

FEMINIST ACTIVISM WITHOUT FEAR



POLICY ACTION FOR FEMINIST ACTIVISM WITHOUT FEAR



Feminist activists are leading movements for justice and liberation worldwide. Today, they are less and less safe. From digital surveillance and smear campaigns, to violence that targets the well-being of activists' organizations, loved ones, and communities, feminist activists are being targeted with increased—and increasingly intense—forms of backlash, or “reprisals.”

That's why Urgent Action Fund for Feminist Activism launched the campaign, **Feminist Activism Without Fear: Facing Risks with Collective Power & Care.** Visit feministactivismwithoutfear.org to read the firsthand stories of feminist activists, or human rights defenders, and their movements—and learn how they're pushing back against backlash.

HOW SHOULD STATES AND POLICYMAKERS BETTER PROTECT FEMINIST ACTIVISTS FROM REPRISALS? KEY SOLUTIONS FEMINIST ACTIVISTS AND MOVEMENTS ARE CALLING FOR INCLUDE:

- **Above all, cease all types of intimidation, threats, and attacks** against feminist activists and their movements.
- **Design and implement policies that reflect and address the full scope of reprisals against feminist activists and support collective care for activists and movements**, including addressing perpetrators' targeting of feminist activists' mental, emotional, economic, professional, digital, and physical security—as well as that of their families, loved ones, support networks, and movements.
- **Advocate for policies and collective protection, care, and safety strategies designed and determined by movements themselves** and acknowledge that healing and recovery is a **non-linear and often long-term** process that varies depending on the reprisals activists are facing and the community, geography, and cultures they are rooted in.
- **Conduct prompt, thorough, impartial, and independent investigations** into all violations and abuses against feminist activists, organizations, coalitions, networks, and movements, and provide access to effective remedies based on transformative justice.

“Feminist activists are fighting for our collective future. Given the intensifying threats they face, the least policymakers can do is prioritize their safety and the sustainability of their movements.”

– **NATHALIE MARGI**, Urgent Action Fund for Feminist Activism



Illustration Credit: Nafisa Ferdous
Photo Credit: Lara Jameson

- **Ensure non-state actors** such as organized militias, faith-based groups, and the media **comply with all applicable laws and uphold their legal obligations to respect human rights.**
- Adopt legislative, administrative, and other necessary measures to **guarantee rights and freedoms outlined in the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders**;
- **Ensure a safe and enabling environment for feminist activists, organizations, coalitions, networks, and movements** by:
 - ▶ Adopting laws and policies that recognize and protect the rights of feminist activists, and take into account the ways in which women, non-binary, trans, disabled, Black, Indigenous, LGBTQIA+ and other activists from structurally marginalized groups are targeted in distinct and diverse ways;
 - ▶ Establishing or strengthening independent, pluralistic, and adequately resourced national human rights institutions, in compliance with the Paris Principles; and
 - ▶ Taking a strong stance against the widespread pattern of attacks and intimidation against feminist activists, and publicly and vigorously condemning specific cases.
- **Ensure national legal and administrative frameworks do not unduly restrict access to funding or create unnecessary obstacles** for feminist activists, their organizations, and movements.
- **Identify and address the multiple structural, systemic, and intersecting types of discrimination** faced by feminist activists, organizations, and movements.
- **Take steps to systematically dismantle and eliminate harmful stereotypes** and practices within all government institutions and in society in line with Article 8(1)(b) of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Article 5 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).
- **Protect the rights and safety of feminist activists, organizations, and movements through embassies and diplomatic missions** in third countries. Adopt consistent guidelines and policies to recognize **feminist activists' right to access visas** and provide visas to individuals at risk, ensuring gender-sensitivity and awareness of confidentiality needs.
- **Adopt effective measures to protect feminist activists, organizations, and movements in online spaces** and engage in concerted efforts to immediately put in place a **global moratorium on the sale, transfer, and use of surveillance technology** until international rules are in place to prevent abuse.
- Ensure that business activities by **national and foreign companies and investors**, as well as **development or aid activities**, do not lead to human rights abuses and reprisals within your territory or jurisdiction.
- **Adequately support the work of the UN** on human rights protection and human rights defenders.

**Names and other identifying features have been changed*



“The company has its protectors.”

– **IRINA**, a journalist and environmental activist*, describes how a mining company escalated its intimidation tactics against her and many other activists, with seeming impunity and support from government actors. Read *Irina's* and other activists' stories at feministactivismwithoutfear.org.

Illustration Credit: Nafisa Ferdous

“A deaf woman human rights defender that we work with really wanted to sponsor her new sign language interpreter to come with her to a third country. But that was a non-starter. So when she gets to this new country, she will have to rebuild her disability-related network of support.”

– **THERESE**, who works for a disability rights and gender justice organization*, on challenges facing disabled activists who need to relocate for safety reasons

For more information and resources, visit feministactivismwithoutfear.org or contact info@urgentaction.org.