



UN High-level Plenary Meeting on the Occasion of the Twentieth Anniversary of the Adoption of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, 18th December 2018

Recommendations by Child Rights Connect, CIVICUS and Save the Children to ensure a focus on children human rights defenders

Children are acting as human rights defenders across the world at local national and international levels. They speak up on many human rights issues, such as the environment, poverty, education, health, violence and discrimination. Yet they are rarely recognized, empowered and protected as such.¹

In a [global consultation with around 2.700 Children Human Rights Defenders](#), children identified what hinders them to be human rights defenders. Children feel they are not taken seriously by adults. They feel unsafe, often lack information to inform their actions and struggle to engage due to lack of knowledge, time and resources.²

Children human rights defenders have the same rights articulated in the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders as adult defenders: the recent UN General Assembly resolution [68/181](#) on the protection of women human rights defenders confirmed that the concept of human rights defenders applies to all ages. The Convention on the Rights of the Child provides the full spectrum of rights needed for every person under 18 to act as a human rights defender, recognizing the additional barriers they face due to their special and dependent status. While youth is often highlighted in the UN human rights discourse, the role of children as human rights defenders is often overlooked.

During the Committee on the Rights of the Child [2018 Day of General Discussion](#) on protecting and empowering children as human rights defenders, children made a strong case that to protect and nurture their ability to defend human rights, they must be empowered with knowledge about their rights, be safe and protected from reprisals, access meaningful and safe spaces to defend theirs and others rights, and for adults to listen to them and recognize their rights to be human rights defenders.

Key asks

In celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders and building on the momentum of the 2018 Day of General Discussion ***we urge Member States and other speakers to put a spotlight on children human rights defenders*** during the UN High-level meeting on 18 December by:

- ***Recognizing that children are human rights defenders*** and, taking into account their special and dependent status, that they should be afforded additional support and heightened protection;
- Making commitments to ***guarantee children's civil and political rights*** in law and practice and creating an empowering environment for children to promote and defend human rights in safe and meaningful ways;
- Systematically ***promoting the rights of children to be human rights defenders***, addressing negative attitudes and building the capacity of adults to engage meaningfully with children;
- Ensuring that those ***violating children's rights as human rights defenders are held to account*** without delay.

¹ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, (2018), [Concept Note for the 2018 Day of General Discussion on Empowering and Protecting Children as Human Rights Defenders](#)

² Also see: Centre for Children's Rights and Save the Children (2016), [Enabling the exercise of civil and political rights: The Views of Children](#)