

## **Preliminary findings and recommendations**

**United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Mary Lawlor**

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### **1. Introduction**

Good morning everyone and thank you for joining this press conference. My name is Mary Lawlor, I am the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders. My mandate, given to me by the UN Human Rights Council, is to monitor the situation of human rights defenders (HRDs) around the world.

Since 9 June 2025, I have been in Bosnia and Herzegovina on an official visit. The aim has been to assess the environment for people seeking to exercise the right to defend human rights in the country. Today, I am concluding that visit and will share my preliminary findings. I will be analysing these further as I develop my final report, which I will present to the UN Human Rights Council in March 2026.

It has been very moving for me to be here again. It brings back conflicting memories of the horrors of the 90s. I say conflicting, because while memories of the terrible things that were done remain, so do the memories of the people who did all they could to stop them.

My visit began and ended here in Sarajevo, and in between my time in the capital my team and I travelled to Banja Luka. During my days in these cities, I met with representatives of the Ministry of Justice of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees, including the Gender Equality Agency and the Advisory Body for the Protection of Women Human Rights Defenders, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Interior of Republika Srpska, the Gender Centre of Republika Srpska, the Joint Committee on European Integration and the Joint Committee on Human Rights of the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Ministry of Interior of Canton Sarajevo.

I also met with the three Ombudspersons of the Institution of the Human Rights Ombudsman of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

I also travelled to Bijeljina, Bihać, Kakanj, Lopare, Prijedor, Prnjavor, Srebrenica and Zenica.

I want to thank the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina for inviting me to the country and facilitating my visit, and all the authorities who met me.

I also wish to thank the United Nations Resident Coordinator and the United Nations Country Team, especially the senior human rights advisor and her team, for their help arranging this visit.

Last but certainly not least, I wish to thank all the human rights defenders who spoke with me. I express my full solidarity with you and your struggles.

### **2. Preliminary Findings**

Across all of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in the Federation, in Republika Srpska and the Brčko District, in the cities and in rural areas, people are doing amazing work protecting and promoting human rights.

People defending the right to a healthy environment, in the spirit of the women of Kruščica, are protecting ecosystems, the right to a healthy environment and the right to water. They are an amazing example, uniting across the country and defending the universality of human rights that

would be washed over by corporate, political and personal interests. They are confronting illegal mining, corruption and dispossession.

People from the Roma community are deconstructing discrimination and empowering Roma children, women and youth.

Members of the LGBTI+ community and their allies are standing up for their rights, insisting on equality for all, no matter their gender identity or sexual orientation.

Defenders with disabilities are insisting, justly, on full implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and on putting an end to their exclusion in society, organising, protesting and playing their part in social movements.

People standing in solidarity with migrants, refugees and asylum seekers are documenting pushbacks on both the Croatian and Serbian borders, identifying those who have lost their lives as a result of criminal action or State negligence, and making sure that people on the move can live their days in dignity.

Human rights defenders are working on transitional justice, ensuring the violence of the past is neither repeated or glorified, and that victims can access redress and overcome trauma.

Often, people defending human rights are from marginalised groups themselves, or those discriminated against in society. In some cases, they were victims of crimes during the war.

They are achieving so much, in spite of the fractured political landscape and the 'frozen peace' described by so many of the people I met during my time here.

It's the 30th year since the Srebrenica genocide and the signature of the Dayton Peace Agreement, and human rights defenders throughout the country are showing incredible unity and solidarity with one another and the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina. They embody the better future that peace proclaimed. There are examples of them being accompanied by authorities in their work, but nowhere have I seen the level of political will that would amount to full support.

There is also significant evidence of authorities and third parties directly and deliberately undermining human rights and putting human rights defenders at risk.

### **3. Good practice**

I have come across some positive practices by the authorities.

The Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees has established an Advisory Body for the Protection of Women Human Rights Defenders within its Gender Equality Agency. While it could and should be empowered to do much more, with wider participation and fuller mandate, it was referenced as a good practice by several human rights defenders I met.

Entity-level Ministries - both in the Federation and Republika Srpska - have in some cases shown some cooperation with human rights defenders and public support for their work, so long as issues deemed politically sensitive are avoided.

Local authorities have also shown support for people exercising the right to defend human rights – in particular outside of the cities, including for people defending and promoting the rights of minorities, women's rights and defending the natural environment. Prnjavor provides one such example.

In the Brčko District, the Law on Public Assembly introduced in 2020 complies with international human rights standards, and could be a model for other legislators to follow, as has been done by some cantons in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Independent human rights bodies, such as the Institution of the Human Rights Ombudsman showed a reluctance to take action on sensitive issues, with patchy support for people working for the human rights of others. They must be much more proactive and unified.

There was favorable feedback from human rights defenders who engaged with the Ombudsman for Children of the Republika Srpska.

These are positive examples and should be built on. The greatest support human rights defenders are receiving, however, is from one another. That solidarity should be replicated by the authorities

#### **4. Issues of concern**

##### *Deteriorating situation for human rights defenders in Republika Srpska*

Recent years have seen a serious deterioration in the environment for defending and promoting human rights in Republika Srpska.

Human rights defenders, including critical independent media and civil society organisations, have been depicted by high-level authorities, including the President of the entity, Milorad Dodik, as enemies of Republika Srpska. This appears to have been made a cornerstone of the sustained, regressive, ethno-nationalist discourse used by ruling politicians in the entity and seemingly aimed at sowing division to cement power captured since the Dayton Agreement, and clear the way for personal gain.

Amidst this discourse, and as a central part of it, legislation has been introduced with the ostensible aim of protecting the entity of Republika Srpska and the rights of its inhabitants as such, but which appear solely to restrict civil and political rights, particularly the rights to freedom of expression, freedom of association and non-discrimination. This has been accompanied by legislation facilitating the work of extractive companies.

The **re-criminalisation of defamation** through amendments to the Criminal Code of Republika Srpska in July 2023 marked a watershed moment in this regard. The amendments, which came into force in January 2024, created a new chapter in the Criminal Code exposing those found guilty of defamation to fines of up to €3,000, and if these fines go unpaid, the person risks up to 2 years' imprisonment.

Some exceptions for liability were provided in the amendments, including where the statements in question are made “for the defence of rights”. But it would be on the accused to prove this defence, and they do not do enough to remedy the problems with the law.

That is because the legislation's problems are existential. The amendments are incompatible with article 19 of the ICCPR, failing to meet the criteria of necessity, legal certainty or proportionality: defamation should be a civil wrong, not a criminal offence. Bad practice in other States is no justification for this. Criminal defamation laws should be abolished, and replaced, where necessary, with appropriate civil defamation laws.

Since the re-criminalisation of defamation, several other new laws have further significantly impacted on human rights defenders in Republika Srpska. While the Republika Srpska authorities insist that there is no connection between these pieces of legislation, this is not my assessment.

Among these is the **Law on the Special Registry and Transparency of the Work of Nonprofit Organisations (the so-called “foreign agent law”)**. While the law was recently struck down by the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, its content, and the manner in which it was adopted, are indicative of the stigmatising approach by the entity's Government towards people it perceives as obstructing its agenda.

The law was adopted under an emergency procedure, authorised as a result of its supposed necessity to protect the constitutional order of Republika Srpska. It provided for the classification of NGOs receiving foreign funding and deemed to carry out “political actions or political activities” as “agents of foreign influence”, and provides for the creation of a special registry for such NGOs. Under the law, this registry will be managed by the Ministry of Justice of Republika Srpska, who shall be the arbiter of which activities could be considered “political” in the context of the law. If implemented, NGOs on the register will be subjected to heightened scrutiny by authorities, including inspections.

Like the amendments re-criminalising defamation, the so-called foreign agents law appears to have been introduced as part of a deliberate policy of the authorities in Republika Srpska to delegitimise the activities of anyone opposing the interests of powerful figures within the ruling party. This includes human rights defenders, such as members of civil society organisations and independent journalists. It may be used to further demonize and undermine civil society organizations receiving foreign funding. During the drafting process of the law, I had called for its withdrawal. While I was relieved to see that this law was annulled by the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, I was informed by the Minister of Justice of Republika Srpska that they are going ahead with the drafting of secondary legislation, which will be followed by the creation of the register. This is extremely concerning. The legislation should be abandoned for good.

As part of the ethno-nationalist, internal-enemy narrative adopted by the authorities of the Republika Srpska, the rights of women and the LGBTI+ community, as well as those defending their rights, have been explicitly depicted as a threat to traditional value and the family to be confronted. This is seen in **amendments to the Criminal Code of Republika Srpska in February 2025, which removed the term “gender identity”** as a protected characteristic from articles criminalising hate crimes, hate speech and the protection of human rights and people working for equality. Doing so potentially removes legal protections for people targeted by hate crimes on the basis of their gender identity, including human rights defenders and those advocating for equality. It sends a very negative signal to society and is an example of the authorities adopting the agenda of the anti-gender movement present in the country. While the Republika Srpska authorities insist they have strengthened legal protection through the amendments, HRDs affected strongly disagree with this.

The same pattern is replicated in the **Law on the Protection of the Constitutional Order of Republika Srpska**, introduced in March 2025. Although it did not reach the level of final adoption, I fear the law may be reintroduced or simply implemented. Provisions criminalising those who “threaten the constitutional order of the Republika Srpska” or who “disrespect or fail to implement the decisions of the institutions or bodies of the Republic Srpska” could have a severely negative impact on human rights defenders and exacerbate self-censorship of all voices critical of the policies of the entity’s authorities.

The rights to freedom of expression and freedom of association, as well as freedom from discrimination and gender equality, are protected under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Bosnia and Herzegovina is a party, as well as other international human rights instruments and standards. The right to freedom from discrimination is a fundamental human right, as is the right to gender equality. The rights to freedom of expression and association can only

be restricted under limited exceptional circumstances. In recent years, these key tenets of international human rights law have been railroaded through in Republika Srpska.

### *The situation for environmental human rights defenders across the country*

People protecting human rights connected to the environment are doing amazing work in Bosnia and Herzegovina. While some have thus far been able to organise freely, and with success, there are several emblematic cases of significant concern that suggest pressure against them is growing.

During my visit, I heard of issues for 1) environmental defenders at the grassroots level, particularly in communities near sites of proposed or existing extractive and so-called 'green-transition' projects; 2) for independent journalists covering environmental issues, including connected corruption and business activities; and 3) for NGOs supporting both journalists and grassroots activists, and advocating with the authorities.

In **Republika Srpska**, the adoption of the so-called **foreign agent law** stirred significant concerns among environmental defenders. Although an exception for environmental NGOs was included in the law, human rights defenders told me they fear their work could be considered 'political' at any moment, and that they may be included in the register, which would severely stigmatise their work. The **re-criminalisation of defamation** has also had an impact, leading to self-censorship. This should be seen in light of legislation introduced to facilitate the work of extractive companies in the entity, including through the Law on Geological Surveys.

Several grassroots activist working on the protection of the environment have been targeted in **smear campaigns**, and **SLAPPs - strategic lawsuits against public participation** - are a major issue that must be addressed. I was encouraged to hear the Ministry of Justice of Republika Srpska say they are open to legislation which would do this. SLAPPs are being brought by foreign and local companies against women human rights defenders active on environmental issues, with local political interests also often involved. **Cease and desist letters** threatening undue legal proceedings have also reportedly been sent to human rights defenders in NGOs by companies, in an apparent attempt to intimidate and silence them.

An emblematic example is the spurious case brought against the young women human rights defenders **Sara Tuševljak and Sunčica Kovačević**, for their defence of the Kasindolska river and the rights of those who rely on it. There are several striking aspects of the case. The first is the resilience Sara and Sunčica have shown, despite being dragged through the courts for the last three years. They are not victims. They are an example all in Bosnia and Herzegovina should be proud of. They should be supported, yet many people seem to be profiting from the SLAPP against them. This includes the Belgian company who brought the case, Green Invest, the local construction company and those involved in it, the law firm representing the company, the company providing expert evidence before the court. I have been following the case since 2022 and will continue to do so. I call on the company to abandon it, and urge the government to provide an official reply to the allegation letter I sent on the case in January 2023.

Another case of significant concern involves Mr. **Zoran Poljašević**, one of the leaders of the successful movement to protect **Mount Ozren**, the site of proposed 'critical mineral' mining. I was inspired by the story of the movement, which has seen people from Republika Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina unite to protect the mountain's ecosystem, culture and history. Yet Zoran has paid a high price, allegedly being dismissed from his job as an engineer in retaliation for his role in the movement. A hearing in his court petition for unfair dismissal is upcoming, and I will be closely following the outcome – he should be reinstated.

Environmental defenders have also been **directly threatened** because of their activism and **warned to stop** it. I am seriously concerned about the environmental damage and human rights impact of **lignite mining in the Bukova Kosa municipality, near Prijedor**, and urge the authorities of Republika Srpska to engage in meaningful and inclusive consultations with local residents and human rights defenders to find a solution and remedy.

There are other cases I have received information on and I will be looking into them further. I am also very concerned by reports I have received of pressure being put on human rights defenders by foreign diplomats from embassies with interests in extractive projects in the country.

#### The situation for journalists

Independent journalists play a vital role in exposing human rights violations. They are important allies of human rights defenders and often exercise the right to defend human rights themselves. They should be supported, and all States should create an environment in which they can work freely, without fear.

There is evidence that this is not happening in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The **re-criminalisation of defamation in Republika Srpska**, already discussed, is the clearest expression of this. While to date there have been no convictions of journalists on the basis of the new crime, it has significantly undermined their work, with journalists reporting on human rights issues, such as corruption and extractive industries, feeling the need to **self-censor** and take extra precautions in their work.

While there are particular challenges in Republika Srpska, there are **issues for journalists across the country, not only in the RS**. Like environmental activists, they are also being targeted in **baseless civil lawsuits (SLAPPs)** and through **threats of legal action** made in an attempt to silence them, as well as **physical attacks** and **online abuse**. There is widespread impunity for these attacks, with journalists reporting that efforts towards accountability grind to a halt when cases reach prosecutors' offices, and retaliation against journalists is rarely, if ever, condemned by politicians. Some high-ranking **politicians, in particular in Republika Srpska, have also repeatedly singled journalists out for public vitriol**, with threats and smears from politicians carried out with impunity. The Special Report of the Ombudsman's Institution on threats against journalist, published in 2017, shows that these issues are far from new. In the opinion of many of those I spoke with, however, they have since gotten worse, with independent journalists also standing to be significantly affected by the adopted foreign agent law in Republika Srpska.

Contact points for journalists at risk have recently been created in prosecutors' offices and ministries of interior, and this is encouraging. When speaking with journalists about the mechanism, however, they made clear that it is currently unable to offer them effective protection, and should be strengthened.

#### The situation for LGBTI+ rights defenders

As with environmental defenders and independent journalists, people advocating for the rights of the LGBTI+ community are under pressure in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This is a clear area of concern.

The situation is not, however, uniform.

LGBTI+ rights defenders can organise with relative freedom in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, at least in large cities. The annual **Pride** event held in Sarajevo is a testament to their amazing work. They are, however, forced to overcome **onerous obligations imposed by Sarajevo Canton** when organising it, stemming in the Canton's Law on Public Assembly, which does not

comply with international human rights law and standards and should be reformed. LGBTI+ demonstrations in Sarajevo, including Pride, are designated as 'high risk', leading to significant security costs that are required to be born by the Pride organising committee.

The situation is significantly worse in Republika Srpska, where the LGBTI+ community has been directly stigmatised by the ruling party. On **18 March 2023, LGBTI+ rights defenders who had arranged a meeting in Banja Luka were attacked by a violent mob**. The meeting had been organised after a film screening the activists had planned was banned by the local police a few hours before it was set to take place. Such events had been taking place for several years in the city, without incident, but on this occasion the event came to the attention of local politicians, with the President of Republika Srpska and the mayor of Banja Luka both speaking out in opposition to it. An investigation was opened into the attack, which was captured on camera and happened in the presence of Republika Srpska police, but has not been completed yet, despite the fact that over two years passed. I am very concerned this occurred in a context of hate speech targeting the LGBTI community and by reports that this was not an isolated incident.

There has been complete **impunity for the attack**, and it has had a major impact on LGBTI+ rights defenders in the entity but also across the country. It should be seen in the context of both the recent legislative projects undermining human rights in the entity, and the internal-enemy narrative developed by high ranking members of the ruling party.

#### *The situation for migrants' rights defenders*

In previous years, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers have faced very difficult conditions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as have those who have been working in solidarity with them. During my visit, I heard about how people doing this work were severely harassed in the past, in particular in border regions, with women human rights defenders notable among those targeted. Although migrants, refugees and asylum seekers still face challenges in the country – including access to adequate food and health care, and alleged police violence - the situation has improved since, and people are able to work in solidarity with them without fear in most cases. Yet they face **administrative obstacles**, and find themselves forced to put significant time and energy into bureaucratic struggles that could be resolved much quicker with proper state support. Administrative requirements also appear to be **instrumentalised to threaten human rights defenders working at borders in some cases**. I will continue to monitor this situation, and intend to examine it further in my final report. **Solidarity should be supported** – never obstructed, repressed or criminalised.

#### *The situation for those working on transitional justice and reconciliation*

Some of the most challenging work in the country is being done by people seeking to address the wrongs of the war. It is lonely work, mainly being done by women, and with either little support from authorities or often in active opposition from them. People are often afraid to support these defenders publicly. One woman human rights defender told me how heavily she has been impacted by seeing the crimes perpetrated in her region repeated in Gaza, while the international community simply idly stands by again. Time is passing, but it does not heal all wounds. Transitional justice takes courage, understanding, and persistence. Human rights defenders are showing it, but they need support.

Defenders told me about administrative harassment, including police inspections during the COVID-19 pandemic, where these organizations were the only ones singled out. One of the crucial steps to reconciliation should be the erection of **memorials for the civilian victims of the war**, including for the **children of Prijedor**, which has been facing **administrative obstacles** and political opposition.

Human rights defenders working on transitional justice and reconciliation should be able to work without fear of losing their jobs or risk further ostracization and retraumatization.

#### *The situation for human rights defenders with disabilities*

In meetings with human rights defenders with disabilities during my visit, I heard of the major challenges for persons with disabilities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including social exclusion, poverty and widespread barriers to the exercise and realisation of their rights. The State ratified the **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** in 2010, yet despite some advances, the medical approach to disability appears still to be entrenched in the country. This is significantly affecting the rights of persons with disabilities in the country, including their right to defend human rights.

**Women defenders with disabilities** feel that they are left out of both the women's rights movement and the disability movement. Access to justice remains a major concern, with no institutional structure for systemic, free legal aid. Additionally, the Law on Representation only allows for representation under one category of persons with disabilities, which hinders the work of larger Unions representing membership-based associations.

The right to public participation for persons with disabilities and those advocating on their behalf should be made more accessible, including by more accommodation made both in terms of physical accessibility and meaningful inclusion.

#### *The situation for human rights defenders from minorities*

Minorities form part of the rich fabric of people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, yet they face significant challenges resulting from the **discrimination** inherent in the Dayton Peace Agreement and its replication in society. It is more difficult for a person from a minority to speak up and organise in defence of human rights, and yet they are, with success, all over the country. In some instances they are supported by authorities, particularly at local levels, such as in Prnjavor. In certain municipalities they seem to be well accepted by both the majority population and local authorities, while elsewhere they face difficulties. There have also been some **notable success stories**, but challenges remain and minority rights activists are also feeling the impact of the above-mentioned legislative initiatives in Republika Srpska.

#### *The situation for women human rights defenders*

**Women are at the forefront of struggles for human rights and social justice in Bosnia and Herzegovina**, as they are all over the world. They are present in environmental struggles, in transitional justice, in the protection of the rights of migrants', in independent journalism and advocacy in defence of the rights of the LGBTI+ community, the rights of minorities and of persons with disabilities. Yet being a woman is a risk multiplier when it comes to human rights activism in the country. In many of the cases of retaliation against human rights defenders, it is women who are targeted for exercising their right to defend human rights. This is happening in the courts, where women human rights defenders are being targeted in **SLAPPs**; it has happened at the borders, where women have been **threatened, doxxed** and **physically attacked** for their work with people on the move; it is happening where women from minorities are confronting prejudice within and outside their own communities; it is also happening to women human rights defenders defending the rights of other women and providing them support, as they are often stigmatized and face gendered and misogynistic comments both in person and on social media. It appears that when activism brings women human rights defenders into the public eye, the risk of retaliation appears to increase.



Much of these risks are due to a deeply patriarchal society, where women traditionally have been relegated to dealing matters of the family. Women defenders are also facing backlash from anti-rights and anti-gender movements, including on social media. They told me that they often don't even report the threats or attacks to the police as they do not expect to receive any tangible support. Additionally, their families and communities may pressure them into giving up their human rights work.

## **5. Conclusions**

The unique political system in place in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the complex legislative landscape that has developed within it, mean that the situation for human rights defenders in the country is far from uniform. The standards all authorities in the country must adhere to, however, are clear. They are laid out in the international human rights treaties to which the State has become a party, and the connected human rights standards. This also includes the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, adopted by consensus at the UN General Assembly in 1998, expanding on the rights enshrined in the core treaties of international human rights all. The Declaration recognises that all people have the right to defend human rights; to take peaceful action to protect them when they are at risk of being violated; and that the State has a duty to protect people from violence, threats, retaliation, discrimination, pressure or arbitrary action in any form for the exercise of this right.

Much more could be done to make the Declaration a reality in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and much could be gained through doing so: on transitional justice; anti-corruption; the rights of women; of minorities; the LGBTI+ community; environmental protection and a just transition that upholds the principle of universal human rights. The responsibility lies with the State, in all its manifestations. I call on it to take up the challenge of the Declaration and work with human rights defenders to make the protection, respect and realisation of human rights for all those under its jurisdiction a reality.

## **6. Preliminary recommendations**

*To authorities across the country:*

- Take proactive measures to tackle negative narratives around promoting and protecting human rights in the country, including by ceasing all public statements by politicians disparaging the work of human rights defenders or conflating it with criminality or security concerns;
- Promote the role of independent journalism and take measures to ensure that journalists are protected from intimidation or retaliation of any kind for their work;
- Ensure conformity between all national legislation and international human rights law;
- Sign and ratify the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of the Environment through Criminal Law and work with civil society to prepare for its full implementation;
- Ensure respect by all relevant authorities for the Aarhus Convention as a national priority;
- Significantly strengthen the network of contact points for journalists at risk in prosecutors' offices and ministries of interior, Take steps to create focal points for civil society organisations working on human rights issues within the Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees, and all other relevant ministries;
- Legislate and take awareness raising measures, including among prosecutors and the judiciary, to prevent the misuse of criminal and civil law against human rights defenders, including journalists, through SLAPPs;
- Take appropriate measures to ensure meaningful, inclusive and equal public participation of human rights defenders; including by, identifying and eliminating obstacles to accessibility for defenders with disabilities;

- Improve transparency of appointments of members to minority councils and ensure the equal, effective participation of women from minorities in decisions affecting them.

*To the authorities of Republika Srpska:*

- Repeal the amendments to the Criminal Code re-creating the criminal offence of defamation, ensuring that it is only classified as a civil offence in legislation that upholds freedom of expression as guaranteed by ICCPR article 19;
- Repeal the Law on the Special Registry and Publicity of the Work of Non-profit Organizations and take active measures to fully protect freedom of association, as guaranteed by ICCPR article 22;
- Repeal the amendments to the Criminal Code concerning gender identity, reinstating the term, and take active measures to promote the human rights of the LGBTI+ community in the entity, including the work of those defending their rights;
- Ensure with no further delay an impartial and effective investigation into the attacks on defenders of LGBTI+ rights in Banja Luka in March 2023, and that perpetrators are brought to justice;
- In consultation with environmental human rights defenders and affected community members, conduct a review of any licenses granted for lignite mining in Bukova Kosa, near Prijedor, taking into account environmental and human rights impacts.

*To the authorities of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina:*

- Consider advancing the Bill on Civil Initiative and Protection of Citizens and Activists and, once adopted, ensure its full and effective implementation.

*To all cantonal authorities*

- Ensure all cantonal level laws comply with international human rights standards, particularly around the rights to freedom of association, peaceful assembly and expression (ICCPR articles 19, 21 and 22);
- Ensure that the burden of the costs of security measures during public assemblies such as Pride do not fall on the organizers of these assemblies.

*To the Institution of the Human Rights Ombudsman:*

- Prepare a special report on the situation of human rights defenders, including specific sections on those defending rights linked to the environment; women's rights; the rights of the LGBTI+ community; the rights of persons with disabilities; and migrants' rights defenders;
- Include sections on human rights defenders in other relevant special thematic reports;
- Collect and publish disaggregated statistics on complaints received from human rights defenders;
- Attend court proceedings in cases concerning human rights defenders, including the civil cases against Sara Tuševljak & Sunčica Kovačević.