UNCOVERING THE HIDDEN ICEBERG

SPOTLIGHT ON GUATEMALA

GUATEMALA HAS HISTORICALLY BEEN ONE OF THE MOST DANGEROUS PLACES TO BE AN INDIGENOUS, LAND OR ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENDER.

In 2021, when Global Witness registered the killing of two land and environmental defenders in Guatemala, ALLIED data indicated that at least 223 NON-LETHAL ATTACKS against these defenders had taken place over the same period. In a country that has long been among the most dangerous for Indigenous, land and environmental defenders (ILED), FOR EVERY ILED KILLED in 2021, at least 110 NON-LETHAL ATTACKS were documented.

In Guatemala, as in other countries, the majority of non-lethal attacks documented were made against individuals (76% of total) while additional attacks were registered against organisations (13%) and communities (11%).

TIPOS DE ATAQUES

In Guatemala, threats represented the most common type of non-lethal attack registered in the dataset, accounting for 16% of all attacks. Intimidation was the second most common attack registered, representing 14.5% of attacks. In Guatemala, intimidation accounted for a higher proportion of non-lethal attacks than in other countries,¹ where intimidation accounted for an average of 2% of all attacks.

¹ The ALLIED dataset analysed here includes five countries: Colombia, Guatemala, Kenya, Mexico and the Philippines.
**Defending What**

Reflecting the specific threat posed to Indigenous Peoples, in 41.5% of attacks in Guatemala where data was available, defenders claimed to be defending territory, as opposed to land, which was the most common category (47%) flagged in the full dataset across five countries.

After territory, 34% of attacks were against defenders who were protecting the environment in general while those attacks against defenders protecting land accounted for an additional 14.7%. Together, attacks on defenders protecting territory and customary rights accounted for nearly half (48.5%) of all attacks.

**Sector Implicated**

Reflecting trends in other countries, in Guatemala, agriculture and livestock represent the sector most often linked to attacks on Indigenous, land and environmental defenders. In 2021, in cases where information was available, 47% of attacks were related to the agriculture and livestock sector. An additional 27% of attacks were linked to mining.

**Conclusions**

In 2022, the National Land Coalition (NLC) in Guatemala published an SDG shadow report highlighting the urgent situation of Indigenous, land and environmental defenders in light of State commitments to achieve SDG 16 for Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions. The previous year, the regional platform Tierra y ODS published a review of progress towards SDG commitments in Guatemala.

Both highlighted SDG indicator 16.10.1, which tracks violence against human rights defenders. As highlighted in the Crucial Gap series published by ALLIED, Guatemala has never reported data against this indicator or mentioned progress towards it in their voluntary national reviews (VNRs).

The report highlights concerning findings from LANDex data collection: A review of the legal framework indicated that existing laws and protection mechanisms are considered weak and inefficient at the moment that defenders are under attack. Likewise, there is no State-led mechanism coordinating the protection of human rights defenders, including Indigenous, land and environmental defenders.

In order to achieve SDG 16, to protect Indigenous, land and environmental defenders and ensure an enabling environment in which they can live and work, the NLC called on the State to urgently sign the Escazú Agreement. In addition, they asked the government to comply with existing cautionary measures and apply the decree issued by the IACHR in 2014, calling for a comprehensive public policy and clear mechanisms to protect these defenders.
ALLIED DATA WORKING GROUP

Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC)
Business and Human Rights Resource Centre
Center for Justice Governance and Environmental Action (CJGEA)
Centro de Investigacion y Educacion Popular Programa Por la Paz (CINEP) y El Banco de datos de derechos humanos y violencia politica
Centro Mexicano de Derecho Ambiental (CEMDA)
Environmental Law Alliance Worldwide (ELAW)
Front Line Defenders
Global Witness (in observer role)
Green Advocates
Indigenous Peoples Rights International (IPRI)
International Land Coalition (ILC)
International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)
International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA)
La Unidad de Protección a Defensoras y Defensores de Derechos Humanos (UDEFEGUA)
Natural Justice
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