



# PROVIDING A LEGAL SHIELD FOR THE GUARDIANS OF THE PLANET

 **CEJIL**

CENTRO POR LA JUSTICIA Y EL DERECHO INTERNACIONAL  
CENTER FOR JUSTICE AND INTERNATIONAL LAW  
CENTRO PELA JUSTIÇA E O DIREITO INTERNACIONAL



# The Issue

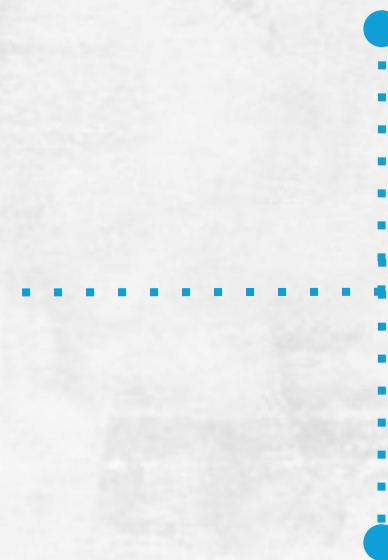
**Latin America accounts for over 80% of human rights defenders killed for their work.** In 2023 alone, over 200 hundred defenders were killed.



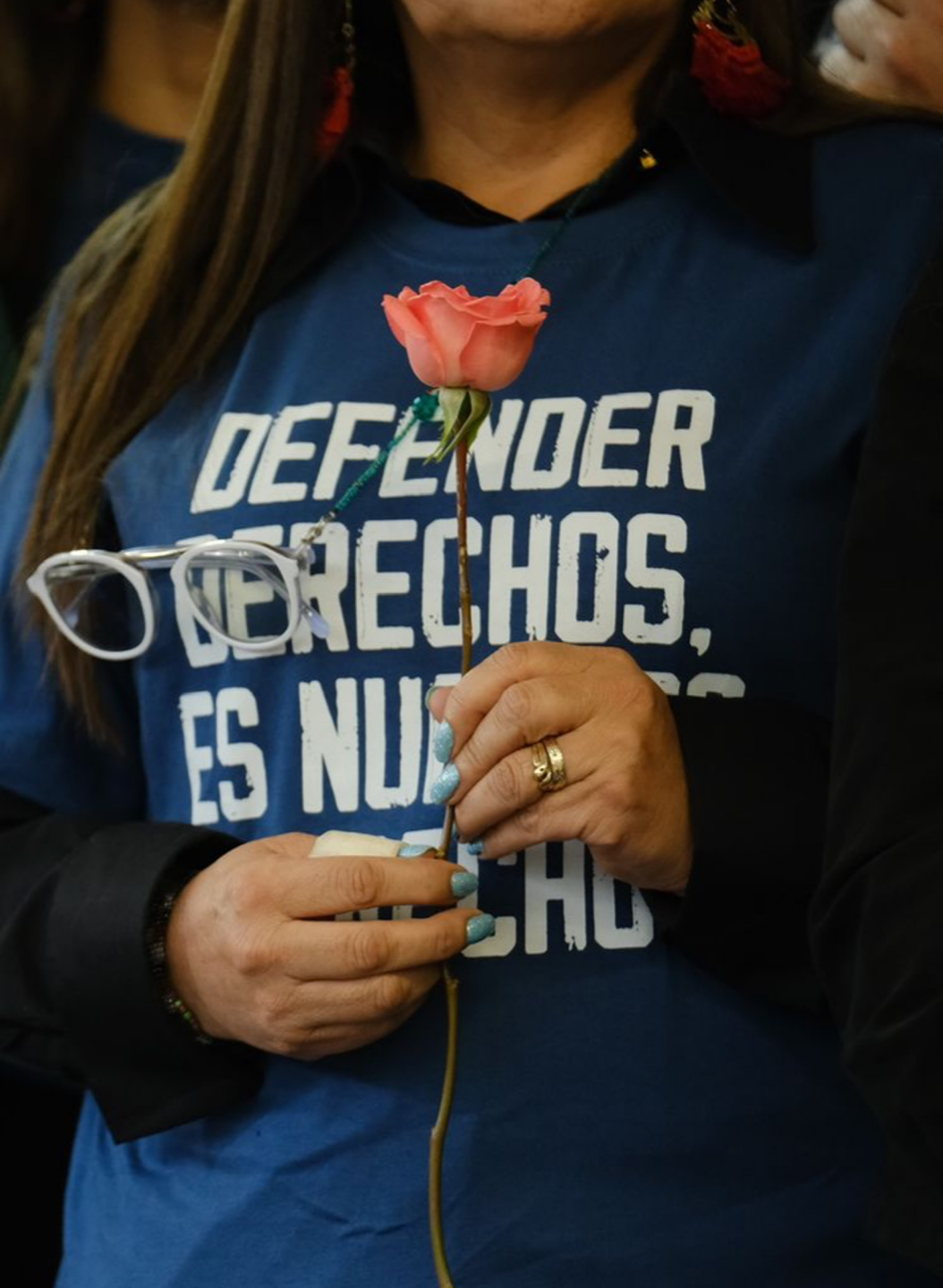
**The most lethal countries** for environmental human rights defenders **are Colombia, Brazil, Mexico, and Honduras**, with the Amazon being the most lethal region for defenders.



Faced with challenges like **democratic erosion, violence, inequality, climate change, and poverty**, thousands have raised their voices online, in the streets, and in the courtroom to advocate for change.



**Impunity for homicides and harassment** of human rights defenders prevail.



## Our Focus:

# Defending the Guardians

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CEJIL represents over

- ▶ **10,000 human rights defenders**
- ▶ **14 indigenous peoples at-risk**

in national and international proceedings.

We are engaged in

- ▶ **46 international protection requests**

on behalf of HRD before international justice bodies (OAS and UN).



## **Our Focus:**

# Defending the Guardians

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## **▶ Our work for human rights defenders include:**

- ▶ Ensuring individual and collective protective measures for those at risk.
- ▶ Fighting impunity for against defenders.
- ▶ Promoting policy reforms that strengthen their ability to speak up without retaliation or danger.
- ▶ Measures to address the root causes of violence.
- ▶ Initiatives to amplify voices of HRD and spaces of conscience.
- ▶ Research, knowledge sharing, and practical tools.





# Defending the Guardians of Nature

- ▶ Indigenous peoples are crucial in combating climate change, drawing on their extensive knowledge of sustainable practices and land stewardship. Their wisdom and control over critical biodiverse areas make them essential stakeholders. They face immense risks.



▶ CEJIL defends Indigenous peoples across Latin America, including Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Paraguay, and Venezuela.

**The Sarayaku in Ecuador**



**Berta Caceres and COPINH on behalf of the Lenca people in Honduras**



**The Siona in Colombia**



**The Yanomami in Venezuela**







## Defending

# Women Human Rights Defenders

Working for HRD requires a focus on women as the violence directed at them is often gendered, vile, and targets their families.

- ▶ Protection policies, practices, and criminal investigations need to take into account intersectionality and the types of violence that affect women defenders.
- ▶ Online and offline gendered violence, stigmatization, and structural impunity are important for WHRD.

**We collaborate with networks and initiatives of women defenders.**





## Highlights of our legal work for women human rights defenders:

- ▶ Filing protection orders and cases for women judges and prosecutors that were fired, persecuted, and forced into exile from Guatemala, such as Erika Aifan.
- ▶ Fighting against doxing, and online threats.
- ▶ Judgments where the IA Court underscores how women defenders and journalists are sometimes silenced through the use of sexual violence.
- ▶ Ensuring truth, justice, and reparations in cases of WHRD that were killed.





# Collective Problems Need Collective Solutions

Defenders are often targeted for their participation in collective processes of change, resistance, accountability, or defense of rights.

We pay attention to individual defenders as well as the enabling environment for their work.



**Context matters!**





# Public Policies Need Data

Entrenched patterns of violence against HRDs require an adequate policy response based on the facts.



Several judgements of the IA Court order States to produce data systems to plan, monitor, evaluate and learn in order to stop violence against HRD.

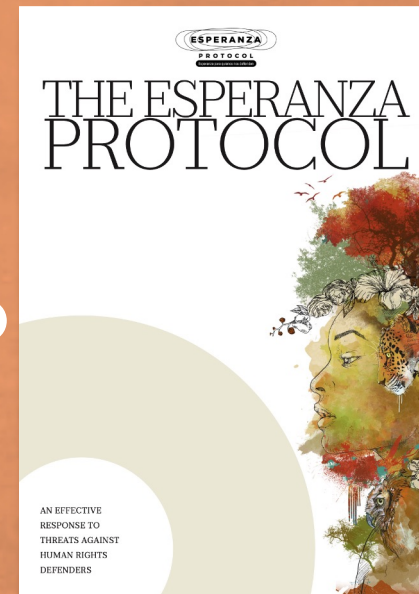


# Criminal Policies are Key

Entrenched patterns of impunity against HRDs require an adequate criminal policy, and effective criminal investigations.

CEJIL led the development of an international Protocol for the investigation of threats against HRDs:  
**The Esperanza Protocol**

Several judgements of the IA Court HR order States to develop investigation protocols to ensure an adequate investigation of crimes against HRD.





# No End to Violence without Tackling its Root Causes


Gabriel Sales Pimenta vs. Brazil

The judgment of the Inter-American Court ordered the establishment of an expert group tasked with identifying the root causes of violence against human rights defenders and making policy recommendations in one of the world's most dangerous countries for them.

⋮







*“The Brazilian State recognizes that Gabriel Sales Pimenta was a courageous human rights defender and his struggle side by side with rural workers in our country is also the fight of all Brazilians”.*

Human Rights Minister of Brazil

Public Acknowledgement of the State Responsibility in the Case

Julio 2024



# Measures to Protect and Amplify the Voices of Human Rights Defenders



- ▶ We file interim protection measures.
- ▶ We conduct hearings and presentations before international mechanisms.
- ▶ We promote art, literature, and journalism that amplify their stories and voices.



We promote the establishment of spaces for memory, research, and learning:

- ▶ Centro comunitario Guwa Kuma: la Casa de los Saberes Ines Fernandez Ortega established pursuant the judgment of Fernandez v Mexico.
- ▶ *No es hora de Callar* first site of conscience and research on violence against women and journalists ordered by the judgment of Bedoya v. Colombia.

We sponsor internships, fellowships, and research projects that engage and support HRD.

Sites of

# Memory Knowledge and Learning





**Our response:**

# We explore issues and solutions



We do in-depth investigations on factual and legal issues to support the right to protest.

- ▶ Research Project on the use of force and lethal weapons
- ▶ Manual on protection policies for HRD: Es tiempo ya!
- ▶ Protocol on the investigation of threats against HRDs: The Esperanza Protocol



Sometimes we cannot do more, but we stand in solidarity, and we raise our voice or share a minute of silence, for those who are not here, are for those who keep going for all of us. We are grateful, and we stand in solidarity.

**“Presente”**





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