



# HRDs

*in action*

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## Introduction

*Peace Brigades International – Kenya is a Project of Peace Brigades International (PBI), registered in Kenya as a domestic NGO with the mandate and commitment to maintain and increase the civic space for HRDs by helping them to overcome challenges and by providing them a range of tools and support to mitigate risks which come as a result of their efforts in defence of human rights. PBI Kenya has been working closely with Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) drawn from the Social Justice Centres in Kenya.*

*PBI Kenya entered into a two-year agreement with the German Federal Foreign Office and ifa (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen) to continue supporting the work of the HRDs in Kenya through the new project titled ‘Raising the voice, visibility and effectiveness of the human rights movement in Kenya’ (2021 -2022). This follows the successful*

*completion of the pilot project implemented in 2020 ‘Increased capacities, stronger networks’ whose vision was to contribute to establishing sustainable protection and support networks, to assert pressure on all actors to adhere to the rule of law and promote human rights nationwide.*

*This photobook aims to portray the human rights defenders from the Social Justice Centres and the different ways they fight for social justice.*



HRDs participating in the SabaSaba walk of life to demand respect for human rights

## Acknowledgement

*The development of this photobook was done through a coordinated process by PBI. We would like to thank everyone who was involved in the process and for the valuable contributions they have made.*

*Special thanks go to Amel Ramirez, who did the major design work, supported by Brandon McNally.*

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*We are extremely grateful for their support.*

# Dreams of Freedom

*It has been the longest of years,  
It has been the longest of months,  
It has been the longest of weeks,  
It has been the longest of days,  
It has been the longest of hours,  
Minutes, seconds, micro seconds and milli seconds,*

*Grandfathers, grandmothers, mothers, fathers,  
Sons, daughters' nieces and nephews,  
All lost to pain, suffering, darkness of dark days,  
Trade of humanity, trade of human dignity for power,  
Trade, trade of human labor, peace and happiness,  
Trade, trade of human dignity and beauty,  
Trade, trade across border, regions and nations,  
Trade, trade that belittles humanity and its true meaning,  
For many got lost to violation and many are born against  
violations,*

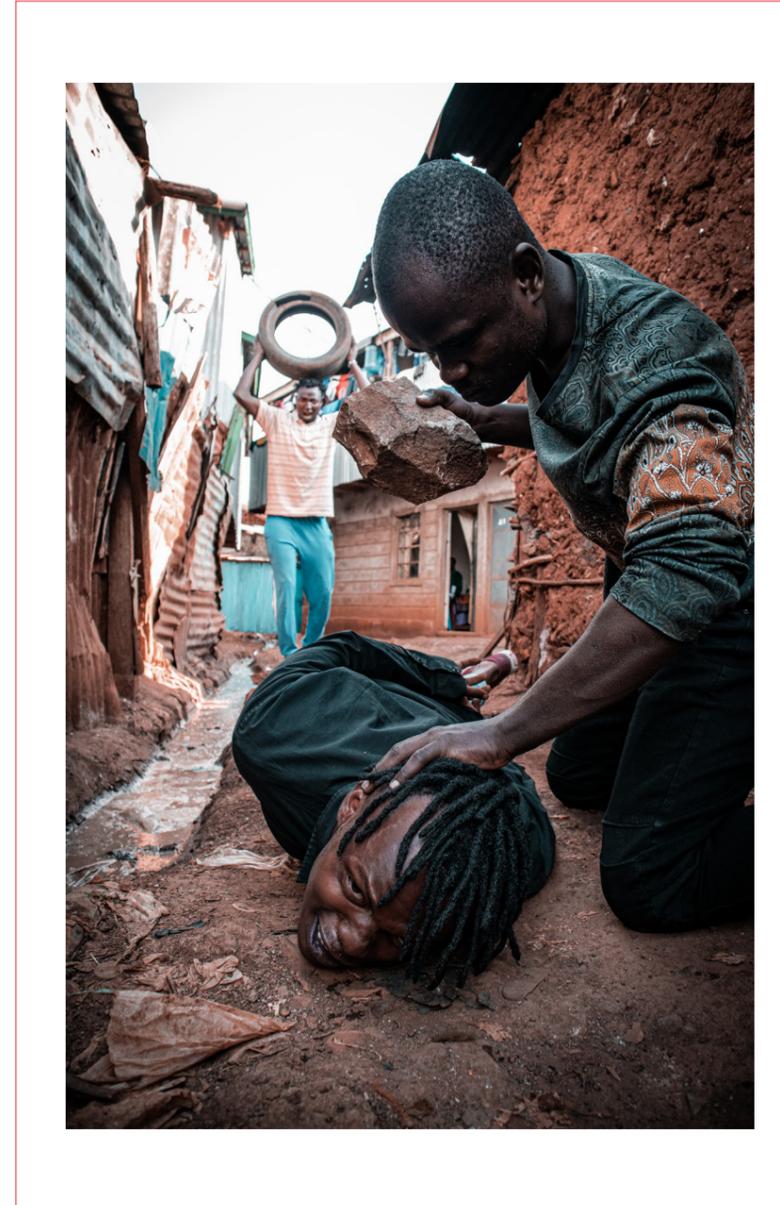
*How many are gone, can we count?  
How many are lost and, in a frenzy, can we tell?  
How many are hiding now, can we say?  
How many are wishing to get back up, can we help?  
How many are in solidarity, solidarity against daily violations,  
Solidarity against poor laws, solidarity to inform, can we join?  
This pain must come to an end, an end that I see,*

*These fears must turn to courage, courage that I feel,  
We the people must unite again, unity that is real,  
These laws must be one for human rights, rights that we mean,*

*Decades of true struggles must come to pass,  
Decades of true organizing must come to be,  
Decades of true partnership that has come strong,  
Decades of true direction for together we have shown path,  
Decades of the long-awaited freedom is here, yes, I feel it,  
Be the champion against violations, Be by nature a rights defender!*

by Javan the Poet

A human Rights Defender based  
at Dandora Social Justice Centre



HRDs running a campaign against mugging  
within the community



HRDs participating in the SabaSaba walk of life to demand respect for human rights



Daniel Mala leading the way during SabaSaba walk of life





## Raising the voice, visibility and effectiveness of Kenya's human rights movement

Community based organisations (CBOs) in Kenya have had exponential growth in recent years, and have become the engine of Kenya's human rights movement. These CBOs have made impressive strides in pushing the human rights agenda and bringing more and more people into the movement. PBI Kenya aims to contribute to the strengthening of the social justice centres and enhance the ability of the HRDs to handle internal difficulties like burnout, stress, and conflict, increase their ability to analyse their risks and to implement security and protection strategies, raise their ability to bring issues of human rights violations, and solutions, to the national debate, by advancing in their advocacy capacities and building of networks. The project further aims to contribute towards the building or improving relationships between social justice centres, local and national authorities especially

the police and members of the international community, as well as to improve the relationship of social justice centres with community members.

Over the last seven years PBI Kenya has established great collaboration with the members of the social justice movement. Amid perpetual reports of violations and abuses, they have remained at the heart of campaigning for a free and fair society by protecting and promoting human rights. Essentially, they form an extremely vital and robust group in upholding the rights of all. PBI Kenya is glad to have worked with them and opened up spaces for peace through local and international advocacy, security trainings and through mentoring sessions and psychosocial support sessions.

The Alliance for Lawyers at Risk with members of Mathare SJC

## The Social Justice Centres in Kenya

### Who we are

The Social Justice Centres Working Group (SJCWG) is a collective leadership of 46 Social Justice Centres across the country. The first Social Justice Centre was established in 2015 in Mathare, one of Nairobi's century-old slums inhabited by around half a million people.

More Social Justice Centres have been established in Nairobi, Mombasa and Kisumu – Kenya's three largest cities - and the counties of Vihiga and Kakamega. These centres are anchored through the Social Justice Centres Working Group, which functions as the collective voice for the social justice movement and is comprised of two representatives from each centre.

Police violence and extrajudicial killings, sexual and gender-based violence, and economic and social rights - such as the rights to water and adequate housing – are all pressing rights issues voiced by communities in informal settlements.

The foundation of these movements is to establish spaces, known as Social Justice Centres, where communities can come and organize, collaborate, discuss and reflect on the human rights violations they endure to document them and campaign for change. The social justice movement has helped to foster unity in the community based on the constitution of Kenya and human rights.

Driven by majorly a youthful activism and tireless voluntarism, the social justice movement is flourishing and new centres are opening up to rescue failed democratic transition and create alternative political leadership for social and economic liberation.

### Key Objectives

- 1 To activate community agency on matters of human rights and social justice.*
- 2 To build solidarity among Social Justice Centres.*
- 3 Organize joint campaigns, petition and solidarity marches on cross cutting grassroots and national issues.*
- 4 Empower the communities to advocate for their own justice and human rights.*
- 5 To expand the democratic civic space.*
- 6 To consolidate the efforts and gains made by the work of grassroots human rights defenders across the country.*

**Social Justice Centres  
Working Group**



Kinuthia Mwangi - HRD from the Social Justice Centres Working Group.



Mentoring session with HRDs at Korogocho Social Justice Centre, to encourage and advise them in their human rights work



Catherine Kihika of Ghetto Foundation training fellow HRDs on security management



Anami Daudi of Mukuru Social Justice Centre. The mural depicts that HRDs are the light and eyes of the community



Comrades with a member of the Alliance for Lawyers at Risk



Farmer, as he is commonly known, paying tribute to a victim of police brutality in Mombasa



Kinuthia Mwangi briefing the Alliance for Lawyers at Risk



PBI UK and PBI Kenya have supported the SJC movement



HRDs met PBI UK and the Alliance for Lawyers at Risk

“This year has been very challenging and also a learning year for me. As a human rights defender documentation of human rights violations has been key in pursuing justice for our people, although this has come with a price with constant threats from security agencies. Witness protection for victims has been lacking in the process of ensuring justice. Despite the challenges brought about by Covid-19, this year has been one of empowerment for me: I have participated in many trainings and attended numerous forums that have strengthened my quest to continue pursuing justice for all. I would conclude my life as a HRD in the following words by James Baldwin:

*“We can disagree and still love each other unless your disagreement is rooted in my oppression and denial of my humanity and right to exist”*

Samuel (MC) Ghetto Foundation





As a woman human rights defender and as someone who coordinates a women-led justice centre, organizing has been both a sweet journey and an uphill task. It has been a journey full of achievements, growth, successes and frustrations and desperation in equal measure. We have achieved great milestones, getting an office was one of them, a space where we could work from. From joining the movement out of passion to being trained paralegals, security management trainers, counselors etc. We are not only serving the community out of passion but also from a point of an informed community organiser. We have received a lot of threats but we are grateful to the networks we have built for the past three years since we began. The threats that we received have only intensified our fight for dignity, equity and justice for all. We continue to fight for a community where everyone lives in dignity and justice is accessible to all!

Faith Kasina – Coordinator Kayole Community Justice Centre





Comemoration of the 2<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the death of Carol Mwatha, a HRD from from Dandora

I am driven by passion for human rights work, community empowerment, rule of law and justice. As a Muslim woman, I have sought to change the narrative and break the cultural barriers that deny Muslim women opportunities to meaningfully participate in development processes to improve their well-being. Over the years, I have worked in the Kisauni area of Mombasa county, a place rife with gang violence and violent extremism. Being a Muslim woman who has decided to stand up for justice and human rights in such a violence prone community has encouraged other women to join me in this work. Preventing and countering violent extremism through enhancing access to justice has been my work since founding Sisters For Justice (S4J). Working with vulnerable youth to build faith in the justice system in order to deter the youth from engaging in violent extremism has been quite fulfilling. I have successfully worked with various justice actors including police, prisons and probation officers to address youth issues.

Naila Abdallah Mohamed is the founder and Executive Director of Sisters for Justice, a youth- and women-led organization that is working to promote justice and protecting women's rights and those of their children.





HRDs from the western chapter (Kisumu) receive their certificates after attending the security management training



Evans Wamiru of Kiambiu Justice and Information Network during Training of Trainers on digital security



Launch of the book "They Were Us" in support of the Mothers of Victims and Survivors Network



Okaka Rodgers



Maryann Kasina



Upcoming HRDs



PBI Kenya visiting the members of Kondele SJC



“I am beginning to accept the loss of my two sons who were killed by police and move away from the victim dependency syndrome by concentrating more on advocacy to realize justice for the victims.”

Mama Victor - the coordinator of the Mothers of Victims and Survivor Network

One of the HRDs displaying his children allegedly killed by police. HRDs are greatly involved in documenting cases of extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances

After attending digital security training, Daniel Mala, the coordinator of Kariobangi Social Justice Centre made this observation:

“I am able to filter confidential information and share this only with the right people, especially when not all members are in need to know, for their safety and that of all our centre members.”



Some of the HRDs distributed flowers to mark a year of police brutality during the effecting of Covid-19 prevention measures in Mombasa



Advocacy: The members of the SJCWG have become more aware of the need to involve other actors in influencing the duty bearers to be more accountable of their actions especially regarding the safety and security of the HRDs. This happened especially during the virtual speaker tours. After attending this year's virtual speaker tour, Faith Kasina made the following statement:

“Personally, I feel there's goodwill from the international community regarding our human rights work. Their acknowledging our work makes me feel that I am not alone in the struggle, I feel supported and encouraged to keep soldiering on in the struggle for a socially just nation.”



Mothers of Victims and Survivors Network playing soccer to campaign against SGBV



Mathare Social Justice Center kids are famous for their dancing skills



HRDs Faith Kasina and Halima Bakari have been instrumental in the collaboration between PBI Kenya and the Social Justice Centres Working Group



Women in SJs after attending a psychosocial session



Maryann Kasina and Anthony Kimani who participated in the virtual speaker tour

## Photo credits

Photos for this book were made by:

**Calvin Ochieng:** photos on page 3, 4, 5, 6, and 20 (1st photo)

**Manu Valcarce:** photos on page 7, 8, 9 (1st photo), 11 (1st photo), 12, 13 (1st photo)

**Ghetto Foundation:** photo on page 13 (1st photo)

**Amnesty International Kenya:** photo on page 14 (1st photo)

**Nayla Kubwa** (Communication Officer - Sisters for Justice): photo on page 15 (2nd photo)

**N'deane Helayzen:** photos on page 19 (2nd photo), 23 (2nd photo)

**Maina (Show Beats):** photos on page 22

All other photos were made by **PBI Kenya**.