



On the front line

Regional Action Network on Human Rights Defenders

Colombia: Defenders forced to flee

Following a series of attacks against members of Colombian human rights organizations (see appeal cases below), Carlos Castaño, head of the national paramilitary organization *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC), United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia, on 1 February threatened all human rights defenders in the country by announcing his intention to purge human rights organizations of “subversives”. As a consequence of the wave of violence against human rights defenders, several organizations were compelled to close their offices and the number of defenders requesting exile increased. Over the years many have had to take the extreme decision to abandon their homes and seek refuge in other parts of Colombia or abroad, on account of the level of threats. Forcing people to take flight is one way of disengaging and weakening the work of human rights defenders.

them to the guerrilla, have meant that defenders have been subjected to violations simply because of their work with deprived communities or those displaced by political violence, or because of their demands that members of the security forces or paramilitaries be made responsible for the atrocities they commit.

Despite the governments commitment to support and protect members of human rights organizations, to-date such measures have been ineffective, failing to offer sufficient protection in time or to demonstrate the political will needed to prevent attacks against human rights defenders. Very few of the complaints filed regarding attacks and threats against human rights defenders have ever been investigated.

Moreover, the Colombian government continues to deny the existence of links between paramilitary groups and the security forces despite the documented evidence of Amnesty International and other organizations, including the United Nations (UN). Nor are the Colombian authorities implementing the principles and recommendations of intergovernmental human rights organizations in respect of protection for human rights defenders,

Renowned Argentinean human rights defender Emilio Mignone dies, (see page 9). In the photo, he is accompanied by his wife, Angélica Sosa de Mignone.
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Over the last two years, more than 20 human rights defenders have been killed by members of the security forces or their paramilitary allies. Allegations accusing them of being legitimate targets in the counterinsurgency fight and linking

including the *Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms*, adopted by the UN General Assembly on 9 December 1998.

CREDHOS promoters in San Pablo. Marco Tulio Torres (right) had to leave the region because of threats.
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DEFENDERS IN THE MAGDALENA MEDIO

One of the areas most affected by the armed conflict is the central region of the Magdalena Medio, a tropical area where many rich natural resources converge. Members of human rights organizations in this area work in a climate of threats and intimidation in which extrajudicial executions, “disappearances” and other human rights violations are frequently perpetrated against civilians and defenders themselves.

CREDHOS

Six activists of the *Corporación Regional para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos* (CREDHOS), Regional Committee for the Defence of Human Rights, have been assassinated and numerous others have been compelled to leave the region, or the country, since the organization was founded in 1987.

Threats and intimidation against CREDHOS have usually coincided with their work to collect testimonies and report on serious human rights violations, largely the work of paramilitary groups operating in the region.

In July 1998, the organization was declared a “military target” by the Santander and South Cesar

Self-Defense Group, a paramilitary group affiliated to AUC. Two months later, this same paramilitary group acknowledged responsibility for the 16 May attack on the oil town of Barrancabermeja, Santander, in which seven people died and at least 25 were abducted and “disappeared”. Member of CREDHOS played a crucial role in denouncing the attack.

The same paramilitary groups parked a lorry carrying ten heavily armed men in front of the house of Osiris Bayter Ferias, president of CREDHOS, on the night of the 16 May attack, while at the same time her telephone rang repeatedly. Nobody spoke when she answered the calls. Osiris Bayter was supported by Peace Brigades International, an organization accompanying human rights defenders, up until mid-1998 when she fled the country on account of the serious threats to her life.

CREDHOS promoter in the municipality of San Pablo, also had to be accompanied by PBI at the end of 1998 on account of threats. On 23 October, an unidentified individual fired shots from a gun in front of

Marco Tulio Torres house just a few minutes after he had gone into the house with his two daughters. At the end of the year he left San Pablo with his family, after receiving reliable reports that he was being sought by paramilitaries in the area.

Since the Barrancabermeja attack, CREDHOS and its members have continued to receive threats from paramilitary groups in the region. In one announcement that appeared in November 1998 in the municipality of Cantagallo, south Bolívar, CREDHOS was held responsible for serious public order problems in the Magdalena Medio and the organization was branded as “paraguerrilla”. On 19 December and 16 January 1999, two further paramilitary communiques were released in the municipality of Puerto Wilches, Santander. Fear of paramilitary attacks in Yondó, Antioquia, and the possible existence of a “black” list naming dozens of local inhabitants, meant that at the beginning of this year PBI intensified its accompaniment of the two members of CREDHOS, Régulo Madero and Henry Lozano, living there.

In August 1997, rumours began to circulate that paramilitary groups operating in south Bolívar were planning to bomb the offices of the *Corporación Laboral Educativa Básica de Especialización Regional*, (CLEBER), Corporation for Regionally Specialized Basic Training for Workers, a human rights organization based in Simití (Bolívar). That month and the following one, soldiers based near Simití went to the CLEBER office to demand information about the activities of the organization and its lawyer, father Clemente Berel. Finally, on account of the threats against him, the French priest was forced to leave the region.

Since then concern for members of CLEBER has not faltered. Since July, several members have had to live in other areas as a result of threats by paramilitary groups, despite PBI's international presence.

Since its foundation in 1986, the organization has been threatened on numerous occasions and the army based in the region has accused its members of sympathizing with guerrilla groups.

Sabana de Torres Human Rights Committee

On 23 December 1997, Mario Humberto Calixto escaped abduction and possible extrajudicial execution when two armed men burst into his house and found two PBI volunteers whose interception allowed Mario H. Calixto to escape. Mario H. Calixto is president of the Sabana de Torres Human Rights Committee, in the northeast of Santander department.

The attack against Mario H. Calixto came shortly after the Committee had published a report regarding human rights violations in the area which provoked several death threats against the president by paramilitary groups operating in the region.

CLEBER

On account of the threats against his life, Mario H. Calixto and his family were compelled to leave Sabana de Torres, and in June 1998 he left Colombia.

Since its foundation in 1998, the Committee has investigated human rights violations committed during the period of the armed conflict and offered legal advice to victims and their relatives and those displaced as a consequence of the violence.

From 1995 onwards, the organization could rely on the presence of PBI when its members were seriously threatened or accused of being linked to the guerrillas. At the end of 1997, the risk to members of the Committee worsened to the extent that several members fled the municipality. Since then, the organization closed its offices and suspended all activities.

For more information, see Amnesty International: *Colombia: "Enough is enough!"* (AMR 23/16/99, February 1999), *Colombia: Human Rights Defenders under Increasing Attack* (AMR 23/17/98, March 1998) and *Colombia: No Security for Human Rights Defenders* (AMR23/32/97, May 1997); or website <http://www.amnesty.org/> (English) and <http://www.edai.org/> (Spanish).

Two experiences with police protection

The State is responsible for guaranteeing protection to those who defend human rights. So it is stated in Article 12.2 of the UN Defenders Declaration. However, in some countries in the region official protection measures for threatened human rights defenders scarcely exist. Having said this, some governments have in conjunction with the defenders agreed upon

special measures to guarantee their safety. Two of these cases are looked at in this article.

Brazil: A special agreement

Father Ricardo Rezende Figueira gained the hate of the Rio Maria landowners, in the Brazilian state of Pará, on account of his frequent complaints about the abuses inflicted on the peasant population by this powerful group. In the lead up to 1991 he received numerous threats against his life, which obliged the federal government, through the Ministry of Justice, to offer him federal police protection. Ricardo Rezende rejected the offer on the grounds that he wasn't the only person at risk; instead he requested the investigation of complaints that had originated the threats, and recommended that those responsible be brought to justice.

However, repercussions in Brazil and abroad regarding the abduction and killing of Expedito Ribeiro de Souza, president of the Rural Workers Union in Rio Maria, on 2 February 1992, led the governor of the state of Pará to renew the offer of protection for Ricardo Rezende, and faced with his repeated refusal, to demand written proof to that affect. In order not to excuse the government of its responsibility in the event of an attempt on his life, Ricardo Rezende was forced to accept the agreement, but he imposed the following conditions:

- The security be extended to the trade unionists also under threat;
- He choose his own bodyguards;
- The assigned police would not be uniformed or armed.

The governor accepted the conditions with the only request that he inform the head of police about his movements, something he omitted on several of his trips outside the state.

Defender Ricardo Rezende. ©AI

Before the military police started protecting Ricardo Rezende, and in order to meet the first condition, the federal government arranged protection for the threatened trade unionists. However, equal measures were not applied: protection was charged to the federal police who were uniformed and carrying machine guns. The serious tensions that arose, originating from the tacit alliances between landowners and members of the federal police, as well as the rejection of bodyguards defending trade unionists, meant that after two years they renounced the protection.

In accordance with the agreement established with Ricardo Rezende, two members of the military police accompanied him constantly from 1992 to 1997 in the state of Pará. Each time he attempted to break the protection the death threats resumed immediately. According to Ricardo Rezende, the fact that military police agents were implicated in the majority of crimes they reported, meant that the loyalty existing among the members of the group which protected his bodyguards also protected him. The clergyman had different bodyguards in an effort to reduce the pressure which they used to suffer for being “friends of the priest”.

Colombia

As a result of the transformation of

the Colombian Ministry of the Interior between 1995 and 1996, Special Administrative Human Rights Unit was set up and includes an Area for Protection. This unit develops the Program of Protection for Witnesses and Threatened Persons, the primary function of which is, in the words of the general director, “to offer protection through the state security organisms to leaders and activists of political parties, social movements and non-governmental human rights organizations, as well as to threatened witnesses in cases regarding human rights violations”.

In order to improve the workings of the Program for Protection, the Committee for Regulation and Risk Evaluation was also set up, fundamentally to evaluate each case and establish possible protection measures in line with the different levels of risk. The permanent members of the Committee are: the National Police, the Civilian Security Department (DAS), one delegate from non-governmental human rights organizations, one delegate from social organizations and the Ministry of the Interior.

In the period up to September 1998, the Committee had analysed 62 cases and, in order to guarantee the well-being and protection of the threatened individuals, a series of measures had been allocated, including humanitarian assistance, bullet proof jackets, cellular telephones, protection for offices and personal security for trade union leaders. However, the workings of the Committee are slow and bureaucratic.

Following the killing on 18 April 1998 of the human rights lawyer Eduardo Umaña, the NGOs met with Ernesto Samper, then president of Colombia, and agreed the “creation of specialized security units to protect the lives of human rights

defenders” as well as a pledge to revise “military intelligence archives kept by state security agencies”, with the aim that the Procurator General study information regarding human rights defenders. In February 1999, the Procurator had still not informed NGOs of his findings.

Human rights NGOs in the country continue to request that the government adopt the recommendations for the protection of defenders that they have repeatedly indicated, including;

- devise and execute effective strategies for the arrest and sanction of those responsible for threats and attacks against defenders;
- guarantee exhaustive judicial investigations into the abuses against defenders, the trial of those responsible; during investigations of members of the armed forces, agents should be suspended from active duty until the end of the investigation;
- guarantee the protection of all Colombian human rights defenders in accordance with their requests and the degree of urgency that the current crisis demands, as well as recent announcements made by the government of Andrés Pastrana;
- guarantee full implementation of UN standards and recommendations regarding protection for defenders;
- guarantee full dismantling of paramilitary groups;
- ensure that the Procurator General informs human rights organizations without further delay of the conclusions of his revision of military intelligence archives.

Mexico : Expelling defenders

Throughout 1998, the Mexican government continued to restrict the presence of human rights defenders in the country, especially in conflict zones such as the state of Chiapas. In what may be interpreted as an attempt to weaken and isolate Mexican human rights defenders and impede their access to international monitoring in Chiapas, dozens of foreign observers were expelled from the country without right, at the time, to have their case heard by the competent authorities.

Expulsions intensified after the Acteal massacre, in Chiapas, in which 45 indigenous displaced peasants were killed by presumed paramilitaries on 22 December 1997, in an area with a strong military and police presence. Two days later, the authorities publicly qualified concern expressed by international organizations as “an unacceptable interference in Mexico’s internal affairs”.

One of the human rights defenders expelled was Father Michael Chanteau, a French clergyman who had been a priest in Chenalhó, municipality of Acteal, for 32 years, playing an active role in the defence of human rights. He was detained there on 26 February 1998, before being transferred to Mexico City, where he was detained incommunicado for seven hours without access to a lawyer, while being interrogated. While he was held, the National Immigration Institute (INM), refused to provide information on his whereabouts or legal status to the dioceses of San Cristobal de las Casas and human rights organizations.

At the time of his detention, Father Michael Chanteau had a complaint

pending with the attorney General’s Office regarding death threats he had received one month before the Acteal massacre from the then municipal president, Jacinto Arias Cruz, “If you don’t control year people, we will kill you as well [...]”.

Tom Hansen, former director of the US organization Pastors for Peace was also expelled in February 1998 after having been detained incommunicado for 24 hours without access to a lawyer; he was denied the right to appeal the decision or have his case revised by a competent authority. On the eve of the expulsion, 18 February, INM agents had arrested him while he was teaching Tzltales indigenous people to operate a video in order to be able to document further human rights violations. Subsequently, the courts ruled in his favour and the restriction on returning to Mexico was lifted. In February 1999, the government’s appeal against this decision was still pending.

On previous occasions the Mexican government has also restricted the presence of defenders from other nationalities in other parts of the country. For instance, on 16 April 1997, INM agents in Acapulco, state of Guerrero, confiscated the visas of two members of an international organization invited to visit the country by Mexican NGOs. During their stay in Acapulco, Vilma Nuñez de Escorcia, director of the Nicaraguan Human Rights Centre, and Benjamin Cuéllar, director of the Human Rights Institute of the Central American University in El Salvador, visited prisons and collected testimonies of victims of torture. Despite having informed the Mexican consul in their own countries about their visit, the authorities expelled them from Mexico four days later. In June 1993, Mexico signed together with another 120 states the Vienna Declaration,

article 38 of which stipulates:

“Non-governmental organizations should be free to carry out their human rights activities, without interference, within the framework of national law and the Universal Declaration of Human”.

In May 1998, the Ministry of the Interior introduced new visa requirements for foreign human rights observers to visit the country. This measure signified delays in obtaining a visa, restricted visits to a maximum of ten days except in special circumstances, and handing over detailed information about the places and organizations to be visited, thereby jeopardizing the confidentiality of victims, relatives and witnesses giving testimony. By restricting the access of Mexican NGOs to international human rights organisms these measures contradict the spirit of the UN Defenders Declaration which states in article 9.4 that:

“ [...] everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to unhindered access to and communication with international bodies with general or special competence to receive and consider communications on matters of human rights and fundamental freedoms.”

See also, *Mexico: Under the Shadow of Impunity* (AMR 41/02/99), to be published on 9 March 1999; *Mexico: Arbitrary Expulsion of international human rights observers* (AMR 41/29/97, May 1997).

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Appeal Cases

Colombia

Medellín defenders in grave danger. New threats against defenders in Trujillo

Human rights defenders working in the area of Medellín, capital of the department of Antioquia, face greater risks than ever.

At the end of January 1999, paramilitary organizations initiated a new wave of attacks against human rights defenders. However, in contrast to the past, paramilitary forces acknowledged their responsibility for some of the human rights violations, including abductions and threats, and openly declared their intention to purge human rights organizations of presumed guerrillas.

Abduction of IPC defenders

On 28 January 1999, a group of heavily armed men broke into the offices of the *Instituto Polpular de Capacitación* (IPC), Popular Training Institute, and, having threatening everyone there, seized Jairo Bedoya, Olga Rodas, Jorge Salazar and Claudia Tamayo as well as several computers with IPC archives. Four days later Carlos Castaño, head of the national paramilitary organization *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC), United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia, declared that this group was holding the four defenders as “prisoners of war”, although no proof that they were alive was provided.

In addition, Carlos Castaño threatened all Colombian human rights defenders: “The [recent] abductions ... mark the beginning of a regrettable, but inevitable stage in the conflict... We do not want to create panic in the non-governmental organizations, but we do call for a purge of guerrillas from said organizations, a call extended to the Human Rights Unit of the Attorney General's Office”.

On 8 February two of the defenders Olga Rodas and Claudia Tamayo, were freed. Their colleagues were freed on 18 February.

Although this is a welcome outcome, the wave of human rights violations against defenders means that many still face grave danger. Faced with repeated accusations by the AUC linking some human rights defenders to the guerrilla, as well as the ineffectiveness of official protection, at least two organizations have been forced to close their offices and break off their activities in order to protect their members. A growing number of defenders have been compelled to leave their communities and seek refuge in other places in order to guarantee the well-being and protection of those at risk. An increasing number of defenders have been compelled to leave their communities and seek refuge in other places.

Extrajudicial execution of CSPP defenders

On 30 January 1999, Everardo de Jesús Puerta y Julio Ernesto González, members of the *Comité de Solidaridad con los Presos Políticos* (CSPP), Committee of Solidarity with Political Prisoners, were killed by bullet shots fired by two men and one woman, alleged paramilitaries

who had stopped their bus which was travelling from Medellín to Bogotá. The CSPP, a respected human rights organization offering legal assistance to political prisoners and promoting and protecting civil and political rights, had in the past suffered human rights violations at the hands of paramilitaries.

The Colombian government denounced the extrajudicial killings and offered a reward for information on the identity of the killers, but to-date no progress has been made in identifying the perpetrators. As a result of the lack of protection the CSPP closed its offices.

Trujillo defenders threatened

In the context of the wave of paramilitary violence, threats were also recently renewed against members of the *Asociación de Familiares de Víctimas de Trujillo* (FAVIT), Association of Relatives of the Victims of Trujillo, in the municipality of Trujillo, department of Valle del Cauca.

On 18 January 1999, an individual linked to paramilitary organizations active in the region was openly spying around the building that houses the offices of FAVIT and Justice and Peace, where two members of the organization, Carlos Ulloa and Stella Guerra, live. While he was there he said: “that pair of sons of bitches upstairs are guerrillas, the same is going to be done to them as was done to the others eight years ago”, a clear reference to the more than 100 peasants “disappeared” or extrajudicially executed in the Trujillo area by paramilitary groups and the security forces between 1989 and 1990.

Since then, FAVIT, with the

support of Justice and Peace has worked tirelessly to get the victims justice. Although the Colombian president publicly acknowledged in 1995 government responsibility for the Trujillo crimes, no-one has been brought to justice and the remains of those who were “disappeared” have not been found, nor has

Members of the Popular Training Institute abducted on 28 February in Medellín, Colombia. From left to right: Jairo Bedoya, Jorge Salazar, Claudia Tamayo and Olga Rodas. ©IPC

compensation been awarded to the relatives. Even so, witnesses have suffered systematic persecution, some have been killed and others have had to leave the country.

Concern for members of Justice and Peace and AFAVIT rose over the last few days. Between 27 January and 4 February, one member of AFAVIT received several residential threats both in writing and by telephone against both organizations: “May the soul of Francisco Javier Trujillo “Pasilla” rest in peace and those of his friends in Justice and Peace” signed “friends from above”, 27 January; the last call in February threatened, “stop working with that AFAVIT woman”.

Members of Justice and Peace have been subjected to threats in the past. In May 1998, for instance, the security forces raided the office of the organization in Bogotá, following the release of a military intelligence service report which suggested that Justice and Peace had information regarding an urban guerrilla network.

Justice and Peace and AFAVIT have frequently requested that the government fulfil its obligations and pledges to guarantee their protection—in accordance with previous agreements with those affected—and to halt paramilitary groups in the region. The lack of an adequate

government response compelled both organizations to announce the closing of their Trujillo office on 19 February.

See also *Colombia: “Enough is enough!”* (AMR 23/16/99, February 1999).

Recommended action

◆ Write to the Colombian government:

- requesting that security be guaranteed for all members of the Intercongregational Commission of Justice and Peace and the Association of Relatives of the Victims of Trujillo;

- requesting an exhaustive investigation into the extrajudicial execution of Everado de Jesús Puerta

and Julio Ernesto González, of the Committee in Solidarity with Political Prisoners, and the bringing to justice of those responsible;

- requesting an exhaustive investigation into the abduction of the four members of the Popular Training Institute in Medellín, and the bringing to justice of those responsible;

- requesting improved protection for defenders in light of recent paramilitary threats, and in accordance with pledges made by the government and UN recommendations;

- Request that paramilitary groups are fully dismantled, as a necessary measure to deter further attacks against defenders.

◆ Write to your home government:

- requesting them to monitor

President of the Republic

Sr. Presidente Andrés Pastrana

Palacio de Nariño

Carrera 8 No. 7-26

Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Faxes: + 57 1 286 7434 /

284 2186 / 337 1351

Minister of National Defense

Dr Rodrigo Lloreda

Ministerio de Defensa Nacional

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Minister of the Interior

Dr. Nestor Humberto Martínez,

Ministerio del Interior

Carrera 8, No.8-09, Piso 2

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Mexico

Members of the Centre for Human Rights of Tlachinollan, Guerrero, Mexico

Anthropologist Abel Barrera Hernández heads the Centre for Human Rights of Tlachinollan, a non-governmental human rights organization in Tlapa, state of Guerrero. He is also a member of the coordination group the National Network of Civil Human Rights Organisms "Full rights for all", a collection of more than 40 Mexican human rights organizations.

On 22 November 1998, the wife of Abel Barrera played back a recorded telephone message at her home in Tlapa which said that if members of the Centre for Human Rights of Tlachinollan didn't cease their activities, they would suffer harm.

Two weeks beforehand, the receptionist at the hotel of Abel Barrera Navarrete, father of the defender, received another call in which an unidentified man warned the anthropologist "to take care, and

progress on providing protection to human rights defenders.

not to continue working with delinquents", because if he did he would be killed.

Threats against Abel Barrera and other human rights defenders in the state of Guerrero are occurring in the context of growing violence, stemming from the presence of the army since the emergence of armed opposition groups.

At the end of 1998 when threats against the Centre for Human Rights increased, the organization was investigating, among other things, the case of several people who had apparently been extrajudicially executed. Implicated in the incident, which occurred in June 1998 in El Charco, an indigenous community close to Tlapa, are members of the Mexican army and suspected members of the Insurgent People's Revolutionary Army, an armed opposition group.

Other human rights defenders in the region who have recently been threatened consider that such intimidation is a way of pressurizing them into giving up their human rights work. Hilda Navarrete, activist with the Guerrero human rights group, "The voice of those without voice", which belongs to the network "Full rights for all", was in a meeting organized by the church on 20 October 1998 when several heavily armed soldiers from the Mexican army surrounded the building and intimidated those present. The organization has been actively working to defend those tortured and imprisoned in relation to incidents in El Charco.

Recommended action

◆ Write to the Mexican government:

- express concern regarding

intimidation against members of the Centre for Human Rights of Tlachinollan during the course of legitimate human rights activities, and request that the security of Abel Barrera and all members of the organization is guaranteed;

- request guarantees for the security of other human rights organizations active in the state of Guerrero;

-reiterate the important work that Mexican human rights defenders carry out, and request the collaboration of the authorities with all those who defend and promote human rights in accordance with the *UN Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms*;

-underline the commitment made by the Mexican government in June 1993 in adopting the Vienna Declaration and Plan of Action, which recognises the important role played by national governments, international governmental organizations and national and international non-governmental organizations.

◆ Write to your government:

- requesting that it monitors the implementation by the Mexican government of resolution 1998/4 by the UN Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities. This requests that the Mexican authorities "ensure full respect for the international instruments to which Mexico is party and ... attach the highest priority ... to promoting the action of human rights defenders and guaranteeing their safety".

Write to:

Governor of the State of Guerrero
René Juárez Cisneros
Palacio de Gobierno/Plaza Central,
Primer Congreso de Anahuac
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Montaña Tlachinollan, A.C
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Argentina: Prominent Argentinean human rights defender dies

Emilio Mignone, one of the most significant figures in the struggle for human rights in Argentina and the world, died at the age of 75, on 20 December 1998, after a long and painful illness.

Emilio Mignone, a renowned lawyer, was also a respected teacher and writer. His tireless search for his daughter who was "disappeared" in 1976 by members of the Argentinean military, led him to work for all those "disappeared" in his country when, two years later, he founded the *Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales* (CELS), Centre for Legal and Social Studies, which among other things, provides legal assistance to the victims of human rights violations.

His presence is irreplaceable, but the legacy left through his commitment and work will undoubtedly be used as a guiding light to reach the goal he yearned, a world in which human rights will be the unquestionable legitimate right of everyone.

Paris: World Defenders Summit (8-11/12/98)

For the 50th anniversary of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, on 10 December 1998, Amnesty International, together with the *Fédération Internationale des Ligues des Droits de l'Homme*, *France Libertés*, the *Foundation Danielle Mitterrand* and the *ATD Quart Monde*-- convened in Paris a worldwide conference in which more than 300 defenders from numerous countries participated. Participants adopted the Paris Declaration. In addition, working groups were held to discuss the role of defenders on impunity, extreme poverty, racism, children, armed conflict, and women's rights.

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Defenders Declaration

On 9 December 1998, the UN adopted the *Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms*.

The text is available on the UN website:
<http://www.unhchr.ch/english/>

Notice board

***Some human rights defenders
at the World Defenders Summit
in Paris on 8-11 December 1998.
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This publication is produced by the Program to Promote the Protection of Human Rights Defenders in Latin America, established by Amnesty International in May 1997 to follow-up Defenders Conference (Bogotá, Colombia, May 1996). Please distribute this bulletin as widely as possible. For more information and to join the Program's Defenders Network, write to:

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