



40th Regular Session of the UN Human Rights Council
Item 3: General Debate on the Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, including the right to development

**Oral Statement Delivered by Shanna Priangka Ramadhanti on behalf of
Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)**

Monday, 11 March 2019

Mr President, FORUM-ASIA welcomes the report of the Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders, and his emphasis on the safety and specific protection needs of women human rights defenders.

We share his concerns on the increasing targeting of WHRDs through online harassment, violence and attacks. Online hate campaign and death threats against Indian journalist, Rana Ayyub, documented in the report, is emblematic of this growing trend in Asia and beyond. Similarly, prominent WHRD, Shahindha Ismail in the Maldives, has been a target of death threats and incitement to violence on social media by extremist groups following false accusations of blasphemy on social media.¹

Echoing the Special Rapporteur's recommendations, we call on states to prioritise the protection of WHRDs, including in online spaces, and address threats in a holistic manner, and immediately and fully investigate all threats and attacks against WHRDs, ensuring access to effective remedy.

We also share his concerns on the specific gendered and intersectional risks faced by WHRDs belonging to marginalised minorities such as indigenous WHRDs and those who defend land and environmental rights, and the violent attacks and killings of these defenders, especially in rural areas. For instance, in November 2018, Agnes Khairsing and her colleague were brutally beaten by 30 people for exposing illegal coal mining and its environmental repercussion in India.²

We call on the Council to adopt a strong and gender sensitive resolution on the protection of environmental HRDs that articulates the human rights obligations of states as well as businesses and development finance institutions in relation to environmental human rights defenders.

Thank you.

¹ FORUM-ASIA, Press Statement, The Maldives: End the targeted harassment and intimidation of human rights defender Shahindha Ismail, 5 April 2017, <https://www.forum-asia.org/?p=26091>

² FORUM-ASIA, Press Statement, India: FORUM-ASIA condemns the brutal attack on women human rights defenders Agnes Kharshiing and her associate, 8 November 2018, <https://www.forum-asia.org/?p=27655>