

# PROTECTING DEFENDERS

How to improve the infrastructure protecting human rights defenders in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Ukraine.

## Recommendations for donors & diplomats



FULL REPORT  
[BIT.LY/PRODEF21](https://bit.ly/prodef21)

## Play a bigger role in the protection infrastructure for human rights defenders at risk



### 1. Show public support towards human rights defenders

- Support human rights defenders at risk with public statements, particularly the most marginalised groups, such as women and LGBTQI rights defenders, journalists/bloggers, environmental activists and defenders operating in remote areas
- Offer the safety of your premises for meetings of civil society representatives
- Establish and empower focal points for the protection of human rights defenders at embassies

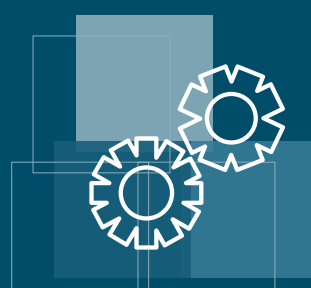
### 2. Enhance cooperation with local and international stakeholders

- Play an active role in support of defenders at risk by issuing expedited multi-visas for them and their family members; by observing trials; by visiting unlawfully jailed defenders
- Cooperate and support independent civil society, and refrain from any support to government-organised non-governmental organisations
- Support initiatives that build relations with professional groups and new allies, such as lawyers, psychologists, media, education institutions, artistic groups, businesses, etc.
- Offer meeting places for and facilitate dialogue among defenders and authorities, as well as representatives of business, academia, etc.

### 3. Enable accurate and safe communication about protection work

- Facilitate cooperation and coordination by taking an active part in donor coordination initiatives
- Use secure channels of communication with defenders at risk, particularly from authoritarian countries
- Support coordination among embassy focal points for the protection of defenders

## Improve existing infrastructure for human rights defenders at risk



### 4. Ground protection work locally

- Support initiatives that build alliances locally and regionally and prioritise protection inside the country and in neighbouring countries
- Request mapping of existing protection actors as a precondition for supporting new ones
- Encourage coordination and cooperation among existing initiatives

### 5. Focus on preventive support, particularly within countries with hybrid regimes

- Encourage and support capacity building in digital and physical security as well as psychological well-being in hybrid countries, such as Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine
- Encourage regular risk analysis within organisations that you support

### 6. Strengthen institutional capacities, organisational security, and individual well-being of local protection providers

- Support initiatives that focus on good governance and healthy organisational culture
- Provide core funding and encourage organisational development of non-governmental organisations
- Encourage and support burn-out prevention measures for protection providers

### 7. Support efforts to strengthen domestic legislation and policies related to protection of human rights defenders

- Support efforts to improve domestic legislation, and international litigation on the cases of rights defenders at risk
- Encourage and support burn-out prevention measures for protection providers

## Strengthen the design & implementation of protection programmes for defenders



### 8. Support flexible protection programmes with a focus on the desired impact on the life of a defender at risk

- Encourage and support programmes with holistic focus on the needs that include family members of defenders at risk
- Ensure that reporting requirements set by the donors do not get in the way of responsive and flexible assistance
- Allow budgetary flexibility for the protection programmes for making timely assistance to defenders at risk possible

### 9. Continue mainstreaming of gender and minority considerations in protection programming

- Encourage protection initiatives that focus on gender equality in decision-making and are gender-sensitive and responsive in the support that is offered

### 10. Invest in physical aspects of protection infrastructure

- Support in-country and out-of-country shelters for human rights defenders at risk
- Support improved protection of offices and homes of defenders
- Support replacement of seized equipment