

In memoriam and solidarity

A statement by the UAF Sister Funds in the wake of recent fatal attacks on women, trans and non-binary activists

September, 2020

Urgent Action Sister Funds share the pain of the families, friends, and activist communities mourning the recent fatal attacks on women, trans and non-binary Human Rights defenders from the four different regions we work in:

- The killing of paralegal and human rights activist, Zara Alvarez, and Manobo Leader, Merlin Ansabu Celis in the Philippines.
- The assassination of doctor and activist, Reham Yacoub in Basra, Iraq.
- The passing of Kurdish-Turkish human rights lawyer, Ebru Timtik after a 238-day hunger strike demanding a fair trial.
- We also strongly condemn the attacks made on actor-director and activist, Saba Sahar, and peace negotiator, Fawzia Koofi in Afghanistan, and on activist Ludia Raymond in Iraq.
- The 45 massacres perpetrated this year and the killing of 195 Human Rights Defenders between January 1st and August 19th in Colombia.

These recent killings on women, trans and non-binary human rights activists bring to fore the risk's defenders, journalists, activists, human rights lawyers, and frontline workers face every day, no matter which country they are in. Many of these attacks have occurred in the form of shootings carried out by unidentified perpetrators, who later have faced little to no legal consequence of their actions. Some of those crimes have been perpetrated with the collusion of narco-paramilitary States who do not recognize the systematic nature of the violence.

These fatal attacks serve as reminders that in today's world, human rights defenders risk their own lives due to their powerful and transformative struggles. This environment of fear and lack of respect for the law stands in direct contrast to the ideas of human dignity, social justice and equal rights.

The toll of these killings on the emotional, mental and physical health of communities and movements is immense. The murders and intimidation tactics aim to silence voices that seek fairness and justice. These actions help authoritarianism to grow unchallenged. And the COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated power inequalities and allowed harsh government clampdowns and increased surveillance and militarization in the name of security to protect corporate and economic interests.

As sister funds, we stand in solidarity and co-responsibility towards human rights defenders and communities who are resisting and demanding State accountability for the violations of fundamental human rights in many countries worldwide. **We are witnessing how new activists are transforming the world following the legacy that those slain women, trans and non-binary defenders inspire.**