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COMMEMORATIVE ISSUE
HUMAN RIGHTS IN MOTION



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INTRODUCTION



HUMAN RIGHTS IN MOTION: A MAP TO A MOVEMENT'S FUTURE

Lucia Nader (Executive Director, Conectas)
Juana Kweitel (Program Director, Conectas)
Marcos Fuchs (Associate Director, Conectas)

Sur Journal was created ten years ago as a vehicle to deepen and strengthen bonds between academics and activists from the Global South concerned with human rights, in order to magnify their voices and their participation before international organizations and academia. Our main motivation was the fact that, particularly in the Southern hemisphere, academics were working alone and there was very little exchange between researchers from different countries. The journal's aim has been to provide individuals and organizations working to defend human rights with research, analyses and case studies that combine academic rigor and practical interest. In many ways, these lofty ambitions have been met with success: in the past decade, we have published articles from dozens of countries on issues as diverse as health and access to treatment, transitional justice, regional mechanisms and information and human rights, to name a few. Published in three languages and available online and in print for free, our project also remains unique in terms of geographical reach, critical perspective and its Southern 'accent'. In honour of the founding editor of this journal, **Pedro Paulo Poppovic**, the 20th issue opens with a biography (by João Paulo Charleaux) of this sociologist who has been one of the main contributors to this publication's success.

This past decade has also been, in many ways, a successful one for the human rights movement as a whole. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights has recently turned 60, new international treaties have been adopted and the old but good global and regional monitoring systems are in full operation, despite criticisms regarding their effectiveness and attempts by States to curb their authority. From a strategic perspective, we continue to use, with more or less success, advocacy, litigation and naming-and-shaming as our main tools for change. In addition, we continue to nurture partnerships between what we categorize as local, national and international organizations within our movement.

Nevertheless, the **political and geographic coordinates** under which the global human

rights movement has operated have undergone profound changes. Over the past decade, we have witnessed hundreds of thousands of people take to the streets to protest against social and political injustices. We have also seen emerging powers from the South play an increasingly influential role in the definition of the global human rights agenda. Additionally, the past ten years have seen the rapid growth of social networks as a tool of mobilization and as a privileged forum for sharing political information between users. In other words, the journal is publishing its 20th issue against a backdrop that is very different from that of ten years ago. The protests that recently filled the streets of many countries around the globe, for example, were not organized by traditional social movements nor by unions or human rights NGOs, and people's grievances, more often than not, were expressed in terms of social justice and not as rights. Does this mean that human rights are no longer seen as an effective language for producing social change? Or that human rights organizations have lost some of their ability to represent wronged citizens? Emerging powers themselves, despite their newly-acquired international influence, have hardly been able – or willing – to assume stances departing greatly from those of “traditional” powers. How and where can human rights organizations advocate for change? Are Southern-based NGOs in a privileged position to do this? Are NGOs from emerging powers also gaining influence in international forums?

It was precisely to reflect upon these and other pressing issues that, for this 20th issue, SUR's editors decided to enlist the help of over 50 leading human rights activists and academics from 18 countries, from Ecuador to Nepal, from China to the US. We asked them to ponder on what we saw as some of the most urgent and relevant questions facing the global human rights movement today: 1. Who do we represent? 2. How do we combine urgent issues with long-term impacts? 3. Are human rights still an effective language for producing social change? 4. How have new information and communication technologies influenced activism? 5. What are the challenges of working internationally from the South?

The result, which you now hold in your hands, is a **roadmap for the global human rights movement** in the 21st century – it offers a vantage point from which it is possible to observe where the movement stands today and where it is heading. The first stop is a reflection on these issues by the founding directors of Conectas Human Rights, **Oscar Vilhena Vieira** and **Malak El-Chichini Poppovic**. The roadmap then goes on to include **interviews** and **articles**, both providing in-depth analyses of human rights issues, as well as **notes from the field**, more personalized accounts of experiences working with human rights, which we have organized into **six categories**, although most of them could arguably be allocated to more than one category:

Language. In this section, we have included articles that ponder the question of whether human rights – as a utopia, as norms and as institutions – are still effective for producing social change. Here, the contributions range from analyses on human rights as a language for change (**Stephen Hoggood** and **Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro**), empirical research on the use of the language of human rights for articulating grievances in recent mass protests (**Sara Burke**), to reflections on the standard-setting role and effectiveness of international human rights institutions (**Raquel Rolnik**, **Vinodh Jaichand** and **Emílio**

Álvarez Icaza). It also includes studies on the movement's global trends (**David Petrasek**), challenges to the movement's emphasis on protecting the rule of law (**Kumi Naidoo**), and strategic proposals to better ensure a compromise between utopianism and realism in relation to human rights (**Samuel Moyn**).

Themes. Here we have included contributions that address specific human rights topics from an original and critical standpoint. Four themes were analysed: economic power and corporate accountability for human rights violations (**Phil Bloomer, Janet Love and Gonzalo Berrón**); sexual politics and LGBTI rights (**Sonia Corrêa, Gloria Careaga Pérez and Arvind Narrain**); migration (**Diego Lorente Pérez de Eulate**); and, finally, transitional justice (**Clara Sandoval**).

Perspectives. This section encompasses country-specific accounts, mostly field notes from human rights activists on the ground. Those contributions come from places as diverse as Angola (**Maria Lúcia da Silveira**), Brazil (**Ana Valéria Araújo**), Cuba (**María-Ileana Faguaga Iglesias**), Indonesia (**Haris Azhar**), Mozambique (**Salvador Nkamate**) and Nepal (**Mandira Sharma**). But they all share a critical perspective on human rights, including for instance a sceptical perspective on the relation between litigation and public opinion in Southern Africa (**Nicole Fritz**), a provocative view of the democratic future of China and its relation to labour rights (**Han Dongfang**), and a thoughtful analysis of the North-South duality from Northern Ireland (**Maggie Beirne**).

Voices. Here the articles go to the core of the question of whom the global human rights movement represents. **Adrian Gurza Lavalle** and **Juana Kweitel** take note of the pluralisation of representation and innovative forms of accountability adopted by human rights NGOs. Others study the pressure for more representation or a louder voice in international human rights mechanisms (such as in the Inter-American system, as reported by **Mario Melo**) and in representative institutions such as national legislatures (as analysed by **Pedro Abramovay and Heloisa Griggs**). Finally, **Chris Grove**, as well as **James Ron, David Crow and Shannon Golden** emphasize, in their contributions, the need for a link between human rights NGOs and grassroots groups, including economically disadvantaged populations. As a counter-argument, **Fateh Azzam** questions the need of human rights activists to represent anyone, taking issue with the critique of NGOs as being overly dependent on donors. Finally, **Mary Lawlor and Andrew Anderson** provide an account of a Northern organization's efforts to attend to the needs of local human rights defenders as they, and only they, define them.

Tools. In this section, the editors included contributions that focus on the instruments used by the global human rights movement to do its work. This includes a debate on the role of technology in promoting change (**Mallika Dutt and Nadia Rasul**, as well as **Sopheap Chak and Miguel Pulido Jiménez**) and perspectives on the challenges of human rights campaigning, analysed provocatively by **Martin Kirk** and **Fernand Alphen** in their respective contributions. Other articles point to the need of organizations to be more grounded in local contexts, as noted by **Ana Paula Hernández** in relation to Mexico, by **Louis Bickford** in what he sees as a convergence towards the global middle, and finally by **Rochelle Jones, Sarah Rosenhek and Anna Turley** in their movement-support model. In addition, it is noted by **Mary Kaldor** that NGOs are not the same as civil society,

properly understood. Furthermore, litigation and international work are cast in a critical light by **Sandra Carvalho and Eduardo Baker** in relation to the dilemma between long and short term strategies in the Inter-American system. Finally, **Gastón Chillier and Pétalla Brandão Timo** analyse South-South cooperation from the viewpoint of a national human rights NGO in Argentina.

Multipolarity. Here, the articles challenge our ways of thinking about power in the multipolar world we currently live in, with contributions from the heads of some of the world's largest international human rights organizations based in the North (**Kenneth Roth** and **Salil Shetty**) and in the South (**Lucia Nader, César Rodríguez-Garavito, Dhananjayan Sriskandarajah** and **Mandeep Tiwana**). This section also debates what multipolarity means in relation to States (**Emilie M. Hafner-Burton**), international organizations and civil society (**Louise Arbour**) and businesses (**Mark Malloch-Brown**).

Conectas hopes this issue will foster debate on the future of the global human rights movement in the 21st century, enabling it to reinvent itself as necessary to offer better protection of human rights on the ground.

Finally, we would like to emphasize that this issue of Sur Journal was made possible by the support of the Ford Foundation, Open Society Foundations, the Oak Foundation, the Sigrid Rausing Trust, the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). Additionally, Conectas Human Rights is especially grateful for the collaboration of the authors and the hard work of the Journal's editorial team. We are also extremely thankful for the work of Maria Brant and Manoela Miklos for conceiving this Issue and for conducting most of the interviews, and for Thiago Amparo for joining the editorial team and making this Issue possible. We are also tremendously thankful for Luz González's tireless work with editing the contributions received, and for Ana Cernov for coordinating the overall editorial process.



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Human Rights in Motion

Voices

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A Four-Country Study

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To Build a Global Movement to Make Human Rights and Social Justice a Reality for All

INTERVIEW WITH MARY LAWLOR AND ANDREW ANDERSON

"Role of International Organizations Should Be to Support Local Defenders"



MARY LAWLOR AND ANDREW ANDERSON

Like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, Front Line Defenders is an international organization based in the Global North working to defend the human rights of people all over the world. Differently from other large human rights NGOs, however, Front Line's main work is not documenting or exposing human rights violations itself, but rather offering practical support to human rights defenders at risk working at the local and national levels. As Front Line's deputy director Andrew Anderson puts it, the organization's stance is not only a practical one, but also a philosophical one. For Front Line, human rights defenders working locally and nationally are the ones who actually bring changes forward. "It is the human rights defender who knows best what it is they need. They're also the most expert in the situation they are facing and the situation on the ground that they are trying to alleviate. So why would you try to barge in, instead of just supporting them to do their work?" asks Mary Lawlor, the organization's director, in an interview granted to Conectas last June.



Former director of the Irish section of Amnesty International, Mary Lawlor created Front Line Defenders (International Foundation for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders) in Dublin in 2001 to "literally try to protect defenders

so that they could do their work without persecution". The decision to found the organization came after she attended a summit on human rights defenders and realized that there was no organization dedicated specifically to protecting human rights defenders at risk. "I was mostly interested not in human rights defenders who were working with human rights without running any risks but in those extraordinary people that have that special kind of courage to work, at great risk, to improve the lives of other people," she says. "There weren't any lofty ideals behind it. It was all about how to get practical, round-the-clock support to human rights defenders when they most needed it."

Front Line Defenders' work consists of supporting human rights defenders at risk by granting them what they themselves say they need to improve their security and ability to do their work. The organization, which has an emergency 24-hour phone line for human rights defenders operating in Arabic, English, French, Spanish and Russian, offers grants for urgent security measures, temporary relocation, medical and psychosocial counselling, and other services that defenders may need. Front Line also carries out international advocacy and offers networking and training opportunities for human rights defenders.

In this interview, Anderson and Lawlor speak about the origin of Front Line Defenders, the potential tension between large international organizations and "increasingly sophisticated" and influential local ones, as well as the difficulty of measuring impact in the human rights field.

Original in English.

Interview conducted in June 2014 by Maria Brant (Conectas Human Rights).



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INTERVIEW

“ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS SHOULD BE TO SUPPORT LOCAL DEFENDERS”

Interview with Mary Lawlor and Andrew Anderson

Conectas Human Rights: During the opening of the last Dublin platform in 2013, you said that the main role of organizations in the North is to help support the work of defenders working in the field – not trying to set the agenda, but just supporting their work. Can you speak a little bit about how you got to this conclusion, given that you came from a large international organization like Amnesty, and also about what motivated this transition – leaving Amnesty to found Front Line?

Mary Lawlor: The reason I set up Front Line Defenders was because we wanted to work with human rights defenders at risk. Human rights defenders at risk are, in our eyes, the people who help build peaceful and just societies. They are agents of social change. Apart from that, I think they are the most amazing people out there, they are those who are willing to risk their security and, in many cases, their lives, not for themselves or their families, but for the rights of their fellow citizens. For me, that has always been a very motivating and inspirational sort of compass.

As you said, I did come from a big international organization, which has its own way of doing things. [When I worked at Amnesty], there was obviously a large, worldwide membership, and ICMs (International Council Meetings) where everything would be debated, but the work of the [Irish] section was basically to get the members to act on human rights violations around the world, wherever they were occurring, in accordance to whatever the priorities Amnesty were at that time, be they a certain campaign or a theme or something like that.

With Front Line Defenders, we just wanted to make it easier and safer for defenders to do their work, to support them in whatever way we could, because, at that time, although there were organizations working on human rights defenders, none were concentrating all their efforts on human rights defenders at risk, and on trying to find *from them* what they thought they needed to help protect themselves. And so that has always been our *modus operandi*.

Everything that we have done in Front Line, since we have started, has been at the request of human rights defenders. It is the human rights defender who best knows what he or she needs. They are also the most expert in the situation they are facing and the situation on the ground that they are trying to alleviate. So why would you try to barge in, instead of supporting them to do their work? We felt that was our job.

Conectas: And personally, how did you get the idea for Front Line, and how was the decision to leave Amnesty after so many years to do this?

M.L.: I was with Amnesty for a very long time. I was in the board for 14 years, and then I was chair for four years. Then I stepped out, and a year later I applied to be director and I remained director for 12 years. Then, in 1998, there was the Paris Summit on Human Rights Defenders, which was done as a cooperation initiative between Amnesty International, FIDH, France Libertés - Fondation Danielle Mitterrand and ATD Quart Monde, and I went to that. I was most interested not in human rights defenders who were working with human rights without running any risks but in those extraordinary people that have that special kind of courage, who were working at great risk to improve the lives of other people. So it was there really that the idea first sparked.

And I knew *one* rich person, so I approached this rich person with the idea of trying to protect human rights defenders at risk so that they could do their legitimate work. I got 3 million euros from this person to set up Front Line. So it all worked out very well! And then I was very fortunate and recruited Andrew Anderson from Amnesty. He was the Head of Campaigning for the International Secretariat, had huge experience, had been very involved in the Paris Summit and knew the issue of human rights defenders very well. And he is a great strategic thinker, so I was very lucky that he agreed to come and work with Front Line Defenders

Conectas: But do you think there is still a role for large international organizations?

Andrew Anderson: The first thing, as Mary has said, is that the people who make the most significant contribution to the better realization of human rights around the world are people working at the local and national levels. And Front Line's work is to support the security and protection of those human rights defenders working at the local and national levels. And that is a practical thing, but it is also a philosophical thing: we think they are the people who really make a difference in terms of moving human rights forward.

Of course, historically, international NGOs have done a lot of work and have made a large contribution in terms of international standard setting and campaigning about human rights issues in countries from which there was no information coming out. The traditional model of Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch was one of documenting and exposing human rights violations in countries around the world that people in those countries could not safely speak about, whether they were living under dictatorships in Latin America or in the former communist countries in Eastern Europe or other regimes.

I think their challenge now is that more and more human rights organizations in the Global South have the space to speak out about human rights in their own countries and also increasingly want to represent themselves in regional and international organizations. So there is an overlap or a potential for tension between increasingly sophisticated human rights organizations working at the local and national levels and the likes of Amnesty and Human Rights Watch and other international human rights organizations. One of the responses to that, from the side of Amnesty, has been to go more into different regions, to try to work more alongside human rights organizations at a national and some regional level. You can understand why they are moving in that direction. But, there seem to be challenges in terms of the cooperation between those organizations, in relation to space for funding, media attention, and representativeness and so on.

Yet, I would not like to say that what X is doing is wrong or what Y is doing is right. I think there is a role for international human rights organizations, but I do think that they should be careful about their interaction and their responsibility to human rights activists working on the local and the national levels.

Conectas: How do you decide which regions to concentrate your work? Do you have a quota for issues or regions? How does it work? And how do you incorporate the demands from the defenders themselves into your programs?

M.L.: We have a global reach; that is what we strive for. We obviously have regional strategy papers on different regions, in which we try to identify what the trends are, what risks human rights defenders are facing etc. But if a human rights defender comes to us for assistance, we take them. We do not say, "Well, you're outside our region or country or whatever set of countries that we prioritize." We do try to build up expertise on countries as they become more oppressive, but we do not have a country or set of countries or a geographic region that we focus on.

The program that has developed over time has been one in which we try to do the research on who the human rights defenders at risk are, where they are, what risks they face, especially marginalized groups such as women, LGBTI, indigenous peoples, and those working on economic, social and cultural rights, as well as civil and political rights. That is the broad framework.

And then, the first thing we do is we offer grants to human rights defenders at risk needing to take security measures. It could be anything: legal assistance to fight a spurious law charge, or defamation charge etc.; medical treatment if someone has been injured; unarmed body guards; money for buying CCTVs or building walls to make an office or a home more secure or for mobile phones or laptops so that people can communicate. We often pay for psychosocial counselling, because the stress is absolutely terrible, particularly for women human rights defenders facing issues such as sexual violence and all of that.

The second thing is advocacy. We try to do a lot of advocacy in the UN. We had an independent evaluator survey with human rights defenders that we had assisted in 52 countries and international advocacy came up very high up on their list of priorities. Defenders like to have their cases taken up. We take up all the cases to the UN Special Rapporteur for human rights defenders. We have had a rolling intern in the office of the UN Special Rapporteur for human rights defenders for years. The intern comes to stay with us for three months to get trained and then goes to the UN special rapporteur office for six months and then comes back to us. The program has given some capacity to the office to be able to take on more cases. We also have a rolling internship in the office of the Special Rapporteur for Human Rights Defenders in the African Commission; so all of the cases from Africa go to the African Commission as well. After we successfully lobbied the Irish Presidency of the EU for the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders, and wrote the draft consultation paper, we set up an EU office to follow their implementation.

Third, then comes training, which, again, came about at the request of the defenders. [We offer three types of training.] The first is on personal security and risk assessment. The model is to train people in each region so that they will then go on to train their colleagues and others in the region. We also have trainers on digital security in the regions who work in English, French, Spanish, Chinese, Russian and Portuguese, and now we are moving into a second level as we are taking on digital security consultants who can do more one-to-one mentoring with groups on an

ongoing basis. We also do training on the E.U. guidelines twice a year, bringing together diplomats and human rights defenders. They have separate sessions and then they come together and discuss what are the possibilities and limits - what defenders can hope for and what diplomats are willing to do. It is a way of getting them to know each other as well.

Then we have add-ons, such as rest-and-respice programs for human rights defenders if they are burn out, if they have been in great danger and need a break, or for people who want to improve or develop a skill. We have these fellowship programs for them to come and acquire some sort of skill, such as learning English, or just to have a break from the relentless pressure they live under. We also have an agreement with the Irish government for temporary humanitarian visas of up to three months for people who are in extreme danger and need to get out quickly for a while. And we have the Dublin Platform every two years. Last year there were 135 defenders from over 90 countries. They come to learn from each other and share experiences, acquire new strategies, have a rest and also, hopefully, a bit of fun as well. And every year we give an award to a human rights defender who has shown exceptional courage.

So that is how the program has grown, based on the demands of defenders. Moreover, since the beginning, we have invited two defenders from each region for a two-day meeting to give input into our strategic plan. So this input, plus the input that we get through the trainings and through the Platform, become part and parcel of the next strategic plan.

Conectas: Could you provide an example of such input received from human rights defenders in your strategic plan?

M.L.: In our last strategic plan, which was 2011-2014, the big issue that we took by request of defenders was visibility, recognition and credibility. So we took on somebody who is very good with video and developed a YouTube channel with interviews with human rights defenders. Another thing we did is create a web page for every defender that we interact with, which has their biography and a short synopsis of who the defender is and what they are there doing and, if we have it, an interview or some video footage – obviously, always with the permission of the defender. We also do a lot of campaigns online, such as on Sochi or on the World Cup – these are new ways of bringing out the cases of human rights defenders and tying them to events. Additionally, we did public service announcements last year in Colombia in conjunction with MOVICE, and that worked well, so we’re doing it this year again in Honduras, and are moving to television too. It is all about trying to bring out the voices of human rights defenders and have them speak for themselves and give them visibility, and recognize them, as an international organization. That, in turn, brings credibility and legitimacy they tell us.

Again, anything that we do is because someone has asked us to do it. A few years back, there was this whole issue of families. The defenders were saying that we could not ignore the families, that we had to give grants to cover the living expenses of the families if the defenders were imprisoned, or if there is some terrible tragedy and the whole family needs counselling. Obviously, we cannot take on families and just pay infinitely for their living expenses, but we do give grants for family support now, which we used not to. That is another direct response.

The program evolves almost organically. One thing leads to another. Once we have one thing in place, there is another idea from a defender or a deepening of a current idea, and we try and respond to that. But, of course, it all depends on resources and money.

*Conectas: What is the main **modus operandi** of your organization? If you could name the DNA of your work, what would that be?*

M.L.: I think it makes sense that organizations try to be as close as possible to the people that they are working with. Our informal DNA is that we are “fast, flexible and furious”. The model that we developed was literally trying to protect the defenders so that they could do their work without persecution. That was it. There were not any lofty ideals behind it. It was all about how to get practical, round-the-clock support to human rights defenders when they most needed it, when they were at risk. At that time there was a slight hiatus before the bigger international organizations were able to kick in – and if someone is in danger, they need an immediate response.

The very first person that we helped relocate temporarily was this man from Congo. We help a lot of defenders temporarily relocate. Last year, we helped with more than a hundred relocations. Anyway, this man had been to the first Dublin Platform and had gone back to Congo. He just rang me one day. At that time, there were just two of us in the office – this young administrative assistant and myself. He said to me that the authorities were closing in on him and that he had to get out. He had gone to a friend’s house but he figured that they would catch up with where he was. He asked me what he could do, and of course I did not have a clue about what he should do. He was in Lubumbashi and I did not even know where that was, I had to go look on the map. So I didn’t know what to do, and this turned out to be the best learning experience for me at that time, because I said to him: “You talk to your colleagues and try to work out what is the best thing for you, how can you get out, where can you go and I’ll ring you back in half an hour.” And I did ring him back after half an hour. He had talked to one of his colleagues in the organization and they had decided that, if they could get money to rent a car, they would drive over this little known border that night. So they had come up with the solution. We sent the money over and they picked it up, left that night, got over the border and all was well. And that is what I mean by acting in support of the human rights defenders, but they decide what is best for them.

Conectas: The last question I would like to ask is how to combine urgent issues with long-term impacts? Front Line is more concerned with urgent issues, but you also do some advocacy work with the human rights rapporteurs, and you have an intern in the UN and so on. So how do you combine these two types of work and how do you measure impact?

A.A.: That is very difficult. Much of the advocacy we do is on urgent cases, so it is kind of linked to urgent responses or reactive support for the human rights defenders at risk. So, the individual cases we submit to the UN or to the African Commission or to the Inter-American Commission or anybody else are largely reactive work. But, we also do some lobbying around more policy related issues. We were involved with promoting the adoption by the European Union of the guidelines on the protection of the human rights defenders in 2004, and we have an advocacy office in Brussels, which seeks to push and press the European Union to live up to the commitments they made. We have been pushing for a similar initiative in the context of the OSCE, the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe, to try to strengthen the priority and the practical measures for the protection of human rights defenders in the OSCE region. We don’t do much work of that kind in the Americas region because the Inter-American system has been better established at an earlier stage. In

Asia, at the moment most of human rights defenders are a little bit fed up with what is happening with ASEAN, but there was initially some interest in pushing ASEAN to be more engaged with the issue of human rights defenders. If that came back on the agenda from the side of the human rights defenders on the ground, then we might look to support that in some way, but we would see our role as supporting the defenders in the region, rather than setting up a priority or an agenda in that regard.

But most of the advocacy we do is case-focused; it is not specific to longer-term objectives. And how do we measure that? It is very difficult. We do our own tracking and monitoring of what has happened to the individual and to the organization, but you are not really measuring if what you have done has had an impact, you are measuring whether, for the human rights defender concerned, their situation has improved. And that may have happened because of what local human rights defenders did or it might be because of some story that got into the media, rather than because of what Front Line Defenders did. Or it might be totally random that they were released or that their situation improved or whatever. Hopefully, we will have contributed.

Even for a local for a national human rights organization, it would be very difficult to measure whether a specific action has had a specific result, because those responsible for oppression against human rights defenders do not generally give honest answers on about why they have taken particular decisions. I mean, if you look at the release of a number of people in Russia in the run up to the Olympics in Sochi, we've heard different explanations. Some said it was a PR exercise by Putin to try to deflect attention from their human rights record down there. Somebody else said that it was because Khodorkovsky had some financial connections to somebody else, and that had to agree to a deal whereby he would not speak about some things. You get different people saying different things, and you can never be absolutely sure why anyone has done anything. I think probably the international pressure on the Greenpeace and on the Pussy Riot cases did have some impact on the context of Olympics release but you can't be absolutely sure if that's what caused it, if there were domestic issues or something else. It is a challenge. More and more donors want to measure impact, and think that human rights are like development, and if you dig a drill for clean water and have a beneficial impact for fifty people and you can measure it. But it doesn't really work like that.

Conectas - Yes, it is very difficult. But working with urgent issues is a little bit easier than just with pure advocacy.

A.A. - Yes, and that being said, human rights defenders from 52 countries responded to an anonymous questionnaire in our 2013 independent evaluation where they said our advocacy was the most important – slightly ahead of grants. The most important feedback for us is the feedback from the human rights defenders themselves. And many times they say that they feel that the support from us and from others has made a difference. One human rights defender has said that you can never be certain that the support [we gave] has had an impact on the government, but it always has had an impact on the human rights defender and their family, because the act of solidarity in itself has a positive impact.

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