The **System of Solidarity (SOS)** is a vehicle to harness the collective voice of ESCR-Net – through online petitions, collective letters, outreach via social and mainstream media and sharing resources and tools – to increase protection for human rights defenders (HRDs) under threat and prevent imminent human rights violations from taking place.

**Current Objectives**

- Harness the collective voice, expertise and access of ESCR-Net’s membership to respond to urgent threats to human rights defenders via joint letters, member-initiated petitions, engaging media outlets and collaborating with international protection mechanisms;
- Prevent serious human rights violations from taking place by coordinating displays of international solidarity and effective collective action;
- Increasingly inform the analysis and practice of international institutions, experts and protection mechanisms based on the experience and perspectives of ESCR-Net members regarding the specific types of threats faced by HRDs working to advance ESCR; and
- Progressively move beyond urgent solidarity actions in reaction to threats or attacks, to facilitating collective approaches to confronting the underlying conditions and forces that have made ESCR advocacy and activism dangerous for many of the Network’s members.

**Impacts 2013-2016**

- Collective statements by ESCR-Net members contributed to the release of seven human rights defenders in Cambodia, Mexican community leader Marco Antonio Suástegeui and then-Chair of ESCR-Net’s Board Hossam Bahgat, following their respective detentions in 2015.
- A robust international response to the assassination of South African grassroots leader Thuli Ndlovu was followed by a swift trial against the perpetrators in January 2016.
- Following the enforced disappearance in January 2016 and subsequent detention of Board member, Saeed Baloch in Pakistan, broad international solidarity coordinated by ESCR-Net contributed to his release from prison on August 3.
- Seven grassroots indigenous leaders, who were detained for more than a year in connection to their activities to defend their territories in Guatemala from mining projects were released on July 22, 2016, following a collective letter, petition and social media campaign.
- Trade union leader, Renante Gamara of the Philippines, was released from prison on August 17, after several years in detention in connection with his human rights activities, following public outcry and several advocacy initiatives by ESCR-Net.
- Via deepened relationships with media outlets, international experts and international mechanisms including the ProtectDefenders.eu consortium, ESCR-Net members have access an increasingly diverse array of tools, resources and avenues of support to bolster their security and protection.
Activities: Emerging Issues and Potential Synergies

Since the last quarter of 2015, ESCR-Net has witnessed a pronounced increase in the frequency, severity and, many times, complexity of the threats facing HRDs. This appears to be due, in part, to the progressive closure of political space via the adoption and enforcement of laws relating to counter-terrorism, national security, foreign funding and NGO registration, baseless criminal charges being filed against HRDs, defamation campaigns, threats against digital security and a general failure to ensure an enabling environment that is conducive to the promotion and defense of human rights. As ESCR-Net’s Social Movement Working Group has discussed these trends, members have noted that current economic conditions are pushing a growing number of communities to resist dispossession and defend their rights, which is often met with these various forms of repression. Corporate capture of state institutions and actors further facilitates aspects of this repression. In many countries, members have also observed politically-motivated discourse fostering of fear and division. HRDs promoting corporate accountability, implementation of legal decisions and women’s rights—particularly related to land and natural resources—are among those most heavily impacted, as evidenced by increasing numbers of cases brought to the SOS from those thematic working groups. To address these immediate threats, the SOS is offering trainings on security and protection of HRDs in international meetings of several working groups while inviting the participation of core working group members in the formulation of urgent appeals and other rapid responses. This analysis emerging from the SOS is informing advocacy discussions in various working groups, exploring how the network might proactively move beyond solidarity to begin to confront the underlying causes that are driving the human rights concerns that prompt HRDs to action.

Membership

The SOS is a benefit for all ESCR-Net members and their partners. At present, the SOS is guided by an Advisory Group comprised of members, which currently consists of representatives from Defend Job (Philippines), FORUM-ASIA (Thailand), OMCT (Switzerland/Belgium), Consejo de Pueblos Wuxhtaj (Guatemala), Front Line Defenders (Ireland), ProDESC (Mexico) and Just Associates. These members are both regionally focused as well as representing work on a global scope; two members are social movements.