

Press release

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The protection of human rights defenders in Colombia is key for the implementation of the Peace Agreement.

The defence of the environment, victims' rights, land restitution, the rights of indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples, of women, of small scale farming communities and rural reform, are important human rights issues in Colombia and are closely linked to the Peace Agreement and its implementation.

However, the human rights defenders who work on these issues have been suffering attacks and threats and, increasingly, paying for this work with their lives. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), in 2016, 59 human rights defenders were murdered in Colombia. In 2017, the figure reached 84. According to the We are Defenders Program (*Somos Defensores*), 80 defenders were murdered in 2016 in Colombia, 106 in 2017 and 46 in the first quarter of this year.

Faced with this trend, organisations and institutions have placed all the tools and means they have at their disposal to protect human rights defenders and reverse this escalation of murders against them. The Taula Catalana per la Pau i els Drets Humans a Colombia and the International Office for Human Rights – Action Colombia (OIDHACO), have gathered together some of these proposals in the **publication “How to protect people who defend human rights in Colombia. Contributions from expert voices during the implementation of the Peace Agreement” which will be launched on 12 June.**

The authors of the articles in this publication include, among others, **Michel Forst, United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders**, with an article which coincides with the twentieth anniversary of the UN Declaration on Defenders. **Ivonne González Rodríguez, Director of Human Rights in the Interior Colombian Ministry**, has also written an article about the State response to the risks faced by people who defend human rights.

To launch this publication, two of its authors, Leyla Andrea Arroyo, from the Black Communities' Process (*Proceso de Comunidades Negras en Colombia - PCN*) and Carlos A. Guevara, from the We are Defenders Program (*Programa Somos Defensores*), will travel to Europe next week. They will be in Berlin on 12 and 13 June; in Barcelona from 14 to 16 June and in Brussels between 18 and 21 June. They will be talking about the fundamental work carried out by defenders, the situation of Afro-Colombian communities and the protection measures available from the Colombian State. The publication will also be launched in Bogotá on 31 July.

During their time in Europe, the two Colombian defenders will participate in meetings with institutions, national and regional political representatives, and representatives from the European Union. They will also take part in public events and are available for interviews with the media.

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