



WOMEN DEFENDERS OF AGRICULTURAL, TERRITORIAL, AND ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS IN COLOMBIA

Risking their lives for peace

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In Colombia, the women who defend their land, their culture, and the environment are being threatened, harassed, and sometimes even murdered. Since the Peace Agreement was signed, their territories have become highly desirable property. While defenders try to preserve these territories, armed groups are prepared to kill for them. These women are true peace builders, but the State provides them with barely any protection. If urgent measures are not taken, their lives are in grave danger.

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This report, with its analysis, recommendations and conclusions, is exclusively a reflection of Oxfam International's position and opinion on the topic examined. Oxfam collected testimonies from rural women defenders of agricultural, territorial and environmental rights who are farmers, indigenous and Afro-Colombian women from different Colombian regions. However, their names have not been provided in light of the profoundly delicate situation they live in with regards to their safety.

Cover photo: A Colombian women's rights defender. Credit: Pablo Tosco

This report is dedicated to all the women who have given and continue to give their lives defending their territory, their environment, their culture and their rights. Thanks to people like them, the world is moving toward being a better place.

We are losing our fear of speaking up. They had put the idea in our heads that we didn't have the right to speak, that we didn't have a voice, but we are discovering now that we do have a voice and that that voice is very valuable, and that that voice means we are building something very big for everyone, both men and women.

Indigenous woman defender, 2019

SUMMARY

After half a century of armed conflict that cost the lives of many people, peace finally came to Colombia. In August 2016, the Peace Agreement for the Termination of the Conflict and the Construction of a Stable and Lasting Peace was signed. But this long-awaited and very welcome agreement has turned out to be just a mirage, especially in certain parts of the country, which are still under the yoke of violence.

There are several reasons why today the Peace Agreement runs the risk of failing. The disarmament of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC-EP) has led to the emergence of a new wave of armed groups that have expanded in territories they seek to control in order to run illegal economies. Although the Agreement included plans to ensure the presence of civil institutions of the State in these areas to guarantee basic rights and justice, such civil institutions remain largely absent. On the contrary, the response that *has* been imposed is military in nature, seeking to exercise authority with force. The 5% increase in the national defence budget is an alarming sign that is a far cry from the type of policies demanded by the communities. Without government control, once the FARC-EP withdrew, the power vacuum was seized upon by legal and illegal extractive corporations and monoculture agribusinesses. They settled in the territories and extended their activities, encouraged by attractive fiscal and other incentives, often pushing aside local communities.

The five decades of war were deeply rooted in a profoundly unequal socioeconomic structure that perpetuates privileges and denies rights. This inequality is especially painful in rural areas and manifests itself very clearly in land ownership, where 1% of landowners possess 80% of the territory. These data make Colombia the most unequal country in terms of land distribution in Latin America, which is, in turn, the most unequal region in the world in this regard. The Peace Agreement was meant to reverse this situation, with a whole battery of measures that would affect land distribution and its use. To date, only 3% of those provisions in the Peace Agreement have been completed and almost half have not yet been initiated.

Women defenders face armed groups, extractive economies, illegal businesses, and military forces. These women defend their culture, their lands, the environment, and their rights. And in doing so, they challenge the interests of the different actors mentioned above. For example, they demand there be prior consent before the development of mining projects; they oppose the transfer of

their ancestral lands to extractive companies; and they resist the pollution and diversion of rivers, forest logging, and any indiscriminate and non-consulted exploitation of their natural resources. In their communities, they lead information and education initiatives about these processes. In performing this work, they question the status quo that prevails in the territories and become the target of all the aforementioned actors, who attack them with threats and harassment, sometimes committing political femicides.

From 2016 to the date of this report, 55 women defenders were killed. In the first half of this year, there was one women social leader murdered, on average, every two weeks. Those who persist in the struggle are in grave danger, and there is no indication that this escalation of violence is going to diminish. In the first quarter of 2019, attacks against women defenders increased by 97% over the previous period, breaking a new record, with 75 attacks. Unfortunately, Colombia is already the second most dangerous country in the world for people defending the land and the environment.

The risk for women defenders is multiplied because there is a whole series of factors that makes them more vulnerable. They are women in a country with a strong patriarchal structure. They are mostly small farmer, indigenous or Afro-Colombian women, and these identities carry a burden of stigmatization. They have diverse gender identities. And, finally, they live in poor rural areas that are historically marginalized. The result is that these women suffer disproportionate consequences of violence, not only physically, but also against their communities and territories. Many times, the authorities themselves do not allow awareness of this violence to be spread, just as they do not recognize the immense work of the defenders to bring justice to their territories.

The Colombian government's response to this serious situation has barely had any effective impact on women defenders, despite the numerous regulatory frameworks that should theoretically protect them. Iván Duque's government came to power in 2018, the year in which the country once again broke another tragic record as the most violent against human rights defenders. Reversing this trend and implementing the necessary measures was up to him. Although he took office saying he would work "tirelessly" to protect social leaders, his words have not translated into effective policies to prevent attacks. The measures he has taken, such as the Timely Action Plan (*Plan de Acción Oportuna*, PAO), are more cosmetic than real advances. They ignore the need to guarantee a conducive environment so that men and women defenders can engage in their communities. Moreover, the previous decrees that formed a notable legal framework to ensure protection and prevention have been omitted. And the government is turning its back on participation by civil society organizations.

Preventing and prosecuting murder, impunity and threats against women defenders is a critical priority. These crimes have a corrosive effect in the territories, eroding public confidence in the government. Each homicide increases uncertainty about the chances of consolidating peace and undermines the Peace Agreement.

The more than 260,000 lives cut short by the war in Colombia cannot be restored. But the efforts made to reach an end to the war and achieve peace should not be for naught. Violence against women defenders is the cruelest reflection and the most alarming warning that the commitments in the Peace Agreement must be

reinforced. The government must lead this process, and to do this it needs the determined support of the international community, the mobilization of Colombian society, and, above all, it needs to listen to the voices of the women leaders themselves.

The main objective of this report is to give visibility to the hard work that the defenders of agricultural, territorial, and environmental rights do every day. Their voices are present throughout the content of these pages and bring us closer to their real situation. Their stories reveal our urgency in making their work visible, to provide them with the protection they so desperately need. Without them, Colombia will be one step farther from peace.

Why is the defence of rural women so important for us? Because together with the land we bring forth life. And it's not only that we give birth to children, we also give birth to hope, we have given birth to peace, we have aborted the war, we say, 'We don't want war!' Although war has been written on women's bodies, that ink is not ours. This is why for us it is so important to focus on the small farmers, to defend the life of those women who are never heard, who are there, who defend their lives, the life of the communities.

Rural woman defender, 2019

RECOMMENDATIONS

The murders and harassment of women defenders must cease immediately. To accomplish this, it is essential to make their work known and obtain recognition for their valuable contribution to peace. Prevention, protection, and guaranteeing justice are key elements to enable them to do their work safely. But none of this will help if there is not a determined government push to put an end to the structural causes that are the backbone of inequality in the country and that put obstacles in the way of these women exercising social leadership. The international community is and must continue to be a major ally to promote these changes and make the crucial role played by these women visible. This is why we make the following call to action:

To the Colombian State

- **Consolidate the comprehensive and effective presence of the State in rural areas**, especially in those most affected by the armed conflict, promoting the rule of law and sustained and inclusive development in these areas.
- **Effectively implement all the points of the Peace Agreement** with the FARC-EP in general, especially the points related to the control of paramilitaries.
- **Restart the negotiations with the National Liberation Army (ELN)**, as its ongoing activity puts women defenders in a situation of high vulnerability.
- **Make the security of women defenders a policy of the State**, thereby drastically reduce the rising numbers of political femicides and attacks, achieving "zero weeks" —that is, weeks without any victims or attacks.
- **Substantially reduce the level of impunity.** To achieve this, the Public Prosecutor's Office must advance more rapidly in investigations against those who attack defenders, including those attacks that took place before the

signing of the Peace Agreement, as well as against the intellectual authors of the attacks.

- **Facilitate the process to report crimes**, improving institutional coordination so that there is a single window created to which women defenders can go.
- **Promote the preventive approach** that has been relegated to the background until now. To do this, it is essential for the Ministry of the Interior to take more leadership in addressing the recommendations and alerts issued by the Early Warning System.
- **Launch prevention and protection mechanisms** to avoid the violence to which women defenders are subjected.
- **Publicly recognize the work of the women defenders of agricultural, territorial and environmental rights** through awareness campaigns on a national level.
- The highest levels of government should **promote respectful treatment of women defenders** by all officials, including local authorities.
- **Avoid the use of mechanisms that instigate the criminalization** of women defenders, their organizations and the lawyers who defend them.
- The following recommendations are presented with regard to the legal measures and the specific government institutions discussed in the report:
 - **Strengthen the participation** of women defenders of agricultural, territorial, and environmental rights **in the National Roundtable on Guarantees, ensuring the necessary resources and conditions for the operability of the Gender Commission**. Likewise, the participation of rural, indigenous and Afro-Colombian women in the Territorial Roundtables on Guarantees must be strengthened.
 - **The Office of the Attorney General must carry out investigations and establish the respective disciplinary sanctions for officials of territorial entities** that act ineffectively or do not fulfil their duties regarding public policies, budget allocation and establishment of measures for the prevention of violence against and protection of women defenders of agricultural, territorial and environmental rights, especially with regard to adoption of gender approaches.
 - **The Office of the Attorney General must expedite the processes investigating public officials who, by their actions or failure to act, commit offenses related to the violation of the rights to life and integrity of women defenders of agricultural, territorial, and environmental rights**. This includes public servants of the entities that fail to comply with the recommendations of the Ombudsman's Office reports on risk and early warnings.
 - **The National Protection Unit should promote protection mechanisms with an ethnic, territorial, differentiated and collective approach** and ensure that they are adapted to the needs of women defenders through the defenders' active participation in the design and implementation processes.
 - **Guarantee the participation** of women defenders of agricultural, territorial, and environmental rights in the construction of protocols for the **integration of the gender approach in all the entities and frameworks analysed**.
 - **Strengthen and support Afro-Colombian community councils and indigenous authorities as well as self-protection instruments** such as

indigenous and *cimarrona* guards, recognizing and supporting *guardias campesinas*, and promoting the recognition of small farmers as having rights, as the Office of the Attorney General has just done.

- **Expand the space for dialogue** between representatives of rural women's groups and organizations and the **Ombudsman's Office Early Warning System**.
- **Take the political leadership necessary** to revitalize the important issues that must be addressed **by the National Security Guarantees Commission**.
- **Make the Peace Agreement an institutional priority**, safeguarding the spirit in which it was drawn up and implementing key chapters, such as the disarmament of paramilitary groups, **the National Security Guarantees Commission, the Agrarian Reform, and the provisions to protect men and women defenders**.
- **Allocate resources** that allow the adequate development and implementation of the **Comprehensive Security and Protection Program for Communities and Organizations in the Territories and of the Comprehensive Guarantee Program for Women Leaders and Human Rights Defenders**. The resources allocated must be differentiated to have a larger amount to guarantee the participation of women defenders of agricultural, territorial, and environmental rights throughout the cycle of the implementation and monitoring of these measures.
- **Formalize an annual public accountability forum** for ministries and institutions to present the progress in the defender protection policy, specifying inter-institutional alliances, budgets, the participant population, and coverage.

To the European Union

In accordance with the human rights obligations of the European Union, and specifically its commitments under the Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders:

- **Establish a structured, periodic dialogue between the EU Delegation in Colombia** and civil society organizations and women defenders, in order to monitor the democratic space available to civil society and concerns regarding the protection of local actors.
- **Establish a focal point in the EU Delegation in Colombia for women defenders of land and the environment** to monitor the implementation of Colombian policies dedicated to their protection and, thus, contribute to preventing attacks against them.
- **Create a working group in the Committee of the European Parliament on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM)** on the situation in Colombia that monitors the situation of **women defenders, and initiates and sponsors different international activities that help raise their visibility and give them a voice**.
- **Promote an urgent resolution in the European Parliament to give visibility to the situation of all women and men defenders of agricultural, territorial, and environmental rights in Colombia** that establishes protection mechanisms and measures to reduce violence.

- Organize a joint mission of the FEMM Committee and the Subcommittee on Human Rights (DROI) to Colombia to assess and learn about the situation of women defenders of land and the environment.
- In the **new EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024 and the revision of the EU Gender Action Plan 2016-2020, include specific chapters** on women defenders of agricultural, territorial, and environmental rights, where the role they play and the need for their recognition and protection is explicitly mentioned.
- **Include an annex on women defenders in the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders**, following recommendation no. 27 of the European Parliament resolution (2019/2564 [RSP]) which calls on Member States to “ensure full implementation of the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders, and to expand their protection and support for human rights defenders, particularly women human rights defenders.”
- Provide **specific funds** for the protection of women defenders of land and environment in the **Trust Fund for Colombia and the future Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI)**. These funds should go directly to women's organizations to manage them autonomously.
- **Review and analyse the EU technical assistance programs regarding police and judicial cooperation** in contexts of high violence against civil society.

To the Government of Spain

- Include **protection and prevention measures** for women defenders of agricultural, territorial, and environmental rights as a **priority in relations with the Government of Colombia**.
- **Maintain and strengthen international cooperation and dialogue with women's organizations** and with women defenders, especially in the departments most affected by attacks and murders.
- **Continue with the leadership role shown by the Spanish government in the National Round Table on Guarantees** and press to revitalize this space. Demand that the executive branch shows the necessary leadership.
- Ensure **full compliance with the Peace Agreement**, especially the provisions that most directly affect women defenders, such as agrarian reform, comprehensive rural reform, and the rights and guarantees for political participation.
- Within the Subgroup on Human Rights and the National Round Table on Guarantees, **lead periodic and ongoing verification actions in the most affected departments**, so that the international community has firsthand exposure to the complaints and situation of women leaders.
- Monitor the **implementation of the different regulatory frameworks** to ensure that there is effective protection with an **ethnic, differentiated, and territorial approach**.
- **Assume leadership within the European Union** to make this agenda a priority within the Council of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and the Delegation of the European Union to Colombia.

- Within the **United Nations Human Rights Council**, lead a specific agenda on women defenders of agricultural, territorial, and environmental rights in Colombia, to give this problem visibility in this body.
- Maintain **Colombia as a priority country in the Women, Peace and Security agenda and in the Defenders Program**, with special emphasis on environmental activists.
- Influence the various relevant international forums to **support the mandate of the United Nations Special Verification Mission**.
- Facilitate the **participation of women's organizations in international advocacy forums**.
- Promote **campaigns to give visibility to the work of environmental activists**, together with other countries committed to this cause.
- **Increase the funding** for various programs that will ultimately affect women defenders. For example, finance rural women's organizations to improve their living conditions and guarantee their rights. Also, provide resources to the women leaders and their organizations for training and education. It is key that these funds can be managed autonomously.
- **Promote programs to combat violence against women**.
- **Stop the sale of weapons to Colombia** in accordance with the Arms Trade Treaty, which Spain has ratified, and the Arms Trade Act of 2007, given the risk of becoming an accomplice in the commission of crimes.

To citizens and public opinion

- **Launch actions aimed at recognizing and giving visibility to the work of women defenders, in addition to making their achievements known** so that they can continue to carry out their work. Public recognition of the work they do is essential to counteract the stigmatization that marks them and causes discrimination against them.
- **Put pressure on different governments** to act urgently, protecting defenders and preventing attacks.
- **Mobilize other people** to generate a trans-border wave of support for women defenders. Every act of solidarity will strengthen their cause.

DEFENDER STORIES

INDIGENOUS WOMAN DEFENDER

My whole family is from the very same region. My grandmother, without realizing it, became a leader more than 50 years ago. The first school was built in this community, thanks to her. We say that was the beginning of how my family began to look for solutions to the problems the communities have with municipal entities.

The mine was set up in the seventies and the eighties. Already back then my uncle was very critical of the working conditions. And he said: 'how can it be, if these are our lands, this is our wealth—it's what is under our land that is going to be mined—how is it that they are giving us such precarious work?' Little by little, I began to participate in local forums, regional forums. Then I had the opportunity to go to national forums with the indigenous movement. Without realizing it you begin to lead things, to be recognized as someone who speaks out.

People were dispossessed of their land for the mine's expansion. And while that was happening, in the decade of the nineties until the beginning of 2000, the paramilitaries came in. Here they murdered members of the community, [and] my family was threatened. A lot of them had to leave, even leave the country. I stayed, and we began to see how other indigenous women were going through the same thing. So we organized ourselves, until we became a formal organization. We began to accompany communities to make public their complaints, to find out where the money was. And that's how we got into trouble. We began to be seen as troublemakers. That's when the threats began to arrive, in leaflets, in calls. Today I am under the government's protection plan. It's very harmful, I feel like it's very dangerous because it doesn't take women's situation into account, it doesn't respond to that community engagement.

INDIGENOUS WOMAN DEFENDER

I began my community leadership in the South of the country. We formed because of the great need to reclaim our rights. At that time we didn't understand why we women didn't have land; neither did we understand the presence of the different armed actors, and we didn't understand why most of the money went for the war and there wasn't any social investment, for us or for our children. So, then we began to get organized and set up a school for political training to go back and unlearn things, because for us these things were normal; among them, [it] was [normal] not having land.

As an organization we had denounced many things that happened in the department and in the municipality that we didn't agree with, and we became the pebble in the shoe of some administrations, but also of some people who came from the armed conflict. That's why we had to flee from our region.

I have a daughter and I decided I didn't want to continue, but they called me to support community processes and I returned to leadership. That's when we created a formal organization. It is a forum for policy advocacy, it is an articulation strategy. It is also a strategy that allows us to come together, advocate, and strengthen ourselves. From this platform we have been making formal complaints, accompanying women who are victims of sexual violence. We have

accompanied important [legal] proceedings of the women who were victims of the paramilitaries in the south of the department. We demand our right to land and the right to peace.

The organization has become a life project because we work as volunteers. We aren't paid, but we get satisfaction knowing that we have succeeded in saving a woman's life. It is easy to spot a woman or man who is a human rights defender. I think we walk with dignity and with our dignity intact we stop anywhere to talk about what we do, what we feel, and what we think. So for me, being a defender of human rights is the same political commitment as being a woman small farmer.

AFRO-COLOMBIAN WOMAN DEFENDER

My life is dedicated to and focused on defending the territory and the environment in my region. I joined the organization on 2004. Then I began to realize more what situation women were in. [I began] to be more conscious of the situation experienced by women in the region, above all the situation of women in the countryside, which is a pretty hard life, quite difficult. In Chocó our rights, human rights, I say they are violated every day, daily, all of them. Because we cannot exercise civil rights, political rights, economic, social, and cultural rights, and now environmental rights, also. For example, mining and logging go against the environment.

The main threats to the territory here are the illegal economies. Because since our territory is so diverse and so rich, they extract our riches, but very little really stays here for development that meets our needs.

We are surrounded by armies, both legal and illegal, and that affects women a lot. Here we are still living in a situation of armed conflict.

As women we are doing this work alone, and, therefore, we face threats. We need society and the international community to know more about our work. The situation in which we are living in the territory must be denounced [with regard to] human rights in general and women's [rights] in particular. Many women defenders and leaders have been murdered, and the government, which is supposed to protect us, doesn't.

1 INTRODUCTION

Colombia suffered one of the longest internal conflicts in the world. More than 50 years of violence shattered and conditioned the lives of its 45.5 million inhabitants. Its consequences can be seen in devastating figures: 260,000 deaths, more than 8 million victims,¹ tens of thousands of disappeared,² and 7.8 million people displaced³ (more than half of whom are women⁴).

Colombia is currently the second country in the world with the most internally displaced persons due to conflict, after Syria.

However, the impact of the conflict was very uneven among different regions, thereby enabling its prolongation. In spite of the magnitude of the data, for many urban areas the conflict is something quite far away and removed from them, which is why it is hard to understand. This means there is widespread ignorance of the role played by women leaders today.

LEADING THE INEQUALITY RANKINGS

Structurally, the causes of the Colombian conflict are rooted in the marked socioeconomic inequality that the country has suffered for decades. Despite an average GDP growth of 2.5% in the past two years,⁵ the prosperity achieved in urban areas, the increase in private and public investments, and the strength in foreign trade, inequality in the country continues to rise.⁶

All the most significant indicators place Colombia among the most unequal countries in the world. According to the World Bank, it ranks fourth after South Africa, Haiti, and Honduras, measured according to the Gini coefficient.⁷ The last OECD report in 2018 concluded that Colombia is the most economically unequal country in Latin America and the third in the world, behind South Africa and Indonesia.⁸

In its latest report, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) ratified this alarming position in the ranking:⁹ Colombia is one of the Latin American countries where there are the most gaps between some departments and others, only surpassed by Mexico and Guatemala. Along these lines, it also reveals the deep difference between rural and urban conditions. Multidimensional poverty (which measures, in addition to income, the conditions of access to basic social services) is 36.6% compared to 11.4%, respectively.¹⁰ In the 2010-2017 period, rural poverty measured by income was 50% higher than urban poverty.¹¹ These figures explain why more than 60% of the rural population is living below the poverty line.

If these statistics are translated into real life, the terrible cruelty behind them is revealed. Compared to any other child in the world, a Colombian child born into a poor household will, on average, have less chance of getting out of poverty, as it will take up to five generations for her family to achieve this, and 11 generations, or 330 years, to reach an average income level.¹³

Rural poverty is closely linked to land tenure. Therefore, it is not surprising that there is a direct correlation between these two variables. In Colombia, while 64% of small farmer households do not have access to land,¹⁴ 1% of landowners own 80% of the territory.¹⁵ Inequality in this area affects the country's 32 departments. In fact, there is none in which the Gini coefficient

Colombia is the most unequal country in land distribution in Latin America which, in turn, is the most unequal region in the world.¹²

shows a trend towards equality. Especially alarming is the case of Chocó, where in its capital Quibdó less than 1% of landowners own 95% of the land.¹⁶

Gender inequality, though widespread throughout the country,¹⁷ is particularly acute in rural areas, where it has been exacerbated by conflict and violence. Added to this discrimination is a lack of specific data on rural, indigenous, and Afro-Colombian women, which makes them invisible in official records.¹⁸ On the other hand, there are data that show that women are more likely to possess smaller areas of land (78% have less than five hectares) and have less access to credit, machinery, and technical assistance than men. Most of them have few opportunities to enter the labor market, so they are usually forced to engage in unregulated activities, exposed to greater risks. As a result, rural poverty is concentrated in single-parent households headed by women. Up to 40% of these families are in this situation of poverty.¹⁹

EXTRACTIVISM IN PARADISE

Colombia is second in the world ranking of countries with the greatest biodiversity.²⁰ It is also the country with the most moorlands [*páramos*] in the world; more than 50% of those that exist are in Colombia.²¹ But, in addition, it has an endless number of endemic species that make it a unique place.²²

However, this wonderful environmental, social, and cultural wealth is in grave danger. Its biggest threat is the extractivist economy. Colombia occupies first place in Latin America in emerald and coal mining, and fourth in nickel exploration.²³ And that which generates wealth for a few is causing irreparable damage to that which belongs to everyone: the environment. Nearly half of the ecosystems that exist in Colombia are in danger or in critical condition.²⁴

For more than a decade, successive governments have made a commitment to economic growth based on the exploitation of non-renewable resources, promoting significant corporate incentives such as those explained below:

- **Stable conditions to ensure that foreign investment is declared as being of public interest.**²⁵ From 2016 to July 2018, at least nine hydroelectric projects were declared as being of public utility and social interest.²⁶ Projects with serious environmental consequences, such as Hidroituango, have been classified as being of public utility since 2008.²⁷
- **Tax benefits, such as tax refunds for investments in exploration, exemptions for payment of building works, and multiple discounts on income tax.**²⁸ These conditions position Colombia among the 10 countries in the world with the best investment climate for mining businesses, according to the industry's own rankings.²⁹
- **There are inadequate processes for sharing information with communities about these projects.** Since 2011, 264 companies have filed applications with the National Environmental Licensing Authority (ANLA) and since then only 42 of them have conducted environmental hearings with the communities—just 16%.³⁰
- **Deployment of the State's armed forces for the protection of private investment through the establishment of specialized battalions.** There are about 20 battalions created for this purpose. In 2015, it was estimated that there were at least 1,129 cooperation agreements between the military forces

For every dollar that mining companies contribute to the treasury, the State loses two to tax deductions and exemptions.

and companies. The value of this type of agreement at that time exceeded \$780 million.³¹

- The new government of Iván Duque has made **a clear commitment to private investment**, giving tax privileges to companies under the hypothesis that this will ultimately contribute to economic growth. Beyond being tremendously questionable, this logic can further deepen the acute economic inequalities.³²
- **Incentives for investment in extractives** have also been extended to foreign companies. In 2018, close to 76% of foreign direct investment corresponded to the hydrocarbon and mining sectors.³³

This package of privileges has had a clear effect on the proliferation of investment projects. Among them are large agribusiness investments, intended for product export, which cover more and more territory and eventually push out the communities that live there.³⁴ Of the 8.5 million hectares that are used for agriculture, 7.1 million are occupied by large coffee, oil palm, and sugarcane crops destined for export.³⁵ Furthermore, drug traffickers and paramilitaries have channeled part of the benefits obtained from cocaine trafficking towards the acquisition of land, to the point where they now own approximately 5 million hectares, 15% of the country's total area, where they have established oil palm plantations and livestock ranches.³⁶ And then there are the areas affected by legal and illegal mining industries, with the latter representing 56% of the mining activity in the country.³⁷

Illicit crops have also skyrocketed, and with them the presence of criminal groups. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), drug crop expansion increased by 17% from 2016 to 2017, a new all-time record.³⁸ The government has not fulfilled its commitments to promote voluntary eradication and now threatens to resume aerial spraying despite its ineffectiveness, harmful effects on the health of affected communities and the increase in social tension in territories where the presence of the State has been limited to such actions of force.

Land concentration is legalized

While the Peace Agreement (which, among other things, proposes measures to reduce land concentration) was negotiated in Havana, the Law on Zones of Interest for Economic and Social Development in Rural Areas (ZIDRES) was enacted in Bogotá. Under this law, any national or transnational corporation has access to unlimited extensions of land through concession or lease.³⁹

Passage of this law was contested by numerous organizations. And a lawsuit was filed to stop it, arguing that it was unconstitutional. Two years later, the Constitutional Court dismissed the claim with a sentence ruling that the ZIDRES law is constitutional. However, the Court itself has interposed a series of limitations that could complicate the limitless expansion of these areas: 1) there must be prior consultation with the communities; 2) such projects may not be constituted in small-farmer reserves, indigenous reservations, collective territories titled to Afro-Colombian communities, or collective territories in process of being established; 3) they must be projects led by local authorities. Under the Constitutional Court ruling, a ZIDRES may not be declared and defined arbitrarily; now there are clear limits that the government must respect.

The government had previously announced that 9 million hectares would be allocated for these areas.⁴⁰ According to the government, the ZIDRES Law will be a tool for the agricultural development of the country, stimulating growth in rural areas and in working the land.

Meanwhile, critical voices indicate that this new incentive for agribusiness companies will foster land concentration and promote socio-economic inequality, in addition to reinforcing the extractivist model.

The application of this development model has further deepened the unequal distribution of wealth in the country. Additionally, it has resulted in the reconfiguration of the territories, transforming landscapes, productive activities and the social fabric, often through violent methods. This has generated massive human rights violations, such as forced displacement, threats, femicide, and sexual violence, among others.⁴¹

There have been several rulings in favor of the community and against the company, but there is failure to comply. [They are ignored, [and] there is no political will [to enforce them].⁴² The company continues to use all the water there is and will be, while the communities have no water. We have been denouncing this, as well as the contamination of groundwater. Several universities have done a study on pollution in the river and water quality; [and] many heavy metals were found. The company ended up suing the organization that supported us to do this study.

Afro-Colombian defender, 2019

THE PEACE AGREEMENT THAT DIDN'T BRING ABOUT THE DESIRED PEACE

The long-awaited Peace Agreement for the Termination of the Conflict between the Colombian Government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia - People's Army (FARC-EP) was finally reached in November 2016.⁴³ Three years after its signature, 68% of the commitments are in the process of being implemented. This is a positive indicator, according to the Kroc Institute, as it is in line with what has been achieved in other peace agreements in other conflicts. In addition, the transformation of the guerrilla group into a political party is another success factor.⁴⁴ The silencing of weapons has allowed the number of homicides to drop to their lowest historical level (24 per 1,000,000 inhabitants).⁴⁵ Despite this, violence has not ceased in many parts of the country and Colombia is now facing a new stage of the conflict.⁴⁶ In certain contexts, peace is currently just a mirage.

There are several factors that explain this:

- **The attacks on women and men defenders.** One of the main challenges of the Peace Agreement is the lack of adequate security guarantees for civil society leaders and human rights defenders.⁴⁸ Only 25% of the provisions included in the Agreement to ensure prevention and effective protection have been implemented.⁴⁹ This has resulted in a growing violation of their rights, as will be analysed later.
- **The presence of armed groups.** Despite several cycles of talks between the National Liberation Army (ELN) and the Colombian Government, the armed

More than 285,000 people have been forcibly displaced since the Peace Agreement was signed.⁴⁷

group has not yet given up its weapons. Moreover, the disarmament of the FARC-EP has generated a whole new wave of armed groups that have spread throughout the territories.⁵⁰

We are up to our necks in armed actors. The paramilitaries, the ELN and the army are present in the territory. There are no FARC dissidents, they merged into other groups.

Afro-Colombian woman defender, 2019

- **The absence of non-military government institutions in the territories.**

Although plans were established in the Peace Agreement and laws were adopted to guarantee a greater presence of the State, the deployment of State services has barely begun.⁵¹ This lack of a comprehensive intervention approach and the corresponding lack of presence of State institutions and social infrastructure have resulted in a failure to prevent the escalation of violence in certain parts of the country.

The State is absent from regions and communities, the State has not reached the territories and if it has arrived, it has done so through the military. They tell us they have invested in peace, but what they brought was more checkpoints and more war tanks.

Rural woman defender, 2019

- **In the absence of the FARC-EP and the State, illegal companies move in.**

Where the guerrillas have left and the government has still not made an appearance, the mafias and all kinds of illegal organizations have taken advantage of this power vacuum to settle in the territories and extend their economic activities, with the enormous social and environmental consequences that this represents.⁵² Meanwhile, large agribusiness corporations expand throughout the country, thanks to the numerous incentives promoted by the government.

- **Militarization as the answer.** In the territories, the most obvious response by the State to date has been the forceful imposition of authority through the armed forces. The 5% increase in the Defence budget is an alarming indicator of the government's response.⁵³ Far from contributing to generate positive and sustainable changes for communities, this type of presence causes more violence, leaving communities and, to an even greater extent if possible, women, in a situation of extreme vulnerability.⁵⁴

- **No concrete measures to alleviate the structural causes of inequality.** As has been analysed, Colombia is a country with profound inequalities at all levels (territorial, gender, and ethnic). With the low level of implementation of the Peace Agreement commitments, it is not possible to overcome these inequalities. One of the key measures to achieve this would be to promote policies and programs that support small farmer, indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities, and especially women, guaranteeing the protection of nature where most of the poorest population is concentrated: in rural areas. However, the Comprehensive Rural Reform has been the most delayed chapter in the implementation of the Peace Agreement. Only 3% of the measures have been completed and almost half of them have not been initiated at all.⁵⁵ In part, this is due to the fact that procedures in the legislature for projects related to Comprehensive Rural Reform have not been successful,

slowing down the entire process. Furthermore, there is lack of information on the implementation of the ethnic chapter.

The conflict arrived here in Chocó at the end of the eighties; the first major displacement took place in 1996. Almost the whole population of Riosucio was displaced. The paramilitaries came to fight and took advantage of the situation to seize territories of small farmers, forcing them to leave, and then, after the paramilitaries, the businessmen arrived. Then they began to grow oil palm. So, there was the displacement and things changed, as the dynamics of the war [changed]. Then came the Agreement signed with the FARC and the Government. The Government committed to addressing those territories; it did not, so the ones who have now taken over those territories are the paramilitaries and the ELN guerrillas. We are surrounded by armed forces, both legal and illegal, [a fact] that brings consequences for women. In Chocó we are still in an armed conflict, we are confined, we are a time bomb. There could be a massacre at any moment.

Woman Defender, 2019

The cost of peace

Rebuilding after five decades of conflict is not a simple task and many resources are needed to accomplish it, especially given that violence persists in parts of the country. Congress has estimated that 31 billion dollars would be needed for the first ten years (85% for the Comprehensive Rural Reform),⁵⁶ of which a part is expected to come from the international community.

The Tax System Study Commission has announced that humanitarian assistance to displaced victims and land restitution, two key issues for laying the foundations of peace, will account for 3.3% of the GDP in 2020, and this figure does not include post-conflict spending. *Misión Rural*, for its part, has estimated that the necessary investment in rural areas will account for about 1% of the annual GDP.⁵⁷

In the configuration of the “new” country, where these funds come from and how public spending is distributed will be key in order to avoid deepening today’s profound inequalities. This is especially important given the difficulties in obtaining domestic resources due to a low, regressive revenue collection capacity that is skewed to favor production by businesses.

The lack of budget allocation is already a problem for many of the policies deriving from the Peace Agreement. If the funds are not available to implement the Agreement’s commitments, there is a risk that violence will escalate.

RURAL WOMEN, BOTTOM OF THE LADDER

In highly patriarchal societies, as is the case in many regions of Colombia, women suffer the greatest inequalities in all aspects of life. Being born a woman in Colombia implies, among other things, a greater risk of suffering an unfavourable economic situation, receiving less pay for the same job, or being a victim of violence.⁵⁹

About 70% of women in Colombia have suffered some form of violence – physical, psychological or political – and only two out of ten report these crimes.⁵⁸

But discrimination against women becomes even more evident in the countryside. Condemned by their traditional role, women must assume more of the tasks related to reproduction. Specifically, on a daily basis, they dedicate

twice the time to this than men do.⁶⁰ This unpaid work is one of the great obstacles to achieving economic independence.

The absence of social institutions in rural areas prevents women from gaining access to basic social services (such as nurseries, residences for the elderly) and other public services (such as access to water or electricity), which robs them of even more time and possibilities of obtaining a paid job. Another measure that would help their economic empowerment would be land ownership.

Unfortunately, ownership of land is a luxury that only a quarter of women can enjoy.⁶¹

A cow has more rights than a woman. A cow is entitled to one hectare of land. And women have no land, not even under their fingernails. A cow is entitled to vaccination, and that is sacred here; there is [the] de-worming, it has a veterinarian, it has supervision. Rural women do not have a health centre, they do not [even] have education.

Rural woman defender, 2019

The rise of the extractivist economy has marginalized women, who are not hired by the industry except on rare occasions. Some have directly experienced the increase in cases of sexual and physical violence through human trafficking networks, sexual exploitation, and forced prostitution, resulting in a greater violation of their rights.⁶² Additionally, women suffer from criminalization of protest; persecution; and political, social and, ultimately, actual physical death. Pollution, insecurity, displacement, and threats have also become generalized in their territories.

We have the problem of legal mining and the economies of illicit crop farming, along with human trafficking, [which is] more underground: Women are taken to cook for them, girls are taken on weekends for sexual exploitation.

Afro-Colombian woman defender, 2019

2 WOMEN DEFENDERS OF AGRICULTURAL, TERRITORIAL, AND ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS

Human rights defenders play a fundamental role in society, since they are the ones who promote and protect the fundamental rights of the most disadvantaged sectors of the population. In Colombia, the work of these people is one of the essential pillars for securing peace in the country and raising awareness of the need to guarantee and enforce human rights in their communities, in the first instance and, by extension, in the rest of society.

DEFENDING LIFE...

In this rural context, where multiple inequalities coexist against the backdrop of armed violence, there are women who have stood up and raised their voices to claim their rights.

Women such as those featured in this report are weaving, with their lives, the foundations of a fairer, more egalitarian society.⁶³ They are the spearhead of social transformation. And, many times, they become social leaders without realizing it.

It is through struggle that several rights have been obtained: education, health, and the right to our own economic independence. We have fought at the national level for recognition that women and small-farmer women are citizens and that we are important in the country, but the struggle has also been within, for mutual recognition among us, men and women. Women are not just here to be wives, sisters, mothers; we also push for a change at the family level, for recognition of our contribution to development, to political and organizational matters, for participation, decision making, [and] even in negotiations. We have pushed for this, and this has been our struggle.

Rural woman defender, 2019

Among these leaders are the women defenders of agricultural, territorial and environmental rights. They are ordinary women who stand up to defend the territorial culture they feel a part of. They do not necessarily define themselves as “defenders” because their volition arises from the desire to care for their heritage, their territory, that which connects them with their ancestors. But this work makes each and every one of them defenders. Many live in remote mountainous territories or in isolated forests. They protect their traditional livelihoods from mining and oil projects, hydroelectric dams, large-scale agribusiness, and illegal crops. The vast majority of them carry out this enormous work voluntarily, adding these responsibilities to those of family and work.

In their daily lives, they accompany community consultation processes when community authorities request it. This translates into support in the form of legal information, awareness campaigns, and informing communities of their rights. They also engage with local and national authorities, and even engage in advocacy actions at the international level. All this work is done in coordination

with other defenders in order to expand their reach and benefit from the enormous work already undertaken.

The problem here is the land; the conflicts here are over land. And we women are demanding those lands because they are ours, because they are for women, because for women the land is not merchandise; we do not seek [the land] to sell it. We have a direct connection with the land, with the territory, based on protectiveness, as with the womb, with life, and not only because we conceive children, but because the conception of life extends much further.

Indigenous woman defender, 2019

Who are the women defenders of agricultural, territorial, and environmental rights?

The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights Defenders, in his report to the 2016 United Nations Assembly, defines environmental human rights defenders as “individuals and groups who, in their personal or professional capacity and in a peaceful manner, strive to protect and promote human rights relating to the environment, including water, air, land, flora, and fauna.”⁶⁴ According to the Rapporteur, land and environmental rights are interrelated and often inseparable.

In March 2019, the Human Rights Council approved a resolution recognizing the contribution of the defenders to achieving sustainable development and environmental protection.⁶⁵

As they are in remote areas where the presence of the State is nil or very limited, the role played by these women becomes even more essential. They become bridges between their communities and government institutions in demanding their collective and individual rights. Furthermore, through their own action, they question the status quo established by the different armed groups.

We go to a community and do a workshop on indigenous peoples' rights, territorial rights, a bit to inform people [of] what they can do, how they can claim a right, how they can go to register with an agency to be included as a victim of the conflict. All those things. Because what we saw with the institutions was that they didn't go out and tell people what they had to do, what steps they had to take to be able to claim their rights.

Indigenous woman defender, 2019

In these contexts, indigenous and Afro-Colombian women defenders are an example of peaceful resistance in the midst of the zones most affected by the conflict. Their work is intrinsically linked to the land and the right of their communities to live on it, practicing their culture and spiritual beliefs. The lands of rural communities and indigenous and Afro-Colombian peoples are often located in areas rich in natural resources, regions with mega-biodiversity that are, therefore, of great value.

...RISKING THEMSELVES

This precious and coveted land becomes the epicentre of the confrontation between different armed groups. And it is where the women leaders focus their efforts. In these territories, illegal armed organizations, who coexist with other

powerful actors linked to corruption and the legal and illegal economy, see these defenders as a direct threat to their interests. As these groups struggle to defend the privileges they have traditionally enjoyed, a spiral of persecution, violence, and threats is unleashed in order to intimidate defenders and put an end to their activity.

In these contexts, women defenders—like their fellow defenders who are men—try to enforce the rule of law by filing complaints, demanding their community rights, and mobilizing their communities. By doing so, they risk more than reprisals and new attacks: The dangers increase significantly because there is no effective implementation of the legal guarantees that deter those who perpetrate such acts.⁶⁶

In some cases, violence results in the dissolution of organizational processes, leaving the population frightened and plunged into maximum uncertainty. The perpetrators thus achieve their objective: to curb the demands of the defenders and their communities, limiting their basic freedoms of movement, expression, association and participation, as well as violating many of their political rights. In other cases, the women leaders and their communities persist in the struggle, resisting and demanding their rights, even if this means putting their lives at risk.

The Peace Agreement was a unique opportunity to reverse this dramatic situation and put an end to the continual harassment against women defenders. But the power vacuum left after the FARC-EP's departure from the territories, the reshuffling of other armed groups and the State's inaction with regard to finally developing a presence in rural areas, together with the few, inefficient institutional measures implemented,⁶⁷ have left these women alone and exposed to the greatest danger. The data are discouraging and speak for themselves.

DEADLY DATA

Together with Brazil, Mexico, and the Philippines, Colombia belongs to the group of four countries where 80% of the murders of activists registered by Front Line Defenders in 2018 are concentrated.⁶⁸ Specifically, it has become the third most dangerous country in the world for a defender of land and the environment.⁶⁹

Since 2016, 344 human rights defenders have died, and the number of fatalities has continued to rise. According to data from *Somos Defensores*, homicides went from 58 to 155 in 2018, representing an increase of almost 300% in just two years.⁷¹ In the first quarter of 2019, there were 25 murders, 66% more than in the same quarter of the previous year.⁷² Indications are that this unfortunate trend will continue through 2019.

The situation for women defenders follows the same pattern. Since 2016, 51 women leaders have been victims of this brutality, and the upward trend remains.⁷³ Specifically, from 2016 to 2018 the increase was 54%. Most of the murdered women lived in rural areas and defended their agrarian, territorial, and environmental rights.

On average, during the first quarter of 2019, more than two social leaders were killed per week.

Most of the deceased women defenders were in rural areas and many were killed for defending environmental and territorial rights.⁷⁰

The lack of a single registry

In the absence of a State registry, the job of counting and analyzing the number of victims is carried out by different agencies. Among them are the Ombudsman's Office,⁷⁴ the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights⁷⁵ and civil society organizations such as *Somos Defensores* and *Marcha Patriótica*.⁷⁶

Since each of them uses different sources to compile their statistics, the figures they use do not necessarily coincide. In any case, it is important to underscore that all of them reveal the same worrying upward trend.

In its official documents, the government uses the United Nations data instead of that registered by the Ombudsman's Office, despite the latter being the only government agency that performs this work. Critical voices indicate that this source is not officially used since its figures are higher than those of the Office of the High Commissioner.

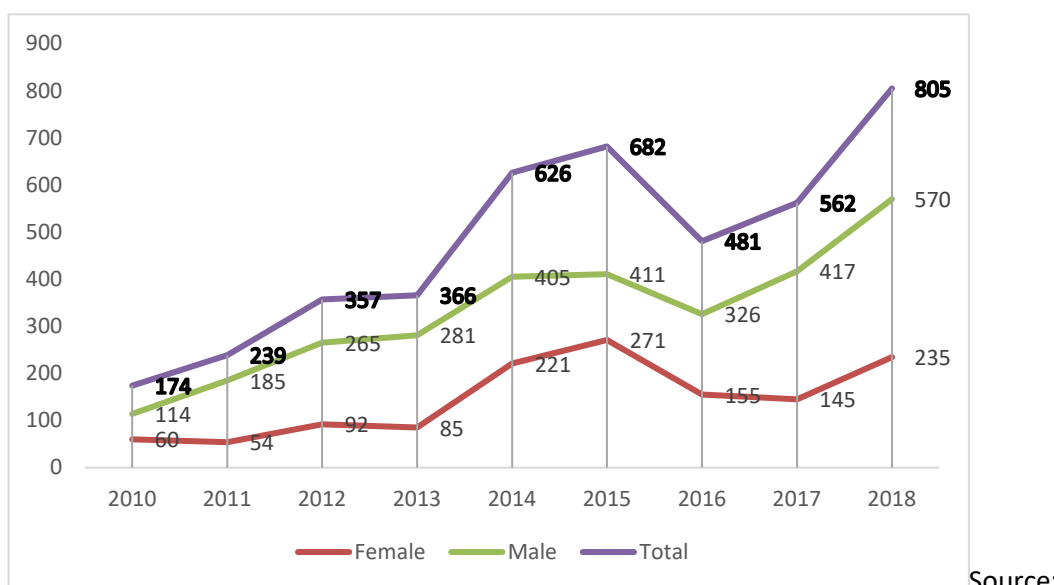
THREATS, HARASSMENT, AND ATTACKS

People who choose the path of leadership in civil society know that this decision can end up costing them their lives. They are also aware that, most likely, they will be subject to a series of threats, harassment, and attacks of various types.

As shown in Figure 1, after the Peace Agreement, the trend of a decrease in attacks was reversed and instead there was an increase of 67% in the rate of attacks over two years. As a result, another unfortunate record was reached, marking 2018 the year of greatest violence against men and women leaders.

In Colombia, 2018 was the most violent year for human rights defenders ever registered.

Figure 1. Number of total attacks against human rights defenders in Colombia (2010-2018)



Prepared by the authors based on data from annual reports of *Somos Defensores*.

Given the conflict situation, with the arrival of the paramilitaries, with the presence of the public security forces and with the presence of the guerrillas very strong, well, we had threats, we had several persecutions and we decided to leave. Although many times I have thought "no more," because you often feel like you're running away from something... defending rights should not be a crime. And running away is the most

terrible thing that can happen to a human being. So when you run away, when you have to leave, you feel like you're running away from something that is not a crime and from which you should not run away.

Indigenous woman defender, 2019

According to the most recent data from 2019, the attacks do not look like they are going to decrease in the short term. In the first quarter of the year, there were 245 attacks, 66% more than in the same period of the previous year.⁷⁷

The attacks against women defenders have also followed the same upward trend since the signing of the Peace Agreement. Although 2018 was not the year with the most cases (2015 was), in the last two years there has been an increase of 51%.⁷⁸ It is alarming that during the first quarter of 2019 attacks against women defenders increased by 97% compared to the same period in 2018.⁷⁹

Attacks against women defenders have registered the greatest escalation since records exist, with a 97% increase in 2019.

The hidden figures

In Colombia the number of registered threats, homicides, and overall rights violations of human rights activists is much smaller than the number that actually occur. This is the result of a combination of silence and invisibility surrounding this violent phenomenon in the different regions of the country.

Additionally, many women defenders do not trust the institutions that should protect them, or they do not consider the protection system officially available to them to be adequate. Therefore, they do not file reports. This premeditated silence means that many of the attacks that actually occur are left unrecorded.

According to the Ombudsman's Office, in 2018 there were 345 civil society organizations with members in danger, including every department in the country.⁸⁰ This figure includes community organizations; organizations of indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples and small farmers; trade unions; victims' associations; social groups; the population with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities; environmental organizations; those claiming lands; organizations of women, youth, and students; as well as public officials who are considered human rights defenders because of their work. In all likelihood, this list of people in danger has already grown.

Why women defenders are more vulnerable

Women leaders face a series of differentiated risks compared to those of their male counterparts. These risks are exacerbated depending on the rights they defend, their gender identity, ethnicity, territorial location, and socioeconomic status.

Defending agricultural, territorial and environmental rights

As the data indicates, most political femicides and other attacks focus on communal or community leaders in rural settings.⁸¹ These women work to defend the rights of vulnerable communities, the territory, and the environment. They also play a key role in the implementation of the Peace Agreement.

This struggle makes them the target of all those actors who oppose the establishment of the rule of law. And it means they face continuous harassment, which seeks to frighten them and make them give up their struggle. The women interviewed reported being subjected to surveillance, followed by motorcycles or vehicles, having their homes or workplaces ransacked and, lately, harassment on social networks. Such pressure has led to some of them being forced to move until the situation of risk disappeared. Others have received anonymous insults and threatening calls. This ongoing harassment and public stigmatization have a profound psychological impact on women defenders. Thanks to the support they provide to each other and through their collective action, they often manage to weather the storm.

67% of the people murdered in 2018 defended rights involving land, the environment and indigenous peoples.⁸²

Despite the terror in which they live, their connection with the territory is too strong to abandon it forever. And they know that their struggle will persist.

The territory for me is like [an] everything: It is where the culture is, it is where the water is, it is where the jungle is. We have an enormous communion, and many times one can find no words to define what the territory is. I would say that for me the territory is life. It is life itself, and without territory we are nothing, we have no life. That is why our motto is: "We defend life and territory," because the territory includes everything. There is the sacred, there is the mundane. We have cried, we have laughed; it has cost us blood. We have had to be defending the territory our whole lives.

Afro-Colombian woman defender, 2019

Being a woman

Being a human rights defender in Colombia can cost you your life. But deciding to take this course in a country where patriarchy is so strongly rooted has a whole series of consequences and specific risks for women. By engaging in public participation, women leaders break with the scale of traditional values and dismantle the *macho* [sexist] outlook whereby women must be limited to the private domain.

One of the most perverse risks that these women face is sexual violence. This type of violence, which has been used in Colombia as a weapon of war,⁸³ is used to demonstrate power and humiliate victims. In the case of women defenders, it becomes a form of punishment for the work they do, a way to silence their demands and generate fear.⁸⁴

In recent years, signs of extreme violence have become more evident on the bodies of some murdered women, where signs of sexual violence and torture have been found.⁸⁵ The Ombudsman's Office itself has indicated that this cruelty seeks to inhibit the work of women defenders and creates a precedent so that new movements led by women do not arise.⁸⁶ Of the 143 activists accompanied by the Ombudsman's Office between 2016 and 2017, 17% had been victims of sexual violence.

We women defenders run other risks that men are not subject to. A man may be murdered, but before a woman is killed she is tortured, sexually abused, sometimes penetrated [with a foreign object], and such situations do not happen to men. So, the punishment for a woman leader, if they don't kill her, is rape to humiliate her physically. We have many colleagues who

have been raped and are told: "This happened to you so you keep your mouth shut," [and], "This was done to you for being a snitch." And sometimes it's not one man who rapes the woman, there are several. The punishment for what you do, the condemnation for what you do, your body is used to pay the price; and that does not happen to men. There is always sexual violence because the punishment is also aimed at the woman's body.

Rural woman defender, 2019

One of women defenders' biggest concerns is not the risk they face to their own lives, but the threats and attacks on other members of their families, especially their sons and daughters. Once again, the goal is to sow terror, intimidate women, and force them to give up their work. This tactic is used to a greater extent against women defenders, as opposed to their male counterparts, since it responds to the patriarchal framework in which a woman is inexorably associated with the role of mother. So, they seek to harm her through her family. There is also sexist violence perpetrated against women throughout the country, affecting one in three women. Women defenders are not exempt from this.⁸⁷

Living in rural areas

There is a pattern found repeatedly among the murdered defenders: They are people living with resources in rural areas who exercise local leadership limited to their territory and to areas that have been the scene of the bloodiest violence in the armed conflict. The context is one of rural inequality and powerful economic interests in the territories' natural resources. Homicides are concentrated in these settings.⁸⁸

Based on an analysis of the data, it is possible to identify the areas where there is the most occurrence of violence, including political femicides against women defenders: the departments of Norte de Santander, Antioquia, Chocó, Valle del Cauca, Cauca, Caquetá, and Nariño.⁸⁹

The confluence of armed groups in these territories and the methods they use when they see their interests threatened create a high-risk scenario for women defenders. According to the relevant reports, those presumed to be responsible for the killings and attacks are mainly paramilitary groups, followed by attacks perpetrated by unknown authors, and, thirdly, dissidents from the FARC-EP, the ELN and public security forces.⁹⁰

The dangerous intersection of discriminations

The disproportionate consequences of discrimination suffered by women defenders are exacerbated because they live in rural areas and because of their ethnicity, their socioeconomic status, and their gender identity.

Because they live in territories with substantial environmental wealth, indigenous and Afro-Colombian women defenders lead the opposition to large-scale development projects, demanding free, prior, and informed consent and promoting the rights of their communities. Threats and attacks against these women leaders have a multiplier effect on the rest of their communities, given both the crucial functions they play and their central role in the defence, preservation, and perpetuation of their traditional culture.⁹¹

The racism that exists towards the members of these communities, exacerbated in the case of women, has put them in a situation of particular vulnerability, as they have hardly any State protection. For these women, the armed conflict has not ended; violence, displacement, and the recruitment of minors persist.

For women who are also small farmers, there is an institutional vacuum in Colombia. The country has not signed the Peasant Rights Declaration. Nor have measures been included to identify the small farmer population in the census and generate fundamental information for the definition of public policies. This means there is a lack of specific statistics on this population. Only after a judicial process in the Supreme Court has the need for such actions been recognized.⁹²

The situation of transgender women defenders is especially difficult, as they not only have to deal with the risks of defending the land, but also face prejudices associated with their gender identity that are characteristic of a deeply macho and conservative society.

It is not easy to be a black, trans woman because they will always be singling you out. But I think the most important thing is that I've known how to develop my own capacity. I've known how to gain visibility and not remain in the background like someone's shadow, but rather to show that we, as trans women and black women, are leaders and that we take care of the territory and that we really love what we do, and that we love the people we truly defend.

Afro-Colombian trans woman defender, 2019

SYSTEMATIC NATURE: THREATS AND POLITICAL FEMICIDES ARE PREMEDITATED

Many voices confirm the systematic nature of the murders and threats against human rights defenders, although the government has seriously questioned this.

The UN Special Rapporteur, himself, addressing the situation of human rights defenders in his December 2018 visit to Colombia, stressed that there is indeed a pattern of systematic attacks after listening to the victims and seeing the horror they face.⁹³ The latest report coordinated by the *Comisión Colombiana de Juristas* also points in the same direction. This report analyses the patterns of the attacks in five scenarios based on more than 300 cases occurring after the Peace Agreement. Its conclusion leaves no room for doubt: Violence against women and men leaders has a repetitive, unchanging, and continuous nature, and its causes are not accidental or random. The victims are chosen selectively (evidenced because more than 50% of them were attacked or killed in their homes), victims with less protection are sought out (all of them worked at the territorial level, with little national visibility), and the vast majority is characterized by going up against hegemonic power (illegal groups or economic groups with interests in the territory).⁹⁴

The government has been forced to rectify its official discourse due to the existence of such unquestionable evidence, the critical voices of certain national and international organizations, as well as the chilling figures of homicides and attacks, which continue to rise. Finally, just a few months ago the Public Prosecutor's Office recognized the systematic nature of these cases but specified

that State agents are not involved.⁹⁵ This is a very important step because the government now can be charged with direct responsibility, whether by action or omission, as recognized by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.⁹⁶

HISTORICAL AND GENERALIZED IMPUNITY

Not only do women defenders risk reprisals and attacks for claiming their community rights; these dangers are aggravated by the lack of any effective implementation of legal mechanisms and guarantees to deter those who attack them. This translates into a lack of access to justice in rural areas. The limited presence of the Public Prosecutor's Office in these contexts is illustrated by a scarcity of material, technical, and human resources and the lack of adequate security mechanisms.⁹⁸ All this limits the State's ability to investigate and undermines defenders' access to justice.

Another risk factor for women defenders is the high level of impunity with which members of armed groups and criminal organizations operate in local areas, where they have succeeded in co-opting important institutional and economic sectors.

Colombia has the eighth highest levels of impunity of any country in the world.⁹⁷

The data reflect the level of historical impunity. Of the 64,095 reports of acts of corruption submitted to the Public Prosecutor's Office between 2012 and 2016, only 1.6% of the cases was resolved.⁹⁹ It is essential to fight against the country's endemic corruption to be able to guarantee the activists their rights and ensure they can carry out their work in a safe environment. But it is also essential to identify and condemn not only the material authors of the crimes, but also the intellectual authors behind them.

Impunity also extends to the institutional silence behind the political femicides of women leaders. The analysis by Global Witness and the Vance Centre of the murder of 122 defenders of land and the environment between 2010 and 2016 reveals unmistakable conclusions. Of all the cases, 102 were investigated; 10 were dismissed due to absence of information, nine ended up with a verdict, and only eight ended in conviction. The impunity rate was therefore 92%.¹⁰⁰ This degree of impunity has been corroborated by other sources, such as the analysis done by CINEP, which specified a degree of impunity of 91.4% (data from 2009 to 2017).¹⁰¹

PERVERTING ESSENTIAL WORK:

Stigmatize...

Historically, organizations and social leaders have been stigmatized by different political and economic actors, armed or not, because these actors have believed they constitute a threat to the status quo and challenge the established social order.¹⁰² This vision has served to justify violence and cruelty against this sector.

The stigmatization of women defenders (also for being indigenous or Afro-Colombian or having diverse gender identities) has permeated all levels of the

country, including its institutions. This has been denounced by the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights Defenders, referring to verbal attacks made by senior government officials against human rights defence work.¹⁰³ These defamatory statements have also been echoed at the departmental level when authorities have linked defenders with criminal gangs.¹⁰⁴

These statements not only delegitimize the unique work women defenders do, but they also create a very dangerous precedent that puts the women at greater risk and opens the door to greater levels of impunity.¹⁰⁵

Women human rights defenders are almost always exposed to rape, to abuse, to slander, often to insults, and we women are exposed to being stigmatized. Doors are closed to us because we are also stigmatized as 'argumentative,' as 'problematic,' and because people are taught that everyone has to keep quiet, even more so when it comes to woman, because we women have always been told to be "seen and not heard." We have always been told to keep it "private." So there are many ways to abuse a woman who defends human rights. We either walk among women or walk alone.

Indigenous woman defender, 2019

...And criminalize

A new pattern of criminalization of defenders has recently emerged, denounced by the Special Rapporteur. Defenders are being accused of being associated with the armed group ELN.¹⁰⁶ According to the Special Rapporteur, the evidence is weak and consists of testimonies by individuals who may be benefitting from reduced sentences by cooperating with the Public Prosecutor's Office. There are cases reported in La Guajira, Cauca, and Nariño.¹⁰⁷

Social protest has also become another dangerous activity for defenders, as they could be prosecuted for multiple crimes, including rebellion and terrorism.¹⁰⁸ Peaceful demonstrating has become a particularly risky activity when it is carried out against extractive projects or against agro-industrial monoculture. The response to these social mobilizations has been marked by excessive use of force, especially by the Mobile Anti-Riot Squad (*Escuadrón Móvil Anti Disturbios - ESMAD*).¹⁰⁹

This scenario is highly worrying and could represent a very significant setback for the consolidation of peace.

A grim future

All indications suggest that the number of homicides will continue to increase, as will harassment and attacks, following the upward trend initiated in 2016. In the short term, the political scenario also points in the same direction.

On the one hand, the breakdown of negotiations with the National Liberation Army (ELN) will lead to much uncertainty, especially in areas where the FARC-EP has retreated but where there is a large concentration of the ELN. Defender activity is high in these same territories, which means high-risk contexts for them.

On the other hand, regional elections will be held in October 2019. Once again, this will be a highly sensitive moment for women defenders, as their work leads them inexorably to challenge local interests, both political and economic. This electoral contest will give women defenders a greater level of visibility, so the risk of attacks is expected to increase.

3 POLICIES THAT DO NOT TRANSFORM REALITY

In the last two decades, women defenders have seen that numerous regulatory frameworks, decrees, and laws have been passed, accompanied by commissions, working groups, action plans, and various programs to, theoretically, protect them. These many government initiatives have barely translated into any effective improvement in their protection.

The government of Juan Manuel Santos—the president who led the country from 2010 to 2018 and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2016 for his role in ending the armed conflict—established links with human rights defenders and made them part of the country’s most important conversations. That openness to dialogue was reflected in multiple packages of norms and resolutions which did not, however, succeed in translating into tangible improvements. Thousands of victims and hundreds of homicides from those eight years of government left a balance that is more bitter than sweet, as the structural problems behind the attacks were not resolved.¹¹⁰

One year after Iván Duque took office as President, it seems clear that his priority is focused on what he has called the “orange economy.”¹¹¹ It proposes favoring investment through tax incentives that shapes the country’s main policies, such as the 2018-2022 National Development Plan.¹¹² Not only will this economic model deepen the country’s profound inequality,¹¹³ it also seems to ignore other very urgent matters, such as the protection of civil society leaders.

As part of the roadmap set out by the Pact for Life signed in August 2018,¹¹⁴ Duque’s government presented the Timely Action Plan for Prevention and Protection for Human Rights Defenders, Social and Communal Leaders, and Journalists (PAO).¹¹⁵ It was conveniently approved just before the arrival of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights Defenders.¹¹⁶

This plan has been much criticized for ignoring questions of vital importance. Firstly, it omits prior decrees that represented an important legal framework for ensuring protection of defenders and prevention of violence against them, as explained below. This omission has raised a lot of questions about how these new provisions will be implemented in public policy, whether this will further the lack of coordination with local and regional authorities, and further complicate the already complicated institutional architecture. Analyses indicate that this plan may overlap with the National Security Guarantees Commission (see below), among others. The Special Rapporteur stressed the need to build on the foundation of already existing agreements in order to ensure sustainability and create trust in the process.¹¹⁷ This last matter has also been quite criticized by civil society organizations, as they were not included in the definition of this policy (as opposed to previous regulations, which were the fruit of dialogue with civil society).¹¹⁸ Secondly, there is also concern over the plan’s militaristic orientation, as it focuses on the armed forces and strengthening their territorial presence as the solution to violence. It omits the fact that the attacks against leaders are the result of structural problems and derive from the armed conflict, leaving the responsibility of State agents unaddressed.¹¹⁹ Finally, according to information

provided by the Ministry of the Interior, there are no data on the plan's current or future budget. For all these reasons, the plan is a significant reversal of achievements to date. For many, it is a return to coercive mechanisms that ignore prevention and focus on persecution of attackers, as opposed to focusing on the people who must be protected.

The opportunity lost and the 'armed conflict' that never was

With alarming numbers of homicides and attacks, the 2018-2022 National Development Plan¹²⁰ was seen as a key opportunity to provide an effective response to this dramatic situation in the country. However, Duque's government turned a deaf ear to organizations' demands and to the real situation faced by hundreds of thousands of women leaders. This plan has become an extension of the PAO, reproducing the same errors. There is no mention of the dismantling of the so-called paramilitary successor organizations; also omitted is the legal and institutional framework of the Peace Agreement with regard to the concept of human security.¹²¹

Another significant omission from the plan is the fact that the nomenclature "internal armed conflict" has not been used. Rather, it uses the term "violence," a category that is clearly insufficient for describing the real situation suffered by the country. This negationist thesis is a constant in the new Iván Duque government and the party he represents, the Centro Democrático. This position is very dangerous because it permeates the whole government; it can encourage mayors and civil servants to ignore the content of the Peace Agreement and may put women defenders in an even riskier situation.

3.1 REGULATORY FRAMEWORKS FOR PREVENTION AND PROTECTION

Back in 2006 we began to say, 'They're going to kill us,' and intimidating leaflets against women in the organization began to appear. They said, 'We are going to kill those crazy women.' But no one paid attention to us. In 2009, for the first time, we sat down with the Ministry of the Interior, through the human rights delegate, and we said, 'They're going to kill us.' Nothing happened until there was a sentence against a presumed paramilitary who said it was true what we had said, that they tracked us to lower the organization's political and investigative profile. Imagine that! Since 2009, it took until 2018 for us to be able to get collective protection measures! Even the daughters of the women in the organization have been threatened in the course of this work.

Woman defender, 2019

At the national level, the rights of activists are guaranteed on paper in a good number of regulations that have been approved over the course of more than a decade. This section analyses those that are considered most relevant for prevention and the protection of women defenders, while identifying the greatest obstacles to making them effective.¹²² In any case, none of these public policies have taken into account the most current data, which suggest that rural women leaders who defend agricultural, territorial, and environmental rights are in the greatest danger. This is a very serious error that needs to be addressed in order to offer these activists the security they need.

National Roundtable on Guarantees

The National Process of Guarantees for the Work of Human Rights Defenders, Social and Communal Leaders came into being with the objective of building real guarantees for the exercise of human rights defence following the 2008 escalation of violence. It is a forum for dialogue and debate between the State,¹²³ the international community,¹²⁴ and the main platforms of human rights and peace organizations.¹²⁵

This instrument combines a series of elements that make it a key element for the security of women defenders. First, the three-way dialogue allows all parties to have their own voice. Second, it has a strong territorial presence, with over 20 roundtables in different departments and 1,400 territorial organizations that are part of the Process, ensuring a rural presence in these spaces for discussion. Finally, having a specific women's roundtable facilitates there being a gender perspective that might otherwise be forgotten.

The National Roundtable on Guarantees has contributed to putting the problem of these guarantees on the public agenda, although not always successfully. Likewise, it has provided human rights organizations with a means of dialogue, recognition, and legitimacy. Thanks to its duration and validity, this roundtable is recognized nationally and internationally as the highest-level tripartite process in the field of human rights in Colombia.

Concrete results have been achieved as a result of constant pressure from civil society organizations. These include the progress made by the Public Prosecutor's Office in the investigation of crimes against defenders.¹²⁶

Despite this achievement, there are evident frustrations in the face of the government's silence and passivity. In recent years, civil society organizations have repeatedly asked for the thematic roundtables to be convened, for the territorial roundtables to be activated, and finally, for celebration of acts recognizing women and men defenders. None of this has been achieved. At the same time, the progress made by the Public Prosecutor's Office is negligible, given the shameful levels of impunity. Therefore, it is essential to revitalize this forum. It is also essential for the executive branch to show the necessary leadership. Finally, all of this must be carried out guaranteeing the participation of women defenders of agrarian, territorial, and environmental rights.

Office of the Attorney General

The Office of the Attorney General is the main disciplinary control body of the Colombian State. Since 2017, there has been a significant shift in this office, which has made it possible to advance in the protection of women defenders.

Its first action in this regard was the approval of Directive 002 of 2017, on the guidelines for the effective protection of the rights of human rights defenders.¹²⁷ That represented a notable advance over the 2010 directive, as it broadened the concept of a human rights defender to include "members of civil society movements, political movements, political and civic leaders and their organizations, and those who actively participate in that capacity in the implementation of the Peace Agreement." It also emphasizes that individual and collective public prevention and protection policies must have a territorial, gender,

and differentiated approach. These guidelines are aimed at attorneys; authorities on a national, departmental, district and municipal level; as well as members of public security forces.

The Office of the Attorney General has carried out other actions to avoid the undermining, discrediting, and harassment of defenders, and has contributed to revealing the systematic nature of the attacks and murders to which they are subjected.¹²⁸

Additionally, in circular 007 of June 2019,¹²⁹ the Attorney General called on territorial leaders to ensure the protection and security of women and men small farmers and leaders who are claiming lands, and women and men defenders of agricultural, territorial, and environmental rights, so that their fundamental rights to life, freedom, integrity, and security are duly guaranteed.

National Protection Unit

The National Protection Unit, attached to the Ministry of the Interior, was created in 2011 with the objective of “articulating, coordinating, and executing protection measures and support for prevention, promoting the rights to life, integrity, freedom and the security of people, collectives, groups, and communities that because of their job or the exercise of their functions may incur extraordinary or extreme risk.”¹³⁰ It is thus the mechanism that defenders of land and the environment must use to ensure their protection. If it were an effective mechanism, many lives could be saved.

However, organizations and women leaders have repeatedly criticized this mechanism as being inadequate. To be effective, it must undergo a complete reconfiguration, diametric of that devised by the current government. This new reform focuses exclusively on increasing physical security, turning a deaf ear to the demands of women defenders who ask for a more global view of security, incorporating a psychological and spiritual approach, as well as collective and differentiated protection.

Another serious problem with this mechanism is that it does not offer guarantees of protection to women defenders. The obligatory risk assessment that it gives is sometimes so poor, biased, incomplete, slow, and inadequate that it has even put women at greater risk by not giving them the necessary, adapted protection in a timely manner. Even the Constitutional Court has referred to this ineffectiveness.¹³¹

The security measures offered by this government entity have also been repeatedly criticized for not responding to the particular needs of women leaders. One of the issues that has been most clearly omitted is a gender-differentiated approach, an issue already identified in 2010 by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women. As previously discussed, women face a series of specific challenges due to the very fact that they are women. Like the women featured in this report, they are mothers, daughters, small farmers, indigenous persons, Afro-Colombians, persons with diverse gender identities, and those who live in remote rural areas. All these particularities demand a differentiated and adapted protection mechanism. However, the risk assessments made by the National Protection Unit are based on fixed and non-negotiable definitions that leave out many of the particular risks that these women face. This is coupled with gender

discrimination and stereotyping by local officials, who are responsible for making the assessments and who, at times, can make the situation worse for women defenders.

The lack of trust in this administrative apparatus has meant that the women themselves, together with their communities, have developed their own self-protection methods.

Protection and self-protection measures

When their lives are in danger, activists turn to that which they know helps protect them; in other words, to that which is most deeply rooted in their land, their ancestors, and their community. They turn to the midwives, *rezanderas*, and traditional medicine for the psychosocial and spiritual support they need. Unfortunately, the authorities do not share this vision and, therefore, spiritual measures are never part of the protection provided by the State.

In the face of the UNP's [National Protection Unit] fallacies, we are putting together our own protocol that includes traditional medicine; it is work carried out in spaces for collective reflection with our highest indigenous authority.

Indigenous woman defender, 2019

They understand the work of defence from a collective standpoint and they take action accordingly. This is why any protective measure must, at its core, include all the women leaders that are part of the organization and their community. The risk is seen as collective and, therefore, the response must also be. But it is equally important for them that the collective does not correspond to a single concept; its diversity (women, indigenous, and Afro-Colombian) must be considered, so, too, the territorial and sociocultural context in which they live, as well as their own world view. To achieve this, it is essential that any protection system set up be developed by the communities themselves.

None of the women have been asked, none of us has been asked what kind of protection we want, what protection I want as a woman. There are collective protections and individual protections, and they also have to include family protection. Because if they tell me, 'Look, I'm going to protect you, and your family is going to be left behind, or your daughter is going to be left behind,' well, you stay, because if you have been defending collective rights, we have to be protected collectively, also.

Rural woman defender, 2019

National Security Guarantees Commission

The National Security Guarantees Commission was created in 2017, within the framework of the Peace Agreement. Its purpose was to design a policy to combat criminal organizations that put peace at risk, and to protect social and political leaders.¹³²

Civil society organizations welcomed its creation with great hope, because it was understood as an historic opportunity for an institutional body to address the issue of paramilitaries from an institutional perspective. This was all the more true because it was created by law, which gave it a higher regulatory status and, therefore, greater capacity for action.

But things have not turned out at all as initially hoped. As a rule, the President would have to convene the Commission monthly, but since coming to power Iván

Duque has only done so twice, after more than 12 months in government.¹³³ This has been an important turning point since the Commission's pace of work was faster during the previous legislature—subcommittees were launched and dozens of territorial sessions were organized.¹³⁴ The Special Rapporteur has demanded that this body be reactivated, given its relevance.¹³⁵

There is a lot of frustration building among women leaders and their organizations at the lack of government leadership on this matter. They feel the Commission has become purely cosmetic, as it has not been possible to really address the issue of paramilitaries, nor has it been able to achieve firm results. According to the latest report by the Kroc Institute tracking Peace Agreement implementation, since the Commission's creation only half of its mechanisms have been activated, and most of them are in an initial phase of development.¹³⁶

All these factors, together with the fact that this Commission has become an advisory commission responding to the PAO,¹³⁷ jeopardize its future, despite this entity's potential to make progress toward breaking the cycle of violence that seeks to silence women defenders.

Comprehensive Program on Security and Protection for Communities and Organizations in the Territories

The Comprehensive Program on Security and Protection for Communities and Organizations in the Territories was another of the measures resulting from the Peace Agreement. It includes a whole series of objectives that, if fulfilled, could become a turning point in the lives of women defenders. Outstanding among these objectives are: to develop a comprehensive and collective protection protocol, to adopt measures to fight stigmatization, and to promote public campaigns to recognize the valuable work of these defenders.

At the time of its approval in 2018, analyses indicated that this program could finally be the mechanism so sought after by defenders.¹³⁸ However, a year later it has a long way to go to reach that goal. According to the Kroc Institute report, the Program is in a very early stage of execution. Specifically, none of its seven provisions has been finalized: One has not been started, and six are only in the embryonic phase. This lack of progress detracts from the progress of the Peace Agreement itself, affecting one of its core elements.

Another of the important shortcomings of this Program is that it violates the spirit of participation with which it was created. While it is true that the main human rights platforms validated the program, indigenous and Afro-Colombian groups were notably absent from the consultations. This was, without a doubt, a missed opportunity to obtain validation from the ethnic authorities for what could be the new protection model.¹³⁹

There are also two other important problems that can be seen: insufficient budgetary funds to cover all these measures and a possible shift towards a traditional security concept, far from the concept of human security with which the Program was initially designed.

Ombudsman's Office

Throughout the years, the Ombudsman's Office has proven to be the primary human rights activist on the part of the government. It has made an enormous ongoing effort to position this agenda at all levels and incorporate it into the Peace Agreement. Moreover, the Ombudsman's Office has worked firmly and determinedly to promote concrete actions to protect women leaders, to prevent violence against them, to safeguard civil society leadership, and to foster a positive vision while counteracting stigmatization.

The Early Warning System [SAT in Spanish], which is under the responsibility of the Ombudsman's Office, activates preventive action by the State through its warnings, special reports, and short-term and imminent risk reports.¹⁴⁰ This mechanism has been in force for more than 15 years and has made it possible to monitor and assess the dynamics of the armed conflict to identify possible massive violations of human rights and International Humanitarian Law.

For the women defenders of land and the environment, the Ombudsman's Office has been a loyal ally, especially due to its effective monitoring work when analyzing possible threats and issuing warnings.¹⁴¹ Thanks to the support provided by UN Women, a gender approach was incorporated in 2005 and, as a result, the Office began to issue differentiated warnings about the specific risks faced by women and violations of their rights. This approach was institutionalized in 2014, making it possible to systematize gender analysis.

The SAT is currently undergoing transformation as a result of the commitments in the Peace Agreement. The need to strengthen the SAT was established, and it was assigned responsibility for a series of functions related to the prevention of violence and protection of the civilian population, including defenders.

Although this reinforcement has been welcomed with open arms, the slow and limited government response remains a cause for great concern. It is particularly illustrative that after Early Warning 026 was issued in March 2018 about women and men defenders, there were 62 homicides committed and the number of threats increased by 63%. Furthermore, the majority of these murders took place in the municipalities that the Ombudsman's Office indicated were high risk.¹⁴² The Ministry of the Interior, which is responsible for taking action in response to the Early Warnings, has failed to fulfil its responsibilities.¹⁴³ It is crucial for the Ministry to assume greater leadership. As long as this does not happen, the hundreds of thousands of defenders will continue to suffer the consequences.

Comprehensive Program of Guarantees for Women Leaders and Human Rights Defenders

The leadership, determination, and ongoing activism of women's organizations and women defenders enables progress toward the creation of specific spaces for the protection of women leaders. The final step was achieved in 2018 with the adoption of the Comprehensive Program of Guarantees for Women Leaders and Human Rights Defenders.¹⁴⁴

The Program's purpose is to guarantee the protection of women's lives and integrity so they can freely exercise their social and political leadership and their right to defend human rights. Under the auspices of the Ministry of the Interior,

this mechanism focuses on three specific strategies: strengthening women leaders and their organizations, institutional adoption of protection measures, and the fight against impunity and the loss of historical memory. It also includes a differentiated, ethnic, comprehensive, territorial, and collective approach that responds to the historical demands of women and their organizations.¹⁴⁵

On the other hand, given the increase in the murders of women defenders of agricultural, territorial, and environmental rights and the threats against them, the Program must be updated to include specific analyses and responses; it must ensure the participation of groups and organizations of indigenous, small farmer, and Afro-Colombian women in the process.

More than a year after its adoption, the Program has still not produced the anticipated results. Women's organizations have reported that it is not being implemented at the necessary pace.¹⁴⁶ Two reasons behind this delay are the lack of budget and the change of government, which, as noted above, has placed greater emphasis on the PAO. In addition, there is hardly any information on progress, so it is even more fundamental to promote tripartite accountability mechanisms involving the government, civil society, and the international community. As the Special Rapporteur has insisted, it is essential to guarantee the Program's immediate implementation, given the urgency of the moment.¹⁴⁷

Moreover, it is vital that the new government not turn its back on the leadership of women defenders and women's organizations. The path carved out over the course of many years in pursuit of a protection mechanism that responds to the diverse situations to which women leaders are subjected must be safeguarded. Militarist approaches, such as that of the PAO, would corrupt the Program's spirit.

What we are really asking for is a differentiated approach through the program of guarantees for women defenders that is built with indigenous women, with Afro women, [with] defenders, and [with] women leaders.

Afro-Colombian woman defender, 2019

3.2 STRUCTURAL PROBLEMS THAT PREVENT GOING FROM PAPER TO PRACTICE

Beyond the specific problems of each of the regulatory frameworks analysed, there are a number of substantive issues that prevent public policy from moving forward in practice to guarantee the rights of small farmer, indigenous, and Afro-Colombian women. Some of them have already been mentioned, but it is relevant to re-examine them to expose the set of obstacles that prevent moving from commitments on paper to implementation in practice.

The gap between a legal framework and its implementation. Despite well-intentioned words and a very high number of regulations and decrees, the reality is that the numbers of attacks continue to grow alarmingly. Meanwhile, the government has not taken decisive measures to stop this dramatic situation or put institutional mechanisms at the service of this objective. Failure to do so puts the lives of hundreds of women defenders at risk, while undermining the Peace Agreement.

Territories subject to ‘might makes right.’ Government institutions still do not have a presence in the areas most affected by the armed conflict. In this vacuum of power, where new armed actors have occupied the space left by the FARC-EP, women defenders are seen as an impediment to those with economic interests in the territories. This makes these defenders targets for attack. Given this danger, and without recourse to the state apparatus, women environmental and territorial defenders are abandoned to their fate.

Imposition of military security. Militarization of territories remains a widespread government policy, especially in places where extractive economies settle in. The military presence prevents a more comprehensive approach that would enable progress towards human security.

Deep and entrenched inequality. If the necessary efforts are not made to break the vicious circle of structural inequality in the country, the problems motivating women's work to defend rights will continue to be equally valid and necessary.

Inadequate institutional architecture. The inefficient implementation of many laws and legal mechanisms is due to the lack of coordination among the different ministries and institutions responsible on a national and territorial level. There are institutional overlaps as well as gaps that leave women defenders without a clear channel for enabling their protection.¹⁴⁸

When sexual violence is reported in the countryside, the woman must go to the department capital, where there is supposed to be an attention system in place. But this does not work as it should; you don't know where to go, it's uncertain, they tell you [to] go here, [to] go there.

Indigenous woman defender, 2019

Centralism in decision making. Although most threats and political femicides occur in rural areas, decisions are still made centrally. While it is true that coordination and planning must be bidirectional, it is necessary to reverse the pyramid in decision making so that the measures are better suited to the particular needs of each territory.

Marginalization of rural women's organizations in decision making. The other side of centralism in decision making is the exclusion of local organizations and rural defenders. Thus, the policies that affect communities continue to be designed without including their input. The few commissions formed by the government that include civil society are not a political priority for the State. Instead, they have been subordinated to the whim of whatever government is in power, which decides to give them political relevance or not.¹⁴⁹

Failure to act on the obligation to protect. The mere existence of reasonable possibilities of preventing a previously known risk from materializing creates State responsibility for failure to act.¹⁵⁰ Despite the Council of State's ruling on this issue, for all practical purposes there seem to be no signs of change. This failure to act is costing many lives.

And this is also an issue of State complicity: If a woman reports any act of violence, part of the armed conflict or not, the law can address it. If the law does not fulfil its duty, then the law and the State become complicit in the crimes against women, and we have said this publicly.

Indigenous woman defender, 2019

Insufficient budget for gender policies. Public funds for women have fallen drastically in the last five years. According to the General Budget of the Nation, the line item for gender equity did not exceed 0.018% in 2013, falling to 0.0014% in 2017. This represents a cut of 92%.¹⁵¹ Some of the regulatory frameworks previously analysed include issues of financing in their articles. Yet, resources have not been specified when it comes to executing the policies. Additionally, it is not possible to know what amount of resources is being allocated to the protection of rural women defenders and the prevention of violence against them, so there is a significant lack of transparency here.

Zero visibility of the specific problems of rural women. If women have been relegated from the priorities of successive governments, this marginalization is exacerbated in the case of rural women. The executive branch's reluctance to adopt the recommendations made by these women, the authorities' ignorance of gender policies, the abrupt decrease in the budget for gender issues and the absence of a clear commitment to address the patriarchal system are a good example of this discrimination and lack of visibility.¹⁵²

The institutional framework at the local level suffers from ignorance about laws for women. Imagine that in the department they thought that CEDAW [United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women] was a virus! Also, we feel discrimination, [since] assisting a Wayúu [indigenous] woman and assisting a woman from the town is not the same.

Indigenous woman defender, 2019

Lack of recognition of the leadership of rural women leaders. Women defenders have little representation in forums for dialogue and consultation; they barely have access to resources (material, logistical, economic, social, etc.). These shortcomings aggravate the risks and consequences of attacks, when they occur. In turn, the lack of recognition by the State has led civil society organizations to distrust official institutions.

We do not trust authority. We do not trust institutions. Because I think that every time we file a complaint or every time we move, I feel, and we feel, that we are reopening those wounds. We are raising our voice above the people who want to silence this voice, especially [that] of women. And that has been the process we have here; I believe that the risk when it comes to women, when it comes to mining, on the environmental issue, is very high. On the land issue [also], it is very high.

Indigenous woman defender, 2019

Lack of adapted and differentiated measures. Defending agricultural, territorial and environmental rights is even more difficult for women who also have an ethnic identity. These conditions decisively influence the possibilities they have to participate in the social and political life of their community, to build their knowledge about their rights and the mechanisms available for claiming those rights, to generate engagement processes, and to reach local and national

decision-making bodies. This specificity is still not effectively taken into account in prevention policies, protection measures, and evaluation processes.

Double Impunity for crimes against women. Although the government has begun to recognize the systematic nature of attacks against defenders, there is no guarantee that such crimes will not be repeated, given the high rates of impunity. For women, the effect is twofold because the aggressions against them are due not only to their activity as defenders but also to their status as women in a society that discriminates against them for that reason. The particular characteristics of this type of aggression are not taken into account in investigations and judicial decisions.

When a woman is killed, it takes months and possibly years for this to be recognized. When it comes to women, there are always doubts. I wish this could be deepened because in this country the law is also sexist. Just as the conflict is sexist, justice is supremely sexist.

Rural woman defender, 2019

Insufficient prevention and protection measures. Most measures of the State are focused on mitigation and response to effects, but those aimed at prevention are very limited. Additionally, existing policies do not receive the necessary attention from the government to enable their effective implementation; the SAT is one example.

Public policies adapted to women defenders. To date, existing policies are very focused on security. However, the spirit of the measures must be aligned with providing the conditions to create an environment enabling women defenders to be political actors, where they can freely exercise their right to defend their lands and the environment.

4 THE ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY AND SUPPORT FOR THE PEACE PROCESS

The international community followed the 50 years of armed conflict closely, especially from the 1980s onward. For several reasons—such as the production and trafficking of illicit drugs or the continuous violation of human rights—many countries took a stance throughout this period.¹⁵³ With regard to the peace process, the international community was present from first negotiations under the government of Andrés Pastrana through the recent ones ending with the signing of the Peace Agreement with the FARC-EP. Several countries served as mediators (Cuba, Venezuela, Chile, and Norway, primarily) and are monitoring its implementation, under the auspices of the United Nations. From this point on, friendly countries will assume important functions, serving as guarantors of the disarmament process, as well as providing technical support for the design and implementation of policies in the post-Agreement period, and for institutional strengthening and public participation. This accompaniment will be key to give the process legitimacy and ensure compliance.¹⁵⁴

In addition to this role as facilitator of the peace building process, the international community has had a key role as an economic donor. However, post-Agreement financing will not be an easy task. From the beginning, the government assumed that part of the funds to implement the Peace Agreement would have to come from abroad, in the form of foreign assistance as well as private investment. Under this premise, the Colombia en Paz fund,¹⁵⁵ under the Office of the Presidency, was created in 2017 for a 10-year period. Various donors are part of it, including the EU, the World Bank, Norway, and Switzerland, among others.¹⁵⁶ In 2018, suspicions of corruption overshadowed this fund and caused the director to step down.¹⁵⁷ To date, the international community has disbursed \$256 million, just over 20% of the contribution made by the State.¹⁵⁸ Spain has contributed \$1.5 million.¹⁵⁹

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY AND ITS SUPPORT FOR WOMEN DEFENDERS OF AGRICULTURAL, TERRITORIAL, AND ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS

Crimes and attacks against defenders have put Colombia in the spotlight of international opinion. This has been a topic of discussion and a source of messages of concern in the most important multilateral, regional, and national bodies, and also a source of public rejection in Colombia and internationally.

#NosEstánMatando

The killings of human rights defenders have caused hundreds of thousands of citizens to rise up and express their condemnation of these events. Since 2018, a “velatón” (extended vigil) is celebrated in March, a form of social expression that has covered 60 cities in the country and has spread to more than 30 countries in the world, with more than 20,000 people participating.¹⁶⁰ Through a simple symbolic act, a network of solidarity is being woven for these civil society leaders who risk their lives fighting for their rights.

What follows is an analysis of the main institutions that have addressed the problem of women defenders. Some of these organizations have prioritized this issue on their agenda, promoting commitments and responsibilities at the international level.

- **United Nations Security Council.** In the session held in April 2019, Colombia was at centre stage of the debate in the United Nations’ highest-ranking body. Although the agenda was marked by the government’s blow to the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP),¹⁶¹ particular emphasis was put on the worrying situation of human rights defenders and the persistent pattern of their murders. Council members stressed the importance of taking quick action to prevent attacks and bringing those responsible to justice. They also pointed out the importance of the effective presence of the State in areas affected by the conflict, through a combination of civil and security institutions. Finally, they stressed the need for the active participation of civil society in peace building. Especially relevant was the fact that a woman civil society leader participated in the session itself. This way, it was possible to give visibility and a voice to these women who, in their own country, are still relegated to a secondary role.
- **United Nations Verification Mission.** The United Nations Secretary General himself repeats his concern about the situation of women and men defenders in each of the Verification Mission reports to the Security Council.¹⁶² He reiterates his request for the adoption of rapid measures to avoid new occurrences, in addition to fighting impunity. He calls on all institutions to work in a coordinated manner, especially where acts of violence are concentrated: rural areas. Unfortunately, he does not make special mention of women defenders, even though they run the risk of suffering double violence.
- **UN Universal Periodic Review.** In May 2018, Colombia passed the review that the Human Rights Council periodically conducts on member countries. In that review, the participating countries assessed the progress made in human rights by the government. In the great majority of the interventions, serious concerns were expressed about the lack of protection for civil society leaders, and the State was urged to implement urgently needed mechanisms to stop the violence against them.¹⁶³
- **Visit of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights Defenders.** Although analysis and recommendations made by the Special Rapporteur have been reflected throughout the report, the visit he made to Colombia in 2018 marked a key milestone. In preparation for this visit, the government was forced to address the issue and prioritize the protection of civil society leaders and the prevention of violence against them, even if only temporarily. In addition, this trip enabled the Special Rapporteur to be a direct witness to the situation defenders face every day, and especially to the invisibility and victimization suffered by women leaders in rural areas.

“Being exposed to multiple discriminations, they are doubly vulnerable to being abused and victimized by armed groups that are fighting to control resources and territories.”¹⁶⁴

According to the Special Rapporteur himself, rural women defenders suffer the most risk throughout the country.

- **United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).** In 2019, Colombia's progress on women's rights was analysed. In the concluding observations of the ninth periodic report on Colombia, CEDAW describes the high risk to which women defenders are subjected and expresses its concern over the limited capacity of the judiciary, particularly in rural areas, and for the re-victimization of these leaders when they try to get protection.¹⁶⁵
- **Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR).** At the end of 2018, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights made a working visit to Colombia in order to verify and observe the situation of human rights defenders on the ground. As a result of this firsthand experience, the Commission has echoed many of the demands related to the protection and safety of women defenders, highlighting that those in rural areas are in a situation of extreme risk. The latest report of the IACHR maintains the same demands that it has made since 2016.¹⁶⁶

Additionally, there are other key spaces at the international level to promote the adoption of protection measures for women and men defenders. The most important are:

- **The European Union (EU).** Over recent decades, the EU's commitment to the rule of law and peace in Colombia has been unwavering. With the launch in May 2019 of the #DefendemosLaVida campaign, this regional body and 17 of its Member States wanted to focus on the stigmatization of those who defend the territories. Another topic of discussion in the April 2019 dialogue between Colombia and the EU was the work of civil society leaders, as well as the ways to guarantee their safety and avoid harassment and intimidation.¹⁶⁷ In addition to these specific issues, the EU has expressed its utmost concern at the highest level for the series of political murders and threats suffered by defenders.¹⁶⁸ The European Parliament has also taken a stance on several occasions, asking for greater guarantees, both within the framework of the trade agreements between the EU and Colombia¹⁶⁹ and in a letter addressed to the EU High Representative and President Iván Duque, calling for concrete action.¹⁷⁰ Although all these actions are welcome, it is urgent for foreign assistance funds to reach women's organizations directly, especially those of rural women, so these organizations can manage the funds themselves. Also, specific mention of defenders of agricultural, territorial, and environmental rights is lacking but needed, given the escalation of violence against them.

Foreign assistance speaks of support, but does not allow, organizations to manage resources. This happens with foreign aid and with institutions, [which] form their own operators that are organizations to manage money; it's not to accompany a process.

Rural woman defender, 2019

- **Government of Spain.** While it is true that, historically, the defence of human rights and civil society activists has not been a priority of the Spanish Government's foreign policy with Colombia,¹⁷¹ in recent years the Spanish agenda has taken a positive turn in this direction. However, there are still many caveats worth noting.

In its discourse, the Government of Spain has echoed the seriousness of the situation suffered by defenders, making statements at the highest level both in Colombia and in the Human Rights Council during the Universal Periodic Review.¹⁷³ Moreover, Colombia is a priority country both in the II National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security¹⁷⁴ and in the program for the protection and temporary reception of human rights defenders who are under threat, of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation (MAEUEC).¹⁷⁵ Spain participates in other entities that are very significant for the protection of defenders, such as the National Roundtable on Guarantees (of which it has been a member and the main contributor since its inception)¹⁷⁶ and the European Union Human Rights Group. It is an active member of the Ambassadors with Defenders initiative, created in 2016 to support activities of women and men leaders in Colombia.¹⁷⁷ In the 2015-2019 Colombia-Spain Country Association Framework (a document meant to guide the cooperation strategy for those five years), a specific objective was included on the reduction of threats against defenders and the increase of reports on their situation. However, the violence against defenders is quite peripheral in the Framework, since it does not permeate the strategic analysis.¹⁷⁸

Since 2017, Spain has included 31 Colombian defenders in its protection program, 14 of whom were women.¹⁷²

Furthermore, Spain has supported the Public Prosecutor's Office in training public servants on sexual violence, a key element to prevent the victimization that women defenders suffer. Geographically, they have focused in the Chocó region, one of those most affected by the conflict, in the empowerment of indigenous women.

Financially, according to MAEUEC data, Spain's contribution to protect and promote Human Rights defenders between 2016 and 2017 was four million euros.¹⁷⁹ The relative weight of this sum on overall Spanish aid to Colombia was 20% in 2016, falling to 9% in 2017. These figures do not correspond to the urgency of the moment or the threatening situation that women defenders are currently facing.

All the political effort that Spain is making to highlight the dramatic reality of defenders clashes with its sale of arms to Colombia. From the signing of the Peace Agreement through mid-2018, € 50.8 million worth of weapons was sold.¹⁸⁰ Ammunition, light weapons, small arms, shotguns and rifles, torpedoes and missiles are some of the materials Colombia acquired. These are weapons that could be violating the rights of the defenders who, on the other hand, successive Spanish governments have said they are defending.

- **Friendly countries.** The voice of alarm about the situation of women defenders has also spread to other countries, such as Norway, Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Switzerland. These countries have expressed their concerns through letters addressed directly to the Colombian government, urging the government to activate protection mechanisms, give a voice to human rights organizations and to women leaders in political arenas,¹⁸¹ and actively fund programs that serve to give defenders visibility and to protect them.¹⁸² These countries, along with others, are part of the Subgroup on Human Rights. Supported by the UN Office for Human Rights in Colombia,¹⁸³ this Subgroup is the main body through which embassies develop priorities and joint actions, including field visits and meetings with civil society, and raise priority cases or issues with authorities and hold high-level visits. In recent times, the situation faced by civil

society and environmental activists has been increasingly present on this group's agenda, in response to the situation Colombia is experiencing.¹⁸⁴

5 FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The Peace Agreement opened the door to put an end to the oldest armed conflict in the Americas. But this peace has only been a brief respite for many communities that suffered the cruelest and most heartbreaking effects of violence. In rural areas rich in minerals or other non-renewable resources or considered suitable for expansion of agro-industrial monocultures, the warlords have changed their names but continue to control the lives of local people.

The absence of the Colombian State continues to be felt in the territories, despite the insistent demands of the international community and human rights organizations. Iván Duque's government has chosen to look the other way, leaving women defenders to fend for themselves in the face of growing threats.

These women who protect lands, the environment, their culture and their roots are now more than ever the target of different armed groups. They are seen as troublemakers because they claim their rights and question the dominant economic and political interests. The alarming and constantly increasing numbers of attacks and murders are a true reflection of the armed groups' intention to intimidate and silence these defenders. But these women fight for peace above all and are not willing to give up their efforts.

It is urgent to take action before this dramatic situation reaches new heights. Making the work of these defenders visible is essential, so that their valuable contribution to peace is known and recognized. Prevention, protection, and guaranteeing justice are key elements to enable them to do their work safely. But none of this will help if there is no determined government commitment to put an end to the structural causes that support inequality in Colombia and lead these women defenders to take leadership. The international community is, and must continue to be, a great ally in promoting these changes and giving visibility to the crucial role that these women play.

Rural women leaders are a key part of building a new country. Without them, Colombia will be one step farther from peace.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As has been emphasized throughout this report, there is an obvious, urgent need to give visibility to the work of women defenders of agricultural, territorial, and environmental rights in the face of the growing threats, attacks and political murders to which they have been increasingly subjected since the signing of the Peace Agreement. This task must be carried out at every national and international level to ensure that not one more woman has to risk her life.

Therefore, we urge that a differentiated and collective approach be developed for the protection of these women defenders and the prevention of violence against them in all national regulatory frameworks and in all international arenas.

To achieve this, Oxfam makes the following recommendations:

To the Colombian State

- **Consolidate the comprehensive and effective presence of the State in rural areas**, especially in those most affected by the armed conflict, promoting the rule of law and sustained and inclusive development in these areas.
- **Effectively implement all the points of the Peace Agreement** with the FARC-EP in general, especially the points related to the control of paramilitaries.
- **Restart the negotiations with the National Liberation Army (ELN)** as its ongoing activity puts women defenders in a situation of high vulnerability.
- **Make the security of women defenders a policy of the State**, thereby drastically reduce the rising numbers of political femicides and attacks, achieving “zero weeks.”
- **Substantially reduce the level of impunity.** To achieve this, the Public Prosecutor's Office must advance more rapidly in investigations against those who attack defenders, including those attacks that took place before the signing of the Peace Agreement, as well as against the intellectual authors of the attacks.
- **Facilitate the process to report crimes** by improving institutional coordination so that there is a single window to which women defenders can go.
- **Promote the preventive approach** that has been relegated to the background until now, which is why it is essential for the Ministry of the Interior to take more leadership in addressing the recommendations and alerts issued by the Early Warning System.
- **Launch prevention and protection mechanisms** to avoid the violence to which women defenders are subjected.
- **Publicly recognize the work of the women defenders of agricultural, territorial, and environmental rights** through awareness campaigns on a national level.
- The highest levels of government must **promote respectful treatment** of women defenders by all officials, including local authorities.
- **Avoid the use of mechanisms that instigate the criminalization** of women defenders, their organizations, and the lawyers who defend them.
- With regard to the specific measures analysed in the report, the following recommendations are presented:
 - **Strengthen the participation** of women defenders of agricultural, territorial and environmental rights **in the National Roundtable on Guarantees, ensuring the necessary resources and conditions for the operability of the Gender Commission.** Likewise, the participation of small farmer, indigenous, and Afro-Colombian women in the Territorial Roundtables on Guarantees must be strengthened.
 - **The Office of the Attorney General must carry out investigations and establish the respective disciplinary sanctions for officials of the territorial entities responsible** for developing public policies, assigning budgets, and establishing measures for the prevention and protection of

defenders of environmental and territorial rights—particularly those that involve the adoption of gender approaches—who do not act effectively or fail to fulfil their duties.

- **The Office of the Attorney General must expedite the processes investigating public officials who, by their actions or failure to act, commit offenses related to the violation of the rights to life and integrity of women defenders of agricultural, territorial, and environmental rights.** This includes public servants of the entities that fail to comply with the recommendations of the Ombudsman's Office reports on risk and early warnings.
- **The National Protection Unit should promote protection mechanisms with an ethnic, territorial, differentiated, and collective approach** and ensure that they are adapted to the needs of women defenders through the defenders' active participation in the design and implementation processes.
- **Guarantee the participation** of women defenders of agricultural, territorial and environmental rights in the construction of protocols for the **integration of the gender approach in all the entities and frameworks analysed.**
- **Strengthen and support Afro-Colombian community councils and indigenous authorities as well as self-protection instruments** such as indigenous and *cimarrona* guards, recognizing and supporting *guardias campesinas*, and promoting the recognition of small farmers as having rights, as the Office of the Attorney General has just done.
- **Expand the space for dialogue** between representatives of rural women's groups and organizations and the **Ombudsman's Office Early Warning System.**
- **Take the political leadership necessary** to revitalize the important issues that must be addressed by the **National Security Guarantees Commission.**
- **Make the Peace Agreement an institutional priority**, safeguarding the spirit in which it was drawn up and implementing key chapters, such as the disarmament of paramilitary groups, **the National Security Guarantees Commission, the Agrarian Reform and the provisions to protect men and women defenders.**
- **Allocate resources** that allow the adequate development and implementation of the **Comprehensive Security and Protection Program for Communities and Organizations in the Territories and of the Comprehensive Guarantee Program for Women Leaders and Human Rights Defenders.** The resources allocated must be differentiated to have a larger amount to guarantee the participation of women defenders of agricultural, territorial, and environmental rights throughout the cycle of the implementation and monitoring of these measures.
- **Formalize an annual public accountability forum** for ministries and institutions to present the progress in the defender protection policy, specifying inter-institutional alliances, budgets, the participant population and coverage.

To the European Union

In accordance with the human rights obligations of the European Union, and specifically its commitments under the Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders:

- **Establish a structured, periodic dialogue between the EU Delegation in Colombia** and civil society organizations and women defenders in order to monitor the democratic space available to civil society and concerns regarding the protection of local actors.
- **Establish a focal point in the EU Delegation in Colombia for women defenders of land and the environment** to monitor the implementation of Colombian policies dedicated to their protection and thus contribute to preventing attacks against them.
- **Create a working group in the Committee of the European Parliament on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM)** on the situation in Colombia that monitors and particularly tracks the situation of **women defenders, and initiates and sponsors different international activities that help raise their visibility and give them a voice.**
- **Promote an urgent resolution in the European Parliament to give visibility to the situation of all women and men defenders of agricultural, territorial, and environmental rights in Colombia** that establishes protection mechanisms and measures to reduce violence.
- Organize a joint mission of the FEMM Committee and the Subcommittee on Human Rights (DROI) to Colombia to assess and learn about the situation of women defenders of land and the environment.
- In the **new EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024 and the revision of the EU Gender Action Plan 2016-2020, include specific chapters** on women defenders of agricultural, territorial and environmental rights, where the role they play and the need for their recognition and protection is explicitly mentioned.
- **Include an annex on women defenders in the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders**, following recommendation no. 27 of the European Parliament resolution (2019/2564 (RSP)) which calls on Member States to “ensure full implementation of the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders, and to expand their protection and support for human rights defenders, particularly women human rights defenders.”
- Provide **specific funds** for the protection of women defenders of land and environment in the **Trust Fund for Colombia and the future Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI)**. These funds should go directly to women's organizations to manage them autonomously.
- **Review and analyse the EU technical assistance programs regarding police and judicial cooperation** in contexts of high violence against civil society.

To the Government of Spain

- Include **protection and prevention measures** for women defenders of agricultural, territorial, and environmental rights as a **priority in relations with the Government of Colombia.**

- **Maintain and strengthen international cooperation and dialogue with women's organizations** and with women defenders, especially in the departments most affected by attacks and murders.
- **Continue with the leadership role shown by the Spanish government in the National Round Table on Guarantees** and press to revitalize this space. Demand that the executive branch shows the necessary leadership.
- Ensure **full compliance with the Peace Agreement**, especially the provisions that most directly affect women defenders, such as agrarian reform, comprehensive rural reform, and the rights and guarantees for political participation.
- Within the Subgroup on Human Rights and the National Round Table on Guarantees, **lead periodic and ongoing verification actions in the most affected departments**, so that the international community has firsthand exposure to the complaints and situation of women leaders.
- Monitor the **implementation of the different regulatory frameworks** to ensure that there is effective protection with an **ethnic, differentiated, and territorial approach**.
- **Assume leadership within the European Union** to make this agenda a priority within the Council of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and the Delegation of the European Union to Colombia.
- Within the **United Nations Human Rights Council**, lead a specific agenda on women defenders of agricultural, territorial, and environmental rights in Colombia, to give this problem visibility in this body.
- Maintain **Colombia as a priority country in the Women, Peace and Security agenda and in the Defenders Program** with special emphasis on environmental activists.
- Influence the various relevant international forums to **support the mandate of the United Nations Special Verification Mission**.
- Facilitate the **participation of women's organizations in international advocacy forums**.
- Promote **campaigns to give visibility to the work of environmental activists**, together with other countries committed to this cause.
- **Increase the funding** for various programs that will ultimately affect women defenders. For example, finance rural women's organizations to improve their living conditions and guarantee their rights. Also, provide resources to the women leaders and their organizations for training and education. It is key that these funds can be managed autonomously.
- **Promote programs to combat violence against women**.
- **Stop the sale of weapons to Colombia** in accordance with the Arms Trade Treaty, which Spain has ratified, and the Arms Trade Act of 2007, given the risk of becoming an accomplice in the commission of crimes.

To citizens and public opinion

- **Launch actions aimed at recognizing and giving visibility to the work of women defenders, in addition to making their achievements known** so that they can continue to carry out their work. Public recognition of the work

they do is essential to counteract the stigmatization that marks them and causes discrimination against them.

- **Put pressure on different governments** to act urgently, protecting defenders and preventing attacks.
- **Mobilize other people** to generate a trans-border wave of support for women defenders. Every act of solidarity will strengthen their cause.

APPENDIX

Women defenders murdered 2016-2019

2016	2017	2018	2019
<p>Cecilia Coicue, Asociación de Trabajadores Campesinos de la Zona de Reservas Campesinas del municipio de Corinto – ASTRAZONA.</p>	<p>Juana Bautista Almazo Uriana, defender of the rights of the Wayúu community.</p>	<p>Margarita Estupiñán Uscátegui, President of the JACI of the El Recreo neighborhood, located in the rural division (<i>vereda</i>) of Vaquerío.</p>	<p>Maritza Quiroz Leiva, civil society leader in Santa Marta.</p>
<p>Maricela Tombé, Asociación Campesina Ambiental de Playa Rica, El Tambo Cauca.</p>	<p>Rubiela Sánchez Vanegas, civil society leader – AMUSAVI Asociación de Mujeres del Municipio de San Vicente.</p>	<p>Felicinda Santamaría Mosquera, President of the JAC of the Virgen del Carmen neighborhood, Comuna 2.</p>	<p>Silvia Maritza Ramírez Chaverra, Afro-Colombian leader, died in a presumed traffic accident.</p>
<p>Yaneth Alejandra Calvache Viveros GW2017, leader of the Asociación de Trabajadores Campesinos de Balboa.</p>	<p>Emilsen Manyoma Mosquera, Afro leader and CONPAZ leader.</p>	<p>Fabiola Fajardo Ayala, member of the Movimiento Resistencia a la Minería in Carmen del Chucurí.</p>	<p>Liliana Holguín, motor-taxi driver, civil society leader and lesbian.</p>
<p>Nelly Amaya Pérez, JAC of the Guamalito neighborhood, Norte Santander.</p>	<p>Edenis Barrera Benavides, cultural leader, Communities in Aguazul – Defensa Civil.</p>	<p>Mary Florelia Cana Meza, founder of the Nasa “Nuevo Despertar” council in Dagua Valle.</p>	<p>Yaneth Ordóñez, JAC of Puerto Asís, Putumayo.</p>
<p>Marcelina Canacue, JAC Rural division (<i>vereda</i>) of Versalles.</p>	<p>Ruth Alicia López Guisao, leader of the Asociación Agroecológica Interétnica e Intercultural ASOKINCHAS, of the Coordinador Nacional Agrario y de Congreso de los Pueblos.</p>	<p>Amparo Fabiola Rodríguez Muchavisoy, indigenous defender and leader, educator and social director belonging to the Camëntsa de Villagarzón council.</p>	<p>María Maura Ortega, JAC of Puerto Asís, Putumayo.</p>

Janet Alejandra Calvache, of the Asociación de Trabajadores Campesinos de Balboa.	Narda del Carmen Barchilon, defender of women's rights processes in the Villa Luz neighborhood in Arauca. Member of ORG Apoyar.	Leidy Julieth Correa Valle, secretary of the JAC of the rural division (<i>vereda</i>) of Guayabal.	María Caicedo Muñoz, social leader and human rights defender, Women's Committee of the Asociación de Mujeres Campesinas de Argelia (Amar); of the Asociación campesina de trabajadores de Argelia (Ascamta); and of Marcha Patriótica.
Espólita Casina Teheran Acosta, Asociación de Desplazados de Cáceres.	Idaly Castillo Narváez, Vice-President of the JAC of the rural division (<i>vereda</i>) of Bellavista.	Diana Luz Romero Mogajés, President of the JAC of the rural division (<i>vereda</i>) of San Joaquín, rural district (<i>corregimiento</i>) of Piñuña Negro.	Lucero Jaramillo Álvarez, leader of the JAC of Puerto Valdivia, Curillo, leader of the illicit crop replacement program in that municipality.
Yolay Róbinson Chica Jaramillo, community social leader, rural district (<i>corregimiento</i>) of La Honda and Council Member in Liborina.	María Efigenia Vásquez, indigenous spokesperson of Pueblo Kokonuko.	Leidy Amaya Ramírez, DESCA promoter and health promoter in San Calixto.	Concepción Corredor, social leader in Casanare. Small farmer, led processes with women.
Nohora Cristina Hernández, member of the JAC of the Cerro Norte neighborhood.	Yoryanis Isabel Bernal Varela, defender of the rights of the Wiwa Golkuche indigenous women, accompanied all the community consultation process of the Wiwa ethnicity with regard to the rights of indigenous women.	María Yolanda Maturana, natural resources defender in the border area between the departments of Risaralda and Chocó. Known for denouncing the illegal mining in the rural district (<i>corregimiento</i>) of Santa Cecilia in Pueblo Rico and the contamination of water sources.	María del Pilar Hurtado social leader, Tierralta, Córdoba.
Oriana Nicoll Martínez, LGBTI Community, Sincelejo.	Katherine Escalante Castillo, President of the Defensa Civil of Aguachica.	Diana Patricia Mejía Fonseca, community mother of the Candelaria La Nueva neighborhood (Ciudad Bolívar). Worked with the ICBF and was a teacher.	Tatiana Paola Posso Espitia social leader in El Copey, César.

<p>Senelia Rengifo Gómez, Centro Educativo Cimarronas and Teacher's Union of Nariño.</p>	<p>Maritza Yuliana García Vinasco, LGTB leader, defender of the rights of vulnerable minors in Dos Quebradas.</p> <p>Ofelia Espinosa de Lopez, founding leader of the JAC of the rural division (<i>vereda</i>) of La Guajira, defended women's rights.</p> <p>Liliana Astrid Ramírez Martínez, leader of the rural division (<i>vereda</i>) of the Coyaima municipality, linked to the teacher's union of Tolima.</p> <p>Liliana Patricia Cataño Montoya, led the land recovery process where the burned homes were in the El Socorro neighborhood.</p> <p>Luz Jenny Montaña, community leader, managed projects for displaced communities in Tumaco.</p> <p>Myriam Zulay Hernández Silva, communal leader, President of the JAC of the rural division (<i>vereda</i>) of El Descanso.</p>	<p>Sandra Yaneth Luna, President of the JAC of the rural division (<i>vereda</i>) of Tutumito Carbonera of the rural district (<i>corregimiento</i>) of Campo Dos.</p> <p>María Magdalena Cruz Rojas, crop substitution movement in Mapiripán.</p> <p>Yessica Viviana Carabalí, member of the JAC of the rural division (<i>vereda</i>) of Santa Catalina, defender of black community rights.</p> <p>Edilma Rosa Cuevas, JAC secretary, rural division (<i>vereda</i>) of Agualasal, Cúcuta.</p> <p>Gladis Rivera Champeño, President of the JAC, rural division (<i>vereda</i>) of La Laguna, Toribio.</p> <p>Juana Patricia Cuesta Blandón, Red diversa de Apartadó, promoted sexual education campaigns.</p> <p>María del Carmen Moreno Páez, President of the JAC of the rural division (<i>vereda</i>) of Caño Rico, Arauquita.</p>	<p>Yamile Guerra, social leader, lawyer and politician in Floridablanca, Santander. Led environmental defence projects.</p>
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NOTES

- 1 Unidad de Víctimas. Registro Único de Víctimas. <https://www.unidadvictimas.gov.co/es/registro-unico-de-victimas-ruv/37394>
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- 36 H. Stone. (2016). *Élites y crimen organizado en Colombia, Insight Crime*. <https://es.insightcrime.org/investigaciones/elites-crimen-organizado-colombia-introduccion/>.
- 37 This refers to legal mining that has titles and licenses under current legislation; however, there are numerous irregularities in some of these projects. There is also a broad spectrum of informal mining that the State has called "illegal" and has been associated with criminal activities; however, this category also includes traditional activities such as small-scale and artisanal mining. The Ombudsman's Office estimated in 2015 that "illegal mining" accounted for 56% of mining in the country. See: Ombudsman's Office. (2015). *Minería sin control, Un enfoque desde la vulneración de los Derechos Humanos*. <http://www.defensoria.gov.co/public/pdf/InformedeMinerla2016.pdf>
- 38 UNODC. (2017). *Colombia. Monitores de territorios afectados por cultivos ilícitos 2017*. https://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Colombia/Colombia_Monitoreo_territorios_afectados_cultivos_ilicitos_2017_Resumen.pdf
- 39 See Oxfam's critical analysis, as a reaction to the legislative initiative before it became a law. Oxfam et al. (2018). *Colombia: las falacias detrás de ZIDRES, una ley de "subdesarrollo rural"*. <https://www.oxfam.org/es/colombia-las-falacias-detras-de-zidres-una-ley-de-subdesarrollo-rural>
- 40 Caracol Radio. (Febrero, 2017). Nueve millones de hectáreas en Colombia serán áreas zidres. https://caracol.com.co/programa/2017/02/14/6am_hoy_por_hoy/1487076771_112082.html
- 41 CINEP. (2018). *¿Cuáles son los patrones? Asesinatos de Líderes Sociales en el Post Acuerdo*. <https://www.cinep.org.co/publicaciones/es/producto/cuales-son-los-patrones-asesinatos-de-lideres-sociales-en-el-post-acuerdo/>.
- 42 For example, since a process of public consultations on mining was initiated in the country in 2013, nine municipalities have used this mechanism to shield themselves against mineral and hydrocarbon exploration and exploitation in their territories. All votes exceeded participation thresholds, in some cases they were over 90%. However, many of these consultations have not had an effective implementation, as they have not been able to curb business advances.
- 43 The signing of the Peace Agreement was preceded by the dialogues that took place in Oslo and in Havana. The first peace agreement, signed in Cartagena, was put to a plebiscite/referendum in which citizens had to vote "Yes" or "No." The final result was a victory for the "No." The result of the plebiscite forced the government to "renegotiate" the agreement, taking the objections of the agreement's opponents into consideration. At the same time, this created uncertainty about the agreements' legal applicability. After a period of negotiation with the promoters of "No", the government and the FARC-EP agreed on a new text for the final peace agreement, which was signed on November 24. This new agreement was ratified by the Colombian Senate and the House of Representatives, on November 29 and 30, 2016.
- 44 Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies. (2019). *Segundo informe sobre el estado efectivo de implementación del Acuerdo de Paz de Colombia 2016-2018*. https://kroc.nd.edu/assets/284864/informe_2_instituto_kroc_final_with_logos.pdf.
- 45 Colprensa. (December, 2017). *Tasa de homicidios en Colombia en 2017 es la más baja en 30 años*. <https://www.elcolombiano.com/colombia/tasa-de-homicidios-en-colombia-bajo-en-2017->

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48 The Peace Agreement incorporated sections on risk prevention and the protection of human rights defenders. More specifically, it envisaged strengthening the security of these people, in particular those working in rural contexts, through the elaboration of protocols for their comprehensive protection in concert with human rights defender organizations. In addition, the Agreement provided for the promotion of comprehensive security and protection measures against stigmatization, broad dissemination mechanisms, legitimation and recognition campaigns for defenders in rural as well as urban areas, and the creation and dissemination of community and public interest media for the promotion of human rights and coexistence. See: United Nations Human Rights Council. (2019). *Situation of Human Rights in Colombia*. <https://www.hchr.org.co/documentoseinformes/informes/altocomisionado/A-HRC-40-3-Add-3-ENG.pdf>.

49 Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies. (2019).

50 Among them, the National Liberation Army (ELN), the post-demobilization armed groups (Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia/Clan del Golfo - AGC/CG, Puntilleros y Pelusos) and the dissident structures of the FARC-EP themselves.

51 Paragraphs 14 to 24. See: Colombian government. (2016). *Framework plan for the implementation of the final agreement for the termination of the conflict and the construction of a stable and lasting peace*. [https://colaboracion.dnp.gov.co/CDT/Conpes/Econ%C3%B3micos/3932_Anexo%20B_Plan%20marco%20de%20Implementaci%C3%B3n%20\(PMI\).pdf](https://colaboracion.dnp.gov.co/CDT/Conpes/Econ%C3%B3micos/3932_Anexo%20B_Plan%20marco%20de%20Implementaci%C3%B3n%20(PMI).pdf).

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53 United Nations Human Rights Council. (2019).

54 Ombudsman's Office. (2017).

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- 64 UN General Assembly. (August, 2016). *Situation of Human Rights Defenders*. A/71/281. <https://undocs.org/en/A/71/281>
- 65 United Nations Human Rights Council (2019). *Recognizing the contribution of environmental human rights defenders to the enjoyment of human rights, environmental protection and sustainable development*. <https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/40/L.22/Rev.1>
- 66 For a more detailed analysis of this issue, see chapter 3.
- 67 *Ibid.*
- 68 Front Line Defenders. (2019). *Global Analysis of Front Line Defenders 2018*. https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/sites/default/files/global_analysis_2018.pdf
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- 71 Somos Defensores. (2019a).
- 72 Somos Defensores. (2019b). *Agresiones contra personas defensoras de Derechos Humanos en Colombia*. Boletín trimestral SIADDHH (January-March 2019). <https://somosdefensores.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/boletin-SIADDHH-enero-marzo-2019.pdf>
- 73 Data obtained from Somos Defensores and press releases. See appendix 1 for the details of deceased women and their role.
- 74 According to the Colombian Ombudsman's Office, 431 murders of human rights activists and leaders of civil society organizations were documented between 2016 and 2018. See: <http://www.defensoria.gov.co/>
- 75 According to the annual reports of the High Commissioner, 290 defenders have been killed in the last three years.
- 76 According to Marcha Patriótica, 497 defenders died between 2016 and 2018. See: Sisma Mujer. (November 2018). *20 años de trabajo feminista por el derecho humano de las mujeres a vivir una vida libre de violencias*. Boletín 16. Page 66 https://www.colectivodeabogados.org/IMG/pdf/24-11-2018-boletin-25-de-noviembre-de-2018_sisma-mujer.pdf
- 77 Somos Defensores. (2019b).
- 78 Somos Defensores. (2019a).
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- 80 Ombudsman's Office. (2018). *Early Warning no. 26-18*. <http://www.indepaz.org.co/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/AT-N%C2%B0-026-18-Defensores.pdf>
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- 83 P. San Pedro. (2009). *La violencia sexual en Colombia. Un arma de guerra*. Oxfam Internacional. <https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/114593/bp-sexual-violence-colombia-090909-es.pdf;jsessionid=E4D9EC67CF125932D28E427D59CAFA8F?sequence=2>.
- 84 United Nations Human Rights Council. (2019).
- 85 See the data contained in: Sisma Mujer. (November, 2018).
- 86 Ombudsman's Office. (2018).
- 87 UN Women. (2018). *El progreso de las mujeres en Colombia 2018. Transformar la economía para realizar los derechos*. <https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20colombia/documentos/publicaciones/2018/10/onu%20mujeres%20-%20libro%20progress.pdf?la=es&vs=1830>.
- 88 ODHACO and Taula Catalana per la Pau i els Drets Humans a Colòmbia. (2019). *Cómo protegemos a quienes defienden los derechos humanos en Colombia. Aportaciones de voces expertas en el marco de la implementación del Acuerdo de Paz*. <http://www.oidhaco.org/uploaded/content/article/1666555647.pdf>.
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- 92 De Justicia. (2018). *El campesinado sí cuenta para la Corte Suprema*. <https://www.dejusticia.org/el-campesinado-si-cuenta-para-la-corte-suprema/>.
- 93 TeleSur. (2018). *ONU denuncia plan de ataque contra líderes sociales colombianos*. <https://www.telesurtv.net/news/onu-denuncia-plan-ataques-lideres-sociales-colombianos-20181204-0002.html>.
- 94 CINEP. (2018).
- 95 El Espectador. (2019). *Fiscalía reconoce sistematicidad en crímenes contra líderes sociales*. <https://www.elespectador.com/noticias/politica/fiscalia-reconoce-sistematicidad-en-crmenes-contra-lideres-sociales-articulo-833539>
- 96 http://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/casos/articulos/seriec_325_ing.pdf
- 97 Fundación Universidad de las Américas. (2019). *Resultados generales Índice Global de Impunidad 2017*. <https://www.udlap.mx/cesij/files/IGI-2017-Resultados.pdf>.
- 98 United Nations Human Rights Council. (2019).
- 99 Ombudsman's Office. (2017).
- 100 Global Witness. (2017). *At What Cost? Irresponsible business and the murder of land and environmental defenders in 2017*. <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/environmental-activists/at-what-cost/>
- 101 CINEP. (2018).
- 102 Observatorio para la Protección de los Defensores de Derechos Humanos. (2018). *Colombia: No hay paz para los defensores de derechos humanos*. <https://www.refworld.org/es/pdfid/5afc7fea4.pdf>.
- 103 United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights Defenders. (2018). *Declaración de fin de misión del Relator Especial de las Naciones Unidas sobre la Situación de los Defensores y las Defensoras de Derechos Humanos, Michael Forst visita a Colombia, 20 de noviembre al 3 de diciembre de 2018*. <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=23960>
- 104 The Governor of Antioquia, Luis Pérez, associated civil society activists with illegal armed groups, questioning their honesty and truthfulness, suggesting they be prosecuted for protesting peacefully. See: United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights Defenders. (2018); Noticias ONU. (Diciembre, 2018). *Los defensores de los derechos humanos en Colombia son un "blanco fácil"*. <https://news.un.org/es/story/2018/12/1446951>.
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- 106 United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights Defenders. (2018).
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- 110 Verdad Abierta. (2018). *During the Santos government, 607 civil society leaders were murdered*. <https://verdadabierta.com/gobierno-santos-fueron-asesinados-609-lideres-sociales/>
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- 112 For more references, see: <https://www.dnp.gov.co/Plan-Nacional-de-Desarrollo/Paginas/Bases-del-Plan-Nacional-de-Desarrollo-2018-2022.aspx>
- 113 Here, it is important to note that another of the star policies of this new legislature has been to increase the VAT to 18% on almost all the products in the basic basket of goods. This indirect, regressive tax will deepen the already profound existing inequalities. See: F. Manetto (Noviembre, 2018). *Iván Duque cumple 100 días de gobierno en Colombia sin rumbo definido*. El País. https://elpais.com/internacional/2018/11/16/colombia/1542402248_870974.html
- 114 "Pact for life and the protection of leaders and persons defending human rights". This is a road map agreed upon by the national government, the Public Ministry, the Ombudsman's Office and the Office of the Attorney General, which establishes 11 commitments. Outstanding among them are: the participatory design of the public prevention and comprehensive protection policy which will be the responsibility of the Ministry of the Interior, the re-engineering of the Protection Program of the National Protection Unit, the continuity of the National Guarantees Commission and the Formulated Action Plan, the adoption of the Comprehensive Protection Plan by governors' and

mayors' offices, and the Protection Protocol for Rural Territories and awareness campaigns on the importance of the women and men leaders and human rights defenders by organizations and news media. See: El Tiempo. (2018). *Se firma 'Pacto por la vida' para brindar seguridad a líderes sociales* <http://www.defensoria.gov.co/es/nube/enlosmedios/7474/Se-firma-'Pacto-por-la-vida'-para-brindar-seguridad-a-l%C3%ADderes-sociales.htm>

115 According to the preliminary document presented by the government, the objective of this Plan is to “join forces to provide a response to the need to generate greater security and support for those who have assumed leadership in the promotion and safeguarding of human rights, as well as complying with the obligations established in the binding international legal instruments”.

116 United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights Defenders. (2018)

117 *Ibid.*

118 Human rights platforms wrote a statement before the Plan's presentation but their proposals were not included in the end. Among the proposals was the analysis of the risks generated by the legal and illegal economies and models, paramilitary groups, gender-based violence and the institutional framework itself, given that the threats against defence activity also originate there. Other points were: to include the particularities of the differentiated impacts for women, ethnic groups and regions in the diagnosis in order to be more realistic; the lack of references to the commitments in the Peace Agreement framework; the limited effectiveness that risk assessment may have when done exclusively using technologies. See: COMOSOC. *Consideraciones de las Plataformas de Derechos Humanos al Plan de Acción Oportuna de Prevención y Protección para Personas Defensoras de Derechos Humanos, Líderes Sociales y Comunales*. <https://comosoc.org/consideraciones-de-las-plataformas/>;

119 For an analysis of the PAO, see, among others: COMOSOC. (2019).; C.A. Guevara. (2019). *Panorama de las personas defensoras de derechos humanos y líderes sociales en riesgo en Colombia, 2018 – 2019*. Bogotá: CAPAZ. <https://www.instituto-capaz.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/FINAL-Policy-Brief-1-2019-web2.pdf>; Somos Defensores (2019); among others.

120 The National Development Plan (Plan Nacional de Desarrollo - PND) is the basis for the government policies of Colombia's president. It links the proposals of presidential candidates in Colombia with their policy platform during the four years of government. The foundation of the president elect's Plan are the campaign proposals presented before the Registraduría Nacional del Estado Civil when he or she goes on record as a candidate, and are known as the “government program”.

121 For decades, the different Colombian governments have defended a very limited concept of protection, limited to physical safety. Although physical safety is a necessary element, human security is a broader concept that also includes psychological integrity, the freedom to act independently and to inherit a healthy environment. The limited concept is not coincidental and is due to a militarized security agenda that does not admit other vital questions such as sexual or psychological violence.

122 Although there are other measures and regulatory frameworks that could, in theory, protect and prevent attacks on and harassment of women defenders, it has been decided to focus on the most important ones, which are the ones addressed in this report. The other frameworks are: Comité de Evaluación de Riesgo y Recomendación de Medidas (Risk Assessment Committee and Recommendation of Measures) to meet the specific needs of women within the framework of the UNP protection roadmap (CERREEM de mujeres), which is composed of four delegate representatives of women victims, women leaders and women's organizations, as well as State entities and international organizations. Subcomité de Prevención, Protección y Garantías de No Repetición (Subcommittee on Prevention, Protection and Non-Repetition Guarantees) created within the framework of Law 1448 of 2011. This subcommittee, which is active in ten prioritized territories, focuses on guarantees for victims and on fostering scenarios of participation and representativeness through municipal and departmental roundtables. Women and men human rights defenders are included. Mesa Única Nacional de Cumbre Agraria, Campesina, Étnica y Popular (Single National Agrarian, Farmer, Ethnic and Public Roundtable Summit), a platform that represents organizations of ethnic, communal and small farmer rights and claims, which was created through Decree 870 of 2014 after the agricultural strike in 2013. This roundtable prioritizes 13 territories that are comprised of small farmer groups in departments such as Antioquia, Chocó and Cauca, among others. Women and men defenders of human, territorial and environmental rights are included. Mesa Nacional de Garantías para Defensores de Derechos Humanos, Líderes Sociales y Comunales (National Roundtable of Guarantees for Human Rights Defenders, Social and Communal Leaders), which was created through the National Process of Guarantees for Human Rights Defenders, Social and Communal Leaders that began in 2009, and is where the major human rights platforms, State entities and the international community come together. Some departments are also prioritized at this roundtable. Mesa Técnica de Seguridad y Protección (Technical Roundtable on Security and Protection), created within the framework of the Peace Agreement with the FARC. This roundtable has an inter-institutional character and its purpose is to

- identify threat factors, as well as the aggressors linked to the reincorporation of ex-combatants into civilian life.
- 123 Including the Vice Presidency of the Republic, National Defence Ministry, Ministry of Justice and Law, Ministry of Labor, General Directorate of Police, Directorate of the National Protection Unit, Presidential Counsel for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law, Ministry of Foreign Relations, Office of the National Public Prosecutor, Office of the Attorney General and Office of the Ombudsman.
- 124 UNDP, exercises the Technical Secretariat; Office 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 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; Mapp/OAS./OEA.
- 125 Plataforma Colombiana de Derechos Humanos, Democracia y Desarrollo: Social and Cultural Economic Rights; Plataforma Alianza de Organizaciones Sociales y Afines: Human Rights in General; Plataforma Asamblea Permanente de la Sociedad Civil por la Paz: Right to Peace; Plataforma Coordinación Colombia-Europa- Estados Unidos: Civil and Political Rights.
- 126 Somos Defensores (2017). *Una piedra en el zapato. Informe anual 2017*.
<https://www.madridprotege.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/colombia-somos-defensores-informe-anual-2017-piedra-en-el-zapato.pdf>
- 127
https://www.procuraduria.gov.co/relatoria/media/file/flas_juridico/1721_PGN%20Directiva%20002%20DE%202017.pdf
- 128 In the face of statements by members of the national government, who have affirmed that the causes of the murder of women and men leaders are related to personal problems, the Office of the Attorney General affirmed that “the dynamics of violence against territorial defenders is a systematic practice” and that “there is a kind of recycling of violence to dismantle the struggles for the defence of land and territorial rights”. See: Office of the Attorney General. (2018). *Violencia sistemática contra defensores de derechos territoriales en Colombia*.
https://www.procuraduria.gov.co/portal/media/file/180710_Violencia%20sistemica-contra%20defensores-derechos-territoriales.pdf
- 129 <https://www.procuraduria.gov.co/portal/media/file/190619-circular-007-2019-PGN-participacion-politica.pdf>
- 130
http://www.defensoria.gov.co/public/Normograma%202013_html/Normas/Decreto_4065_2011.pdf
- 131 This is ruling T-666/1744 of the Constitutional Court:
<http://www.corteconstitucional.gov.co/relatoria/2017/t-666-17.htm>
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<http://es.presidencia.gov.co/normativa/DECRETO%20154%20DEL%2003%20FEBRERO%20DE%202017.pdf>
- 133 El Espectador (January 2019). *¿Por qué el presidente Iván Duque no convoca la Comisión Nacional de Garantías de Seguridad?* <https://www.elespectador.com/colombia2020/pais/por-que-el-president-ivan-duque-no-convoca-la-comision-nacional-de-garantias-de-seguridad-articulo-857536>
- 134 Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies. (2019).
- 135 United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights Defenders. (2018).
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- 137 Somos Defensores. (2019a).
- 138 See, for example: Somos Defensores. (2017).
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- 140 Ombudsman's Office. (2017). *Sistematización 15 años de Alertas Tempranas de la Defensoría del Pueblo*.
http://desarrollos.defensoria.gov.co/desarrollo1/ABCD/bases/marc/documentos/textos/Sistematizacion_15_anos_SAT.pdf.
- 141 See Early Warning no. 26 of 2018 on the situation of Human Rights Defenders. The risk situation in 324 territories of the country is analysed there. It is a very valuable document, not only for its ability to warn and issue alerts, but for its content; there is a real breakdown of national, regional and local contexts, which, with a level of detail in each place, reveals the threatening actors and, therefore, the possibilities that national and territorial authorities have to fight against organized crime. It makes a detailed analysis of the figures but goes further by analyzing the threats that these people face.

- 142 Ombudsman's Office. *Informe al Congreso de la República*.
<http://www.defensoria.gov.co/es/public/Defensor/454/Informes-al-congreso.htm> .
- 143 An illustrative case of this lack of leadership was that Risk Report 010-17 was never elevated to the category of early warning by the Minister of the Interior, in accordance with the protocol established in Decree 2890 of 2013.
- 144 The first result of this effort was reflected in the creation of the CERREM para Mujeres in 2012. Its mission is to offer comprehensive protection with a collective approach. In 2013, a discussion process led by these organizations was initiated in order to achieve a specific mechanism with a gender approach, which culminated in the Program in 2018.
- 145 Sisma Mujer. (2016). *Programa de Garantías Para Lideresas y Defensoras de Derechos Humanos*. <http://www.sismamujer.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/0-4.pdf>
- 146 Red Nacional de Mujeres y Sisma Mujer. (2019). *Comunicado de la Red Nacional de Mujeres and Sisma Mujer*.
https://www.humanas.org.co/alfa/dat_particular/ar/arc_44610_q_11012018Comunicado-rechazo-asesinato-Martiza-Quiroz-agresiones-en-contra-de-lideresas-y-defensoras.pdf.
- 147 United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights Defenders. (2018).
- 148 Departamento Nacional de Planeación. (2013). *Documento CONPES Social. Equidad de Género para las Mujeres*. Number 161.
<http://americalatina.genera.org/newsite/includes/fichas/politica/COLOMBIA.pdf>
- 149 Guevara. (2019).
- 150 This obligation is set forth in several rulings of the Council of State, most recently in the Sentence of August 31, 2017. See:
http://legal.legis.com.co/document/index?obra=jurcol&document=jurcol_7dcf5406343542ce9cdebfd6f912b5f3
- 151 Departamento Nacional de Planeación. (2013).
- 152 Guevara. (2019).
- 153 F. S. Benavides and S. Borda (coords.). (2019). *The construction of peace: Colombia as an international mirror*. CIDOB d'Afers Internacionals Magazine. Barcelona: CIDOB.
https://www.cidob.org/es/publicaciones/serie_de_publicacion/revista_cidob_d_afers_internacionals/la_construccion_de_la_paz_colombia_como_espejo_internacional
- 154 This is already the case with the government's proposal to modify the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP) which has been much criticized by the international community, which has demanded that it remain in its original version. See: El Espectador. (March, 2019). *La Comunidad Internacional, el gran apoyo de la JEP*. <https://www.elespectador.com/colombia2020/justicia/jep/la-comunidad-internacional-el-gran-apoyo-de-la-jep-articulo-857772>
- 155 <http://www.posconflicto.gov.co/consejeria/Paginas/Fondo-Colombia-en-Paz.aspx>
- 156 The Colombia in Peace Fund was created by President Juan Manuel Santos in April 2017 and encompasses five sources of post-conflict program financing, following the signing of peace with the former FARC-EP guerrillas in November 2016. This fund includes the Sustainable Colombia Fund (FCS), the United Nations Multi-Donor Fund, the European Union Fund, the World Bank Fund and the National General Budget.
- 157 El Diario.es. (April, 2018). *El Gobierno colombiano despide a la directora del fondo que maneja el dinero para la paz*. https://www.eldiario.es/politica/Gobierno-colombiano-despide-directora-maneja_0_759075077.html
- 158 Gobierno de Colombia. (15-19 April, 2019). *Informe semanal Fondo Colombia en Paz*. N° 54.
<http://www.posconflicto.gov.co/consejeria/InformesSemanalesFCP/Informe-FCP-15-19-abril-2019.pdf>.
- 159 According to information from the Spanish Agency for Development Assistance (AECID).
- 160 Pressenza. (2018). *Massive velatón [wake] in Colombia and the world for murdered social leaders*. <https://www.pressenza.com/es/2018/07/velaton-en-colombia-y-el-mundo-por-los-lideres-sociales-asesinados/>
- 161 RT. (Abril, 2019). *El Consejo de Seguridad de la ONU revisa el proceso de paz en Colombia*.
<https://actualidad.rt.com/video/311507-onu-revisar-proceso-paz-colombia-farc>
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- 163 Human Rights Council, Colombia report. Here the questions asked by the different countries as well as the countries' interventions can be consulted:
<https://www.ohchr.org/SP/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/COindex.aspx>
- 164 Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. (2006). *Las mujeres frente a la violencia y la discriminación derivadas del conflicto armado en Colombia*.

- <http://www.cidh.org/countryrep/colombiamujeres06sp/IV.htm>.
- 165 Ver la sección Observaciones Finales sobre Colombia, May 2019:
https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CEDAW%2fC%2fCOL%2fCO%2f9&Lang=es
- 166 Statement after the visit of the IACHR in 2018:
<https://www.oas.org/es/cidh/prensa/comunicados/2019/008.asp>
- 167 https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/colombia/60775/11%2%AA-edici%C3%B3n-del-di%C3%A1logo-de-derechos-humanos-entre-colombia-y-la-uni%C3%B3n-europea_es. See, also, interview with the EU Director for America: El Espectador. (2019). “Colombia debe hacer más por los DD.HH.”. *director de la UE para las Américas*
<https://www.elespectador.com/colombia2020/pais/colombia-debe-hacer-mas-por-los-dd-hh-director-de-la-ue-para-las-americas-articulo-857871>
- 168 See, for example, the European External Action Service Declaration in 2018:
https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/peru/40854/declaraci%C3%B3n-local-sobre-la-situaci%C3%B3n-de-los-defensores-de-derechos-humanos-en-colombia_es
- 169 http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2019-0031_ES.html?redirect
- 170 <https://www.justiciaypazcolombia.com/21-europarlamentarios-se-pronuncian-sobre-la-paz-en-colombia/>
- 171 P. San Pedro. (2010). *Las relaciones bilaterales entre España y Colombia ¿Dónde quedan los derechos humanos y el Derecho Internacional Humanitario?* Oxfam Intermón.
<https://www.oxfamintermon.org/es/documentos/09/09/10/relaciones-bilaterales-entre-espana-colombia>
- 172 75% of the 41 persons accepted in Spain between 2017 and 2019 were from Colombia. 83% of were women, 14 of whom were from Colombia. Data provided by the Human Rights Office of the MAUEC.
- 173 Spain recommended that Colombia continue “advancing in the recognition and protection of defenders, avoiding their criminalization and fighting against the impunity of the material and intellectual authors of the aggressions, as well as developing global policies of prevention and collective protection”.
- 174
<http://www.exteriores.gob.es/Portal/es/SalaDePrensa/EIMinisterioInforma/Documents/Plan%20Nacional%20Mujeres,%20Paz%20y%20Seguridad%20TEXTO.pdf>
- 175 The Human Rights Office (ODH) of the MAUEC manages the program for the protection and temporary reception of human rights defenders who are under threat. This program, which was created in 1998, is aimed at human rights defenders who are threatened and at risk because of their peaceful defence of human rights, and seeks to facilitate their temporary shelter in Spain, guaranteeing confidentiality regarding their identity. Through this mechanism, the ODH collaborates with other reception programs for human rights defenders implemented by different autonomous institutions and NGOs. Since it became operational, more than 300 human rights defenders have participated in the program to date. See:
<http://www.exteriores.gob.es/Portal/en/PoliticaExteriorCooperacion/DerechosHumanos/Paginas/Proridades.aspx>
- 176 Assessment of the international community on the National Guarantees Process:
<http://www.tudefiendesmisderechos.com/jscripts/ckeditor/kcfinder/upload/files/valoracion%20Int.pdf>
- 177 <http://www.hchr.org.co/index.php/informacion-publica/comunicados-de-prensa/ano-2017/8834-embajadas-oficina-de-la-onu-para-los-derechos-humanos-y-oficina-de-la-onu-para-los-refugiados-visitaron-apartado-antioquia>
- 178 Specifically, the objective is: “At the end of 2019 threats to defenders will have been reduced by 5% and status reports and records will have been increased by 25%”. See: MAUEC. (2015). *Marco de asociación país Colombia–España 2015-2019*.
https://www.cooperacionspanola.es/sites/default/files/map_colombia_2015-2019_.pdf.
- 179 Spain provided 1,9 million euros in 2016 and more than two million in 2017. There is still no data available for 2018. These figures have been extracted from the PACI data using the DAC code 15160 Human Rights.
- 180 See the successive reports of the Armas Bajo Control campaign, of which Oxfam Intermón is a part. <https://www.oxfamintermon.org/es/proyecto/campana-armas-bajo-control>
- 181 See, for example: El Espectador. (2016). *Comunidad internacional alerta sobre asesinatos a líderes sociales*. <https://www.elespectador.com/colombia2020/justicia/comunidad-internacional-alerta-sobre-asesinatos-lideres-sociales-articulo-855032>
- 182 The Norwegian Embassy in Colombia, for example, finances the publication of the Somos Defensores reports.

183 Countries that are part of this subgroup are Canada, France, Norway, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, through their embassies, and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

184 <http://www.hchr.org.co/index.php/informacion-publica/comunicados-de-prensa/427-ano-2018/8937-subgrupo-de-derechos-humanos-del-grupo-de-cooperantes-rechaza-ataques-contradefensores-y-defensoras-de-derechos-humanos-y-reitera-su-apoyo-al-trabajo-legitimo-de-construir-paz-en-todo-el-territorio-colombiano>

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