

# FEMINIST ACTIVISM WITHOUT FEAR



# FEMINIST ACTIVIST- TO-ACTIVIST RECOMMENDATIONS



**Feminist activists are leading movements for justice and liberation worldwide. But today, they are less and less safe.** While the burden of change rests squarely on perpetrators of backlash—and the policymakers who have the power to stop them—activists themselves have plenty of solutions to prevent, address, and heal from backlash they face as they challenge oppression and mobilize solutions for a better world.

*Activists share this advice not to add to, but to help ease the burden other activists face. What makes sense for you will depend on your context and your own assessment of risks.*

## ANTICIPATE, PREPARE FOR, AND REPORT RISKS AND RETALIATION

- **Evaluate whether visibility will help or hurt and know that this may change rapidly.** Establish a media team and strategy.
- **Know the legal framework of your country and context.** Seek counsel from lawyers.
- **Keep your organization's accounting and reporting duties—as well as personal paperwork, including visas—up-to-date.**
- **Prepare for protests.** Be aware of how to handle high-risk situations, including dealing with police, potential repression, and physical altercations. For example:
  - ▶ **Invite trained observers** to monitor.
  - ▶ **Wear comfortable, protective clothing** and shoes.
  - ▶ **Don't bring your private phone.** Bring a separate phone containing only emergency contacts.
  - ▶ **Film the police and others** involved (if appropriate and safe).
  - ▶ **Take public transport** to and from a protest, and change clothes immediately afterward in case you might be followed.
  - ▶ **Keep an eye out** for external instigators.
  - ▶ **Identify retaliatory acts as separate violations. When possible, report and respond.** If unsafe to report at the local or national level, consider doing so confidentially, internationally or regionally. If you face backlash for cooperating, or seeking to, with the UN, report your case at [www.ohchr.org/en/reprisals/how-share-information-about-cases-intimidation-and-reprisals](http://www.ohchr.org/en/reprisals/how-share-information-about-cases-intimidation-and-reprisals).

**"It sounds silly, but nobody told me that those things would happen. I think that element of surprise is the biggest enabler of any kind of action. I had no idea that I would become a target."**

– **DIANA**, sexual and reproductive health and rights activist\*



*Illustration Credit: Tracy Selma  
Photo Credit: Arnet Xavier*

## CENTER COLLECTIVE CARE

- **Center collective care and protection in your organizations, coalitions, and movements.** From creating space to share joy, sorrow, and stories to organizing healing justice retreats, identify practices that work for you.
- **Build networks of collective care** to offer mutual support in preventing, mitigating and healing from backlash.
- **Seek advice and mentorship from other activists**, who can share their lessons and learning from personal experience.

## PRIORITIZE YOUR OWN EMOTIONAL, MENTAL, PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING.

- **Take care of yourself and your body** through rest, movement, and nourishment.
- **Access psychological or psychosocial support from professionals.**
- **Participate in rest and respite programs** like fellowships or shelter cities.

## PROTECT YOUR PHYSICAL SECURITY AND INTEGRITY

- **Prepare safety protocols**, secure your offices, close doors quickly, and avoid elevators, if possible.
- **If you face backlash from community members, seek support** from someone familiar with and respected within the community if that is available to you.
- **Keep a packed suitcase** in case you need to flee.

## PROTECT YOUR DIGITAL SECURITY AND PREVENT ONLINE THREATS

- **Don't assume** "you don't have anything to hide." Limit social media sharing of photos and information of family members and colleagues.
- **Use safe communication channels and protect passwords. Back up important contacts and information.**
- **If possible, have separate phones for private and professional use.**
- **Consider reporting** severe online threats to authorities.
- **Evaluate how to safely engage with social media.**
- **Consider hiring a company to do "ethical hacking"** to help identify vulnerabilities.

*\*Names and other identifying features have been changed*



**"When we are connected, it is easier to prevent and face reprisals."**

– ELENA, *feminist activist\**

*Illustration Credit: Nafisa Ferdous*

*Photo Credit: Life Matters*



To access more resources, read activists' stories, and learn more about the backlash they face, visit [feministactivismwithoutfear.org](https://feministactivismwithoutfear.org)