

An abridged checklist to assess the risk a defender (or group of defenders) may face (according to the threats and vulnerabilities and capacities they have). European Office of PBI and Front Line Foundation

(Please note that this checklist provides suggestions to assess risk as well as ideas to take action, specially on reducing vulnerabilities)

Assessing the direct threats the defenders may have	Information needed to assess those threats
Affecting key interests	Do defenders' work affect key interests of a threatening actor?
Considering an attack	Can a threatening actor be considering seriously to act against the defender(s)? (In other words, does the threatening actor really pose a threat?)
Capacity to attack	Does the threatening actor have the capacity to attack (training, means, resources, etc)? Has this actor attacked defenders before?
Reaction by Government and State institutions	Can the Government and/or State institutions deter the potential attacker due to their reaction in protection of the defender?
Dissuasion capacity	Do the defenders have the necessary dissuasion capacity to prevent an attack?
Assessing vulnerabilities and capacities	Information needed to assess those components
Geographical, physical and technical components	
Exposure of the defenders	The need to be in, or to pass through, dangerous areas to carry out normal daily or occasional activities. Threatening actors in those areas.
Hiding places, escape routes	Are there any hiding places? How accessible are they (physical distance) and to whom (for specific individuals or the whole group)? Can defenders leave the area for a while if necessary?
The means the defenders have	Do defenders have access to the necessary means to do their work safely? (communications means, safe offices, transportation, accommodation while in the field, etc)
Components linked to conflict	
Links to conflict parties	Do defenders have links with conflict parties (relatives, from the same area, same interests) that could be unfairly used against the defenders?
Defenders' activities affecting a conflict party	Do defenders' work directly affect an actor's interests? (For example, when protecting valuable natural resources, the right to land, or similar potential targets for powerful actors.) do you work on a specially sensitive issue for main stakeholders? (such as land ownership, for example)
Transportation of items and goods and written information	Do defenders have items or goods that could be valuable to armed groups, and therefore increase the risk of targeting? (Petrol, humanitarian aid, batteries, human rights manuals, health manuals, etc.)
Components linked to the legal and political system	
Access to authorities and to a legal system	Can defenders start legal processes to claim their rights? (Access to legal representation, physical presence at trials or meetings, etc.) Can defenders claim the attention of relevant authorities towards their work and protection needs?

Ability to get results from the legal system and from authorities	Are defenders legally entitled to claim their rights? Or are they subjects to repressive internal laws? Can they gain enough clout to make authorities take note of their claims?
Registration and legal standards	Are defenders denied legal registration or subjected to long delays?
Sources and management of information	
Sources and accuracy of information	Do defenders have reliable sources of information to base accusations on? Do defenders publicise information with the necessary accuracy and method?
Being witnesses or having key information	Are defenders key witnesses to raise charges against a key stakeholder? Do defenders have relevant and unique information for a given case or process? Can defenders keep information in a safe and reliable place?
Social and organisational components	
Existence of a group structure	Do defenders work alone or as part of a group or institution?
Mobilization capacity	Are defenders able to mobilize people for public activities?
Psychological components (group/individuals)	
Ability to manage stress and fear	Do key individuals, or the group as a whole, feel confident about their work? Are feelings of fear, depression and loss of hope being clearly expressed (in both words and action)?
Work resources	
Ability to understand work context and risk	Do defenders have access to accurate information about their working environment, other stakeholders and their interests? Are defenders able to process that information and get an understanding of threats, vulnerabilities and capacities?
Ability to define action plans	Can defenders define and, in particular, implement action plans? Are there previous examples of this?
Ability to obtain advice from well informed sources	Can the group obtain reliable advice? From the right sources? Can the group judge make independent choices about which sources to use? Do you have access to particular organisations or membership status that enhances your protection capacities?
People and amount of work	Do the people or personnel available match the amount of work needed? Can you plan field visits in teams (at least two people)?
Financial resources	Do they have enough financial resources for their security? Can they manage cash in a safe way?
Access to national and international contacts and media	
Access to national and international networks	Do defenders have national and international contacts? To visiting delegations, embassies, other governments, etc? Can you issue urgent actions via other groups?
Access to media and ability to obtains results from them	Do defenders have access to media (national, international)? To other media (independent media)? Do defenders know how to manage media relations properly?

ⁱ This checklist has been adapted from the forthcoming book “A Protection Manual for Human Rights Defenders”, by the European Office of PBI and published by the Front Line Foundation.