

THE
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Carter Center Statement from the 2019 Human Rights Defenders Forum

The Carter Center is calling for global solidarity with activists facing increasingly violent retribution for their work to advance human rights and peace worldwide. The 12th meeting of the Human Rights Defenders Forum took place Oct. 12-15 and brought together activists from 28 countries. There was a special focus on attacks against female human rights defenders and peacemakers, who face even more severe violence than their male counterparts.

According to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, threats and attacks against activists have increased in recent years, with 431 documented killings in 2017 and 2018. Activists have reported that attacks against them and their colleagues continue unabated because the perpetrators are rarely held accountable.

Former President Jimmy Carter has a message for those activists taking great risks: “I want every human rights defender and peacemaker to know that their work is essential to overcoming the present crises vexing our world,” he said. “We must all combine our efforts to offer meaningful solidarity to those on the frontlines of the struggle for human rights, climate justice, and peace.”

Forum participants call on local and national governments and international organizations to:

- 1) Increase efforts to protect activists who are threatened and attacked.
 - Offer activists political, moral, and physical support in times of crisis.
 - Create robust programs to support women activists.
 - Stop impunity for violators — hold accountable those who attack human rights and peace activists.
- 2) Increase meaningful long-term support for their work. Activists report that the difficult work of movements and civil society organizations is hampered by drastic funding cuts by previously reliable sources. In addition to issuing strong statements about human rights abuses, governments should also provide needed resources and other support. Philanthropic foundations also should increase flexible, long-term support.

The Carter Center’s Human Rights Program has created a web-based platform to facilitate ongoing discussions and community building for human rights defenders and peacebuilders at forum.cartercenter.org.