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Protecting women human rights defenders and people who defend women's rights in Europe

Motion for a resolution

tabled by the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination

This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only those who have signed it

According to the definition of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), women human rights defenders are “all women and girls working on any human rights issue, and people of all genders who work to promote women’s rights and rights related to gender equality.” Their role is to denounce gender-based discrimination and violence and call with courage for societal change. They can be activists, journalists, health workers, private sector actors or members of non-governmental organisations

Women human rights defenders are increasingly at risk due to a deteriorating human rights environment and the shrinking space for civil society in some Council of Europe member States. In denouncing human rights violations and systems of deeply rooted gender inequalities they encounter numerous obstacles. There are notably multiple threats against defenders of sexual and reproductive health and rights, of the rights of LGBTI people, as well as feminist movements denouncing patriarchal systems and values. These threats are attempts to silence them and to discourage them from continuing.

It is time to recognise the important contribution of women human rights defenders to the protection of human rights and to increase efforts to ensure their safety and security. The Assembly should look into the situation of women human rights defenders in Europe, raise awareness of the risks and the challenges they face and call for measures to guarantee their freedom of expression and protection.

