

## Mexico and Mesoamerica: Strengthen protection of women human rights defenders

25.08.2014

Governments in Mexico and Mesoamerica should strengthen national laws and mechanisms to protect human rights defenders, including through the adoption of gender-specific provisions and policies to better recognise and protect women human rights defenders, the International Service for Human Rights and Just Associates (JASS Mesoamerica) said today.



(Geneva) - Governments in Mexico and Mesoamerica should strengthen national laws and mechanisms to protect human rights defenders, including through the adoption of gender-specific provisions and policies to better recognise and protect women human rights defenders, the International Service for Human Rights and Just Associates (JASS Mesoamerica) said today.

A regional roundtable discussion on the protection of women human rights defenders in Mexico and Mesoamerica was held on the side-lines of the 152<sup>nd</sup> Special Session of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in Mexico City on 15 August 2014. The event focused particular attention to the need for stronger national implementation of a [UN General Assembly resolution on the protection of women human rights defenders](#), adopted last year.

'While the adoption of Resolution 68/181 was rightly hailed as historic, its real value is as a roadmap for the development and implementation of gender-specific policies and programmes for the protection of women human rights defenders at the national level,' said Ms Pooja Patel of ISHR.

'The time has come for authorities in Mexico and throughout Mesoamerica to translate the resolution into action,' Ms Patel said.

'Women human rights defenders in Mexico and Mesoamerica face a range of violations perpetrated by both State and non-State actors, including defamation, ill-treatment, arrests, criminalisation and sexual violence, often with complete impunity,' said Ms Cristina Hardaga of Just Associates (JASS).

Ms Hardaga also pointed out that these violations have different impacts and responses compared to the same type of attacks perpetrated against male human right defenders. 'The protection mechanisms for human rights defenders and journalists established in Mexico in 2012 requires further strengthening in order to be effective, including the through the adoption of a clear gender perspective,' Ms Hardaga said.

During the roundtable Mr Jesus Peña Palacios of the UN Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights offered a number of concrete steps that can be undertaken to address some of these concerns in the immediate term, including through clear documentation of the violations disaggregated according to gender, as well as supporting networks for women human rights defenders.

Ms Ana Güzmes, Director of UN Women in Mexico said, 'not only are the life and integrity of the women human right defenders at stake, but so are the historical struggles for gender equality.'

The representative from the Embassy of Norway in Mexico - which sponsored the event - stressed the need for discussions on how to transform UN resolutions into concrete actions. She highlighted the importance of the UN resolution on women human rights defenders since it recognises their specific contributions to strengthening democracy and the particular threats and obstacles they face in this regard.

The discussion concluded with the participation of specialists from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights who emphasised the importance of protecting the right to defend human rights, recalled the existing mechanisms to implement protective measures, and provided clarity regarding the requirements that make them effective.

The event was co-organised by Just Associates (JASS), ISHR, Centre ProDH, CEJIL, MHI, WHRD-International Coalition and the National Women Human Rights Defenders Network in Mexico, with the support of the Embassy of Norway, UN Women and the Office of the UN High Commissioner. Civil society participants included those from Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. Discussions focused on assessments of the ground realities for women human rights defenders as well as implementation of State obligations on the protection of human rights defenders, including the UN resolution on women human rights defenders.

*Contact:*

*Pooja Patel, Program and Advocacy Manager (Women Human Rights Defenders), ISHR, on [p.patel@ishr.ch](mailto:p.patel@ishr.ch).*

*For additional information:*

*Videos (ONLY in Spanish)*

*Conversatorio Protección para las Defensoras de Derechos Humanos: Un Balance sobre las medidas 1/2 - <http://www.ustream.tv/recorded/51400296>*

*Conversatorio Protección para las Defensoras de Derechos Humanos: Un Balance sobre las medidas 2/2 - <http://www.ustream.tv/recorded/51403229>*

*Experiencias en el diseño de mecanismos de protección para defensoras, defensores y periodistas - <http://www.ustream.tv/recorded/51404064>*

*Experiencias en el diseño de mecanismos de protección para Defensoras, Defensores y Periodistas - <http://www.ustream.tv/recorded/51404484>*

*Discusión en torno a los Avances, Retos y Obstáculos para el diseño e implementación de medidas de prevención - <http://www.ustream.tv/recorded/51407558>*