

## [HRC37 | Human rights defenders at risk in Honduras and Colombia](#)

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**The situation is only getting worse for human rights defenders in Honduras after the fraudulent elections of 26 November 2017. In Colombia, the delay in accrediting the OHCHR Representative has impacted on the protection of human rights defenders. We urge both governments to take immediate action.**



As indicated in [the report](#) of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Honduras presented at the Human Rights Council, the elections have been tainted by claims of electoral fraud, leaving a bleak trail of violent deaths, dozens of injured, arbitrary detentions and excessive use of force [among others](#).

In [a statement](#), ISHR, jointly with the International Platform against Impunity (Pi), members of the Coalition against Impunity and human rights defenders in Honduras, have condemned the deplorable reaction of the military and civil police to the protests, in which even children were victims of the disproportionate use of force by security forces.

Mario Roberto Chinchilla of the Coalition against Impunity explains that human rights defenders have accompanied the people of Honduras, documenting patterns of violent behaviour by the armed forces and police against protestors legitimately exercising their rights.

'We have documented grave violations against human rights defenders, like targeted killings of social movement leaders fighting for the conservation of the environment, as well as of community leaders who organised protests', states Chinchilla.

Helen Nolan from ISHR agrees, saying that 'there is a persecution of leaders and human rights defenders through criminalisation and detention.'

Andrea Bolaños from Pi explains that there have been reports of the use of firearms, as well as tear gas and water containing chemicals, all with the aim of injuring protestors and breaking up protests.

'Moreover, military and police officers have been observed infiltrating the protests with the double purpose of stirring up violence and identifying human rights defenders and leaders,' adds Bolaños.

In face of this situation, the statement urges the Honduran government to:

- **investigate and prosecute**, through the Public Ministry, high level politicians, military and police officials,

as well as members of businesses that ordered and executed the 38 targeted killings of leaders and human rights defenders, along with other human rights violations;

- **free the persons detained and prosecuted** for exercising their rights to freedom of expression, opinion, assembly and association.

ISHR, jointly with the Colombian Commission of Jurists (CCJ), also stressed the worrying situation in Colombia. Noting the unquestionable commitment of OHCHR to confront the grave situation faced by human rights defenders in the country, the delay in accrediting the new Representative of OHCHR in Colombia - accredited yesterday during the session where the report was presented - was highly concerning.

Emphasising this point, Ana María Rodríguez of the CCJ explains that the lack of clear leadership in the Office until the accreditation was confirmed affected the proper documentation of cases of attacks and the analysis of the context in which they occur, as well as the accompaniment of leaders and communities in the regions.

'In light of the 121 killings registered in 2017, as well as cases like the [reprisals against Adriel Ruiz](#) following his participation in the review of Colombia by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, we welcome the decision by Colombia to accredit the new Representative,' said Rodríguez.

The full statement can be found [here](#).

Watch the statement here:

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