



Being Well and Staying Safe: Resources for Human Rights Defenders

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Thank you for joining New Tactics, Jane Barry and other practitioners for an online dialogue on Being Well and Staying Safe: Resources for human rights defenders from **June 22 to 28, 2011**. It was a fascinating conversation! Please continue to add comments to this space if there is something that you were not able to add during the dialogue week. We will begin to work on summarizing this dialogue. Once that summary is finished, it will be posted on this page, and all of the dialogue participants will be notified.

Human rights work is a powerful and fulfilling vocation. And it is equally hugely challenging for human rights practitioners. The nature of this work exposes defenders to distressing and threatening situations. The need to take care of one's self is extremely important, as is the need to take care of, protect and support each other. Human rights defenders cannot be well without being safe. Likewise, they cannot truly be safe without being well. Often, security is thought of as a stand-alone concept, rooted in the set, militaristic concepts of war and conflict. Human rights defenders are defining a new concept of security - one that comes from a feminist

and anti-militarist standpoint. Women in Black have defined security as including: freedom from constant threats, economic security, political security, environmental security, and health security. How would a new, more integrated and holistic definition of security impact the human rights community? This online dialogue is an opportunity to further explore the ways in which well-being and security are mutually inclusive for human rights defenders. This is a space to discuss how these issues and concepts relate to gender, identity, human rights work, budgeting and fundraising.

The featured resource practitioners that helped to lead this dialogue included:

Jane Barry (co-facilitator) - author of *What's the Point of the Revolution if We Can't Dance?* (with Jelena Djordjevic, 2007), United States

Mike Grenville - trainer on avoiding burnout, United Kingdom

Nina Jusuf - advisor and trainer for Capacitar International, Indonesia

Edna Aquino of the Global Campaign to Stop Stoning and Killing Women (SKSW Campaign)

Patricia Smith, Founder of Compassion Fatigue Awareness Project, United States

Jessica Wrenn from the American Jewish World Service (AJWS), United States

Emily Jacobi - Executive Director and Founder of Digital Democracy, United States

Wojtek Bogusz of Front Line Defenders, Ireland

Lin Chew of the Institute for Women's Empowerment (IWE), Hong Kong

Marie Caraj - (Co-Founder of Protection International) freelance consultant and trainer on protection & security for HRD and other vulnerable groups, Belgium

Saira Hamidi of the Urgent Action Fund, United States

Becky Hurwitz - Project Manager at MobileActive and currently working on the SaferMobile project, United States

Marcio Gagliato of the Center for Victims of Torture, Zimbabwe

Note: This dialogue is PUBLIC. Do not share any private or sensitive information. For advice on a specific situation, please [contact a participant privately](#).

Summary Participants considered the following questions:

What is the relationship between well-being and security?

What gets in the way of integrating well-being into security from an individual, organizational and community perspective?

How does information communication technology fit into the work of keeping defenders safe and well?

How can the human rights community support the well-being and security of defenders?

What works? Share resources and tools for defenders for being well and staying safe.

What is the relationship between well-being and security?

Participants traced the development of our notions of well-being in security, beginning with **security threats** such those associated with war, genocide, and the displacement of populations. Over time, the focus on security has **expanded** to acknowledge needs associated with well-being, which often deals with more **long-term challenges** to mental, physical, and emotional health. Also discussed were ways in which well-being is more about the condition of **soul**, while security is physical condition. Participants emphasized the need to go **beyond basic** definitions to include social, political and cultural elements. Human rights defenders may be expected, and expect themselves, to be “**tough**,” in ways that undermine their personal well-being. Furthermore, participants considered the way in which **gender (1)** and **other identities** may impact the way in which human rights defenders understand and address their well-being and security. **Solidarity** and community were two important elements participants identified as important to the maintenance and sustainability of well-being. Bearing witness to the pain and suffering of others, it was agreed, puts us at risk for secondary trauma known as **compassion fatigue**. Human rights defendants must take care of themselves to ensure that they can continue to help others.

What gets in the way of integrating well-being into security from an individual, organizational and community perspective?

The first step identified in integrating well-being into security is [challenging the idea](#) that the individual is not as important as his/her work. Too often well-being and security are perceived to be [the price paid](#) to do human rights work, when really the [passion and well-being](#) of human rights defenders is what [motivates](#) them to do their work well. Participants identified the [business attitude](#) and language that has entered many NGOs as undermining the integration of well-being, citing the [shock of ideology](#) and [market language](#). To counter these challenges, participants emphasized the need for organizations to conduct internal discussions about well being and whether they are a place [with or without “soul.”](#) Rather than [confronting resistance](#) to efforts integrating well-being, participants suggested that systems validating well-being be rewarded. Furthermore, efforts should be made to demonstrate the ways in which exhaustion and burn-out ultimately contribute to [organizational failure](#). The risks and fears that accompany human rights work need to be [discussed](#) and acknowledged.

How does information communication technology fit into the work of keeping defenders safe and well?

Information communication technology is [vital](#) to the work of defenders in an increasingly [digitized](#) age. Participants suggested [adapting technologies](#), such as [GPS tracking devices](#) in phones, to improve HRD's security, citing an [example of midwives](#) who enter information when making house calls to alert others to their whereabouts and needs. However, it is harder to use these technologies for [long term well-being](#), and other venues must be explored. It is also important that [grant makers](#) evaluate their digital security to ensure they protect HRDs. In discussing the role information communication technology, participants emphasized the need to [improve](#) the way human rights defenders learn about technology. Though technology has great potential to assist defenders, there is a [persistent gap](#) between the language of technology and the language of human rights defenders, paying particular attention to gender. When teaching information communication technology it is important to break the instruction down into [understandable parts](#).

How can the human rights community support the well-being and security of defenders?

The [variety of needs](#) HRDs range from individual to collective support. [Dialogue participants agreed](#) that there is a growing recognition of the security and well-being concerns/priorities of HRDs within the grantmaking community, in particular. More and more grantmakers are identifying the [types of support](#) they are best-placed to provide to their partners and reaching out to other organizations that can be supportive, including ongoing dialogues with partners and providing general support. One way to provide support is to work with [regional networks](#) of national human rights organizations. These regional networks (there are examples in Latin America, East Africa and Asia) seek to strengthen the work of HRDs in the region by reducing their vulnerability to the risk of persecution and by enhancing their capacity to effectively defend human rights.

Grantmakers have identified [best practices](#), both in terms of prevention and response, through which they can support HRD well-being and safety:

- providing emergency, capacity-building and long-term security grants while also allowing flexibility for unexpected emergency situations
- supporting HRDs in developing and implementing a security plan
- identifying regional “hot zones” and issues that are likely to place HRDs in danger
- improving digital security and support grantees in doing the same
- funding psychosocial support and considering Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation

However, grantmakers do face [challenges](#) when trying to support the well-being and security of HRD. Oftentimes requests speak to threats and major security concerns but do not include a security plan. It is crucial for grantmakers to approach such requests with caution and sensitivity, reminding, instead of prescribing, to these groups that the grants can also support their security needs including well-being.

What works? Share resources and tools for defenders for being well and staying safe.

Participants shared ideas for next steps after this dialogue. [Many agreed](#) that there is a need for a more formal [network or coalition](#) of practitioners/trainers, HRDs and grantmakers interested in continuing to share information and ideas, and collaborate/coordinate future efforts.

Resources:

[Capacitar International](#)

[MobileActive.org](#) resources:

[SaferMobile Wikipedia page](#)

https://lab.safermobile.org/wiki/Main_Page

[Mobile Security Risks: A Primer for Activists, Journalists and Rights Defenders](#)

[A Guide to Mobile Security Risk Assessment](#)

[Safer Twitter](#)

[Mobile Tactics for Participants in Peaceful Assemblies](#)

[Who Cares Where I am, Anyway? An Update on Mobile Phone Location Tracking](#)

[The Bug in Your Pocket: Remote Listening Applications for Mobile Phones](#)

[Risk and Responsibility: Defending Human Rights Defenders](#), American Jewish World Service Grantmaking Strategy Paper

[Claiming Rights, Claiming Justice: A Guidebook on Women Human Rights Defenders](#), Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (2007)

[Front Line Handbook for Human Rights Defenders: What protection can EU and Norwegian Diplomatic Missions offer?](#) researched and written by Chris Collier and published by Front Line

[Insiste, Persiste, Resiste, Existe](#), Jane Barry with Vahida Nainar.

Project partners: Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights, The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation and Front Line International Foundation for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (2008)

[New Protection Manual for Human Rights Defenders](#), researched and written by Enrique Eguren and Marie Caraj and published by Protection International (2009)

[Security in-a-box: Tools and Tactics for your Digital Security](#), Tactical Technology Collective and Front Line International Foundation for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders

[Self-Care and Self-Defense Manual for Feminist Activists](#), Marina Bernal. Artemisa, Grupo Interdisciplinario en Género, Sexualidad, Juventud y Derechos Humanos and Elige—Red de Jóvenes por los Derechos Sexuales y Reproductivos (2006). Published in English by CREA (2008)

[What's the Point of Revolution if We Can't Dance](#), Jane Barry with Jelena -Djordjevic. Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights (2007)

[Integrated Security: The Manual](#), Jane Barry, Kvinna till Kvinna and Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights (2011)

[Urgent Responses For Women Human Rights Defenders At Risk: Mapping And Preliminary Assessment](#), Inmaculada Barcia, Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) (2011)

Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) [April 2012 Forum](#)

[Embattled NGO Assistance Fund](#)

*Patricia Smith is a certified Compassion Fatigue Specialist with 20 years of training experience. As founder of the Compassion Fatigue Awareness Project© (www.compassionfatigue.org), the outreach division of Healthy Caregiving, LLC, she writes, speaks and facilitates workshops nationwide in service of those who care for others. She has authored several books including *To Weep for a Stranger: Compassion Fatigue in Caregiving*, which is available at www.healthycaregiving.com or Amazon.com.*