

## **The Price of Choices**

The main challenge  
is being a girl,  
the social consequences  
the constant worry  
of my family.  
If I get arrested,  
it will not be the same,  
if I were a boy.

Girls  
can be subjected  
to physical violations,  
dramatic stress.  
The security agencies that watch  
know this point of weakness,  
so they call home,  
while male colleagues face different harassments.

Human rights workers, including me,  
have different social choices.  
My main concern, more than danger,  
is how these choices will be used  
to defame me  
socially, politically  
in front of my family,  
the wider society.

We have created a ghetto  
where we practice our beliefs freely.  
You face the question,  
how will this be used against you?  
Your romantic and human relationships,  
the nature of your friends;  
the social events in which you participate,  
anything related to sex or alcohol.  
You practice these with more anxiety  
than someone who made the same choice  
but does not work in human rights.

This is a social burden and fear,  
the harm that family can face.  
I am ready to pay the price of my choices,  
but other people pay the price too.

*Composed by Juliana Mensah from the interview transcript of a woman human rights defender from Egypt working on civil and political rights from the research project 'Navigating Risk, Managing Security, and Receiving Support', which focuses on the experiences of human rights defenders at risk in Colombia, Mexico, Egypt, Kenya, and Indonesia ([securityofdefendersproject.org](http://securityofdefendersproject.org))*