



**Information for the CEDAW Committee on the Situation Concerning  
Violence Against Women Human Rights Defenders  
52nd session, New York, July 17, 2012**

**Summary**

**Oaxaca Consortium for Equality and Parliamentary Dialogue,  
Women's Roundtable Network in Ciudad Juárez, Just Associates (JASS),  
National Communications and Urgent Action Network of Women Human Rights Defenders in Mexico**

In Mexico there has been an alarming rise in violence committed against women human rights defenders. Due to the general context of impunity, violence and criminalization of social protest that exists in the country, this particular violence is invisible and the gravity of its characteristics and consequences diminished.

Between December 2010 and December 2011, eleven women human rights defenders were murdered, the majority of them from the states of Chihuahua and Guerrero<sup>1</sup>. 41% of the attacks that occur on human rights defenders are against women<sup>2</sup>.

Margaret Sekaggya<sup>3</sup>, the Special Rapporteur for Human Rights Defenders, acknowledges in her report that, after Columbia, Mexico is the country where women human rights defenders receive the most death threats on the American continent. She also highlights that Mexico is one of the countries where most women human rights defenders are attacked for fighting against impunity, for helping victims of human rights violations gain access to justice<sup>4</sup> and for promoting rights of indigenous communities.

Women human rights defenders run a greater risk of being subjected to sexual violence, smear campaigns based on gender stereotypes, violence within their families and communities, as well as scarce recognition for their work<sup>5</sup>. Furthermore, they are more likely to be forced to stop defending human rights after experiencing an attack.

76% of the women human rights defenders who were interviewed for the study "Women human rights defenders in Mexico"<sup>6</sup> cite experiencing gender-specific violence because of the work they do and 40% of these highlighted sexual violence as the principal manifestation of this particular type of violence.

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<sup>1</sup> High Commissioner's Office for Human Rights in Mexico. Updated 2012: Report on the situation of human rights defenders in Mexico.

<sup>2</sup> Report on human rights violations perpetrated on human rights defenders during the period from 2011-first quarter of 2012. Alejandro Cerezo, coordinator of ACUDEH.

<sup>3</sup> Margaret Sekaggya's Report, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, 20 December 2010, p.12.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p. 11

<sup>5</sup> *Violence against Women Human Rights Defenders in Mesoamerica: a diagnosis in work. Mesoamerican Initiative for Women Human Rights Defenders*, Marusia Lopez, coordinator UDEFECUA, FCAM, AWID, CONSORCIO OAXACA, JASS, LA COLECTIVA FEMINISTA.

<sup>6</sup> *Women human rights defenders in Mexico: 2010-2011 Evaluation of the conditions and risks that they face carrying out their work*, Andrea Medina and Teheres Hochlli, coord. JASS, Oaxaca Consortium and Red Mesa de Mujeres de Ciudad Juárez, 2011.

In 2010, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights expressed their concern over the lack of significant progress in applying previous recommendations made by the Commission, including the relative lack of protection for human rights defenders and journalists.

More than 2 years later, in June 2012, the President issued a decree through which the Protection of Human Rights Defenders and Journalists Act was passed. However, the level of violence against human rights defenders has become more acute, without any sign of political will and concrete actions shown on behalf of the Mexican State to combat the situation:

- **The number of murdered women human rights defenders has risen between 2010 and 2011.** Out of the 11 registered murder cases of women human rights defenders between 2010-2011, 72% of these were committed in 2011.
- **At least two organisations linked to the defence of women's human rights have had to close down due to security reasons between 2011 and 2012.**
- **The principle agent responsible for violence against women human rights defenders is the State.** 55% of women human rights defenders claim that the State is directly responsible for the attacks and threats carried out against them<sup>7</sup>.
- **98.5% of these attacks remain unpunished<sup>8</sup>.**
- **Criminalization**, particularly in cases of women defending rights to land and territory.
- **Deficient implementation of preventative and precautionary measures issued by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.** Between 2010 and 2011, women human rights defenders who have been awarded preventative and precautionary measures are still being threatened and attacked.
- **Lack of gender indicators.** Approved protection systems do not include gender indicators that allow for the establishment of specific protection measures for women human rights defenders, as recommended by the UN Rapporteur for Women Human Rights Defenders.

#### **SOME RECOMMENDATIONS WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE IN THE COMMISSION'S FINAL REMARKS TO THE MEXICAN STATE:**

- To establish a reasonable time frame in which to provide information on the progress of investigations into murders and attacks against women human rights defenders and to punish those who have been identified by the relevant authorities as responsible for the attacks and murders of women human rights defenders according to the law.
- To guarantee access to justice and effective protective measures for the families of those women human rights defenders who have been forcibly disappeared, who have been victims of femicide, violent organized crime, attacks by the military, paramilitary groups, parapolice groups and individuals.
- To carry out a comprehensive evaluation, from a gender perspective and with the participation of women human rights defenders, on the failure to apply precautionary measures issued by the relevant national bodies and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. To use this assessment to determine the necessary measures to guarantee its full application.
- To implement gender-focused protocols for prevention and protection in each and every state in the Mexican Republic.

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<sup>7</sup> *Women defenders of human rights in Mexico: 2010-2011 Evaluation of the conditions and risks that they face carrying out their work*, Andrea Medina and Teheres Hochlli, coord. JASS, Oaxaca Consortium and Red Mesa de Mujeres de Ciudad Juárez, 2011.

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.cmdpdh.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=312%3Aong-se-suman-a-la-exigencia-de-la-onu-para-protoger-a-defensores-y-defensoras-de-derechos-humanos-&catid=47%3Adefensoras-y-defensores&Itemid=187&lang=es](http://www.cmdpdh.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=312%3Aong-se-suman-a-la-exigencia-de-la-onu-para-protoger-a-defensores-y-defensoras-de-derechos-humanos-&catid=47%3Adefensoras-y-defensores&Itemid=187&lang=es)