...] in [a] taxi for five years.

Interview Respondent № 16, originally from Central and Eastern Europe

Financial sustainability of HRDs in exile

Only survey respondents were asked whether human rights work was their primary source of income. The majority (56 of the 90 who answered the question) reported that this was the case, with 42 fully employed in the sector, 15 working part-time, and 29 volunteering. Being in exile prompted many HRDs to consider alternative careers, while some remained devoted exclusively to their cause.

Those who remained committed solely to human rights work cited several reasons. The most prominent included their deep-seated passion for the work, their years of specialisation in the field, and a sense of
duty, particularly among those who had witnessed war or conflict. They often maintained ties with their in-country organisations, often contributing in a voluntary capacity or with poor pay conditions. Some continued their advocacy through writing and publishing about contemporary issues, while others encountered barriers to finding employment outside of human rights work due to language constraints or other practical obstacles.

HRDs considering alternative professions also reported having to adapt their roles in order to maintain some focus on human rights. Some relocated their organisations or sought further education in human rights. Others had to engage in income-generating activities, from part-time work to small-scale businesses, due to financial constraints. A commitment to socially beneficial work persisted in community engagement activities akin to their previous roles, such as peacebuilding programmes and psychosocial support.

There was also an interest in furthering education in fields directly or indirectly related to human rights and exploring different areas, such as journalism, literature, social care work, and career counselling. One HRD reporting experiencing a kind of morale fatigue due to the intense nature of work in human rights defence, indicating the emotional and psychological toll of their work. Several other HRDs expressed their desire to acquire practical skills or trades, reflecting a pragmatic approach to adapting to exile.

6.3.6. EXPECTATIONS AND REALITIES OF RETURNING HOME

When asked if they would be willing to return if circumstances allowed, 22 of the 39 interview respondents and 63 of the 98 survey respondents said that they would. Six interview respondents and 22 survey respondents were not sure. The remainder (11 interview and 13 survey respondents) were not planning to return. There was no significant difference in responses according to demographics such as age group, gender, country of exile/relocation, or whether they were in exile/relocation with their families or on their own.
Motivation to return

Respondents motivated to return home were driven by a commitment to societal change, emotional connections, and the possibility of political shifts in their countries of origin. They saw their exile as temporary, pending improvements in their home countries’ political, social, or human rights landscapes.

A significant motivation was the desire to foster societal change, with many respondents expressing a sense of duty to address issues such as human rights violations and corruption.
That's my country and there is a lot to be done there. We need to work for a better country that will respect human rights.

Survey Respondent № 5, originally from Sub-Saharan Africa

Moreover, respondents cited an emotional connection to their homeland, fuelled by homesickness and the presence of friends and family.

Home is home. Everyone is free at home.

Survey Respondent № 12, originally from Sub-Saharan Africa

Every morning, I miss my country.

Survey Respondent № 39, originally from the Americas

Finally, the prospect of returning home was often dependent on political changes, particularly shifts in legislation or regime change.

Home is home, but my returning home depends on change in the current political system that forced me out of the country.

Survey Respondent № 7, originally from Sub-Saharan Africa

Reasons for hesitation

Respondents hesitant about returning home cited reasons including safety concerns, political instability, mental health challenges, and uncertainty about future conditions. Their return would hinge on the meeting of certain preconditions, such as changes in the political landscape or personal security guarantees, indicating that their decision was largely dependent on favourable changes in their home countries.

Currently, there is a terrorist group in my country that threatens me with death. If this group is completely driven away from my country, I will always be ready to go and work for people's human rights.

Survey Respondent № 32, originally from South Asia
Political and legal conditions also contributed to this hesitation. Respondents wanted stable internal affairs and guaranteed freedoms before contemplating return. As one participant put it:

“I would consider returning to my country ONLY IF my freedoms are appreciated and guaranteed nationally and internationally by my country.”

Survey Respondent № 3, originally from Central and Eastern Europe

Finally, emotional and psychological factors, such as mental health conditions, and the difficulty of starting anew, were also cited as reasons for uncertainty.

“Currently, because of so many losses that I’ve faced throughout my life, my mental health is in serious decline. I cannot make a proper decision in this situation.”

Survey Respondent № 29, originally from Southeast Asia

**Reasons for unwillingness to return**

Respondents unwilling to return home cited ongoing safety threats, deep mistrust of their government, and oppressive political regimes as the primary reasons for their stance. They believed the issues which led to their exile remained unresolved, hence returning would expose them to the same risks they fled from. They saw no notable improvements in their home countries’ situations in the foreseeable future.

Safety concerns, specifically fear of persecution, torture, or death, were prevalent. These fears often arose from potential targeting due to their advocacy or political beliefs, with one respondent saying: ‘I’m not interested to return to my country of origin because I will be a target [of the government] due to the nature of advocacy I did against the war crime [they] committed against humanity.’

Fear of political repression was also significant, including the possibility of being labelled as terrorists or communists, facing arbitrary arrests, or being targeted for supporting opposition causes or groups.

“I have been red tagged or called a communist/terrorist in my country. I would either be killed, disappeared or sent to prison on trumped up charges.”

Survey Respondent № 23, originally from Southeast Asia

Finally, a deep scepticism regarding potential positive changes further fuelled reluctance to return. Respondents doubted their home countries’ capacity for meaningful change or felt that the nature of the current political regimes would prevent them from feeling safe. One respondent summarised this sentiment as follows:
The interviews and survey were also used to garner the respondents’ insights into the potential gaps and challenges present in existing support programmes for exiled HRDs. While interviewees were asked an open question about support that was lacking or changes needed, the survey respondents were offered a list of areas that required changes and could also offer their own options. The responses from both groups revealed key areas of concern, such as language and integration barriers, sustainable funding, promotion of NGO services, NGO-state cooperation, and a systemic lack of strategic solutions. Notably, they stressed the importance of a comprehensive and integrated support system which offered legal aid, mental health services, language support, and capacity-building.

Responses from the 39 interviewees underlined the complexity of these issues, with factors including age, country of exile, gender, and family situation influencing their responses. For the age group 25-34, work permits, visas, capacity-building, scholarships, and professional networks were prioritised. Meanwhile, defenders aged 45-54 emphasised long-term support, psychosocial assistance, and financial sustainability. HRDs aged 35-44, particularly those in exile with their families, raised the need for more community networks and longer support programmes as their main challenges.

Financial pressures and the cost of relocating to Europe were often cited by HRDs as a challenge. One interviewee noted: ‘I think that the main challenge is increased financial pressure because in Europe you...’
have to pay European salaries to people [...] 1 000 EUR is not a salary you can pay living in Warsaw.’

Gender also played a role. Both male and female HRDs highlighting the importance of network-building, economic stability, and capacity-building. However, female HRDs placed a significant emphasis on the need for psychosocial support and mental health services, acknowledging the trauma often experienced by HRDs. This aspect was not explicitly mentioned by the male respondents.

Female HRDs with families highlighted long-term support, participatory decision-making, employment and educational opportunities, psychological support, community integration, and safety as areas of concern. Those without families highlighted the need for increased visibility of support services, legal challenges tied to their status, and immediate access to essential services. Across the board, HRDs stressed the need for holistic, customised, and sustained support, tailored to their individual circumstances.

All survey respondents identified multiple gaps in provided support. The table below outlines the type of support respondents’ indicated as lacking, listed in descending order according to the number of respondents who mentioned each category.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of support lacking</th>
<th># of mentions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Financial assistance</td>
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<td>Medical aid</td>
<td>68</td>
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<td>Housing assistance</td>
<td>66</td>
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<td>Employment assistance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Integration</td>
<td>62</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistance with schooling for children</td>
<td>56</td>
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<tr>
<td>Help with career changes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Access to education</td>
<td>46</td>
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<tr>
<td>Legal aid</td>
<td>46</td>
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<tr>
<td>Psychological aid</td>
<td>46</td>
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Below is an analysis summarising the main points raised by HRDs when asked to list gaps and challenges in the support systems. In summarising responses from the interviews and online survey, we have chosen not to quantify specific answers here. We contend that the emphasis should not be placed on the number of mentions but on the significance of each issue raised. Some challenges and gaps, due to their importance, warrant inclusion even if they were only highlighted by a single respondent.
Information accessibility and awareness on existing support

In both interviews and surveys, HRDs underscored the need for improved clarity and accessibility of information regarding NGO support, legal procedures, and resources. Respondents expressed concern over insufficient information dissemination and urged NGOs to enhance their service promotion efforts. A recurring theme among respondents was a gap in knowledge about available support systems, with calls for easy-to-understand and readily accessible information on these resources.

“There is probably still not enough information about what kind of support there can be. I think this should be more understandable. I didn’t even know where to look for this information.”

Interview Respondent № 19, originally from Central and Eastern Europe

“People don’t know how to get support; there is not enough information. NGOs and support systems should spread information about the possibilities of support and resources.”

Interview Respondent № 32, originally from Central and Eastern Europe

Many HRDs relocate with minimal information and support, which leads to significant challenges when combined with a lack of social networks and inadequate information access. Therefore, more effective means of sharing information, such as newsletters detailing available funding and relocation support were suggested.

Institutional support and sustainable funding for exiled HRDs

The respondents emphasised the crucial need for improved institutional support and sustainable funding for exiled defenders. They underlined the importance of having clear processes in place to avoid starting from scratch and to help defenders regain a sense of purpose. Registration challenges resulted in funding gaps, proving problematic for exiled organisations seeking financial backing. Freedom of association regardless of formal registration was seen as paramount.

Exiled defenders recounted difficulties opening bank accounts and receiving funding, which hindered their ability to sustain their work. High living costs in European countries further complicated the situation. The respondents made it clear that short-term, individualised support fell short of helping organisations retain staff and operate strategically.

They also highlighted funding gaps as a recurrent challenge, describing a discrepancy between international principles advocating for freedom of association and the practical limitations placed on access to funding as a result of overly bureaucratic registration requirements. Respondents stressed the importance of long-term financial support and stability for sustaining the work of HRDs in exile.
Psychological help is very important [...] to make you feel like you’re not the only one here trying to survive [...] someone to turn to, someone to talk to.

Interview Respondent № 19, originally from Central and Eastern Europe

Networking and community-building for HRDs in exile

Both interview and survey respondents highlighted the crucial role of networking and community-building in the integration process for human rights defenders in exile or relocation. They emphasised the necessity of safe - both physical and online - spaces where HRDs can gather, communicate, collaborate, and establish supportive networks. Such community-building initiatives can foster solidarity, offering a valuable platform for HRDs to address common challenges and share resources.

Networking and connections with peers were particularly significant for HRDs located far from major cities. Respondents stressed the need for effective networking systems to facilitate communication and collaboration. Building communities or networks where HRDs can connect and share experiences with those in similar situations was seen as essential.

The respondents also highlighted challenges related to social integration, particularly due to language barriers and limited communication skills. They underscored the importance of providing physical and online venues or programmes for social integration, viewing them as essential tools to combat isolation and foster a sense of belonging.

Training, capacity-building, and education support for HRDs

Respondents stressed the necessity of training programmes and capacity-building initiatives for empowering HRDs with the skills and knowledge required to carry on their work in exile. There was a
Education support to HRD[s] is necessary, something which I am not receiving. The educational support to my children covers only one child and I have [four other] children that I have to struggle to meet their educational needs.

Survey Respondent № 7, originally from Sub-Saharan Africa

Support to refugee-led organisations

Interviewed HRDs suggested establishing refugee-led organisations as a crucial step in providing much-needed support, capacity-building, and advocacy for legislative reforms. Empowering exiled HRDs to lead these organisations is vital in promoting their perspectives and tackling the unique challenges refugees face. Moreover, respondents stressed greater integration and collaboration with local charities, organisations, and initiatives to create a comprehensive and inclusive approach to supporting exiled HRDs.

There is probably still not enough information about what kind of support there can be. I think this should be more understandable. I didn’t even know where to look for this information.

Interview Respondent № 19, originally from Central and Eastern Europe

People don’t know how to get support; there is not enough information. NGOs and support systems should spread information about the possibilities of support and resources.

Interview Respondent № 32, originally from Central and Eastern Europe

Employment opportunities and skills diversification for exiled HRDs

Both interview and survey respondents highlighted challenges in securing suitable employment and sustainable incomes in their host countries. They emphasised the importance of finding jobs that matched their skills, experience, and could provide adequate salaries. Many exiled HRDs found themselves limited to low-skilled jobs, which did not make effective use of their abilities and led to financial instability. This hampered their ability to continue their activism and support themselves financially.

In terms of employment, only cleaning, manual labour, and such things [...] are available.

Survey Respondent № 7, originally from Sub-Saharan Africa
Skill diversification was highlighted as a critical requirement for HRDs transitioning to new careers outside of human rights. Several respondents called for more capacity-building for human rights defenders, highlighting that existing services did not adequately address this.

I have been working in the LGBTQI+ rights field long enough to be considered to work for an international organisation. However, it seems I need to suffer more to be an eligible worker.

Survey Respondent № 17, originally from the South Caucasus

Ineligibility to work with international organisations due to lack of experience or expertise or other reasons was also reported. Suggestions for addressing these challenges included support for individual business projects and connecting exiled HRDs with donors or foundations that could potentially back their work financially. Such measures would not only enable HRDs to continue their advocacy but also keep them engaged with their communities and allow effective representation of their people.

We need help to sustain ourselves. I personally don’t want to just rely on short term financial assistance. I need to find a job that would allow me to survive as well as keep on working as [a human rights] defender.

Survey Respondent № 23, originally from Southeast Asia

Integration and language support for exiled HRDs

Both interview and survey responses consistently emphasised the difficulties HRDs face in terms of adjusting to new languages and cultures. They highlighted the need for comprehensive language support programmes and integration initiatives, including access to language classes and cultural orientation. These tools, along with support for building social networks, were deemed crucial for HRDs to establish themselves and feel a sense of belonging in their new environments.

Respondents also highlighted challenges they faced as a result of bureaucratic complexities in their host countries. They called for assistance in navigating these processes, including the purposes of setting up organisations and accessing funding.

Some respondents believed that integration support primarily came from the national authorities, with insufficient input from NGOs. Suggestions for improvement included facilitating community-building
and experience-sharing among HRDs themselves. Respondents indicated that factors such as lack of experience, mistrust among different groups, and a misplaced belief that their relocation would be temporary greatly hindered the effectiveness of existing support systems, which were often viewed as short-term solutions.

“For my other colleagues who are in [other countries], they have to learn the language [...] Getting a bank account for the organisation[s] purposes is very complex [...] You cannot easily get a bank account and you cannot receive any sort of finance.”

Interview Respondent № 5, originally from South Asia

Legal support for HRDs

Both interview and survey respondents highlighted legal support as a substantial gap in the support system for HRDs. They stressed the complexities of navigating immigration laws, securing legal status, and the need for assistance with registering NGOs or establishing oneself as individual entrepreneur. Access to legal expertise was considered critical in dealing with these legal challenges.

Survey respondents repeatedly mentioned a lack of consistent legal assistance, particularly in the realm of refugee and immigration processes. Frustration was expressed about the slow progress of refugee applications and issues related to legal status and access to lawful employment. The renewal of residence permits, which, in some cases, had to be carried out every six months, was also cited as a problematic area.

“There is no continuous legal support. In our case, the process of requesting refuge, documentation, and taxation, we [did] it without any support, which has probably made it more difficult and longer.”

Survey Respondent № 34, originally from the Americas

Healthcare and mental health support for HRDs

Both interview and survey respondents highlighted challenges in securing suitable employment and sustainable incomes in their host countries. They emphasised the importance of finding jobs that matched their skills, experience, and could provide adequate salaries. Many exiled HRDs found themselves limited to low-skilled jobs, which did not make effective use of their abilities and led to financial instability. This hampered their ability to continue their activism and support themselves financially.
The programmes that are providing help are missing two aspects: health and mental health. Even if you get the health insurance it’s the worst. You have to pay and they reimburse after. It does not cover anything. Health basically is not covered well and mental health is not covered at all. Mental health coverage I did not come across. There is no such service available and, if there is, you find yourself the therapist, they will pay fees. Mental health is not a priority in relocation programmes.

Interview Respondent № 2, originally from MENA

One respondent suggested including the profession of human rights defender in the list of occupational illnesses to recognise the health impact of their intense, stressful work defending victims of torture, political imprisonment, and slavery, often undertaken relentlessly without respite.

Family and elderly support for HRDs

Respondents voiced concerns about inadequate support for HRDs’ families. The existing system was criticised for focusing solely on the individual HRD, disregarding their families’ needs.

So far, I have received forms that limit the requests to myself as an HRD. There is no room to include family nor to seek support for family.

Survey Respondent № 50, originally from Sub-Saharan Africa

The unique struggles faced by elderly HRDs in exile were also highlighted. Due to the inability to claim pensions while abroad, these HRDs, despite their age, had to continue their advocacy work for financial reasons, thus revealing a critical gap in the support system.

Strategic long-term support and follow-up

Respondents emphasised a necessity for enduring support for HRDs in exile, extending beyond short-term interventions. They require consistent assistance for effective integration into new societies and execution of their work. The focus should be on long-term mechanisms addressing evolving needs and challenges, including the legal, financial, and strategic aspects.

Interviewees reported that support often lacks long-term strategic vision. They urged continuous communication, follow-up, and institutional assistance that outlasts short-term aid. They also noted the unique circumstances of HRDs, suggesting more tailored, holistic support and potential capacity-building for strategic advocacy.
Human rights organisations are operating like banks and lack empathy [...] The whole view of human rights work should be changed.

Interview Respondent № 39, originally from Sub-Saharan Africa

We are treated as a project, not human beings [...] Exile organisations have to make sure that we have the right expectations [...] I did not know - about knowing the language - that it would be this vital in Sweden!"

Interview Respondent № 28, originally from Southeast Asia

Empathy and communication in support systems

Respondents critiqued human rights organisations and support systems for a perceived lack of empathy, limited operating hours, and instances of mistreatment. Survey participants appealed to service-provider organisations to upgrade their communication methods. They described experiencing delays in email responses and complex phone procedures, complicating contact with these organisations, particularly in emergencies. Thus, there appears to be a pressing demand for a more efficient emergency response system.

Human rights organisations are not economic migrants and therefore [have experienced] different processes, often marked by high exposure to violence and even violence.

Survey Respondent № 34, originally from the Americas

Safety measures in exile/relocation

Survey participants voiced concerns over safety issues upon relocation, particularly to neighbouring countries. HRDs in exile often confronted significant threats, including life endangerment from government forces. Such threats often instigated their relocation. They emphasised a lack of sufficient protection for HRDs in exile, especially in countries close to their homeland, leading to a persistent state of fear, even while advocating for their community from exile.

You can create really interesting supporting schemes that work on long-term support rather than short-term. I do understand the approach of "Let’s save them right now. Let’s give them the security for the office and forget about them". No, that’s not how it should be done, especially for those who work in countries that have consistent hostile environments in authoritarian regimes, in countries with conflicts [...] You can’t do stuff like this with them, you can’t.

Interview Respondent № 6, originally from Central and Eastern Europe
Transition planning and expectation management

Respondents underscored the importance of thorough preparation and planning for the eventual cessation of financial aid. They stressed the significance of understanding that financial resources may be limited or eventually will come to an end. HRDs highlighted the need to devise sustainable strategies, identify alternative funding sources, and establish income-generating activities to ensure their ongoing work and financial stability beyond existing funding programmes. Preparedness for funding termination was deemed critical for the long-term sustainability of HRDs in exile.

“It is a big struggle. I left a very big responsibility in my country when we left. Part of me is guilty [for] leaving because I know the work that I left behind.”

Interview Respondent № 28, originally from Southeast Asia

6.3.8. RESPONDENTS’ RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING SUPPORT PROGRAMMES

Both interview and survey respondents were asked to reflect on what changes may be needed in the support system that could improve its quality and enhance the sustainability of exiled HRDs. What follows are their recommendations. While these recommendations were not addressed to any particular stakeholder, they could be taken into consideration by governments, international organisations, support organisations, exiled human rights organisations, donors, and exiled/relocated HRDs themselves.

1. **Financial and employment support**: Boost financial assistance to ensure HRDs can maintain an adequate standard of living, including supporting children’s education and enhancing technical skills. Establish mechanisms for timely payment systems and consider providing capital for start-up businesses. Assist HRDs in finding sustainable employment that matches living standards and salary levels in their host country.

2. **Access to education and work**: Facilitate access to job opportunities, education, and training in the host environment. Advocate for the rights of HRDs to work in their country of exile and access further education.

3. **Comprehensive support programmes**: Design projects to address the diverse needs of HRDs, encompassing psychological and medical support, including health insurance coverage and mental health services.

4. **Integration and networking**: Offer courses and opportunities to aid integration and facilitate networking among HRDs. Provide services in native languages and targeted support for integration, including cultural education and assistance with administrative procedures.

5. **Institutional support and funding**: Conduct workshops on host country legislation and offer assistance in obtaining essential legal documents. Advocate for salaries considering local taxation and the cost of living. Provide ‘integration information’ packages to aid HRDs in navigating their new environment and accessing funding and grants.
6. **Legal support and safety measures:** Help HRDs navigate legal challenges and ensure their safety during relocation. Provide support for HRDs to continue their work from exile and provide assistance with legal cases in their home countries.

7. **Collaboration and connection:** Facilitate collaboration among HRDs and encourage international organisations to support local defenders. Create spaces for HRDs to connect and discuss shared concerns.

8. **Targeted support for vulnerable HRDs:** Provide specific support for single parents, including financial aid for childcare and education.

9. **Empathetic staff and supportive environments:** Ensure coordinators and staff involved in relocation and support are emotionally supportive, responsive, and aware of HRDs’ needs.

10. **Access to support and funding:** Make funding more accessible and flexible for HRDs and provide information about available support mechanisms. Increase the number of human rights protection officers and ensure individual cases receive adequate attention.

11. **Rehabilitation programmes and post-release support:** Offer rehabilitation programmes, including respite, for HRDs, and provide robust assistance for HRDs post-prison release.

12. **Medical and psychological support:** Provide medical rehabilitation and psychological support, especially for victims of war and survivors of sexual abuse.

13. **Equitable support and recognition:** Address perceived discrepancies in the availability and access to support between different groups and ensure equitable opportunities for all exiled HRDs.

14. **Housing assistance:** Seek to resolve housing issues for HRDs in advance, given the acute shortage of available rental housing in Europe.

15. **Visibility of HRDs and safety measures:** Devise a more effective support system for HRDs, particularly those in precarious situations, with an emphasis on pre-emptive protection to preclude detention or torture. Address the dilemma HRDs face in needing to publicise themselves to garner attention and protection, which, paradoxically, can compound their vulnerability and expedite their persecution. This issue is exacerbated by an environment within the human rights community that is perceived to be unsupportive, described as bureaucratic and lacking in tactical competence and strategic vision. Therefore, there is an apparent need for a re-evaluation of existing support structures to ensure they are not neglecting the safety of those not directly or immediately targeted by regimes and, as a result, inadvertently increasing their exposure and risk. A more nuanced approach to visibility and advocacy for HRDs is required, one that both safeguards their security and amplifies their voices effectively.

16. **Addressing burnout and harassment within NGOs:** Address issues related to burnout, indifference, and lack of empathy in staff members of support provider organisations, along with tackling any instances of harassment and abuse of power (one survey respondent mentioned sexual and psychological harassment and abuse of power by a representative of a support organisation with which they interacted).
7. Conclusions

The initial hypothesis of this research posited that individual HRDs and human rights NGOs in exile are heavily dependent on relocation and emergency support, potentially undermining their long-term sustainability. However, following data analysis and synthesis, it was revealed that, though the current situation of exiled HRDs is frequently unsustainable, this fact isn’t directly linked to their reliance on support programmes. Instead, this lack of sustainability appears to be due to other factors, such as an inadequate support system, insufficient integration, trauma, and mental health issues, among other things.

The findings of this research bear a series of key implications for systems supporting HRDs in exile. With evidence collected from a diverse array of methods and sources, including interviews, focus groups, desk research, and an online survey, these implications shed light on the systemic shortcomings of existing support systems and how they can be ameliorated.

The evident lack of awareness and understanding of the vital role played by HRDs underscores the pressing need for educational initiatives to highlight their significance. Enhanced respect and recognition for their work can catalyse improved resource allocation and facilitate the establishment of dedicated protection mechanisms. While international efforts to protect HRDs are invaluable, the primary responsibility lies at the state level. They need to demonstrate unwavering commitment, devoid of corruption and impunity. Engaging in meaningful collaboration with civil society will guarantee protection measures that are more inclusive, effective, and relevant to each context.

There is a pronounced disparity in terms of access to protection mechanisms. This calls for targeted interventions designed with an understanding of the unique challenges faced by different groups, such as rural HRDs, women human rights defenders, the economically disadvantaged, and other vulnerable groups. Solutions should be comprehensive, ensuring that no defender is side-lined due to socio-economic or geographical constraints.

Visas, especially those allowing multiple entries, are vital lifelines for many HRDs. Simplifying application processes, reducing bureaucratic roadblocks, and aligning practices with political commitments can make the European Union a more accessible and dependable haven for HRDs. The surging demand for temporary and long-term relocations further accentuates the need to re-evaluate the capacity and design of existing programmes. It’s crucial that HRDs are not merely shielded from imminent danger but are also equipped with resources and backing to sustain their work efficiently in exile.

Furthermore, HRDs who cannot return to their home countries after a period of relocation grapple with unique challenges. Support services tailored to their specific needs, ranging from language training to socio-cultural integration, are paramount. Given the intricacies and diversity of HRDs’ requirements, fostering a coordinated approach among supporting entities is essential. Proactive, anticipatory strategies, as opposed to merely reactive measures, can address potential issues before they intensify.

Europe, with its esteemed position as a beacon for human rights and democracy, has both the responsibility and capability to spearhead these changes. By refining its strategy towards HRDs in exile, Europe can fortify its reputation as a global vanguard for human rights.

One insight from the study that begs significant attention is the need for support systems to transition from a short-term to a long-term perspective. Systems must not solely focus on immediate relocation and emergency support but should broaden their scope to include sustainable integration, capacity-building, and strategic planning. This perspective requires a long-term vision that facilitates HRDs’ adjustment to life in exile and supports their ongoing human rights work. Support services should equip
HRDs with necessary tools for successful integration, including language support, cultural orientation, and training to develop job skills suited to their new environment.

Moreover, a more well-rounded approach to mental health support must be a priority. The unique psychological challenges endured by HRDs due to their displacement and trauma necessitate more robust psychological aid and counselling services, tailored specifically for their needs. A broader inclusion of healthcare services, considering the physical and psychological stresses experienced by HRDs, would significantly contribute to their long-term resilience.

The complex administrative and legal hurdles that HRDs face in exile require more dedicated support. Assistance in navigating immigration laws, securing legal status, and help with registering NGOs are just a few areas where the system falls short. The enhancement of such legal support is vital to ensure HRDs are not hampered by bureaucratic complications in their new environments.

The research also highlights the importance of addressing gaps in family and elderly support for HRDs. The system often overlooks the needs of HRDs’ families and the unique challenges faced by elderly HRDs. A more inclusive approach recognising these needs and ensuring appropriate support is provided is crucial. The implementation of these improvements requires close collaboration between NGOs, governments, and other relevant stakeholders.

Importantly, given the increasingly long arm of the state and growing transnational repression, the need for safer relocation procedures, especially for HRDs moving to neighbouring countries, is evident. The creation of safety protocols and sufficient protection mechanisms is integral to guarantee their security, allowing them to advocate effectively without the constant threat of endangerment.

Furthermore, the study highlights the need for better communication and more empathetic interactions within support systems. It is crucial for support services to improve their communication channels, ensuring their accessibility, especially in emergency situations.

Overall, the findings present a clear call for a more holistic, long-term, and empathetic approach to supporting HRDs in exile. The collective efforts of all stakeholders are needed to implement these changes, ensuring that the rights and wellbeing of HRDs are protected, enabling them to continue their crucial work for the advancement of human rights.
8. Recommendations

8.1. RECOMMENDATIONS TO STATES HOSTING EXILED HRDS

1. **Recognition of HRDs' Right to Asylum:** Explicitly recognise the right of HRDs at risk to seek and enjoy asylum. Formalising a human rights defender at risk regime can lead to the progressive development of asylum access, a pivotal issue in the international refugee framework.

2. **HRD Protection visas:** Implement ‘HRD protection’ visas within relocation programmes as alternatives to asylum for HRDs. These visas should afford the necessary legal status and protections for HRDs to continue their work without travel and employment constraints.

3. **Research on HRD Migration Challenges:** Encourage in-depth research and documentation centred on the hurdles HRDs face during their migration process. Thorough understanding will enable the creation of customised support mechanisms and policies.

4. **Enhancement of Relocation Programmes:** Strengthen the capacity of existing relocation schemes to cater to the escalating demand for HRD safe havens. Engage with European countries to multiply relocation opportunities and facilitate access to protection.

5. **Support in Asylum Procedures:** Ensure HRDs are not curtailed in their activism while undergoing the asylum application process. Policies involving dispersal, detention, and isolation need revision to guarantee HRD safety and wellbeing.

6. **Addressing Exile Challenges:** Tailor support programmes to counter the specific challenges faced by exiled HRDs, including language barriers, information paucity, and discrimination. This encompasses language training, cultural orientation, and resource accessibility.

7. **Comprehensive Support for Relocation:** Beyond financial aid, legal and logistical assistance in relocation scenarios is paramount. This entails support in discerning safe travel options, visa processing, transportation, and settling in the host country.

8. **Promotion and Advocacy:** Amplify awareness about the necessity of supporting at-risk HRDs and champion their rights and safety. A concerted effort from governments, international entities, and civil society organisations can significantly bolster HRD protection initiatives.

9. **Broadening Collaborations:** Foster collaboration among stakeholders such as governments, NGOs, academic institutions, and international bodies. Such synergies can foster innovative, potent solutions for HRD relocation.

10. **Prioritise Sustainable Relocation Solutions:** While asylum remains vital for certain cases, emphasis on enduring relocation solutions facilitating safe activism is essential. A broad range of relocation strategies should be explored before resorting to asylum.

11. **Legal Safeguards:** States must ensure HRDs a transparent and secure legal pathway, considering their distinctive circumstances during immigration or asylum assessments.

12. **Access to Employment and Services:** Guarantee HRDs the right to work, avail public services, and achieve self-reliance. This includes the provision of work permits, healthcare access, and educational opportunities.

13. **Safety Provisions:** Collaborate with local law enforcement and communities to safeguard HRDs, especially if threats originate from their native countries. Witness protection schemes, police training, and community sensitisation can be instrumental.

14. **Integration Initiatives:** Facilitate HRD integration through language courses, cultural orientation, and community integration programmes to foster belongingness and cultural assimilation.
8.2. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE EUROPEAN UNION

15. **Consideration for HRDs’ Families:** Address the requirements of HRDs’ families. This may encompass family reunification efforts, educational support for children, or services tailored to the needs of elderly family members. Families should be understood in a wide sense and include the partners of LGBTIQ+ individuals or other defenders.

16. **Partnership with NGOs:** Augment the efficacy of HRD support by forging partnerships between government entities and NGOs. This collaboration can take the form of joint ventures, routine consultations, or collective training sessions.

**8.2.** RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE EUROPEAN UNION

17. **Visa Process for HRDs:** Develop an accessible and streamlined visa process tailored for HRDs. Acknowledge HRDs’ pivotal role in driving change in third countries, ensuring their safety while supporting their significant contributions.

18. **Visa Facilitation for HRDs:** Explicitly integrate HRDs as a category deserving specific visa facilitations, in line with current practices. Introduce a simplified procedure for HRDs within the EU Visa Code, set out criteria for facilitations, and adjust legal frameworks on visas and the Temporary Protection Directive to offer temporary protection to endangered defenders within the EU.

19. **Multiple-Entry Schengen Visas:** Equip HRDs with multiple-entry Schengen visas of extended validity, bolstering their safety and mobility amid threats in their native countries.

20. **Catalogue of Visa Options:** Create a comprehensive catalogue detailing the myriad visa options available for HRDs to lawfully enter and reside in the EU. Such a resource, translated into pertinent languages and published online, would offer vital information accessibility to HRDs.

21. **Urgent Visa Access:** Recognise HRDs' right to visa access and enforce consistent policies to promptly cater to those facing grave threats. A collaborative approach between ProtectDefenders.eu, human rights groups, and EU public stakeholders is crucial to craft a conducive framework for HRDs' visa accessibility in the EU.

22. **Long-Term Relocation Programmes:** To sufficiently back HRDs in extended relocation and exile, it's vital to design and enforce dedicated long-term relocation initiatives. These schemes should furnish exhaustive support and tools for HRDs and their families, ensuring their safety and wellbeing over prolonged durations.

23. **Visa Policy Review:** The European Union must re-evaluate and modify its prevailing visa guidelines to specifically incorporate HRDs as a category eligible for certain visa concessions. This will ensure HRDs have quick and hassle-free visa access, facilitating their European travels for advocacy, training, and temporary respite from threats.

24. **Tailored Visa Schemes:** Establish visa schemes explicitly curated for the needs of endangered HRDs. Such plans should contemplate short-term, multiple-entry visas, empowering HRDs to gauge and regulate the risks they face while persevering in their vital human rights endeavours.

25. **Family Visas for HRDs:** The EU ought to instate distinct provisions for the families and partners of HRDs to secure visas, acknowledging the parallel threats they endure and offering adequate documentation assistance.

26. **Simplify Visa Applications:** Endeavour to refine the visa application procedure for HRDs, curtailting unwarranted documentation demands and addressing issues such as passport denials and data-sharing security risks.
27. **Active Engagement with Relocated HRDs:** The European Commission, in conjunction with Member States, should actively liaise and confer with HRDs who have relocated to the EU. It is essential to incorporate their insights in the conceptualisation and realisation of HRD relocation schemes and European endeavours, keeping in view the distinct challenges and needs of HRDs in third countries.

28. **Oversight on Return and Security:** The pertinent EU delegation should be tasked with vigilant surveillance of the return and security status of HRDs who have journeyed back to their native country. This should involve extending support and aid when required.

### 8.3. RECOMMENDATIONS TO HRDS IN EXILE

29. **Adaptation and Capacity-building:** Seek out and participate in integration and capacity-building programmes, develop job skills that suit the new environment, and proactively build social networks.

30. **Mental Health:** Prioritise mental health, access psychological aid where possible, and engage counselling services if available.

31. **Family Support:** Be proactive in seeking resources and services to support family members and engage with elderly HRDs to ensure their needs are met.

### 8.4. RECOMMENDATIONS TO HRDS AT RISK

32. **Preparedness:** Develop a contingency plan for potential exile, including preparing relevant legal documents, identifying potential host countries, familiarising yourself with relevant laws, and building international networks.

33. **Sustainability Planning:** Work on developing sustainable strategies, identify alternative funding sources, and establish income-generating activities to ensure ongoing work and financial stability.

### 8.5. RECOMMENDATIONS TO NGOS PROVIDING SUPPORT TO HRDS IN EXILE

34. **Integration Programmes for HRDs:** Initiate integration initiatives that connect HRDs to supportive networks and resources within their host countries. Address the pressing challenges they face, such as feelings of isolation and constrained access to services when in exile.

35. **Tailored Support:** Each HRD’s situation is unique. Providing customised support services that reflect the individual’s circumstances, cultural background, and personal needs is crucial. This could involve individualised training programmes, counselling services, or support with specific legal issues. This could also include family support (e.g. access to education for family members, healthcare, and so on).

36. **Mental Health Services:** The mental health challenges that HRDs face, including trauma and post-traumatic stress, should not be overlooked. Offering mental health support, such as counselling or psychotherapy, should be a priority.

37. **Continuous Support:** Offering long-term support, rather than just emergency or short-term aid, can be instrumental in helping HRDs to sustain their work and integrate into the host society.

38. **Enhance Communication:** It’s important to establish efficient and empathetic communications channels, such as hotlines or dedicated email addresses, to respond to HRDs’ inquiries or concerns promptly.
39. **Capacity-building**: Organisations can support HRDs in their professional development by providing training and workshops to diversify their skills, prepare them for the job market in the host country, or aid them in continuing their advocacy work effectively.

40. **Promotion of International Solidarity**: Champion international solidarity endeavours to bolster support for exiled HRDs. Facilitate collaboration and information-sharing among human rights bodies and advocates, aiming to establish a formidable support network.

### 8.6. RECOMMENDATIONS TO DONORS

41. **Long-term Funding**: Prioritise funding for long-term support programmes that aid HRDs in building a sustainable life in exile.

42. **Support for NGOs**: Fund NGOs that provide legal, psychosocial, and family support to HRDs in exile.

43. **Funding Innovation**: Consider novel funding approaches that may be more sustainable or effective in the long-term, such as supporting individual business projects or connecting HRDs with foundations.

### 8.7. SUGGESTIONS FOR ADAPTATION STRATEGIES FOR HRDS

44. **Skills Diversification and Development**: Adapting to a new society may require the acquisition of new skills or the diversification of existing ones. This could include language training, technical skills, or vocational training that aligns with job opportunities in the host country.

45. **Building Local Networks**: Building social networks in the host community can be incredibly beneficial. This could involve joining local clubs or associations, volunteering, or participating in community events.

46. **Self-care and Mental Health Management**: Given the high-stress nature of human rights work and the additional stress of living in exile, self-care and mental health management are crucial. This could involve regular exercise, mindfulness practice, seeking therapy or counselling, or joining a support group.

47. **Cultural Integration**: Understanding and integrating into the new culture can make transition easier. This could be accomplished by attending cultural events, learning local languages, or developing relationships with locals.

48. **Legal Literacy**: Familiarising oneself with the host country's legal system, particularly immigration and employment laws, can reduce uncertainties and help avoid potential legal issues.

49. **Entrepreneurship and Self-employment**: Depending on the legal framework of the host country, starting a small business or becoming self-employed can provide a flexible and fulfilling source of income. This could also provide a platform to continue human rights work.

50. **Strategic Advocacy**: Continue advocating for human rights, perhaps by collaborating with local NGOs, writing articles, or participating in speaking engagements. This can help maintain a sense of purpose and keep the HRD's plight in the public eye.

51. **Family Support**: If family members are also in exile, supporting them can also be an important adaptation strategy. This could involve accessing family services, enrolling children in local schools, or providing emotional support to one another.
The efficacy of each of these strategies will depend on the HRD’s individual circumstances, including their skills, family situation, legal status, and the cultural, social, and economic environment of the host country.

8.8. RECOMMENDATION TO ALL STAKEHOLDERS

52. **Conduct Meta-research:** Given the significant volume of research on the issue, there's a clear need for a thorough meta-analysis of the existing literature. We recommend that stakeholders either collectively or individually dedicate resources to synthesise the findings and conclusions of these reports. Such an analysis could identify recurring themes, gaps in the focus of research, and suggest areas for improvement in the support system. By doing so, it would contribute to a more effective and informed approach to assisting HRDs in exile. Furthermore, such meta-research could also provide valuable recommendations for future research directions and policy developments.
9. ANNEXES

ANNEX I. DESK RESEARCH BIBLIOGRAPHY

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23. International Service for Human Rights, Cote d'Ivoire: The law on the promotion and protection of human rights defenders needs to be implemented, 2020 Link

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ANNEX II. FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. ‘One of the key hypotheses for this research is that human rights defenders, individual human rights defenders and their organisations in exile or in relocation rely heavily on the emergency and relocation support from the partners and the donors. And that renders them unsustainable in the long run because instead of adapting their lives to the new realities, they continue living in this temporary thinking. And that prevents them from becoming sustainable. What are your thoughts about this hypothesis? Do you think it’s kind of a valid hypothesis? What comes to your mind when you hear it?’

2. ‘Another question was kind of very straightforward and direct. What would make this research, this kind of research into what’s available, what’s missing from this support to human rights defenders in longer relocation/exile? What would make this research useful to you in your work? What should be included? What would you want to see?’

3. ‘And then my final question is that, in your opinion, what would make this research useful or how to make this research useful? How can we make this research useful to human rights defenders, both in exile and at home who might be considering going into relocation?’
My name is XXX, I represent a research team at International Partnership for Human Rights, IPHR, doing research on the situation of human rights defenders in relocation/exile. The overall objective of the research is to enhance the long-term self-sufficiency of HRDs living in exile, as well as the sustainability of their work. More specifically, we are trying to establish the key needs of and challenges faced by HRDs living in long-term exile and provide evidence-based recommendations to enhance the relevance and effectiveness of support offered to exiled HRDs by various stakeholders. As part of the research we are studying various reports and other information available on the situation of HRDs in relocation/exile. We are also interviewing a cohort of 50 HRDs, providers of support and other stakeholders from different countries, whose experience and expertise is relevant for the research. In addition, we will distribute an online questionnaire for HRDs in exile to receive additional information. The final outcome of the research will be an evidence-based report with recommendations that would be publicly available.

Thank you for finding time to talk to us. This will be a semi-structured interview meaning that I have a set of questions that I need to ask, but may ask additional clarifying questions along the way. I am looking for your honest opinions, views and impressions, so there are no correct or incorrect responses to the questions. The conversation will last anywhere from 40 to 90 minutes. The inputs we receive during the data collection process will be anonymised and included in the final report in the aggregated way; quotes will have no attribution. Would you mind if I record the interview so that I get everything correctly? The recording will be deleted as soon as we have transcribed it. Do you have any questions for me at this point? You may skip any question if it makes you feel uncomfortable or stop the interview altogether at any point. Do you have any questions for me at this point? (Answer the questions if there are any) Shall we start?

We have two blocks of questions, one is related to the context and circumstances leading to your relocation/exile and the other one is related to your experience with the relocation process and life and work in relocation/exile.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Type of Question</th>
<th>Instruction/Description (only if needed)</th>
<th>Responses (for multiple choice, checkboxes, grids)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Interviewee code (We will need codification for all interviewees so that we don’t keep their names in the same spreadsheet as information about their stories)</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td></td>
<td>Female, Male, Prefer not to say, Other (own response) — an automated option</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td></td>
<td>18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, 65 and over, Prefer not to say</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>At the time you went into exile/relocation, were you an individual human rights defender or do you work with an organization/initiative?</td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td></td>
<td>Individual, Part of organization/initiative, Other (own response) — an automated option</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>For how long have you been working in the field of human rights?</td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td>Less than 1 year, 1-3 years, &gt;3-5 years, &gt;5-7 years, &gt;7-10 years, &gt;10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>What is the geographical scope of your work?</td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td>Technically, it would be a question with subquestions</td>
<td>Global, Regional, Country focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>If regional, name the region(s)</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#</td>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Type of Question</td>
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<td>Responses (for multiple choice, checkboxes, grids)</td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>If country focus, which country(ies)</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>Before analysing, we'd need to synchronise the names of the countries</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>What was the main focus of your human rights work prior to/at the time</td>
<td>Checkboxes</td>
<td>Select all relevant options or suggest your own</td>
<td>Political rights, Social and economic rights, Cultural rights, Women rights, Minority rights, LGBTQ+ rights, Environmental rights, Access to justice, Anti-corruption, Anti-racism, Disability rights, Human rights education, International advocacy, Holistic security, Other (own response) — an automated option</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>What was your position in the organization at the time of going to exile/relocation?</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td></td>
<td>Director/Top manager, Manager, Program officer/Coordinator, Accountant/Finance, Employee/Staff member, Volunteer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>What is your country of origin (where you lived before exile)?</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td></td>
<td>List all countries, if more than one</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Section II. Experience with the relocation process. Life and work in relocation/exile**

<p>| 12.| Do you consider yourself to be in relocation or in exile?                | Multiple choice  | &quot;Other&quot; should not be encouraged here though | Relocation, Exile, Other                                 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Type of Question</th>
<th>Instruction/Description (only if needed)</th>
<th>Responses (for multiple choice, checkboxes, grids)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Section II. Experience with the relocation process. Life and work in relocation/exile</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Please elaborate why you think it is relocation (exile)?</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>What led to your decision to go into relocation/exile?</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>What is your current country of relocation/exile?</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Is it your first relocation/exile country?</td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>If no to above, what other countries were your relocation/exile countries?</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>Not the countries via which the respondent had to travel to get to the current country, but where they lived as a country of relocation/exile</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Is it your final destination?</td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>If no or not sure to previous question, please elaborate (why not sure, or where you are going next and what will be your final destination)</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>For how long have you been living in your current country of relocation/exile?</td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td>0-3 months</td>
<td>&gt;3-6 months</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Section II. Experience with the relocation process. Life and work in relocation/exile

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<thead>
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<th>Question</th>
<th>Type of Question</th>
<th>Instruction/Description (only if needed)</th>
<th>Responses (for multiple choice, checkboxes, grids)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 21. | When did you go into relocation/exile? | Multiple choice |  | 0-3 months  
>3-6 months  
>6 months - 1 year  
>1-2 years  
>2-3 years  
>3-5 years  
More than 5 years |
| 22. | Are you in relocation/exile with your family? | Multiple choice |  | Yes  
No  
Partly |
| 23. | Please elaborate (only if they start explaining) | | | |
| 24. | Family members who are with you in country of exile: | Checkboxes | Select all relevant options or suggest your own | Partner/spouse  
Parents  
Underage children  
Other (own response) — an automated option |
| 25. | What is your current legal status? | Multiple choice | | Short term visa (less than 1 year)  
1-year visa  
3-year visa  
5-year visa  
residency permit  
asylum seeker  
received refugees status  
under subsidiary protection  
undocumented migrant  
Other (own response) — an automated option |
| 26. | Have you received any kind of support from the authorities in your country of relocation/exile? | Multiple choice | | Yes  
No  
I am not aware if such support is available |
| 27. | If yes, what kind of support have you received? | Checkboxes | Select all relevant options or suggest your own | Legal aid  
Medical aid  
Rehabilitation  
Psychological aid  
Financial assistance  
Help with accommodation |
### Section II. Experience with the relocation process. Life and work in relocation/exile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Type of Question</th>
<th>Instruction/Description (only if needed)</th>
<th>Responses (for multiple choice, checkboxes, grids)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Help with accommodation&lt;br&gt;Access to education&lt;br&gt;Police protection&lt;br&gt;Assistance with schooling for children&lt;br&gt;Integration&lt;br&gt;Assistance with employment&lt;br&gt;Internship&lt;br&gt;Access to free workspace&lt;br&gt;Other (own response) — an automated option</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>What was the length of the support provided to</td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td>Less than 1 month&lt;br&gt;&gt;1-2 months&lt;br&gt;&gt;2-3 months&lt;br&gt;&gt;3-4 months&lt;br&gt;&gt;4-5 months&lt;br&gt;&gt;5-6 months&lt;br&gt;&gt;6 months - 1 year&lt;br&gt;&gt;1-2 years&lt;br&gt;&gt;2-3 years&lt;br&gt;&gt;3-4 years&lt;br&gt;&gt;4-5 years&lt;br&gt;more than 5 years&lt;br&gt;Unlimited&lt;br&gt;I am not sure/I don’t remember</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Please elaborate</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>In case they want to comment (e.g. different types of support had different duration and so on)</td>
<td>Yes&lt;br&gt;No&lt;br&gt;Not sure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>How accessible was support provided by the authorities?</td>
<td>Linear scale</td>
<td>Please rate how easy it was to obtain and use the support provided by the authorities on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is “impossible” and 5 is “very easy”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Please elaborate</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>Optional, in case they want to comment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#</td>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Type of Question</td>
<td>Instruction/Description (only if needed)</td>
<td>Responses (for multiple choice, checkboxes, grids)</td>
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<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Have you received support from non-governmental organisations?</td>
<td>Checkboxes</td>
<td>Select all relevant options or suggest your own</td>
<td>Help with accommodation Access to education Police protection Assistance with schooling for children Integration Assistance with employment Internship Access to free workspace Other (own response) — an automated option</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>If yes, what kind of support have you received?</td>
<td>Checkboxes</td>
<td>Select all relevant options or suggest your own</td>
<td>Legal aid Medical aid Rehabilitation Psychological aid Financial assistance Help with accommodation Access to education Assistance with schooling for children Integration Assistance with employment Life coaching Internship Access to free workspace Physical security Digital security Psycho-social security Rest and respite Other (own response) — an automated option</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>IF THEY RECEIVED SUPPORT FROM NGOS: how many NGOs have</td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 &gt;5 More than 1 (for those who do not remember how many)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Please name organisations that provided support.</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>Select all relevant options or suggest your own</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#</td>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Type of Question</td>
<td>Instruction/Description (only if needed)</td>
<td>Responses (for multiple choice, checkboxes, grids)</td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36.</td>
<td>What was the length of the support provided to you by NGOs?</td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td></td>
<td>Less than 1 month&lt;br&gt; &gt;1-2 months&lt;br&gt; &gt;2-3 months&lt;br&gt; &gt;3-4 months&lt;br&gt; &gt;4-5 months&lt;br&gt; &gt;5-6 months&lt;br&gt; &gt;6 months - 1 year&lt;br&gt; &gt;1-2 years&lt;br&gt; &gt;2-3 years&lt;br&gt; &gt;3-4 years&lt;br&gt; &gt;4-5 years&lt;br&gt; more than 5 years&lt;br&gt; Unlimited&lt;br&gt; I am not sure/I don't remember</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37.</td>
<td>Please elaborate</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>Optional, in case they want to comment</td>
<td>(e.g. different types of support had different duration and so on)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38.</td>
<td>How accessible was support provided by NGOs?</td>
<td>Linear scale</td>
<td>Please rate how easy it was to obtain and use the support provided by the authorities on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is &quot;impossible&quot; and 5 is &quot;very easy&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39.</td>
<td>Please elaborate</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>Optional, in case they want to comment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40.</td>
<td>Has the support provided covered your family as well?</td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td></td>
<td>Only support from authorities&lt;br&gt; Only support from NGOs&lt;br&gt; Support from both authorities and NGOs&lt;br&gt; No&lt;br&gt; I am not sure/I don't remember&lt;br&gt; Not needed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Section II. Experience with the relocation process. Life and work in relocation/exile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Type of Question</th>
<th>Instruction/Description (only if needed)</th>
<th>Responses (for multiple choice, checkboxes, grids)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>Was it easy to find information about possibilities of support?</td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td>Yes, but only for support from authorities</td>
<td>Yes, but only for support from NGOs No for both Not sure Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>Please elaborate. In case of “not easy”. What were the obstacles?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>Do you continue your human rights work in relocation/exile?</td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Why? (for both yes and no) In case of YES: Did you ever consider doing something else?</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>If you continue your human rights work in relocation/exile, have there been changes you needed to introduce to your work in exile?</td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>Please elaborate</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>From your experience, what kind of support human rights defenders lack in relocation/exile or what changes are needed in the support system?</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>If you continue your human rights work in relocation/exile, have there been changes you needed to introduce to your work in exile?</td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No Not sure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Section II. Experience with the relocation process. Life and work in relocation/exile

<table>
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<th>#</th>
<th>Question</th>
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<th>Instruction/Description (only if needed)</th>
<th>Responses (for multiple choice, checkboxes, grids)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>49.</td>
<td>Please elaborate</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50.</td>
<td>Do you know any other HRD in relocation/exile whom we could reach out to to fill in our online questionnaire? If yes, could you please share their name or contact with us (now or after checking with them if they are willing to take part in the survey)?</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51.</td>
<td>Is there anything else that we haven't asked you about but you find it important to say regarding support to HRDs in relocation/exile?</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ANNEX IV. ONLINE SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

This online questionnaire is part of research on the situation of human rights defenders in relocation/exile led by International Partnership for Human Rights. The overall objective of the research is to enhance the long-term self-sufficiency of HRDs living in exile, as well as the sustainability of their work. More specifically, we are trying to establish the key needs of and challenges faced by HRDs living in long-term relocation/exile and provide evidence-based recommendations to enhance the relevance and effectiveness of support offered to exiled HRDs by various stakeholders. As part of the research we are studying various reports and other information available on the situation of HRDs in relocation/exile, interview exiled/relocated HRDs and collect information via this online survey. We would highly appreciate it if you could participate in the research and contribute to its conclusions and recommendations by filling in the form below.

The process will take you roughly 20 minutes. The inputs we receive during the data collection process will be anonymised and included in the final report in the aggregated way; quotes will have no attribution.

The final outcome of the research will be an evidence-based report with recommendations that would be publicly available. We have two blocks of questions, one is related to the context and circumstances leading to your relocation/exile and the other one is related to your experience with the relocation process and life and work in relocation/exile.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Mandatory (Y/N)</th>
<th>Type of Question</th>
<th>Instruction/Description (only if needed)</th>
<th>Responses (for multiple choice, checkboxes, grids)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Name, surname</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2. | Gender                                             | Y               | Multiple choice | Female
Male
Prefer not to say
Other (own response) — an automated option offered by Google |
| 3. | Age                                                | Y               | Multiple choice | 18-24
25-34
35-44
45-54
55-64
65 and over
Prefer not to say |
## Section I. Context and circumstances prior and leading to relocation/exile

<table>
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<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Mandatory (Y/N)</th>
<th>Type of Question</th>
<th>Instruction/Description (only if needed)</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>At the time you went into exile/relocation, were you an individual human rights defender or did you work with an organization/initiative?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td>Individual Part of organization/initiative Other (own response) — an automated option</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>For how long have you been working in the field of human rights?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td>Less than 1 year 1-3 years &gt;3-5 years &gt;5-7 years &gt;7-10 years &gt;10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>What was the main focus of your human rights work prior to/at the time of going to exile/relocation?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Checkboxes</td>
<td>Select all relevant options or suggest your own</td>
<td>Political rights Social and economic rights Cultural rights Women rights Minority rights LGBTIQ+ rights Environmental rights Access to justice Anti-corruption Anti-racism Disability rights Human rights education International advocacy Holistic security Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>What was your position in the organization at the time of going to exile/relocation?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>Director/Top manager Manager Program officer/Coordinator Accountant/Finance Employee/Staff member Volunteer Other Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>What is your country of origin (where you lived before exile)?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>List all countries, if more than one</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Section I. Context and circumstances prior and leading to relocation/exile

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Do you consider yourself to be in relocation or in exile?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td></td>
<td>Relocation Exile Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>What is your current country of relocation/exile?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Is it your first relocation/exile country?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td>Select all relevant options or suggest your own</td>
<td>Yes (go to 13) No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>What other countries were your relocation/exile countries?</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>Not the countries via which you had to travel to get to the current country, but where you lived as a country of relocation/exile</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Is it your final destination?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes (go to 15) No Not sure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Please elaborate (why you are not sure, or where you are going next and what your final destination will be)</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>For how long have you been living in your current country of relocation/exile?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td></td>
<td>0-3 months &gt;3-6 months &gt;6 months - 1 year &gt;1-2 years &gt;2-3 years &gt;3-5 years More than 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>When did you go into relocation/exile?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td>List all countries, if more than one</td>
<td>0-3 months &gt;3-6 months &gt;6 months - 1 year &gt;1-2 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Section I. Context and circumstances prior and leading to relocation/exile

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<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>&gt;2-3 years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+Programming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt;3-5 years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More than 5 years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Are you in relocation/exile with your family?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes, No (go to 19), Partly</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Family members who are with you in the country of relocation/exile:</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Checkboxes</td>
<td>Select all relevant options or suggest your own</td>
<td>Partner/spouse Parents Underage children Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 19. | What is your current legal status in the country of relocation/exile?   | Y              | Multiple choice |                                          | Short term visa (less than 1 year) 1-year visa 3-year visa 5-year visa residency permit asylum seeker received refugees status under subsidiary protection undocumented migrant Other |}

<p>| 20. | Have you received any kind of support from the authorities in your country of relocation/exile? | Y | Multiple choice | Yes, No (go to 24), I am not aware if such support is available (go to 24) |
| 21. | What kind of support have you received?                                   | N | Checkboxes      | Select all relevant options or suggest your own | Legal aid Medical aid Rehabilitation Psychological aid Financial assistance Help with accommodation Access to education Police protection Assistance with schooling for children Integration Assistance with employment Internship |</p>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Access to free workspace Other (own response) - an automated option</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>What was the length of the support provided to you by the authorities</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td></td>
<td>Less than 1 month &gt;1-2 months &gt;2-3 months &gt;3-4 months &gt;4-5 months &gt;5-6 months &gt;6 months - 1 year &gt;1-2 years &gt;2-3 years &gt;3-4 years &gt;4-5 years more than 5 years Unlimited I am not sure/I don't remember</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>How accessible was support provided by the authorities?</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Linear scale</td>
<td>Please rate how easy it was to obtain and use the support provided by the authorities on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is &quot;impossible&quot; and 5 is &quot;very easy&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Have you received support from non-governmental organisations?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td>Select all relevant options or suggest your own</td>
<td>Yes No (go to 29) I am not aware if such support is available (go to 29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>If yes, what kind of support have you received?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Checkboxes</td>
<td>Select all relevant options or suggest your own</td>
<td>Legal aid Medical aid Rehabilitation Psychological aid Financial assistance Help with accommodation Access to education Assistance with schooling for children Integration Assistance with employment Life coaching</td>
</tr>
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</table>
# Question

## Instruction/Description (only if needed)

## Responses (for multiple choice, checkboxes, grids) + Programming

## Section I. Context and circumstances prior and leading to relocation/exile

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<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>Internship Access to free workspace Physical security Digital security Psycho-social security Rest and respite Other (own response) — an automated option</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>If you received support from NGOs: how many NGOs have provided support to you?</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>&gt;5</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>More than 1 (for those who do not remember how many)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>What was the length of the support provided to you by NGOs?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td></td>
<td>Less than 1 month</td>
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<td>&gt;1-2 months</td>
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<td>&gt;2-3 months</td>
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<td>&gt;3-4 months</td>
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<td>&gt;4-5 months</td>
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<td>&gt;5-6 months</td>
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<td>&gt;6 months - 1 year</td>
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<td>&gt;1-2 years</td>
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<td>&gt;2-3 years</td>
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<td>&gt;3-4 years</td>
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<td>&gt;4-5 years</td>
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<td>more than 5 years</td>
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<td>Unlimited</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I am not sure/I don't remember</td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29.</td>
<td>Has the support provided covered your family as well?</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td></td>
<td>Only support from authorities Only support from NGOs Support from both authorities and NGOs No I am not sure/I don't remember Not needed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 30.| Was it easy to find information about possibilities of support?          | Y               | Multiple choice   |                                          | Yes, but only for support from authorities Yes, but only for support from NGOs Yes for both No for both Not sure Other |

| 31.| Do you continue your human rights work in relocation/exile?             | Y               | Multiple choice   |                                          | Yes No (go to 37) |

| 32.| Did you consider doing something other than human rights work?          | N               | Multiple choice   |                                          | Yes No |

| 33.| Please elaborate                                                        | N               | Text              |                                          | |

| 34.| Is human rights work your main source of income?                        | N               | Multiple choice   |                                          | Yes No |

| 35.| What kind of human rights work are you engaged in?                      | N               | Multiple choice   |                                          | Fulltime work with human rights organisation Part-time work with human rights organisation Volunteering Other |

<p>| 36.| Did you need/have to introduce any changes in your human rights work in relocation/exile? | N | Checkboxes | No Change in thematic scope Change in geographical scope of work Change in the organisational structure Other changes |</p>
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<td>37.</td>
<td>From your experience, what kind of support human rights defenders need?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td>Help with career change, Life coaching, Financial assistance, Help with accommodation, Access to education, Legal aid, Medical aid, Rehabilitation, Psychological aid, Assistance with schooling for children, Integration, Assistance with employment, Access to free workspace, No changes are needed, Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38.</td>
<td>Please elaborate</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39.</td>
<td>In your opinion, what changes are needed in the support system to enhance the long-term self-sufficiency of HRDs living in exile, as well as the sustainability of their work?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40.</td>
<td>If circumstances allow for it, would you return to your country of origin?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td>Yes, No, Not sure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41.</td>
<td>Please elaborate</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42.</td>
<td>Please share any other thoughts regarding the situation of HRDs in relocation/exile</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>