

Defence of Human Rights is sustained despite Cooptation of the Justice System

The Guatemalan Human Rights Defenders Protection Unit (UDEFEGUA) presented its **2024 Report on the Situation of Individuals, Organizations, and Communities Defending Human Rights**, entitled "**Impact of the Co-optation of the Justice System on the Defence of Human Rights**." It provides an analysis of the context in which the human rights defender community carries out its defence, as well as records of attacks.

In 2024, **Guatemala went through a period of transition and struggle that sought to lay the groundwork for structural change**. However, anti-democratic actors who remained in state institutions persisted in carrying out **actions that consolidated a coup d'état** in order to regain control. For example, the multiple actions carried out during the election process for the high courts. This process represented increased repression and threats of criminal prosecution against human rights defenders and journalists.

UDEFEGUA recorded a decrease in attacks against individuals, organizations, and communities defending human rights compared to previous periods. In 2024, **a total of 4,133 attacks were documented**, 42% of which were directed at women defenders. The majority of these attacks occurred online.

The change in Executive authorities has contributed to a decrease in attacks, as, at least in the last three administrations, the use of state resources has been evident in the strategy of attacking individuals, organizations, and communities defending human rights.

In 2024, **we recorded 28 murders of human rights defenders. This is one of the most serious acts on the scale of violence**, which is significant despite the overall decrease in attacks. Therefore, in UDEFEGUA, we express our concern. At the same time, we stand in solidarity with the families who lost a human rights defender as a result of their work, and whose cases remain completely unpunished.

The UDEFEGUA registry shows that the majority of these people were defending the environment and territory, many of whom were Indigenous peoples. The increase in attacks against journalists and social communicators, especially those who conduct investigative work or practice critical journalism, is also worrying.

Given this situation, **UDEFEGUA emphasizes the urgency of creating protection mechanisms for individuals, organizations, and communities defending human rights**. This action must take into account the differentiated needs of vulnerable populations, as well as specific occupations, such as journalism, in order to guarantee the defence of human rights. **We reiterate that the Public Policy for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders must be approved without further delay.**

We urge **that the recommendations of the visit by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) are followed up**, which proposed an international evaluation of the work of the current Public Ministry.