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ORAL STATEMENT
ITEM 3: GENERAL DEBATE

UN Human Rights Council
Forty-sixth Session
22 February- 23 March 2021

Madam President,

We would like to thank the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders for drawing attention to the killings of those who defend human rights.

I deliver this statement on behalf of a coalition of 10 organizations¹ who have been recording the increasing yearly toll. At least 331 individuals were killed in 2020 alone for daring to stand up for human rights.

As in every previous year, impunity awaits the vast majority of those responsible. Most killings are recorded in Colombia, Philippines, Honduras, Mexico, Guatemala, Afghanistan and Brazil. Around 70% of those killed were fighting to protect their land, territory and environment, many of them Indigenous people. Others were killed in contexts of conflict and repression. As the Special Rapporteur also stresses, these killings are usually preceded by threats and are preventable.²

We invite you to read their stories on the [HRD Memorial](#) website. Each one of their deaths is an indictment of the failure of States to live up to their commitment to uphold human rights and create a safe and enabling environment for those who defend them.

These individuals should be at the forefront of our protection efforts. We join the Special Rapporteur in urging states to commit to a true implementation of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders and:

- Recognise and applaud the key role played by human rights defenders, and stop smearing and stigmatizing them;
- Take all necessary steps to counter the prevailing impunity in these cases and bring about real justice;
- In consultation with defenders, design individual and collective protection programmes that address their needs;
- Ensure that those who defend human rights are enabled to do so in a safe environment without fear of threats, attacks or reprisals.

Thank you.

¹ ACI-Participa Honduras; Afghanistan Human Rights Defenders Committee (AHRDC); Amnesty International; Brazilian Committee of Human Rights Defenders; Comité Cerezo (Mexico); FIDH; Front Line Defenders; Global Witness; Human Rights Defenders' Alert – India; Karapatan (The Philippines); OMCT; Programa Somos Defensores (Colombia); Red TDT (Mexico); and UDEFEGUA (Guatemala).

² See HRDmemorial.org and also Front Line Defenders, [Global Analysis 2020](#), February 2021, Amnesty International, [Deadly but preventable attacks, killings and enforced disappearances of those who defend human rights](#), 2017; Global Witness, [Defending Tomorrow](#), *The climate crisis and threats against land and environmental defenders*, 2020, Udefegua, [Informe de situación de personas defensoras, comunidades y organizaciones de derechos humanos 2019-2020](#), Programa Somos Defensores, [El virus de la violencia](#), informe semestral enero-junio 2020, amongst other sources.