

The Atlanta Declaration

**A Consensus Document from
“Human Rights Defenders on the Frontlines of Freedom”
The Carter Center, Atlanta, GA, USA
November 12, 2003**

History reveals that there have been moments in time when the world’s leaders and peoples made fateful choices and embarked on paths that were sometimes beneficial to humanity and sometimes catastrophic. Mindful of this we, human rights defenders from 41 nations, have gathered in Atlanta because of our alarm at the direction and implications of what has come to be known as the “war against terrorism.”

While recognizing the responsibility of states to secure peace and security for their peoples, we believe strongly that these goals can only be achieved by addressing the root causes of the problems that afflict humanity.

Today there is a global deterioration in respect for human rights caused by poverty, war, injustice, occupation, colonialism, racism, violence and suppression of democratic, economic, social and cultural rights.

- particularly concerned about an expanded internal security role for the military in some countries facilitated by resumed military cooperation with powerful nations. Any powers granted to the police, military, and other security forces must be entirely in line with international human rights standards and/or international humanitarian law. If governments invoke exceptional measures, this should be done in full accordance with international instruments for a specific purpose and limited duration. Such actions and their implications should be made transparent to the wider public.
2. Create an enabling environment for human rights defenders to carry out their work and ensure their protection from all forms of retaliation, threats and violence. States should pay particular attention to the following rights contained in the 1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders
 - (a) freedom of thought, speech, expression, communication and the right to information;
 - (b) freedom of association;
 - (c) freedom of assembly;
 - (d) freedom of movement;
 - (e) the right to receive funding;
 - (f) the right to privacy.
 3. End impunity by ensuring that members of the military and security forces and civilians responsible for human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law are brought before ordinary civil and criminal courts and prosecuted for their crimes. Furthermore, states should immediately ratify the Statute of the International Criminal Court without reservations, as well as other relevant international human rights treaties.
 4. Strengthen judicial systems by ensuring independence in the appointment and functioning of judges and ensure adequate judicial training in the area of international human rights law and mechanisms.
 5. Address the root causes of social, political, economic and cultural problems to find and implement long-term solutions to violence, insecurity and human rights violations.

We call upon the wider civil society and the private sector to:

1. Develop regular opportunities for human rights defenders to meet, build capacity, share experiences, and support each other on a regional and global basis. Specifically, we have agreed to create a Human Rights Defenders Policy Forum, which will work on an ongoing basis and meet periodically to assess particular challenges facing defenders in their work. This forum will provide a vital support system and an opportunity for developing strategic thinking on key issues. One goal of the forum will be to build

2. Highlight best and worst practices by bot