

How to protect people that defend human rights

Expert voices - the situation during the implementation of the Peace Agreement



Taula Catalana per la Pau
i els Drets Humans a Colòmbia



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Introduction

In October 2017, ODHACO and the Taula Catalana per la Pau i els Drets Humans a Colòmbia published the report “One year since the start of the implementation of the Peace Agreement in Colombia”, about the extent to which the Colombian Peace Agreement between the FARC-EP and the Colombian government had been implemented since it was signed in November 2016.

One of the main conclusions of our analysis was that the signing of the Agreement had a positive impact on the rates of violence in the country due to the cessation of armed confrontation between the FARC-EP and the Colombian army. Not only were the deaths of combatants reduced, but also those of civilians as a result of the armed conflict. There was also a historically low murder rate in the country.

However, we also reported our serious concerns: despite the fact that figures of

violence were in decline, the figures of murders of human rights defenders and social leaders had increased alarmingly. Since then, practically every week there have been new murders of members of these groups. Communal leaders, small-scale farming communities, Afro-descendants and indigenous people have been the most affected groups. The proportion of female leaders and women human rights defenders who have suffered assaults and murders has also increased. The State control bodies, the Ombudsman’s Office and the Public Prosecutor’s Office have all called for more forceful and effective responses from the State.

In the first quarter of 2018 the number of murders doubled compared to the same period in 2017. What is happening? Who is killing defenders and why? Why are these groups the most affected and why are there more and more women victims of these aggression and murder? Why do the actions of the State seem to have no impact?

WHAT IS HAPPENING? WHO IS KILLING DEFENDERS AND WHY? WHY ARE THESE GROUPS THE MOST AFFECTED AND WHY ARE THERE MORE AND MORE WOMEN VICTIMS OF THESE AGGRESSION AND MURDER? WHY DO THE ACTIONS OF THE STATE SEEM TO HAVE NO IMPACT?

Seeking answers to this, we have invited several experts on different issues to share their analysis in this publication: representatives of Colombian civil society, some of the communities most affected by the violence and also representatives of the Colombian State and the United Nations system.

We wanted not only to give more visibility to the alarming situation of socio-political violence that persists in Colombia after the signing of the Peace Agreement, but also to the factors that continue to generate this violence and its structural causes.

We are issuing this publication in the year which marks the twentieth anniversary of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. At the global level, the impact of this declaration on human rights defenders is being assessed and who better to give us their vision on the importance of the Declaration in Colombia, than the current United Nations Special Rapporteur for Human Rights Defenders, Michel Forst. It has been an honour to include his piece in this publication.

It is indeed our honour to include all the pieces by all those who participated in this report, those who not only have deep knowledge and understanding of the Colombian context and the human rights situation in the country, but who are also tireless fighters in the struggle to defend human rights. We thank each of them for their contribution to this publication.

Twentieth anniversary of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders: How far have we come in protecting people who defend human rights?

Michel Forst

United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders

In December 1998, at the end of the first world summit on human rights defenders in Paris, a new chapter began in the struggle for a better world for all people. I listened carefully to the testimonies of Rigoberta Menchú, Angela Davis and the Dalai Lama, full of hope and determination, and was convinced that, at last, the legitimate right to defend and promote human rights was going to be recognised. When the United Nations adopted the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders that month, all countries that are part of the UN General Assembly committed to respect and implement the provisions of that Declaration. Many felt that, at last, the necessary political and collective impetus had been created to consecrate the right to defend rights. Almost twenty years have passed since that moment. It is important to take the time to analyse what we have managed to change and what still remains to be done. What can we say about the implementation of the Declaration? How can we talk about successes when every week we see news

of aggressions and murders against people who are carrying out legitimate struggles for justice and equality?

GOVERNMENTS HAVE MADE NEFARIOUS SPEECHES, LABELLING PEOPLE AS “ANTI-PROGRESS”, “CRIMINALS” OR “TRAITORS”, WHO UNCOVER CASES OF CORRUPTION OR OPPOSE ECONOMIC PROJECTS THAT DESTROY FORESTS, THE AIR WE BREATHE OR THE WATER WE DRINK

There are real reasons for indignation and sometimes for despair. Not a week goes by without finding out about attacks, threats or, worse, murders against brave activists. No region of the world seems to escape the rise of authoritarian governments whose discourses of hatred, xenophobia and intolerance foster retrograde laws that are contrary to international human rights standards. Under the gaze of an often apathetic public opinion, laws have multiplied restricting the work of

civil society. Governments have made nefarious speeches, labelling people as “anti-progress”, “criminals” or “traitors”, who uncover cases of corruption or oppose economic projects that destroy forests, the air we breathe or the water we drink. And in just a few months it is possible to destroy the fruits of decades of social struggles. Unfortunately, the outlook in Colombia and other countries in the region is not much more encouraging and people who defend these rights have had to face multiple threats and aggressions. For many of the defenders who have been discriminated against, attacked or killed, justice has not been delivered. Mario, Duvis, Martha, Osiris, Gerson, Nelly, Diego, Daniel. So many defenders have been murdered in Colombia for having raised their voices against injustice, against impunity. Or simply for having sought to live in peace. I also think of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó, of the Huellas del Cauca community. I think of Buenaventura and I think of all these territories of hope, whose collective strength overcomes trauma on so many

occasions, in order to continue struggling for human dignity.

I DO NOT LOOK TO THE FUTURE WITH FEAR BUT RATHER WITH OPTIMISM AND HOPE. WITH A STRONG VISION BUILT OVER THIRTY YEARS OF EXPERIENCE DEFENDING HUMAN RIGHTS, I CAN SAY THAT WE HAVE MADE GREAT PROGRESS

In light of this critical situation, different devices have been created. Frequently they have been driven by civil society organisations and by the same defenders whose ingenuity has enabled them to overcome the lack of resources. Shelter cities, public recognition awards, urgent letters, national protection mechanisms, workshops on digital security and national or regional networks of human rights defenders are just some of the instruments that have been created and that we should reinforce at all levels of the State and society. In Colombia,

initiatives have multiplied since the beginning of the 2000s, with programs to help defenders at risk, to make their work visible or to improve cooperation between the different actors of the State and civil society. Colombia is one of the few countries in the world that has its own protection mechanism due to the serious risks faced by people fighting for fundamental rights. However, as good as these tools are, their existence is already a recognition that defending rights is a high risk activity and can not reverse by themselves a phenomenon whose roots are deeply rooted in a history of impunity and violence. We must recognise that these tools are no substitute for more systemic and collective work, including all sectors of society and remembering the primary responsibility of the State to protect human rights.

Faced with such a difficult scenario, we must recognise our victories. Because we have won many battles. I am convinced of that and that is why I do not look to the future with fear but rather with optimism

and hope. With a strong vision built over thirty years of experience defending human rights, I can say that we have made great progress, whether in terms of gender equality, sexual diversity, international justice or the fight against the death penalty. None of that would have been possible without the often invisible work of thousands of people. Protesting in the streets of our cities, educating in the classrooms of our schools, informing in the newspapers that we read. Since I began

my term as Special Rapporteur, I have been able to travel the world and witness the dynamism and resilience of vibrant and tireless civil societies. Communities and human rights organisations are more visible and are more organised and more interconnected than ever. Feminist movements, indigenous peoples, small-scale farmers and trade unionists have reached international levels and have created new norms on human rights. They have come together to give more voice

and resonance to their struggles. National, regional and thematic networks of human rights defenders have flourished.

The twentieth anniversary of the Declaration provides a unique opportunity to reinforce these initiatives and to create new spaces for dialogue. It offers the space to evaluate what we have learned over the last twenty years and to listen much more closely to the people we must protect. States should develop activities to recognise the work and the legitimate role of defenders. It is also within our hands to open ourselves up, beyond the people already convinced by our struggle. Too many times we have talked among ourselves, without seeing or understanding the need to engage in dialogue with other social actors such as universities, companies, churches, and more widely with our neighbours, those who are close by who often think that human rights are the privilege of a small erudite elite. It is in our hands to charm young people, elderly people, people with disabilities, minorities and show them





that we can all be human rights defenders and that we should fight together to win more rights.

Colombia is experiencing a historic moment with the long-awaited departure from an armed conflict that caused the suffering of millions of people for decades. Defenders should have the possibility to contribute fully to the consolidation of the rule of law and democracy. For me, they are sentinels who watch over our rights. And because they watch over us, it is our role to also watch over them.

Situation of Human Rights Defenders in Colombia

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All records confirm that, since the implementation of the Final Peace Agreement between the Colombian Government and the FARC-EP, levels of attacks and violations of the right to the life and integrity of human rights defenders and social leaders have increased. According to the non-governmental *We are Defenders Program (Programa Somos Defensores)*, there was an increase of 16.42% in individual aggressions against this group in 2017, compared to the year 2016. The Program's Information System on attacks against Human Rights Defenders (*Sistema de Información sobre Agresiones contra Defensores y Defensoras de Derechos Humanos - SIADDHH*) reported assaults against 481 defenders in 2016 and 560 cases in 2017. Likewise, there was a disproportionate increase in murders and attacks against leaders with at least 156 cases (106 murders and 50 attacks)¹.

1. *Una piedra en el zapato*. Annual Report 2017, We are Defenders Program (*Programa Somos Defensores*). March 2017, pages 59-62.

In terms of gender, of the 560 cases recorded, 74% were against men and 26% against women, and this proportion was similar in 2016. However, it is important to note that the murders of women were more violent, including incidences of sexual violence. There was an increase in murders (from 80 to 106), threats (from 317 to 370) and arbitrary arrests (from 17 to 23); while the level of attacks (from 49 to 50), information theft and arbitrary use of the criminal system stayed the same².

For its part, the Human Rights Ombudsman's Office (*Defensoría del Pueblo*), a state control agency, registered 282 murders between January 1, 2016 and February 27, 2018³, a figure that raises alarms about the departments in the west of the country, where key geographic areas are located that connect the interior of the country

2. *Una piedra en el zapato*. Annual Report 2017, We are Defenders Program (*Programa Somos Defensores*). March 2017, pages 59-62.

3. *Alerta Temprana N°026-18* Human Rights Ombudsman's Office (*Defensoría del Pueblo*). 28 February 2018, page 35.



Photo: Javier Sulé

with the Pacific coast, a natural trading route, which also offers possibilities for retreat and concealment in its forests and jungles, and where the State has little presence. The climatic conditions and high altitude greatly favour the planting of crops for illicit use, whose raw material and by-products constitute an important source of income to support illegal armed groups, as part of a much more extensive

cross-border drug trafficking network, for which the Pacific Ocean is the main interconnection route.

In this region, according to figures from the Ombudsman's Office (*Defensoría del Pueblo*), 62% of all homicides of social leaders and human rights defenders took place in the aforementioned period. Particularly noteworthy is the situation

in Cauca (75 murders registered), Antioquia (38), Valle del Cauca (15), Nariño (15) and Chocó (14), all of which are being prioritised in terms of risk⁴.

It is important to note that, despite the recommendations made repeatedly by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) in its regional reports, the Colombian State still does not prepare or monitor its own list for these crimes⁵.

The victims are involved in campaigns in favour of the peace process, the defence of land against the implementation of extractive projects⁶, reporting and political opposition, the promotion of land restitution processes and the voluntary

4. *Alerta Temprana N°026-18* Human Rights Ombudsman's Office (*Defensoría del Pueblo*). 28 February 2018, page 36.

5. *Comprehensive Protection Policies for Human Rights Defenders* Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. December 2017.

6. According to the report for the year 2016 *Defenders of the Earth* by the organisation Global Witness, the second highest number of environmental leaders in the world were killed in Colombia, with a total of 37 in that year, second only to Brazil (49).

substitution of crops for illicit use, as well as the defence of the rights of the LGBTI population, women and Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities⁷. Indeed, the main leaders at risk are community leaders (directors of Community Action Boards - JAC, Local Administrative Boards - JAL, Community Councils and Indigenous Councils) and/or people who carry out different actions in their communities or organisations to exercise and claim their rights.

Areas with presence of illicit crops have been identified as scenarios of risk, where voluntary substitution agreements have been signed that go against the interests of illegal armed groups; areas where infrastructure and extractive projects are located, such as legal and illegal mining, which are often guarded by illegal armed groups acting as “private security” guards; and areas close to the Territorial

7. *Situación de derechos humanos y derecho humanitario en Colombia 2016-2017* Joint report of human rights organisations for the Universal Periodic Review of Colombia. Edition 2017.

Spaces for Training and Reincorporation (*Espacios Territoriales de Capacitación y Reincorporación*), given that these lands have historically been controlled by the FARC-EP guerrilla and have now become areas which are being fought over among groups that want to take control of the territory and the illicit economy. It is also important to highlight the impact on the municipalities prioritised for Development Programs with a Territorial Approach (*Programas de Desarrollo con Enfoque Territorial - PDET*), which have been seriously impacted, but which are places where the Final Peace Agreement is being implemented, and they have become places of greater risk for the exercise and defence of land rights because of the policies of change that challenge the authority and control of armed groups.

In most cases of attacks, threats and killings against social leaders and human rights defenders the material and intellectual perpetrators are unknown (it is worth noting that the rate of using

motorcycle hitmen for these murders is greater than 90%⁸). However, in cases in which the perpetrators are known, the majority belong to armed paramilitary successor groups. Indeed, the Institute of Studies for Development and Peace (*Instituto de Estudios para el Desarrollo y la Paz – Indepaz*) has identified that in the first half of 2017 these groups were active in 274 municipalities in 28 departments, this is to say in more than 70% of the national territory. Especially prevalent are the Gaitanist Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (*Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia - AGC*), also known as the Clan del Golfo, the Rastrojos, the Águilas Negras, Puntilleros and La Constru, among many other such groups⁹.

In the current context, it is important to also highlight the conduct of

8. *Una piedra en el zapato*. Annual Report 2017, We are Defenders Program (*Programa Somos Defensores*). March 2017, page 83.

9. GONZÁLEZ POSSO, Camilo y ESPITIA, Carlos Eduardo. *Dejación de Armas y Sometimiento. XIII Informe Presencia Grupos Narcoparamilitares*. Indepaz. October 2017, page 8.

dissidents from the FARC-EP, especially in the departments of the south-west of Colombia; as well as the People's Liberation Army (*Ejército Popular de Liberación* - EPL) and the National Liberation Army (*Ejército Nacional de Liberación* - ELN), who are also alleged to be responsible for murders of social leaders, human rights defenders and former members of the FARC-EP guerrilla who have now been reincorporated into civilian life.

Given the higher rates of violence in the regions where armed groups have less territorial control after the departure of the FARC-EP, there has been a resurgence of attacks against social organisations and leaders who oppose the aims of these structures to take control over new areas. These leaders are therefore subject to pressure and threats, as well as attacks against their life and integrity. In addition to killings, there are reported cases of forced disappearance, sexual violence against women, threats, restrictions on mobility, extortion, sowing

of antipersonnel mines and improvised explosive devices¹⁰.

Against this background, the Final Peace Agreement contemplates several mechanisms aimed at ending and dismantling the paramilitary phenomenon, contained in Point 3.4 of the document on security guarantees. One of these mechanisms is the Special Investigations Unit, which is responsible for centralising investigations that have until now been dispersed in different units of the Prosecutor's Office and that until now have lacked coordination within this institution. Undoubtedly, the creation of the Special Unit in May 2017 under Decree 898 is an important step forward, but it will be key that the Unit stays open to constant dialogue with organisations that also document and assist in the observation of the phenomenon of violence against defenders, given that impunity rates are still very high, especially with regard to the

10. *Informe de Riesgo N°007-17*. Human Rights Ombudsman's Office (*Defensoría del Pueblo*). 110 March 2017, page 21.

intellectual perpetrators of these crimes. Indeed, it is fundamental to deepen context analysis to enable an understanding of the role of human rights defenders in the regions to reveal the framework behind each crime.

Within the same Prosecutor's Office, the promulgation of Directive 0002 of November 30, 2017 is also a positive step. This Directive establishes that the work of human rights defenders will be considered as the first investigative hypothesis when crimes are committed against them, and standardises a series of procedures for the investigation of this type of aggression. Complying with this Directive is fundamental, insofar as the Government has repeatedly denied the systematic nature of crimes against this group, claiming that the majority of cases are related to "lovers' quarrels" or common theft. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) participated in the process that led to this Directive. The Prosecutor's Office is also in the process of preparing a second Directive for the

judicial investigation of death threats and harassment against leaders and defenders.

Another key scenario created within the framework of the Peace Agreement is the National Commission for Security Guarantees (*Comisión Nacional de Garantías de Seguridad - CNGS*), whose purpose is to design Public Policy for the dismantling of paramilitary successor

organisations and their support networks. Created through Decree 154 of February 3, 2017, its implementation has been complex, with the lack of governmental commitment preventing progress on its mandate. Sub-commissions have been created that, due to their deliberative nature, have monitored the strategies and results of the authorities in charge of investigating murders against social

leaders, however, they have yet to make progress on their fundamental role, which is to formulate public policies aimed at dismantling paramilitary successor groups and radically reducing aggressions against social leaders and human rights defenders and the reincorporated members of the FARC-EP guerrilla.

The reform of the Ombudsman's Office Early Warning System (*Sistema de Alertas Tempranas - SAT*), through Decree 2124 of December 2017, is also important to mention. This Decree gives autonomy to the Office to issue alerts and risk reports. Until now, this depended on the Inter-sectoral Early Warning Commission (*Comisión Intersectorial de Alertas Tempranas - CIAT*), in which several institutional and territorial entities participated, whose role often hindered Alerts being issued. Thanks to the recent Decree, the Ombudsman's SAT has issued at least 28 Early Warnings that must now be effectively dealt with by the Colombian State authorities led by the Inter-Sectoral Commission for Rapid Response to Early



Warnings (*Comisión Intersectorial para la Respuesta Rápida a las Alertas Tempranas* - CIPRAT), a body managed by the Ministry of the Interior, which so far has not carried out the necessary, urgent and serious actions requested by the Ombudsman's Office.

THE WORK OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS WILL BE CONSIDERED AS THE FIRST INVESTIGATIVE HYPOTHESIS WHEN CRIMES ARE COMMITTED AGAINST THEM

To date, we are still waiting for the Comprehensive Security Program to be formalised. This Program will aim to define and adopt comprehensive protection measures for the promotion of peace and coexistence; meanwhile the Government is currently negotiating a collective protection protocol with social organisations, following the issuance of Decree 2078 of 2017, as part of the process of the National Guarantees

Roundtable, with the participation of social movements and state institutions responsible for prevention, protection and the investigation of crimes against defenders. These organisations also demand the recognition of the small-scale farming, Afro-Colombian and indigenous guards as community self-protection mechanisms, insofar as they consider that, in both individual and collective terms, the National Protection Unit has not adjusted its risk assessment procedures and indicators, maintaining bureaucratic procedures that hinder or minimise the implementation of its measures, which are often reduced to a bulletproof vest and a mobile phone.

Finally, the National Action Plan on Human Rights and Humanitarian Law is also pending completion. Although this Plan was born out of a discussion process that started in 2006, it was later included in point 5.2 of the Peace Agreement¹¹, which

establishes that this Plan must commit the Colombian State to promoting protection, respect and guarantees for human rights in the country, including economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights, with a differential and gender-based approach, addressing principles of equality and progressivity, and guaranteeing the right to peace, especially in the territories most affected by the conflict¹².

In short, progress has been made in the construction of legal mechanisms for the prevention, protection and investigation of crimes and attacks against social leaders and human rights defenders; however, there is still limited political will within State institutions to apply these measures, to the point that they are insufficient to tackle the high numbers of aggressions which continue against this collective.

11. GALLÓN, GUSTAVO. *Plan Nacional de Derechos Humanos*. El Espectador, July 19, 2017.

12. 5.2 *Compromiso con la promoción, el respeto y la garantía de los derechos humanos*. Final Peace Agreement, 24 November 2016.

Guarantees for women peacebuilders: the situation of women human rights defenders in Colombia

Claudia Mejía

Director of Corporación Sisma Mujer

Women human rights defenders and leaders are faced with a context where the socio-political risks associated with the work they perform are compounded by the violence caused by structural discrimination against women. This situation was recognised by the Constitutional Court in its Court Orders 092 of 2008, 098 of 2013 and 009 of 2015, which describe the extraordinary gender risks that should be considered when analysing the situation of women. The Court pays special attention to the risks associated with leadership by women leaders and human rights defenders.

In the context of a generalised worsening of conditions for the defence of human rights in Colombia, women human rights defenders (WHRDs) have seen their work affected by aggressions against their lives, their families and their organisational processes. Below is an overview of the situation of WHRDs in the context of the postagreement. The objective is to diagnose their situation, to understand the need to provide effective responses and

measures with a gender focus, which can provide guarantees for the right to defend human rights.

The conditions for the defence of human rights have specific issues for women, given that these women leaders have decided to break with traditional values. By participating in public life in their territories they have dismantled different types of patriarchal domination, which, added to the dimensions of class and ethnicity, restricts the lives of women to the private sphere, and limits the scope of their political participation in social transformation.

The organised and systematic participation of women leaders and defenders, as well as their public and political visibility, has paradoxically run parallel to persecution and stigmatisation against them. In 2014 there was an increase in aggressions, especially threats, against women leaders and defenders, related to the fact that women's human rights organisations were in the process of

strengthening themselves and acquiring an important role at the national level in different issues on the public agenda, such as the environment, women's rights, access to land and the peace process¹.

In the last three years, the increase in murders of women defenders has been notable. According to the We are Defenders Program (*Programa Somos Defensores*), in 2015 there was a 33% increase in the number of women defenders murdered. The figure rose from 6 cases in 2014 to 8 cases in 2015, and 9 in 2016. In 2017, the year with the highest number of murders of human rights defenders in Colombia since the beginning of the peace process, 16 women leaders and human rights defenders were murdered, which represents an increase of 77.8% over the previous year².

The Ombudsman's Office (*Defensoría del Pueblo*) reports that between January 2017 and February 27, 2018, 23 women human rights defenders and leaders were murdered. Additionally, the Office reports 142 cases of individual threats, representing an increase of 49.5% over the previous year. In the case of threats, the Ombudsman highlights the use of explicit symbolic violence of a sexist nature in intimidating pamphlets that threaten the dignity of women defenders by referring to stereotypical behavioural norms³.

In 2017, We are Defenders (*Programa Somos Defensores*) also highlights extreme violence in 4 cases of murders against women defenders, including acts of torture, sexual violence and brutality⁴. This shows evidence of rage against female bodies, as well as male chauvinist anger over the social advancement of women,

as feminist authors have characterised in other Latin American realities⁵.

THE OMBUDSMAN'S OFFICE REPORTS THAT BETWEEN JANUARY 2017 AND FEBRUARY 27, 2018, 23 WOMEN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS AND LEADERS WERE MURDERED

As we explained at the beginning of this reflection, the trajectories of women defenders and the obstacles they face are different from those of male defenders, when building their identity as actors who are transforming their realities and those of their communities. Likewise, the methods used to silence their political work operate differently, including the use of sexual violence as a weapon. The Ombudsman has pointed out repeatedly that this: "not only destroys women's dignity, it also sends

1. *Situación de las defensoras y defensores en clave de género*. Corporación Sisma Mujer. 2016.
2. Annual reports of the Information System on Aggressions against Human Rights Defenders in Colombia (*Sistema de información sobre agresiones contra defensores de DDHH en Colombia - SIAD-DHH*): *La Divina Comedia*, 2015; *El Cambio*, 2016; *Contra las cuerdas*, 2017; and *Piedra en el zapato*, 2018. We are Defenders (*Somos Defensores*).

3. Early Warning No 026-18 of 28 February 2018.
4. *Piedra en el zapato*. We are Defenders (*Somos Defensores*). 2018, page 83.

5. Interview with Marcela Lagarde «Hay un enojo machista por el avance social de las mujeres» www.elnuevodiario.com October 1, 2017.



Photo: Lola Crespo

a warning message to communities”⁶ and other potential leaders to desist from becoming involved in the defence of human rights. Thus, 17% of the 143 women defenders accompanied by the Ombudsman’s Office (*Defensoría del Pueblo*) between January 2016 and

6. Human Rights Ombudsman’s Office (*Defensoría del Pueblo*). “Día por la dignidad de las mujeres víctimas de violencia sexual en el marco del conflicto armado interno”. Bogotá DC, 25 of May 2017, page 9.

October 31, 2017, had been victims of sexual violence⁷.

The challenge that emerges from this situation is how to provide effective guarantees for WHRDs and build capacity to tackle the risks. This is what we been working on through dialogue with the

7. *Informe Especial. Comportamiento de las violencias contra las mujeres durante el 2016*. Boletín No. 13. Corporación Sisma Mujer. 2017.

National Government with the aim of providing differential responses and guarantees that address the particular circumstances of the extraordinary gender-based risks faced by women defenders in their territories.

One of these efforts is in the collective formulation and construction, involving women’s organisations and hundreds of women defenders throughout the country, of the *Program of Guarantees for Women Human Rights Defender*⁸. This Program is developing an action plan of evaluation procedures and follow-up mechanisms to be included in a public Policy Proposal.

17% OF THE 143 WOMEN DEFENDERS ACCOMPANIED BY THE OMBUDSMAN’S OFFICE BETWEEN JANUARY 2016 AND OCTOBER 31, 2017, HAD BEEN VICTIMS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

8. Available at: <https://www.sismamujer.org/programa-de-garantias-para-lideresas-y-defensoras-de-derechos-humanos/>

We have also stressed the importance of streamlining the gender mainstreaming approach in all risk analysis processes at the individual and collective level, and in accordance with these analyses, the need to allocate and approve differential protection measures for women leaders and defenders⁹.

**THE IMPORTANCE OF STREAMLINING
THE GENDER MAINSTREAMING
APPROACH IN ALL RISK ANALYSIS
PROCESSES AT THE INDIVIDUAL
AND COLLECTIVE LEVEL**

The task at hand is urgent and demands social support to promote the right of women to defend human rights, and to develop and empower themselves as social leaders working for the democratic transformation of their communities and territories, without fear of suffering

victimisation in their own bodies or through their communities and families. It is time to end fear and to implement effective and concrete mechanisms to guarantee the human rights of women who are involved in local peacebuilding processes.



Photo: Lola Crespo

9. As provided for in Resolution 805 of 2012 from the Ministry of the Interior.

State response to the risks faced by human rights defenders

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Context

After decades of Armed Conflict the National Government has reached a Final Agreement for the Termination of the Conflict and the Construction of a Stable and Lasting Peace with one of the most relevant actors in the armed confrontation. Undoubtedly, this can be considered as the greatest achievement of the Colombian State in the consolidation of democracy, peaceful coexistence and the deepening of the Social and Democratic Rule of Law enshrined in our Political Constitution of 1991.

In addition to the ethical and moral reasons for valuing peace in the construction of civil life, in Colombia peace is also relevant within the normative basis on which the country is built, as enshrined in our Constitution. Thus, Article 22 establishes that “peace is a right and a duty of obligatory compliance”; and, similarly, in article 95, on the rights and duties of citizens, it is observed that “defending and disseminating human

rights is the foundation of peaceful coexistence”.

In spite of these ethical, moral, legal and political provisions that have been appropriated and defended by the National Government, our country continues to be affected by multiple expressions of violence, particularly in the areas previously influenced by those who exercised power through violence, who have now been welcomed into democratic life through the Final Agreement. Without doubt, these territories are highly attractive to illegal armed groups and organised armed groups that continue to exist and carry out criminal activity in the territories, and as a result they continue to exert violence against the population in general and against the most representative leaders and activists.

Aware of the complexity and the challenges of this situation, the National Government has directed efforts towards the adoption of normative, administrative



"They are heroes but they are not bulletproof"
Photo: We are Defenders (Programa Somos Defensores)

and political measures aimed at respecting and guaranteeing the Human Rights of all citizens of Colombia. In addition to actions that have been developed as part of the implementation of the aforementioned Peace Agreement, aimed at addressing this reality, some of the prevention and protection measures that deserve to be highlighted and that have been adopted in the last year will be mentioned briefly below.

Normative measures: areas of prevention and protection

Decree 1581 of 2017

The prevention of Human Rights violations is synthesised in a national strategy within a Public Policy, which seeks to prevent individuals, groups and communities from becoming victims of violations of their rights to life, integrity, freedom and security. This Public Policy is an instrument that helps us to guide the preparation and action of national and territorial institutions to make progress on risk management in three dimensions: early prevention, urgent prevention and protection and guarantees of non-repetition.

For example, under decree 1581 of 2017, the National Government approved the Public Policy for the Prevention of Violations of the Rights to Life, Integrity, Liberty and Security of Persons, Groups and Communities, which has strategies

aimed at preventing violations of the rights to life, liberty, integrity and security of persons, groups and communities: (a) against illegal or arbitrary restrictions of civil liberties, (b) in disputes over land and territory, (c) from the dynamics of the criminal economy. In this way, measures are also adopted to implement (d) a preventive vision of justice, which seeks to prevent certain conflicts from increasing; (e) the national culture strategy; (f) the prevention of threats and violations associated with the emergence of new risks. Without doubt, the capacities and qualities of state institutions and their officials are now sufficient to overcome the violence that afflicts human rights defenders and social leaders in Colombia, which is why Decree 1581 of 2017 establishes provisions for (g) institutional capacities for prevention and (h) mechanisms and instruments for inter-institutional coordination.

In short, this Public Policy represents an outstanding commitment from the National Government in the process of

promoting a culture of peace in which human rights are respected at the national and regional levels.

Decree 2078 of 2017

In the area of protection, the National Government has adopted a Roadmap for the collective protection of the rights to life, integrity, freedom and personal security of groups and communities.

EMERGENCY MEASURES ARE ADOPTED BASED ON AN INITIAL RISK ASSESSMENT, AND MANAGEMENT AND COORDINATION ARE FORESEEN WITH THE BODIES AND INSTITUTIONS RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING THE IMMEDIATE RESPONSE ACTIONS AIMED AT COLLECTIVE PROTECTION

This Decree establishes emergency measures, collective protection measures and a follow-up mechanism, among other

instruments. Emergency measures are adopted based on an initial risk assessment, and management and coordination are foreseen with the bodies and institutions responsible for providing the immediate response actions aimed at collective protection. Collective protection measures are granted in response to a comprehensive evaluation of collective risk. These measures are aimed at counteracting factors of risk, vulnerability and threat, resulting from collective activities. The monitoring mechanism establishes coordination with territorial entities and other entities responsible for the development of measures and their evaluation

Decree 2252 of 2017

The National Government issues provisions on the prevention and protection of human rights defenders, leaders of organisations and social and community movements, and human rights defenders, granted by Governors and Mayors.

Decree 2124 of 2017

This decree creates a new Prevention and Alert System for Rapid Reaction, and defines the autonomy of the Ombudsman's Office for the issuance of Early Warnings, and the Rapid Response of the Government is strengthened in terms of security and subsequent comprehensive intervention via programs of a social nature.

Political/administrative measures

Acts of public recognition for the work of human rights defenders

Acts of public recognition for the work of human rights defenders are a political measure that seeks the non-stigmatisation, respect and protection of human rights defenders, social and community leaders. This public recognition is achieved in two ways: (a) within the framework of the National Guarantees Process and, (b) through public statements in press releases.

National Guarantees Process for the work of human rights defenders and social and community leaders

The National Guarantees Process for the work of human rights defenders and social and community leaders, is an agreement between the institutions of the Colombian State¹ and human rights defenders' organisations², which has the support of the international community³.

1. Vice-President's Office, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Justice, Employment Ministry, National Police, National protection Unit, Presidential Council for Human Rights and IHL, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Public Prosecutor's Office, Procurator General's Office, Human Rights Ombudsman's Office.
2. The following Colombian human rights coordination groups: Plataforma Colombiana de Derechos Humanos, Democracia y Desarrollo; Derechos Económicos Sociales y Culturales; Plataforma Alianza de Organizaciones Sociales y Afines; Derechos Humanos en General; Plataforma Asamblea Permanente de la Sociedad Civil por la Paz; Derecho a la Paz; Plataforma Coordinación Colombia-Europa-Estados Unidos; Derechos Civiles y políticos.
3. UNDP is the Secretary; Office in Colombia of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights; Embassies of Sweden, Spain, Switzerland and Canada (embassy delegated by the G-24 Group of donor countries); Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees; Mapp -OAS.

This strategy, led by the Ministry of the Interior, is based on the firm idea that only joint work between State institutions and civil society organisations can produce results for the creation of a favourable climate for the guarantee and respect of human rights in Colombia and the rejection of all forms of violence and / or pressure and valuing the work of human rights defenders as fundamental for democracy, with a rights-based and participative approach. In the Process the components of Prevention and Protection, Investigation and Women are developed and implemented at the national and territorial levels.

During the period that the Guarantees Process has been underway, multiple acts of recognition have been carried out at both the national and territorial levels in favour of at least two hundred and forty-eight (248) human rights, communal and ecclesiastical organisations; trade unions, associations and groups of relatives of victims, and others, many of whom, in turn,



group together other associations, communities and organisations.

Public statements in the media or in press releases

Another way of publicly recognising the work of defenders in order to prevent and overcome stigmatisation has been through public statements in the media



Photo: Javier Sulé

or in press releases, rejecting aggression or any act of violence against human rights defenders.

Communication campaigns supporting the work of defending human rights

The National Government worked for more than a year to design, in agreement with social organisations, a Communication

Strategy called 'You defend my rights, I defend your work'. Its objective was to ensure that citizens identify who human rights defenders are, what they do and what they contribute to society, to raise awareness of the importance of their work. For this purpose, radio broadcasts were designed and disseminated on 10,219 occasions. Additionally, the Ministry of the Interior and the Presidential High Communications Council commissioned a television commercial that was aired on public and private channels. Part of the strategy is a web space, which can be consulted at: <http://www.tudefiendesmisderechos.com/>. This was developed by the Human Rights Unit in the Ministry of the Interior and UNDP, in coordination with human rights coordination groups.

Specific Forums and Campaigns on Non-Stigmatisation

Specific Forums and Campaigns on Non-Stigmatisation.

The Government of Colombia wanted to directly diagnose and debate stigmatisation and the effects it has on defenders with citizens. Thus, under the leadership of the Ministry of the Interior, on December 9, 2015, a project for non-stigmatisation was carried out in partnership with Semana Magazine, in a forum called "Stigmatization in Colombia and Peacebuilding" in which social sectors met to present their points of view with the purpose of raising public awareness on this issue.

Attendees included representatives of the legislature, military forces, human rights organisations, academics, and public officials among others, who agreed that the role of the media is fundamental and that one of the great challenges of the post-conflict is to overcome stigmatisation in the country, and promote inclusive spaces for debate.

Scenarios and mechanisms created with the purpose of giving an effective, articulated and timely response by the Colombian State to the entire group of human rights defenders and social and community leaders, so that their situation can be analysed with a view to adopting measures for their protection, defence and guarantee

The National and Territorial Subcommittees on Prevention and Protection and Guarantees of Non-Repetition organised under the Transitional Justice Committees, prepare prevention and protection roadmaps, with the support of the Human Rights Unit in the Ministry of the Interior. Although these roadmaps focus on victims of the conflict in light of Law 1448 of 2011, they also address the situation of leaders and defenders.

The CERREM Risk Assessment and Recommendations Committee, led by the National Protection Unit and chaired by the Human Rights Unit in the Ministry of the Interior, is a scenario in which one

of the main protection sectors are human rights defenders and social leaders.

The Inter-institutional Commission on Guarantees for Women Leaders and Women Human Rights Defenders, created by Decree 1314 of August 10, 2016, addresses cases of threats and attacks against women leaders and women human rights defenders and strengthens programs of recognition, support and guarantees for their work.

The National Commission on Security Guarantees, created within the framework of the Final Agreement signed between the National Government and the FARC-EP on November 24, 2016, under Decree Law number 154 of 2017, is a scenario which plays an important role in preventing, promoting and guaranteeing the exercise of the work of defenders throughout the country.

In addition to the above, the National Government recognises and regularly holds talks with all sectors of the population. One example of this is the Round Table with Indigenous Peoples,

work with community action boards and the promotion of participation, constant dialogue with the Roundtable for the Agrarian, Small-Scale Farming, Ethnic and Popular Summit, CACEP, the Small-Scale Farming Roundtable in the Cauca Department and permanent communication with diverse social organisations throughout the territory, with a differential and territorial focus. The existence of the Office for Democracy, Citizen Participation and Community Action, and the Office for Indigenous, Roma and Minority Affairs (DAIRM), the Office for Black, Afro-Colombian, Raizales and Palenqueras Community Affairs (DACNARP), and the Office for Prior Consultation and Human Rights in the Ministry of the Interior, shows the permanent interest of the National Government to address human rights problems related to various social sectors.

Added to these scenarios, is the information provided and the monitoring of cases undertaken by the Office in Colombia of the United Nations High

Commissioner for Human Rights and by organisations such as We are Defenders (Somos Defensores), with whom the National Government talks on a permanent basis.

Measures that should be adopted in the future

Raise awareness of and implement all normative measures already issued by the National Government, including those recently sanctioned, such as Decree 1581, 2078, and 2252 of 2017.

Likewise, a significant challenge is to sanction and implement the Comprehensive Security and Protection Program for Communities and Organisations in the Territories, by means of a Decree that regulates point 3.4.8 of the Final Agreement, with the following components to be developed under this program:

- Comprehensive measures for prevention, security and protection;

- Program of community promoters for peace and coexistence;
- Protection protocol for rural territories; and
- Program to support the activity of reporting cases of human rights violations.

Peace must not cost us our lives: Indigenous Peoples in Colombia in defence of life and territory

Aida Quilcué Vivas

Nasa Indigenous Woman
Councillor on the Rights
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People, Human
Rights and Peace

**National Indigenous
Organisation of Colombia
(Organización Nacional
Indígena de Colombia - ONIC)**

In Colombia today 106 Indigenous Peoples live throughout the national territory. For Indigenous Peoples, PEACE is about living in balance and harmony with our Mother Earth. Today as yesterday we walk, we weave and we hold mingas -collective gatherings to maintain the living memory of our ancestors. We are actors and weavers of peace, a peace built in accordance with our principles of unity, territory, culture and autonomy, according to our Law of Origin and the Major Law.

The current context of the peace dialogues in the country has led us as always to mobilise using words, the sweet words of our peoples and communities which we want to tell using our own voices, experiences and worldviews, our own history from our hearts, to place at the service of Colombian society and humanity our own ways of building peace.

With the signing of the Peace Agreements in Havana for the termination of the conflict, an Ethnic Chapter has been included which cross-cuts the whole process. Without our

participation as collective political subjects in the construction of a stable and lasting peace that the country so longs for, this peace will not be real or effective, given that the conflict continues in a large part of our territory. Paradoxically, peace has not arrived in our territories or for our peoples and therefore it is our duty to make this situation visible and report it. Today, during the implementation of the Peace Agreement, the humanitarian situation facing our peoples is critical, which has led us to classify this situation as a systematic and continuous physical and cultural extermination of our existence in Colombia, that is to say a genocide or “ethnocide” in times of peace towards indigenous peoples.

**THE HUMANITARIAN SITUATION
FACING OUR PEOPLES IS CRITICAL,
WHICH HAS LED US TO CLASSIFY
THIS SITUATION AS A SYSTEMATIC
AND CONTINUOUS PHYSICAL AND
CULTURAL EXTERMINATION OF
OUR EXISTENCE IN COLOMBIA**

Since the signing of the peace accords in Havana, up to the date of February 2018, 45 indigenous leaders have been murdered, defenders of life, territory, peace and the dignity of the Colombian indigenous movement. The majority of these occurred in the departments and municipalities today prioritised by the “post-conflict” such as: Cauca, Tolima, Antioquia, Cesar, Chocó, Nariño, Quindío, Valle del Cauca, Meta, Guajira, Risaralda, Vichada and Amazonas; directly affecting the following Indigenous Peoples: Wounaan, Eperara Siapidara, Nasa, Pijao, Embera Chamí, Katío and Dovidá, Zenú, Jiw, Wayuú, Wiwa, Kokonuko, Awá and Makuna.

So far in the Peace Agreement implementation process, it is evident that there is a systematic violation of human rights towards Indigenous Peoples, which adds to the physical and cultural extermination of our Peoples. During the period described, we have registered 4,832 cases of violations of human rights and International Humanitarian Law throughout the national territory, not to

The following figures show the extent to which Indigenous Peoples are being affected by the armed conflict in times of peace:

- **106 Indigenous Peoples at risk of physical and cultural extinction** due to the “development” policies of the Colombian State and the armed conflict.
- Organised population group with **the highest percentage of leaders murdered and threatened.**
- **36 Indigenous Peoples at risk of physical and cultural extinction** as declared by the Constitutional Court in Colombia, in Sentences T-025 of 2004 and its Follow-up Orders 009, 092, 173, 174, and 251; these Peoples are at imminent risk of disappearing.
- **396 indigenous leaders** throughout the Colombian territory **with individual protection measures** assigned by the National Protection Unit (Unidad Nacional de Protección - UNP), making us the most affected population group
- **Indigenous young people and children continue to be forcibly recruited** by all armed groups in Colombia, mainly the Embera, Nasa and Awá indigenous peoples in the Colombian Pacific region.
- **Population facing the greatest number of victimising acts registered** since the signing of the Peace Agreement to date (February 2018)
 - 122 threats,
 - 827 indigenous people confined,
 - 3.800 displaced indigenous people,
 - 10 forced recruitments.

Source: **ONIC**, February 2018

mention the many events that are not recorded.

**THERE IS A SYSTEMATIC VIOLATION
OF HUMAN RIGHTS TOWARDS
INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, WHICH ADDS
TO THE PHYSICAL AND CULTURAL
EXTERMINATION OF OUR PEOPLES**

Likewise, today we are the population group in Colombia that most often demands protection measures from the UNP. However, these means are insufficient and ineffective and do not have an ethnic, gender-based, and much less a geographical, differential approach. In terms of collective protection, very little progress has been made: since 2016, the UNP has been holding workshops on collective risk analysis in some communities. These are communities that have precautionary measures decreed by a land restitution judge in areas prioritised by the post-conflict where the violation of



Photo: Javier Sulé

the human rights of Indigenous Peoples is continuous and systematic: Resguardo Thami, in Alto Andaguada, zone 3, Resguardo Dobida Gibi, Eyakira Ancestral Territory, Bojaya Indigenous Authorities, Resguardo Majore, Ambura, Resguardo Chidima Tolo and Pescadito, Droguanda, Acidru and Camaindra in Chocó, the Siona People in Putumayo, the indigenous organisations AIPEA and ACIMA in the department of Amazonas.

However, it has not been possible to make progress with regards to a collective risk analysis protocol for indigenous communities in the territories. And although the UNP issued Resolution 1085 of 2015 to advance collective risk analysis, this was not consulted with indigenous organisations.

The problem we face today is structural: the lack of support from Colombian

institutions as a result of a colonial State that persists in the country and that is reproduced with each government. The absence of weapons is not a guarantee of peace for our territories. The absence of war is serving to ratify the interests of families that have maintained power in Colombia, reproducing a policy of territorial dispossession, discrimination and a model of economic development which impoverishes our people.

THE ABSENCE OF WAR IS SERVING TO RATIFY THE INTERESTS OF FAMILIES THAT HAVE MAINTAINED POWER IN COLOMBIA, REPRODUCING A POLICY OF TERRITORIAL DISPOSSESSION, DISCRIMINATION AND A MODEL OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WHICH IMPOVERISHES OUR PEOPLE

Finally, we are concerned that today it is the State security forces that are silencing the voices of our leaders: the Colombian National Army, the ESMAD Mobile Anti-

Riot Squadron and the National Police. Despite their constitutional mission to protect citizens they are the ones who are bringing the tranquillity of Indigenous Peoples into disharmony. Illegal armed groups seek territorial control of our territories: the Neo Paramilitaries, whether they are Águilas Negras, Rastrojos, Clan Usuaga, Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia, and the ELN and EPL guerrilla, criminal gangs, as well as dissidents of the FARC-EP and other unidentified armed actors. All the armed actors assassinate us for the simple fact that we take care of our territory, defend our autonomy and exercise authority in our organisational processes of struggle and resistance.

Stop killing us!

*Count on us for peace,
never for war.*

Situation of afro-colombian communities and protection measures from the Colombian State

Cases of Buenaventura, Tumaco, Costa Caucana and Norte del Cauca

**Danelly Estupiñan
Valencia and Leyla
Andrea Arroyo**

Process of Black Communities in Colombia (*Proceso de Comunidades Negras en Colombia – PCN*)

Peace must not take away the little that the war has left us.

Structural factors that threaten the collective life project of Afro-Colombian communities

Colombia has been signing free trade agreements as part of its policy of economic liberalisation, including Free Trade Agreements with the United States, Canada, Mexico, the European Union, Japan, Costa Rica, Guatemala and the Pacific Alliance. There is an overall aim to strengthen economic alliances with North America and Europe and establish a relationship with China and India.

As part of these dynamics of economic liberalisation, the government has been establishing mining agreements with different multinational companies, including Anglo Gold, Minerales Andinos de Colombia, Negocios Mineros S.A., Continental Gold de Colombia and Mineros S.A.

- **AngloGold:** has been assigned 406 mining titles in the country, distributed in five projects which affect the following territories: La Colosa and Chaparral in Tolima, Quebradona and Gramalote in Antioquia, Salvajina in Cauca, La Llanada in Nariño, and Río Dulce in Antioquia.
- **Minerales Andinos de Colombia:** has been granted 111 mining titles and operates in Segovia, Antioquia and in Marmato, Caldas, where it carries out open cast operations, taking over the small-scale artisanal mining which has existed since the 19th Century.
- **Negocios Mineros S.A.:** has 88 titles which comprise 35 thousand hectares in the departments of Antioquia, Chocó, Risaralda, Cauca and Tolima.
- **Continental Gold de Colombia:** has been assigned 67 titles covering 79 thousand hectares in the municipalities of La Vega and La Sierra in Cauca, Bagadó and Lloró in Chocó,

Suratá and Vetanien Santander, Silos and Mutiscua in Norte de Santander and in Antioquia.

- **Mineros S.A.:** a company formed with national capital which has 67 mining titles. Its operations extend over 116 thousand hectares in the municipalities of Bagre, Zaragoza, Nechí y Bajo Cauca Antioqueño.

The 739 mining titles granted by the Colombian government to multinational mining companies compromise territories ancestrally inhabited, used and managed by ethnic communities. Likewise, the 17 FTAs signed by Colombia, involve the modernisation of port infrastructure, access roads and hotel infrastructure, among other works, including, among other strategies, the construction of

17 new ports in Buenaventura, thus compromising 80% of the urban territory traditionally inhabited and used by Afro-Colombian populations. The economic policy is one of the main factors causing risks (imminent risk of murder, threat, displacement, forced disappearance) for Afro-Colombian leaders and their organisational dynamics. These leaders and their communities have made their political positions known, by organising actions of public denunciation, social protest, international advocacy, collective protests known as mingas, with the firm purpose of caring for, defending and protecting the territory of Afro-descendant communities as a collective life space for humans, minerals, animals, plants and water.

The ancestral ethnic territories of the Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities of Norte del Cauca and the Costa Caucana within the department of Cauca, as well as Tumaco in the department of Nariño and Buenaventura in the department of Valle del Cauca, are



Photo: Javier Sulé

territories in dispute due to the dynamics of the mining, port and tourist enclave. These territories are rich in natural resources such as gold. They are also geo-strategic territories for the world economy. Buenaventura is one of the most coveted areas in the Pacific and is besieged due to its strategic location, as it sits at an equidistant point between the north and south of the continent. For this reason, Buenaventura is considered the most important international trade corridor in the country, enabling communication with the nations of the Pacific basin, and due to its proximity to the Panama Canal, facilitating access to Caribbean markets¹.

As can be seen, the real agents that cause threats to the territories and the true faces of the violence are legally sanctioned economic megaprojects, validated and implemented by governments and mining and port

1. Colombian Maritime Authority; General Maritime Office. Captaincy of the Ports of Buenaventura. June 2017.

entrepreneurs. They use and have used violence perpetrated by armed groups to demographically drain the territories and thus, open up the pathway to economic prosperity for the Colombian business State. Another factor that threatens the life project of Afro-Colombian communities is structural exclusion; the highest levels of poverty and inequality in Colombia exist in territories with a high Afro-Colombian population, where 80% of the communities do not have their basic needs met, that is to say, they do not enjoy rights to housing, security, autonomy, health, potable water and basic sanitation, education and employment.

**THE REAL AGENTS THAT CAUSE
THREATS TO THE TERRITORIES AND
THE TRUE FACES OF THE VIOLENCE
ARE LEGALLY SANCTIONED ECONOMIC
MEGAPROJECTS, VALIDATED AND
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The other factor threatening the collective life of the Afro-Colombian population is the violation of and institutional disrespect for norms and mandates that recognise the rights of Afro-Colombian communities. In practice, despite Constitutional Court rulings, the Colombian State denies the rights won by these communities.

These structural reasons are the real threats, as they are not immediately evident and yet they place leaders, social processes and ancestral territories at high risk, even at the present moment of the post agreement between the Colombian Government and the FARC. Leaders and human rights defenders continue to be massacred, as shown in the latest report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). In the year 2017, this Office registered 441 attacks against human rights defenders.

We are being systematically massacred, not because of “lovers’ quarrels”, as the

national government has publicly stated. We are being massacred because the government and businessmen see us as a threat to the consolidation of the mining and port enclave economies.

WE ARE BEING MASSACRED BECAUSE THE GOVERNMENT AND BUSINESSMEN SEE US AS A THREAT TO THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE MINING AND PORT ENCLAVE ECONOMIES

Risks faced by social leaders in Colombia

Baseless criminal proceedings; leaders incriminated based on false processes linking them with subversive groups such as the ELN; harassment, forced displacement, murder, persecution, stigmatisation, torture, forced disappearance, silencing, massacres, extermination, sexual violence, discrediting, dispossession of ancestral territories, practices and values.

What protection measures are granted by the Colombian State and why are they not effective in safeguarding leaders' lives?

The protection measures granted by the Colombian State, based on the level of risk shown after analysis, are: transport assistance, payment of rent, vehicle (conventional or armoured), bodyguards, bulletproof vest, mobile phone with credit and panic button. Protection measures have two characteristics: they are measures of an individual and material nature. As part of our organisational processes we have been reflecting for 20 years on the approach of these measures granted by the State and we believe that these measures would be strengthened by complementing the individual and material measures with collective, political and legal measures.

THE CURRENT PROTECTION MEASURES ARE NOT EFFECTIVE TO FULLY SAFEGUARD THE LIVES OF LEADERS

The systematic occurrence of murders of human rights defenders in Colombia has shown that the current protection measures are not effective to fully safeguard the lives of leaders, or to facilitate their continued work in the defence of human rights.

Proposal for protection measures with a collective, political and legal approach

For ethnic communities a true measure of collective protection of a political nature is respect for and application of the fundamental right to prior consultation and free, prior and informed consent for megaprojects that are being implemented in the territory, compromising the cultural integrity of ethnic people. If only this right were guaranteed according to the principles of ILO Convention 169, the risks for social leaders would be significantly reduced, since the guarantees for this right would

enable collective rights to participation, territory, identity and autonomy to be respected.

A TRUE MEASURE OF COLLECTIVE PROTECTION OF A POLITICAL NATURE IS RESPECT FOR AND APPLICATION OF THE FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT TO PRIOR CONSULTATION AND FREE, PRIOR AND INFORMED CONSENT FOR MEGAPROJECTS THAT ARE BEING IMPLEMENTED IN THE TERRITORY, COMPROMISING THE CULTURAL INTEGRITY OF ETHNIC PEOPLE

It is vital to reflect on and question the individual and material protection measures granted by the Colombian State to safeguard the lives of leaders and communities. Measures are not implemented to counteract the threats or factors that indicate intention to cause harm; they merely try to deal with the risk, that is, to reduce the probability of

suffering any type of damage. However, even with protection schemes, leaders have been killed or have suffered attacks. The other indicator of ineffectiveness of these individual and material protection measures is that they do not reduce or eliminate threats, therefore the demand from threatened leaders increases every day and the list of implemented individual protection schemes has reached more than 8,000 throughout the country.

In order for the fundamental right to protection to stop being merely rhetorical, the current measures of individual and material protections must be complemented with collective, political and legal measures.

THE CURRENT MEASURES OF INDIVIDUAL AND MATERIAL PROTECTIONS MUST BE COMPLEMENTED WITH COLLECTIVE, POLITICAL AND LEGAL MEASURES

Collective protection measures of a political nature:

- Harmonising ancestral territories. In other words, the State must comply with the agreed substitution of monocultures for illicit use such as coca, the elimination of mechanised mining and the presence of



Photo: Javier Sulé

armed groups, which, among other factors, put at risk the continuity of existence of urban and rural black communities.

- Recognition of traditional occupation as a right to land ownership in areas of land reclaimed from the sea, in municipal capitals (guarantees of inhabitation, use and enjoyment of community and family territorial spaces).
- Strengthening of ethnic authorities to guarantee the exercise of ethnic, collective and individual rights.
- Guarantees for ethnic communities' autonomous vision of the present and future, during territorial planning exercises.
- Strengthening of autonomous protection schemes such as those of indigenous guards, Afro-Colombians and women.
- National, regional and local campaigns for the non-stigmatisation of human rights defenders and their social processes.

- Public recognition, at the local, regional and national level, for human rights defenders and their social processes.
- Recognition of human rights defenders as political actors that contribute to the strengthening of the State.
- Training on collective ethnic rights for the military and police (with the support of UNHCR and UN Human Rights).
- Implement an early warning system related to land dispossession (comprised of organised communities, state security forces, public ministry, interior ministry and presidential human rights council).
- Government action that prevents or regulates the arrival of heavy digging machinery to territories (environmental alert).
- A diagnosis should be made of the territories of Buenaventura that enables the determination of which territories are for habitation as well as which are

being used collectively and are at risk of dispossession, to provide a precautionary measure for these territories.

- Establish a precautionary measure for the protection of urban and rural territories that serves as a protection mechanism until the Land Management Plan is reformulated.
- Control posts in strategic places of the territory: location of these points agreed between the state security forces, institutions and communities.
- Implement a mechanism of prosecution or sanction for action or omission.

Collective protection measures of a legal nature:

- Legal recognition for family and community property in ancestral / traditional territories, in rural areas and municipal capitals, for example: program for the massive titling of

properties and homes, in areas of lands reclaimed from the sea.

- Precautionary measure as a protection measure that guarantees territorial rights.
- Application of the ethnic roadmap for the protection of ancestral / traditional territories and the cultural integrity of ethnic communities.
- Ensure prior consultation for administrative and legislative measures, as well as for plans, programs, projects, works and activities.

Collective protection measures of a material nature:

Strengthening the security of the headquarters and offices of social organisations, collective and individual measures for human rights defenders, and for ethnic communities and their territories, through the installation of security cameras, closed television

circuits, reinforcing bars, armouring and facilitation of means of transport, among others.

Being a social leader is not a crime

Salmon

Carlos A. Guevara J.

Coordinator of
Communication,
Advocacy and
Information System
(SIADDHH), We are
Defenders Program
(*Programa Somos
Defensores*)

I have always been fascinated by salmon. But aside from my culinary taste for them, there is one aspect that captures my respect and even more my admiration for this fish of icy waters and pure will; I refer to their ability to face obstacles and overcome them, face countless predators for months and at the peak of their lives, swim against the current to reproduce... and swim against the strongest currents that any fish has ever faced, always with the conviction of achieving the survival of their species. And I bring this example to the table because the lives of human rights defenders and social leaders in Colombia resemble that of this extraordinary fish.

For decades, social leaders were the most invisible collective in the Colombian armed conflict as victims of the war. So much so, that not even the National Centre for Historical Memory mentioned this sector of the population in its most important analysis document, the “Basta Ya”¹ report.

This shows that there is a whole universe of social leaders and human rights defenders who need understanding and reparation. They were also forgotten by the whole of the Colombian State and especially, by the various governments over the past 20 years that have also done their utmost to hide the structural violence suffered by the country’s social leaders.

The oldest civil society record of violence against leaders is that of the Centre for Grassroots Research and Education (*Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular – CINEP*²; However, the We are Defenders Program (*Programa Somos Defensores*) has been documenting this violence with greater precision for 10 years and has the most complete database. During these ten years the Program has registered approximately 5,000 attacks against human rights defenders³.

1. <http://www.centrodememoriahistorica.gov.co/micrositios/informeGeneral/>

2. <http://cinep.org.co/>

3. <https://www.somosdefensores.org>

This invisibility that would seem to be negative for the work of defenders has not stopped these *salmon* from moving forwards. In the middle of the war, it were these activists who at the local, regional, national and international level flew the flag for the negotiated exit to the conflict, as the only way to end hostilities and thus seek a different country.



Photo: Javier Sulé

We started to get to know the term “*human rights defenders*” 20 years ago thanks to the UN declaration⁴ which defined who these activists were as well as establishing the obligations that each member state would have towards these men and women.

However, we already knew these defenders in Colombia by other names; we called them small-scale farmers, indigenous people, Afro-Colombian leaders, trade unionists, student leaders, feminists, and environmentalists. Of course, a small but powerful fraction of the Colombian population called them by other, not so positive names: *scum*, ‘*commies*’, *rebels*, *guerrillas*, *terrorists*.

Today, it seems that despite the passing of the years, the advancement of democracy, the expansion of the interdependence and complementarity of human rights, despite the fact that Colombia signed a Peace Agreement with the continent’s oldest

guerrilla, the *salmon* are still dying, and not of old age.

2017: choppy seas

The peace dialogues with the FARC have a bittersweet flavour. While it is really important to recognise that the *silence of the rifles* led to the lowest murder rate in the last 30 years (24 for every 100 thousand inhabitants)⁵, this murder rate against human rights defenders shot up. According to figures from the We are Defenders program (*Programa Somos Defensores*), murders against these activists have seen a sustained annual increase since the beginning of the peace process (2013 - 78 cases, 2014 - 55 cases, 2015 - 63 cases, 2016 - 80 cases)⁶. In 2017 the figure broke the barrier of 100 cases and in 2018 the situation is not

4. <http://www.ohchr.org/SP/Issues/SRHRDefenders/Pages/Declaration.aspx>

5. «Tasa de homicidios en Colombia en 2017 es la más baja en 30 años» <http://www.elcolombiano.com>, October 26, 2017.

6. <https://www.somosdefensores.org/attachments/article/144/Contra%20las%20cuerdas.%20Informe%20Anual%20Espan%CC%83ol%20220217227p.pdf>

improving and is getting even worse with a record number of 46 leaders killed in the first three months of the year alone.

Of these recent murders in 2017 and those committed so far in 2018, the group of activists with the highest number of deaths are small-scale farmers, community leaders, communal and indigenous and Afro-Colombian community action groups, which highlights the fact that this violence has been focused on poor defenders from remote areas of the country where the war has always been present (departments such as Antioquia, Norte de Santander, Valle de Cauca, Cauca, Nariño, Meta, Córdoba and Chocó) and with little possibility of accessing state aid. These are the same populations that have faced the most killings in this war without end.

VIOLENCE HAS BEEN FOCUSED ON POOR DEFENDERS FROM REMOTE AREAS OF THE COUNTRY WHERE THE WAR HAS ALWAYS BEEN PRESENT



Photo: Javier Sulé

This is where the million dollar question arises. Who is killing them? According to figures from We are Defenders, those most responsible for these murders are still unknown due to the immense impunity surrounding these cases which

reaches 87%⁷, followed by paramilitary groups and with participation in a smaller

7. Según el informe especial *STOP WARS - Paren la Guerra contra los defensores (as)*.

proportion of the state security forces and the guerrilla.

However, according to the authorities, different perpetrators are responsible for these crimes and for different reasons, as pointed out by Public Prosecutor Néstor Humberto Martínez⁸, or even because of “lovers’ quarrels” as stated by Defence Minister Luis Carlos Villegas⁹. Unfortunately, both officials completely deny the political motives that have always been behind these deaths. Thus, between 2016 and 2018 more than 70 people have been arrested for these crimes, but none of them actually planned the crimes; they are merely those who pulled the trigger¹⁰.

8. «Fiscal dice que no hay sistematicidad en asesinatos de Defensores de DDHH» <http://www.eluniversal.com.co/colombia/bogota/fiscal-dice-que-no-hay-sistematicidad-en-asesinatos-de-defensores-de-ddhh-241980>, 8 December 2016.

9. «Asesinatos de líderes son por “lios de faldas”: ministro de Defensa» <https://www.elespectador.com/noticias/politica/asesinatos-de-lideres-son-por-lios-de-faldas-ministro-de-defensa-articulo-728893>, 17 December 2017.

10. «Un violento comienzo de año para los líderes sociales» <https://colombia2020.elespectador.com>, January 31, 2018.

THEY FACE THE CHALLENGE OF BEING THE KEY PLAYERS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PEACE AGREEMENTS, SINCE THEY ARE THE ONES WHO HAVE THE CONTACTS, THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE LAND AND OF THE COMMUNITIES AS WELL AS THE ORGANISATIONAL AND LIFE EXPERIENCE TO TALK ABOUT PEACE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE UNDERGROUND WAR

A river full of challenges

Within this difficult situation, the *salmon* face the challenge of being the key players in the implementation of the Peace Agreements, since they are the ones who have the contacts, the knowledge of the land and of the communities as well as the organisational and life experience to talk about peace in the middle of the underground war that still affects them. They also achieved between 2014 and 2017 the political mobilisation of the victims,

advances in public policies on human rights and protection, the non-stagnation of spaces for tripartite dialogue, (government, international community and civil society) for guarantees for the defence of human rights in the country and made great contributions to the negotiating tables in Havana and Quito.

This situation means that the Colombian State is faced with a river full of challenges:

1. Protection

The existing protection mechanisms¹¹ and those established under the Peace Agreements have not yet been harmonised. The Government continues to protect with bodyguards, bulletproof vests, armoured vehicles and mobile phones, but collective protection, which is what is really needed, has still not got underway. To date there is not enough money to cover such a challenge: to

11. Decree 1066 of 2015 and its protection program for persons at risk.

protect approximately 15 thousand people, and the institutions are not prepared to cope with the volume of requests for protection which will surely arrive.

2. Prevention

Prevention mechanisms have never been implemented. Those which already exist, such as the Early Warning System, are not taken seriously enough by the government; one example of this is Risk Report 010 - 17¹² issued the previous year warning of the danger for more than 200 human rights organisations and their activists in 24 departments of the country, but to date it is not known what actions the government took to attend to this warning. In the new post agreement scenario, the prevention component should be at the top of the list of tasks to be carried out by the government if it does not want to continue counting deaths of

12. «Defensoría del Pueblo emite informe de riesgo sobre líderes sociales» <https://verdadabierta.com/defensoria-del-pueblo-emite-informe-de-riesgo-sobre-lideres-sociales/> , 31 March 2017.

human rights defenders. To achieve this, there is already a new decree (Dec. 2124 of 2017) that could strengthen the autonomy and efficiency of the SAT: tomorrow will come and we will see if it is implemented.

3. Investigation

Although it must be recognised that in 2017 the Prosecutor's Office made progress as never before in investigations into crimes against defenders, there is still a lack of structural analysis of this violence and the possible common patterns among these crimes. It is also highly positive that the Public Prosecutor has acknowledged that there are indications that killings of defenders are systematic¹³, and this position must lead to in-depth investigations that reveal the criminal plans and structures behind these deaths.

13. «Fiscal admite "algún grado de sistematicidad" en crímenes a líderes sociales» <https://www.elespectador.com/noticias/judicial/fiscal-admite-algun-grado-de-sistematicidad-en-crimenes-lideres-sociales-articulo-729362>

Only when the salmon manage to spawn in calmer waters, upstream, do they rest from their long and difficult journey, always remembering that the water they faced, and successfully traversed, is the guarantee that their descendants have an opportunity to live. Likewise, human rights defenders and social leaders have come a long way to reach this peace, negotiated with the hope that their descendants and in general, their own communities, have the opportunity to live in their country in peace.

International and European instruments for the protection of human rights defenders

Hendrine Rotthier

International Office for Human Rights - Action Colombia (OIDHACO)

The main international instrument on human rights defenders is the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders¹. This declaration took 14 years to draft; however, since its approval in 1998, through a UN General Assembly resolution, the Declaration has been extremely valuable. It defines the concept of human rights defender and gives legitimacy to the work of defending rights. This instrument has facilitated the creation of the Special Representative and subsequently the United Nations Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders.

The Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders can, among other things, send letters to governments asking for urgent measures to prevent human rights violations or asking questions about human rights violations that have already occurred. The current Special Rapporteur, Michael Forst, presented five communications on cases of human rights defenders to the Colombian

State between 2015 and 2016, namely, threats against Afro-descendant leaders; the murder of William Castillo from the Association of Agro-ecological and Mining Brotherhoods in Guamocó (Asociación de Hermandades Agroecológicas y Mineras de Guamocó - Aheramigua); threats against Claudia Julieta Duque; threats against the Political Prisoners' Solidarity Committee (Fundación Comité de Solidaridad con los Presos Políticos - FCSPP); threats against the Movement of Victims of State Crimes (Movimiento de Víctimas de Crímenes de Estado - Móvice) and against the United Workers Confederation of Colombia (Central Unitaria de Trabajadores de Colombia - CUT) in the Department of Valle del Cauca. Michel Forst has visited Colombia several times in recent years, the last time in 2016. There have not been, however, any official visits to Colombia - at the invitation of the Colombian State - by any United Nations Rapporteur since 2010².

1. http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Defenders/Declaration/declaration_sp.pdf

2. *Situación de derechos humanos y derecho humanitario en Colombia 2013-2017*. Joint report of human rights organisation for the Universal Periodic Review of Colombia 2018. October 2017.

In annual reports presented at the United Nations Human Rights Council and the General Assembly, the Rapporteur gives visibility to the situation of human rights defenders around the world.

THE DELEGATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION IN COLOMBIA HAS REPEATEDLY EXPRESSED ITS CONCERN ABOUT THE SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN COLOMBIA

The Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, which turns 20 in 2018, has also been the basis for regional and national instruments for the protection of human rights work.

The European Union approved guidelines on human rights defenders in 2004. These guidelines, updated in 2008, give an important role to the embassies of the European Union around the world

in protecting and promoting the work of human rights defenders. The gap between their ambition and implementation in practice has been criticised, for example the lack of knowledge on the guidelines within diplomatic missions and the lack of concrete actions to promote them³, however, on occasions, important results have also been seen. The Delegation of the European Union in Colombia has repeatedly expressed its concern about the situation of human rights defenders in the country. For example, in March 2018, the EU and its member states, plus Switzerland and Norway, expressed concern about the increase in murders and threats against human rights defenders⁴. The “Ambassadors with Defenders” initiative also exists, as a thematic subgroup of the Cooperation Group in Colombia, in which the embassies of

the European Union and several of its member states, Norway, Switzerland, and other countries like Canada and the United States have participated⁵. Through field visits to the workplaces of social leaders and human rights defenders at risk and statements warning about the situation, they urge the Government to take measures and give legitimacy to the work of human rights organisations and defenders.

The guidelines also stipulate that in bilateral dialogues between the EU and third countries, the situation of human rights defenders must be included. In Colombia, however, this dialogue has not been held in the last year and the expected date for a possible dialogue in 2018 is not known, a situation of particular concern in light of the high rates of killings and murders against

3. Amnesty International. Ensuring protection? The European Union and human rights defenders July 2007 - 2008 <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/52000/eur010092008eng.pdf>

4. https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/colombia/40854/declaraci%C3%B3n-local-sobre-la-situaci%C3%B3n-de-los-defensores-de-derechos-humanos-en-colombia_es

5. «La sentida súplica de los embajadores» <https://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/derechos-humanos-embajadores-piden-proteger-a-lideres/476325>, April 6, 2016.

human rights defenders in Colombia at this time.

Protectdefenders.eu is an EU initiative that aims to support defenders at risk throughout the world and strengthen their organisations. It works with funds from the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), which is another instrument of financial support from the EU for defenders and their organisations

The European Parliament's sub-commission on human rights (DROI) organises periodic hearings with human rights defenders, awards the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought every year and can issue resolutions expressing concern in individual cases of human rights defenders.

The European Union guidelines and the political commitment of the European Union, its Member States, Switzerland and Norway are important tools to support defenders and their



Photo: Taula Catalana per la Pau i els Drets Humans a Colòmbia

organisations that are in a situation of threat or aggression, when the Colombian State does not comply with its obligation to support their work and guarantee their protection.

Many individual countries have their own 'guidelines' and instruments. For example, the German Bundestag

(parliament) issued a Motion on the protection of threatened human rights defenders; the Congress of Deputies of the Spanish State issued a Proposed Law on the Protection of Human Rights Defenders and in Belgium, the Senate issued a Resolution on the protection of human rights defenders, and the House of Representatives also issued

a Resolution on Defenders⁶; In Europe, for example in Catalonia, Spain and the Netherlands, protection programs and temporary respite also exist for at-risk defenders⁷.

Pressure and monitoring carried out by civil society organisations on the implementation of these political commitments and legal obligations has been essential to turn words into concrete actions, however, greater political will and commitment is needed from the Member States.



Photo: Javier Sulé

6. <http://www.dekamer.be/FLWB/PDF/50/2060/50K2060004.pdf>

7. <https://www.government.nl/topics/human-rights/helping-human-rights-defenders>

<http://www.ccar.cat/comienza-el-programa-de-proteccion-de-defensores-de-derechos-humanos/?lang=es>

Conclusions and recommendations

Based on the information gathered in the different chapters of this report, it is clear that the situation for human rights defenders in Colombia is extremely alarming. After the signing of the Peace Agreement, this situation has worsened considerably and continues to worsen during the ongoing implementation phase.

The factors that lead to violence and the structural causes that are described in this report are multiple. Therefore, a comprehensive response to all these factors and causes is needed in order to yield positive results for the safety of defenders and social leaders.

In the different chapters of this publication geographic patterns are identified, including patterns related to the motives and the perpetrators, the

profiles of the victims and the ways in which defenders and leaders are killed. It is urgent that the systematic nature of these aggressions is recognised and that progress is made in dismantling the criminal structures behind these murders according to the identified patterns. It is also important that the investigations carried out by the Public Prosecutor's Office not only take into account the context in which the defender or leader was working, but also prioritise their work defending human rights as the first hypothesis in the investigation.

The protection offered by the National Protection Unit for leaders and defenders is important and in some cases it has saved lives, but a policy that only mitigates risk in this way is neither sustainable nor efficient. Not all measures are suitable for all people who need to be protected: a differential approach is needed that recognises the specific needs of each group. Progress is also needed in the implementation of collective measures that take into account the proposals of communities and groups that

already have self-protection mechanisms which may be a more efficient response to the enormous protection challenges that exist in these most vulnerable groups.

PROGRESS IS ALSO NEEDED IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF COLLECTIVE MEASURES THAT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE PROPOSALS OF COMMUNITIES AND GROUPS THAT ALREADY HAVE SELF-PROTECTION

However, it is not enough to only make progress in improving protection. Violence can only be fought with decisive measures that attack its factors and causes and that focus must be not only on protection but above all on prevention. The Peace Agreement includes a series of measures for the dismantling of paramilitary successor groups which are necessary and urgent to implement, as these groups are responsible for most of the aggressions against human rights defenders and leaders of social processes. The same

goes for the strengthening of existing prevention mechanisms such as the Early Warning System

The international community also has an important role to play in the implementation of protection measures for defenders and can offer decisive support to the Colombian Government for the difficult situation it is facing. It is urgent that the Special Rapporteur for Human Rights Defenders is invited to make a formal visit to the country.

IT IS URGENT TO HOLD THE HUMAN RIGHTS DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE EU AND COLOMBIA, WHICH HAS NOT TAKEN PLACE SINCE JUNE 2016

The State must promote events to mark the twentieth anniversary of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, and make a special effort to recognise the community of defenders. These actions require limited resources but would have

a real impact on the risk situation of these people.

The European Union also needs to demonstrate a greater commitment to the Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders within all the different bodies of the European Union and to develop a more comprehensive and joined-up policy with greater impact. Its commitment to defenders must be central, not only in the field of development cooperation, but also in political and trade relations. It is urgent to hold the human rights dialogue between the EU and Colombia, which has not taken place since June 2016. The EU must also monitor the implementation of the prevention and protection measures included in the Peace Agreement, in particular the development and functioning of the Special Investigations Unit of the Public Prosecutor's Office, which has received its support.

The sum of all these efforts and sustained political will is the only way to reverse the dramatic situation for human rights

defenders and social leaders in the country.

The **Taula Catalana per la Pau i els Drets Humans a Colòmbia** is a Catalan coordination group, comprised of NGOs, trade unions and public institutions. Its main objectives are the promotion and protection of human rights in Colombia and support for a negotiated political solution, using as a basis the recommendations of the United Nations and other international bodies.

Organisations in the Taula

- Ajuntament de Lleida
- Associació Catalana per la Pau
- Comissió Catalana d'Ajuda al Refugiat
- Consell Nacional de la Joventut de Catalunya
- Cooperació
- La Fàbric@
- Entrepobles
- LaFede.cat
- Fons Català de Cooperació al Desenvolupament
- Fundación Indera
- Fundació Pau i Solidaritat - CCOO Catalunya
- FundiPau
- Intersindical - CSC
- Justícia i Pau
- Lliga dels Drets dels Pobles
- Moviment per la Pau - MPDL
- Oxfam Intermón
- Plataforma Unitària Contra les Violències de Gènere
- Sindicalistes Solidaris - UGT

Observers

- Agència Catalana de Cooperació al Desenvolupament
- Brigades Internacionals de Pau de Catalunya - PBI Colòmbia
- International Action for Peace - IAP
- Nabowa - Xarxa per la Pau

The **International Office for Human Rights – Action Colombia** (*Oficina Internacional de Derechos Humanos-Acción Colombia* - ODHACO) is a network of European and international organizations dedicated to political advocacy before the EU institutions, EU Member States, Switzerland, Norway, and the United Nations to promote the Rule of Law, democracy and comprehensive respect for human rights, peace and sustainable development in Colombia.

Full members of ODHACO

Germany

- Kolko – Menschenrechte für Kolumbien
- Bischöfliches Hilfswerk Misereor e.V.

Austria

- DKA Austria

Belgium

- Broederlijk Delen VZW
- Comité pour le Respect des Droits Humains “Daniel Gillard”
- FOS - Socialistische Solidariteit
- Solidarité Socialiste – FCD (SolSoc)

Spain

- Associació Catalana per la Pau
- ATELIER: Asociación de Técnicos especialistas en Investigación y Estudios sobre la realidad Latinoamericana
- Cooperacció
- Intermon Oxfam
- ISI internacionalista
- Justicia por Colombia
- Pachakuti Soldepaz
- Fundación Mundubat

France

- ACAT - Action des chrétiens pour l'abolition de la torture

- Réseau France Colombie Solidarités
- CCFD, Comité Catholique contre la Faim et pour le Développement - Terre Solidaire

Great Britain

- ABColombia
- Christian Aid
- Colombia Caravana UK Lawyers Group

Norway

- FOKUS – Forum for Women and Development

Netherlands

- Cordaid
- MM - Mensen met een Missie

Sweden

- Diakonia Suecia
- Plataforma Sueca por Colombia

Switzerland

- Grupo de trabajo Suiza

International

- FIDH - Federation Internationale des Droits de l'Homme -
- OMCT - Organización Mundial Contra la Tortura

Italy

- Rete Italiana di Solidarieta Colombia Vive!

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- Taula Catalana per la Pau i els Drets Humans a Colòmbia

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