

## Defenders in Development Campaign Welcomes IFC Position Statement on Reprisals

### *Groups encourage development of robust protocols for implementation given growing threats*

November 2018 -- Human rights groups and accountability organizations welcomed the International Finance Corporation's recently released [Position Statement on Retaliation Against Civil Society and Project Stakeholders](#).

The Position by the private sector arm of the World Bank Group affirms that the ability of stakeholders to engage freely with IFC and its clients is important for the realization of human rights and “essential to promoting positive development outcomes.” With the statement, IFC formally adopts a no-tolerance position on reprisals - “IFC does not tolerate any action by an IFC client that amounts to retaliation – including threats, intimidation, harassment, or violence – against those who voice their opinion regarding the activities of IFC or our clients.”

Civil society members of the [Defenders in Development Campaign](#) applauded IFC's taking a formal and public position against reprisals. In IFC's member countries and around the world, those who defend their lands and territories, advocate for clean water, or call attention to corruption increasingly face threats, harassment, physical attacks, criminalization, arbitrary detention, or other sorts of reprisals. In 2017 alone, of the at least 312 defenders killed for their work defending human rights and fundamental freedoms, 67% were defending their rights in the face of large investments, extractive industries and big business activities, or what can be considered development contexts.

IFC's Position Statement commits to the development of “internal protocols and staff guidance to raise awareness and guide action” including around contextual risk screening.

“We urge the IFC to develop a comprehensive and detailed approach to this issue that integrates not just the assessment of reprisal risks, and addressing risks as they arise, but proactive engagement to prevent reprisals, robust human rights due diligence, reprisal-sensitive stakeholder engagement, and a response protocol so that when threats and reprisals materialize the institution is positioned to respond in a timely and effective manner to minimize and remedy harm, and to prevent future attacks,” said Gretchen Gordon, Coordinator of the Coalition for Human Rights in Development.

“Following several targeted attacks on human rights defenders in connection with development projects, we are seeing more development banks start to identify ways to address this critical issue,” said Andrew Anderson, Executive Director, Front Line Defenders. “We hope that other development actors and financial institutions will follow and build upon this step by IFC, to develop their own comprehensive position statements and more importantly institutional programs for the prevention of reprisals and safeguarding of defenders.”

“The growing restriction of civic space demonstrates that implementing a no-tolerance position on reprisals will require that financiers actually reconfigure their development models and modes of stakeholder engagement to address the power imbalance experienced by communities on the frontlines of development and to ensure that their rights to determine their development priorities and free prior informed consent are recognized and respected in the first place,” said Sukhgerel Dugersuren, Oyu Tolgoi Watch, Mongolia.

*The Defenders in Development Campaign is a global effort to transform development so that it advances the realization of human rights and safeguards those who defend them. The Campaign engages in advocacy to change policy and practice at development financiers and works to ensure that communities have the information, power, and resources to shape development processes and defend their rights.*

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