

Human Rights Cases at a Glance: Summary of letters written by IRTF in response to urgent human rights abuses

On behalf of our 190 Rapid Response Network members, **IRTF volunteers wrote and sent six letters each month** to government officials in these countries, with copies to officials in the US. See the letters at <http://www.irtfcleveland.org/content/rm> or ask us to mail you hard copies.

By signing our names to these crucial letters, human rights crimes are brought to light, perpetrators are brought to justice and lives are spared. Our solidarity is more important than ever. Together, our voices do make a difference.

Trends in Spring 2020 – April to June

COLOMBIA

targets: women's rights activists, journalists, indigenous and Afro-descendant leaders, labor organizers and trade unionists (including agricultural unions), campesinos, environmental justice activists, farmers involved in the crop substitution program, and community and social leaders.

GUATEMALA

targets: campesino land rights defenders, journalists, and human rights defenders and lawyers.

HONDURAS

targets: women's rights activists, campesino land rights defenders, journalists, indigenous and Afro-indigenous social leaders, environmental justice leaders, and Covid-19 mutual aid response providers.

MEXICO

targets: women's rights activists, journalists.

COLOMBIA

- Apr 5 assassination of **Carlota Isabel Salinas Pérez**, an active member of the Popular Women's Organization of Colombia (OFP, Organización Femenina Popular), at her home in San Pablo, Bolívar Department
- Apr 26 death threats to journalist **Eder Narváez Sierra** by a person identifying himself as the commander of the paramilitary organization Los Caparrapos in the Bajo Cauca region of Antioquia Department.
- May 1 assassinations of rural community leaders, including: **Teodomiro Sotelo Anacona**, a rural organizer and a council member for the Afrorenacer del Micay association, which promotes the rights of African-Colombian communities; **Andrés Andrelio Cacimanca Burbano**, who was killed in place of his wife, a well-known community leader; **Mario Chilhueso**, age 44, the president of ASTCAP, a rural association for small-scale farmers; **Hugo de Jesús Giraldo López**, age 64, member of the Patriotic March and past president of the rural association of community action boards ASOCOMUNAL (Cauca Dept)
- May 12 systemic assassinations of social leaders, including: **Hamilton Gasca Ortega**, age 33, member of the Trade Union Association of Peasant Workers of Piamonte, an affiliate of FENSUAGRO, assassinated along with his sons **Robert Gasca** and **Kevin Gasca**; **Alvaro Narváez Daza**, president of the **Community Action Council in El Vado**, his wife **María Daza**, son **Cristian Narváez Daza** and 15-year-old granddaughter **Jeny Catherine López Narváez**; **Uenseslao Guerrero de La Cruz**, age 57, the former president of the Community Action Board of the Curacas district in San Joaquin Township (Cauca Department)
- May 25 killing and injury of farmers by Colombian army protesting the military's forced eradication of their coca plantations. Killed was **Emerito Digno Buendía Martínez**, age 44; injured: **Miguel Hernández León**, **Juan José Orozco**, and **Jimmy Alberto González**.

- May 26 death threats and surveillance against **Jani Rita Silva**, the legal representative of the Association for the Integral and Sustainable Development of the Amazon Pearl (**ADISPA**) and a vocal leader denouncing the socio-environmental effects of oil extraction operations, including those of Amerisur (Putumayo Department).
- Jun 19 massacre of several persons in the Quebrada del Medio rural zone of Ituango, Antioquia (including **Camilo Sucerquia Durango**, age 15, **Carlos Barrera**, age 17; **William Pérez**) and imminent threat of violence to Ituango residents due to the insurgency of the armed paramilitaries Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia (AGC)
- Jun 22 unjust arrest and detention of six campesinos accused of belonging to an armed group causing forced displacement and threats against community leaders: **Carlos Julio Betancourt Flores**, **José Isidro Martín Barreto**, **Carlos Julio Díaz**, **José Vicente Hernández**, **Norbey de Jesús Bustamante Cardona**, and **Luis Alberto Méndez** (Meta Department).

GUATEMALA

- Apr 2 assassination of **Dominga Ramos Saljoj**, an active member of the Committee for Campesino Development (CODECA) and a leader in the organized resistance against the electric monopoly ENERGUATE Company. She was shot eight times in front of family members at her home in Santo Domingo, Suchitepéquez Department.
- May 24 break-in and vandalism at home of human rights lawyer **Esteban Emanuel Celada Flores**, a member of the Group of Litigators against Torture in Latin America; the third raid on his home in less than five months.
- Jun 25 beating and arrest of journalist **Francisco Chox**, reporting on the long-standing land dispute between Nahualá and Santa Catarina Ixtahuacan (Sololá Dept).

HONDURAS

- Apr 1 unjust arrest and detention of women's leader **Evelyn Johana Castillo**, assistant coordinator of the Ojojona Women's Network in Ojojona, Francisco Morazán Department.
- Apr 3 killing of land rights defender **Iris Argentina Álvarez Chávez** when security guards employed by the La Grecia Sugar Mill burned homes and used gunfire to forcibly evict families of the Cerro Escondido campesino cooperative in Choluteca Dept.
- Apr 4 assault by police on journalists **Roger David Iraeta** (Canal 6 y Canal 25), **Onán Zaldivar** (Canal 22) and **Edward Azael Fernández** (TvMas y Diario La Prensa) who were reporting on a road blockade set up by residents to slow the spread of the coronavirus from San Pedro Sula to Santa Bárbara; police also confiscated their equipment and erased the footage they had just (Santa Bárbara Department).
- May 23 death of **Edwin Noel Flores Sacaza**, a Garífuna man from Sambo Creek, whose body was discovered inside a container at the Ensenada thermoelectric plant (owned by El Grupo Laeisz), where he worked as a security guard (Atlántida Department).
- Jun 1 killings and attacks on civil liberties by security forces under the guise of health emergency protections: **Marvin Rolando Alvarado Santiago** (El Paraíso, Omoa, Cortés Dept.) was killed; medics **Oscar Machado** and **Eduardo Vásquez** (Zacate Grande, Amapala, Valle Dept.) attacked by TIGRES anti-riot police; **Miguel Padilla** and his brother-in-law **Yoni Duarte** (Guarizama, Olancho Dept.), were illegally detained and tortured by military police; **César Arnulfo Blandón Merlo** (Jutiapa, Danlí, El Paraíso Dept.), an adolescent youth who was staffing a health check point, suffered a broken hand when Preventative Police beat him; **Heydi Mareli** and her brother **Wilmer Roberto Amaya Rubio** (Campamento, Olancho Dept.) were arbitrarily detained, punched, kicked, slapped and insulted by nine Preventative Police agents.
- Jun 24 attacks on civil liberties against members of the environmentalist **Comité Ambientalista de Azacualpa** as a result of their collaboration with ASONOG (Association of Non-Governmental Organizations of Honduras) to provide COVID-19 related emergency food relief to local villagers (Copán Department).

MEXICO

- Jun 23 death threats to feminist journalist **Soledad Jarquín** and members of the feminist organization **Consortio para el Diálogo Parlamentario y la Equidad Oaxaca** (**Consortio Oaxaca**) in Juchitán de Zaragoza, Oaxaca State.

Rapid Response Network: human rights cases at a glance

APR-JUN 2020		COMPARISON APR-JUN 2019		
COUNTRIES				
		COUNTRIES	%	
8	44%	Colombia	12	67%
6	33%	Honduras	3	17%
3	17%	Guatemala	1	6%
1	6%	Mexico	1	6%
0	0%	El Salvador	0	0%
0	0%	Nicaragua	1	6%
18	100%	total	18	100%
TARGETED GROUPS				
5	15%	indigenous/peasants/land rights	12	43%
0	0%	Afro-descendant groups	0	0%
2	6%	human rights lawyers/defenders/observers	5	18%
2	6%	workers' rights	1	4%
3	9%	women's rights	1	4%
0	0%	LGBT rights	0	0%
0	0%	student/youth rights	0	0%
2	6%	environmentalists: opposing mines, highways, dams	2	7%
4	12%	journalists/community radio	0	0%
0	0%	political candidate/political office-holder	0	0%
7	21%	community leaders/political activist	1	4%
0	0%	migrants/ migrant rights	0	0%
8	24%	other	6	21%
33	100%	total	28	100%
TYPES OF ABUSE				
5	9%	death threats	14	22%
18	33%	assassinated (or otherwise killed)	28	43%
0	0%	forced disappearance/suspected assassination	0	0%
0	0%	tortured (but not killed)	0	0%
3	5%	hit/beaten/assaulted	1	2%
3	5%	attempted assassination: shot at/stabbed (not killed)	5	8%
0	0%	threatened/attempted assault	11	17%
1	2%	surveilled/followed/intimidated	0	0%
11	20%	criminalization of protest: illegal search, arrest, detention, conviction	1	2%
1	2%	forced evictions/seizure of communities by armed groups(# of families)	0	0%
8	15%	police attacks on groups/illegal raids	4	6%
1	2%	burglary, ransacked office/home	0	0%
0	0%	kidnapping/attempted kidnapping	0	0%
0	0%	tamper with car	0	0%
0	0%	food crops destroyed	0	0%
3	5.5%	press/broadcast equipment destroyed	0	0%
1	2%	defamatory statements/misinformation campaign	1	2%
0	0%	medical attention denied	0	0%
0	0%	conscientious objector status denied	0	0%
0	0%	homes/encampments burned down	0	0%
55	100%	total	65	100%