

2023

2024

196

KILLINGS*

142

KILLINGS*

1339

NON-LETHAL ATTACKS**

1155

NON-LETHAL ATTACKS**

UNCOVERING THE

HIDDEN ICEBERG

A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

The *latest ALLIED dataset* shows sustained violence, emerging digital threats and a more prominent use of criminalization against Indigenous, land and environmental defenders across 75 countries

ALLIANCE ^{OF} LAND,
INDIGENOUS ^{AND}
ENVIRONMENTAL
DEFENDERS

* reported by Global Witness

** reported by ALLIED

In 2023 and 2024, civic space continued to shrink worldwide.¹

As people took to the streets to protest authoritarianism, extractivism and genocide, many governments responded by detaining human rights defenders and framing dissent itself as a threat to national interests. In this context, Indigenous Peoples, youth, environmental groups and others demanding climate action faced intensified retaliation by state authorities and private sector actors.

Across 2023 and 2024, Indigenous, land and environmental defenders (ILEDs) confronted persistent threats, arbitrary arrests, violence and killings, alongside a rise in digital attacks. These trends raised urgent concerns about how online harm fuels offline violence, as well as the responsibility of social media companies and how regulators should respond.

Humanitarian and environmental crises, continued resource extraction and collusion between governments and corporations further deepened defenders' vulnerability. In many regions, conflict eroded already fragile protections, exposing communities to displacement, land expropriation and systematic violence. Such dynamics were stark in Palestine and the Democratic Republic of Congo, but also in Myanmar, the Philippines, Sudan and Ukraine – contexts where land rights violations both drive and result from conflict, creating self-reinforcing cycles of insecurity and ecological destruction.

Despite the severity of these trends, state monitoring of attacks against defenders remains profoundly inadequate. In many contexts, civil society organizations are the primary actors documenting abuses, identifying patterns of escalation and pressing for accountability. In this context, initiatives like ALLIED and the data collectors contributing to this effort are indispensable – strengthening the global evidence base, filling critical reporting gaps, and enabling more effective protection for Indigenous, land and environmental defenders at a moment when they are urgently needed.

¹ https://monitor.civicus.org/globalfindings_2024/

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A CRUCIAL GAP

Violence against defenders undermines global development commitments and strikes at the heart of Agenda 2030, specifically Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16, which calls for peaceful and inclusive societies. Target 16.a highlights the need to protect fundamental freedoms with Indicator 16.10.1 – endorsed by UN member states in 2015 – tracks killings and attacks on human rights defenders, journalists and trade unionists. While a complementary indicator on violence against environmental human rights defenders has been introduced in the CBD monitoring framework, the SDG indicator remains the primary global measure of whether fundamental freedoms are being upheld.

Despite these indicators, reporting by states remains extremely limited. In the 10 years since the SDGs were endorsed, only five of the 191 countries – plus the European Union – that have submitted a Voluntary National Review (VNR) have recognized the killing of at least one human rights defender, journalist or trade unionist. These numbers come in stark contrast to civil society reporting: Global Witness documented at least 1,810 land and environmental defenders were killed over this same period.

In 2024, Kenya¹ was the only country of the 36 submitting VNR reports to the SDG mechanism that indicated at least one case of violence. Three countries reported zero cases and the other 32 did not report at all.

Meanwhile, in 2024, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) documented the killing of 502 human rights defenders² across 44 countries, at least 167 of which were environmental human rights defenders (EHRDs). An additional 19 EHRDs were recorded as disappeared, while EHRDs were detained in at least 28 countries in 2024.

1 In its 2024 VNR, Kenya invited ALLIED to submit data that was internally validated by the Kenya National Commission of Human Rights and reported for SDG 16.10.1.

2 Number of environmental human rights defenders killed and disappeared reported by the indicators team at OHCHR, 2025. <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/b12adf1ee3a840b7a23d089050c3bd80>

366

**VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEWS
SUBMITTED SINCE 2015**

5

**REVIEWS THAT ACKNOWLEDGED
AT LEAST ONE KILLING**

Since 2015, states have submitted **366 Voluntary National Reviews** to the High Level Political Forum – yet **only five³ have acknowledged even one killing** of a human rights defender, journalist or trade unionist.

In 2024, **Kenya** was the only country to indicate at least one case of violence against defenders. The same year, OHCHR reported at least 167 environmental human rights defenders were killed and another 19 disappeared globally.

The data reveals a fundamental gap in state reporting on the situation of defenders – a gap that civil society has consistently stepped in to fill.

3 Of the 366 VNRs submitted by 191 countries and the European Union since 2015, only 23 have reported data against indicator 16.10.1, and only five reports – Kenya (2024), Uruguay (2022), the State of Palestine (2018), Indonesia (2019), Nigeria (2020), 1.4% of the total – have indicated that at least one human rights defender, journalist or trade unionist had been killed in the country.

ALLIED DATA COLLECTION

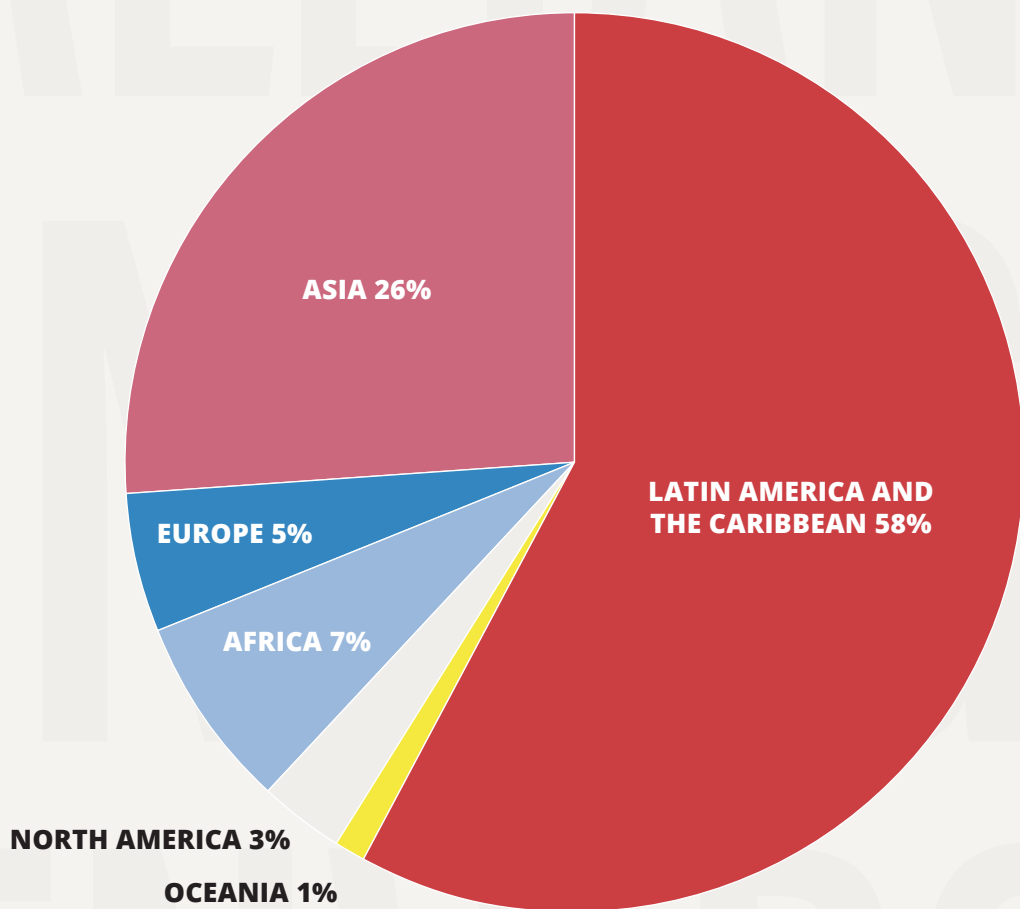
Since 2012, Global Witness has monitored the killings of land and environmental defenders, recording 2,253 during that time. With the aim of capturing the wider scale of non-lethal attacks that surround and often precede non-lethal violence, the Alliance for Land, Indigenous, and Environmental Defenders' (ALLIED) Data Working Group formed in 2017, bringing together data and reporting by local, national, regional, and international organisations.

In 2023 and 2024, for every defender killed, more than seven non-lethal attacks were recorded in the ALLIED database, with one in three of these attacks targeting Indigenous Peoples. These attacks – ranging from threats and physical assault to displacement, online harassment and criminalization – often occur in the weeks, months or years preceding a killing. Monitoring these patterns is essential both for timely intervention and to strength protection mechanisms.

ALLIED works directly with data collectors at multiple levels to verify cases that would be impossible to document without close contact with affected communities. The 2023-2024 ALLIED dataset reflects reporting from 10 data collectors and protection organizations, including five local organizations. The depth and richness of local reporting is clear: in countries where local partners contributed to data collection – such as Guatemala, Colombia and the Philippines – far more attacks were identified, underscoring the essential role of documentation by local networks and grassroots organizations.

Data availability, however, is uneven across regions, sometimes creating the fast impression that violence is absent. Underreporting remains a pervasive challenge, as political pressure, security risks and fear of retaliation prevent many defenders from reporting attacks, particularly when powerful business or state actors may be involved. Risks are even higher for those defenders marginalized by race, ethnicity, gender identity or Indigeneity, as well as women human rights defenders. Local data collectors, likewise, face significant danger in some contexts for their work monitoring abuses. Weak rule of law, impunity and shrinking civic space further obstruct accurate reporting.

States must urgently improve monitoring and reporting on violence against defenders, adopt protection laws, ensure accountability and provide remedy to those harmed. More than 75 years after the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and with fewer than five years left to meet Agenda 2030, defenders face persistent attacks for safeguarding their lands and communities. As the Rio Conventions and regional frameworks such as the Escazú Agreement offer emerging avenues to recognize and protect defenders, swift and coordination action is needed to end the human cost of defending the land and environment on which we all depend.



REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF ATTACKS

PATTERNS OF HARM: THE 2023-2024 DATASET

In 2023 and 2024, ALLIED documented nearly 2,500 non-lethal attacks across 75 countries,⁴ representing on average close to 3.5 attacks per day.

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One in every three attacks targeted Indigenous Peoples.

As in past years, violence documented in the ALLIED dataset in 2023 and 2024 was concentrated in Latin America. The region accounted for 58% of all documented attacks across the two years, driven by a high number of reported incidents in Colombia and Guatemala. Asia, the second-most violent region for defenders, accounted for an additional 26% of global attacks, with the highest rates of violence reported in the Philippines, India, Indonesia and Cambodia.

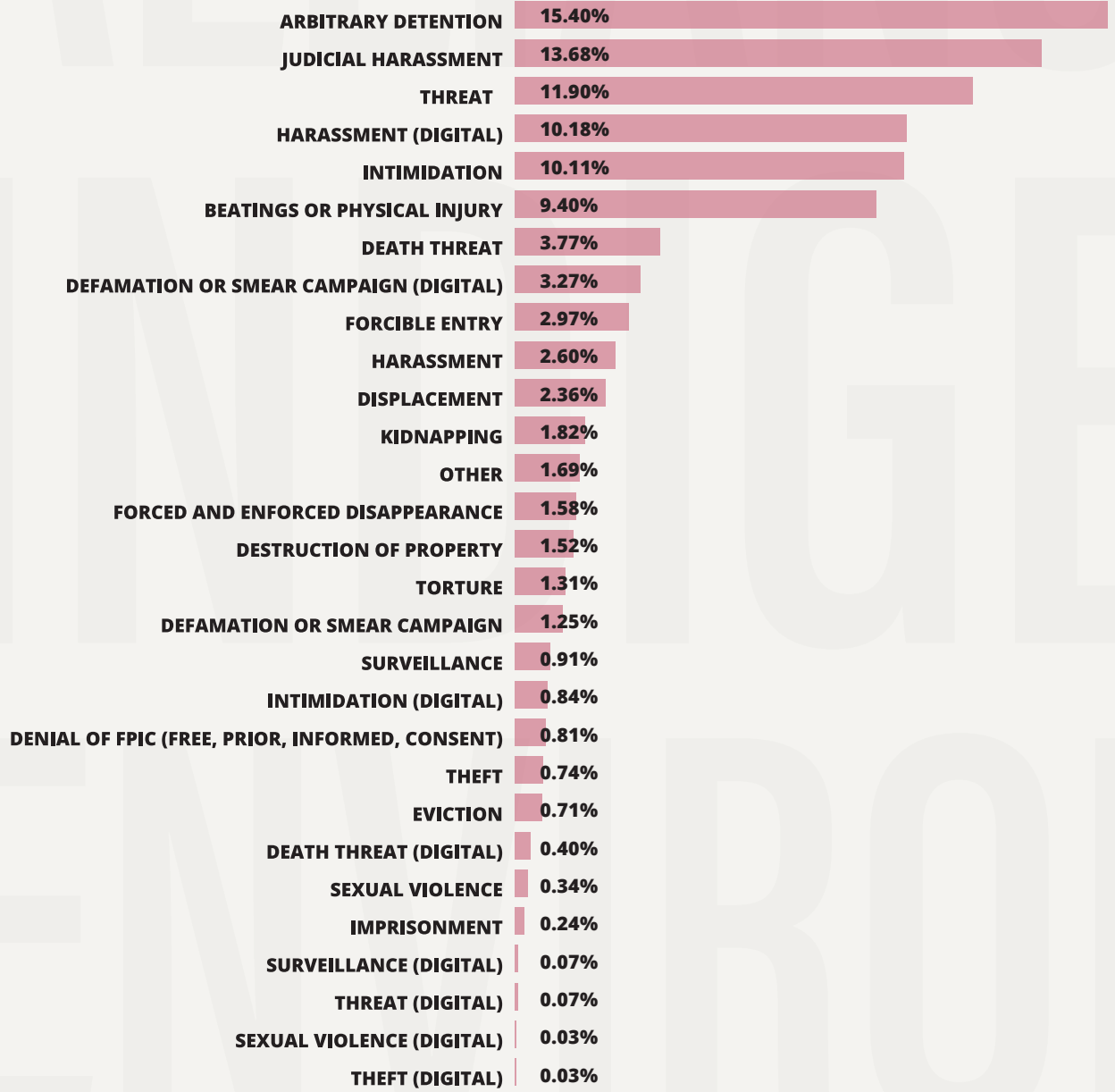
TYPES OF ATTACK

Across both years, attacks against individuals – rather than communities, groups or organizations – were most prominent, representing 56% of all attacks in 2023 and 77% in 2024. Attacks against entire communities, such as displacement or physical violence, accounted for 28% of attacks registered in 2023 and an additional 12% in 2024. Attacks registered against entire communities implies that the total number of individuals affected is much higher than the number of attacks alone.

In contrast to previous years, where threats represented the most common type of registered attack, in 2023 and 2024, arbitrary detention and judicial harassment were the types of attack most often recorded. Together they accounted for nearly 30% of all attacks documented over the two years.

Across the two years, **arbitrary detention and judicial harassment were the most prominent types of attack** recorded, marking a shift from threats as the most common attack documented in 2022.

⁴ Incidents occurred in 58 countries in 2023 (1,339 attacks) and 52 in 2024 (1,155 attacks), with both overlapping and year-unique countries contributing to a combined total of 75.



TYPES OF ATTACKS REGISTERED GLOBALLY BETWEEN 2023 AND 2024

In 2024, arbitrary detention was the most common type of attack globally, accounting for 18% of total attacks, driven by high numbers in India, Bangladesh and North America. Judicial harassment was the second-most common type of attack (15%), with clusters reported in Indonesia, Cambodia and Uganda.

VIOLENCE MOVES ONLINE

In 2023, the ALLIED dataset expanded to include online attacks with the aim of better understanding violence in the digital sphere. Although not all data collectors monitor digital violence, those that do have identified alarming trends. In Guatemala alone, a cluster of 275 cases of digital harassment accounted for 18% of all global incidents registered that year.

Local data collector UDEFEGUA, which recorded the incidents in Guatemala, reports that since the pandemic, online violence in the country has seen a sharp rise:

“The violence that used to be achieved offline had to move online during the pandemic,” said UDEFEGUA researcher Brenda Guillen. In cases of defamation, Guillen notes that social media is particularly effective – much more than any offline measure could be – as posts and messages can quickly have a much greater reach. In 2024, digital attacks accounted for 58% of all the incidents recorded by UDEFEGUA. They are also concerned by patterns that seem to indicate that online violence can portend an offline attack. Guillen refers to digital defamation and hate speech towards defenders as “aggressions that set the stage for more lethal attacks,” noting that “in some areas (...) there are dedicated Facebook pages that defame human rights defenders and organizations.”

Generational differences also shape exposing and reporting: younger defenders, more active online, face heightened risks of digital harassment, while older defenders may be less familiar with digital platforms or security practices, making these attacks harder to identify or document. Online gender-based violence is especially underreported, as women and gender-diverse defenders endure sexualized harassment and doxxing, often choosing not to report due to the normalization of online abuse, stigma and weak institutional responses. Together, these dynamics obscure the true scale of digital attacks.

AFFILIATION AND ETHNICITY

Across both years, Indigenous Peoples represented the group most targeted by violence. Despite accounting for approximately six% of the global population, Indigenous Peoples accounted for more than a third (33.45%) of all attacks documented in 2023 and 2024. More than half of all documented attacks against Indigenous Peoples occurred in Bangladesh, Colombia, Guatemala, India, and the Philippines.

Despite comprising approximately 6% of the global population, Indigenous Peoples accounted for more than a third of all attacks documented worldwide in 2023 and 2024.

Across the two years, they were ***more than twice as likely to be targeted*** in a kidnapping than the general ILED population.

A closer look at the data from 2023 and 2024 suggests that Indigenous Peoples experience a disproportionately higher share of certain kinds of attacks relative to the overall defender population. Across the two years, kidnappings represented a larger share of attacks against Indigenous Peoples (5.45%) than in the overall ILED population (1.9%), suggesting they are more susceptible to this kind of attack.

After Indigenous Peoples, community leaders and members working in defense of land and the environment represented the second-most at-risk group, accounting for more than 31% of global attacks across the two years. Colombia and Mexico were the most dangerous countries for community leaders and members, representing 36% of all documented attacks against these groups. Combined, attacks on Indigenous Peoples and local communities accounted for 72% of all registered attacks.

While data about the experience of specific ethnic groups remains limited, six attacks against Garifuna defenders were registered in Honduras in 2023, in large part targeting members of the *Organización Fraternal Negra Hondureña* (OFRANEH). Across the two years, 33 attacks on Afro-Colombians were documented in the country, the majority of which were linked to the displacement of community members in the Chocó region in 2023.

Groups raising environmental concerns represented 10.7% of attacks perpetrated over the two years, with the largest number of such attacks registered in the United States (15%) followed by Mexico (13%), Uganda (10%) and the United Kingdom (9%).

Members of environmental concerns groups were most often targeted by tactics of criminalization, with more than 80% of attacks against these groups being either judicial harassment or arbitrary detention.

CAUSES AND PERPETRATORS

Indigenous, land and environmental defenders (ILEDs) safeguard traditional knowledge, protect critical biodiversity hotspots and care for their territories and the environment. They are frequently attacked or criminalized for being portrayed as opposing powerful economic interests – especially mining, agribusiness, logging, energy and infrastructure – where their resistance is framed as an obstacle to investment or development.

In 2023 and 2024, defending land was the single-most dangerous activity for defenders, accounting for 27.1% of reported cases where data was available. Defending territory and customary rights – often associated with Indigenous Peoples – was only slightly less risky, representing 26.9% of attacks. Those defending the environment in general accounted for an additional 19% of cases, while those defending water accounted for an additional 18% of global attacks.

Where business sector-specific data was available, defenders raising concerns about industrial agriculture and livestock operations faced the highest number of attacks – 29% of the total – with clusters of violence reported in Honduras, Colombia, Brazil, and Guatemala. Nearly three in every four attacks on defenders raising concerns about agribusiness occurred in these four countries, largely related to sugar, palm oil, corn, and coffee.

Mining was the second-most dangerous sector for defenders, named in 22.9% of all documented cases. More than half of all mining-related attacks took place in Colombia, India, the Philippines, the United States and Mexico.

After mining, attacks related to oil and gas accounted for another 18.3% of the total, with over half of this violence concentrated in Uganda, followed by the United States and the United Kingdom, where violence was largely endured by protestors calling for climate action. Broadly defined, the energy sector contributed to an additional seven% of global cases. Forty% of these energy-related attacks related to hydropower across Asia, Latin America and Africa.

Across regions, police were the most frequently named alleged perpetrator, responding for nearly one in every four attacks. India accounted for more than 20% of these cases. The judiciary was the second-most common alleged perpetrator, representing just under 15% of global attacks. In 2024, Cambodia had the largest number of judiciary-related attacks (17%), followed by Indonesia (13%) and India (12%). Together, the three countries accounted for nearly 43% of all attacks implicating the judiciary.

Paramilitary forces accounted for 10.6% of global attacks, all reported in Colombia.

These patterns reveal that violence against defenders is systemic and often perpetrated by state-linked institutions, often where governance power, and profit converge. Country-level clusters of violence in 2023 and 2024 further illustrate how these dynamics unfold.



DIGGING IN: CONCENTRATED VIOLENCE AND EMERGING CONFLICT

The global ALLIED dataset enables deeper analysis of country-level trends, enabling greater understanding of the specific contextual drivers and threats defenders face.

LATIN AMERICA

Latin America remained the most dangerous region for defenders. Across the two years of data collection, Colombia and Guatemala each registered more than 500 attacks, together accounting for 42% of all global attacks and 72% of those documented across Latin America and the Caribbean.

COLOMBIA

Colombia recorded the highest number of attacks worldwide (543), representing nearly 22% of the global total. Violence was concentrated in departments where armed groups compete for territorial control – particularly Cauca, Antioquia, Chocó, Putumayo, and rural Amazonian frontier zones. Over the two years, threats made up more than 44% of all attacks, followed by intimidation (8.9%) and displacement (6.4%). Internal conflict, weak state presence and overlapping legal and illegal extractive activities continue to shape the risk faced by defenders in the country. Nearly 65% of cases with available information were linked to the industrial agriculture and livestock sectors, while 23% were connected to mining. A subsequent section in this report draws on five years of ALLIED data to examine long-term trends in Colombia, including evolving territorial dynamics, sectoral drivers and the communities most affected.

GUATEMALA

With 506 attacks documented in 2023 and 2024, Guatemala recorded the second-highest number of attacks of any country in the global database for this period. Following the 2021 law restricting NGO activity, civil society organizations, journalists, judges, and activists continued to face growing limitations and targeted persecution. The government also issued several “state of siege” declarations in Indigenous territories, allowing for the suspension of constitutional rights, including freedom of movement, association and protest, and further contributing to an environment of repression.

Digital harassment was the most common form of attack during this period, documented by local partners UDEFEGUA and accounting for 41% of all incidents reported in Guatemala, followed by defamation and smear campaigns (13%). At the same time, physical violence intensified as compared to past years, particularly incidents of evictions involving the burning of homes, destruction of crops, theft of livestock and forced displacement of community leaders – including individuals engaged in formal dialogues to resolve territorial disputes.

MEXICO, BRAZIL, AND HONDURAS

Elsewhere in Latin America, violence was widely documented across Mexico, Brazil, and Honduras. In Mexico, mining was identified as the most dangerous business sector, with members of the Frente Unido de Pueblos de la Laguna facing kidnapping and armed raids over opposition to a sodium cyanide plant.⁵ In Brazil and Honduras, the agriculture and livestock sector was frequently connected with attacks, while quilombola defenders in Maranhão faced escalating threats and land invasions⁶, while women human rights defenders from the Red de Mujeres Campesinas Las Galileas experienced forced evictions, detention, and threats by private security forces, highlighting persistent risks to territorial rights and community safety.

NORTH AMERICA AND EUROPE

In 2023 and 2024, ALLIED recorded attacks across North America and Europe, with incidents in Belgium, France, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands, in addition to higher numbers in the United States and the United Kingdom.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Across 2023 and 2024, the ALLIED database reflects a rise in incidents against Indigenous, land and environmental defenders in the United States of America. The high-profile killing of environmentalist Manuel Esteban Paez Terán, known as “Tortuguita,” was a culmination of escalation tensions as several states enacted laws⁷ restricting rights to peaceful protest while increasingly criminalizing environmentalists. Judicial harassment accounted for 64% of the more than 70 incidents reported in the United States over the two years, due in large part to records provided by the Business and Human Rights Centre, while arbitrary detention accounted for an additional 22%.

5 <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/statement-report/mexico-concern-about-attacks-and-harassment-frente-unido-de-pueblos-de-la-laguna-en>

6 <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/fa/node/8524>

7 <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/feb/02/atlanta-shooting-manuel-teran-crackdown-environmental-defenders>

In 2023, there were numerous attacks on demonstrators opposing a lithium mine in Thacker Pass, Nevada, a pipeline project in Appalachia, and ongoing fossil fuel projects and investment during New York Climate Week. In 2024, likewise, a group of elder activists were arrested in New York while protesting Citibank backing of fossil fuel projects.

More than 80% of the attacks over the two years targeted members of environmental concerns groups, often detained or arrested during mass demonstrations. In 2024, 40% of incidents in the United States targeted those demonstrating for climate action. Police were the most common alleged perpetrator, accounting for 57% of cases across both years, while in 2023, 16% of incidents indicated violence perpetrated by corporations.

UNITED KINGDOM

The observations from the United States reflect similar patterns in the United Kingdom, where 100% of attacks over the two years targeted environmental concerns groups. All of the recorded attacks were either judicial harassment (60%) or arbitrary detention (40%). The oil and gas sectors were most frequently connected with incidents, named in 80% of cases where data was available. The proportion of attacks affecting women increased notably between the two years, from 43% in 2023 to 71% in 2024.

Many of these cases concerned members of the UK group Just Stop Oil. In 2023, numerous activists were arrested for participating in so-called “slow marches,” with climate activist Stephen Gingell – a 57-year-old father of three – receiving a six-month prison sentence.⁸ The arrests commonly referenced the newly introduced Public Order Act 2023, which established offences related to protest disruption—such as interfering with key national infrastructure—and effectively expanded police powers to detain climate activists engaged in peaceful demonstrations. The Act has drawn criticism from human rights organisations, which argue that the government is criminalising the right to protest.⁹

On 18 July 2024, following the sentencing of five Just Stop Oil activists to up to five years in prison for planning to block the M25 motorway, UN Special Rapporteur Michel Forst described the verdict as “a dark day for peaceful environmental protest.” He warned that the ruling “should shock the conscience” and signalled a worrying decline in civic rights and freedoms in the United Kingdom.

8 <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/dec/15/just-stop-oil-activist-is-first-to-be-jailed-under-new-uk-protest-law>

9 <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/04/un-human-rights-chief-urges-uk-reverse-deeply-troubling-public-order-bill>

ASIA

In Asia, a significant number of attacks on Indigenous, land and environmental defenders were recorded across 2023 and 2024.

INDIA

In India, 151 attacks on defenders and their communities were documented over the two years, making it the third-most dangerous country for defenders after Guatemala and Colombia, accounting for more than six% of the global total. Many incidents involved accusations of Maoist affiliation and actions by state-employed forest personnel, particularly in response to opposition to land acquisition by the State Industries Promotion Corporation of Tamil Nadu (SIPCOT) in southern India. During a peaceful protest against the forcible acquisition of 3,174 acres of wetlands, stretching across nine agricultural villages, by SIPCOT for an industrial park, 21 farmers and community leaders were arrested by the Tamil Nadu police on 4 November 2023.¹⁰

PHILIPPINES

In the Philippines, which has consistently been one of the most dangerous countries for defenders globally, 131 attacks on defenders were recorded in the same period. In 2023, violence was largely attributed to conflicts surrounding mining, which represented 37% of all attacks where data was available, while in 2024, nearly half (49%) of attacks with sector-related data were connected with industrial agriculture. Across both years, Indigenous Peoples were disproportionately targeted by violence in the Philippines, representing nearly 45% of all cases recorded, while estimated to comprise 10-20% of the population.

INDONESIA

In Indonesia, judicial harassment was the most common type of attack across both years, accounting for more than 54% of all attacks documented. Indigenous Peoples and community leaders and members were the most commonly targeted in such processes (89% of total), though environmental concerns groups represented an additional 14% across the two years. In 2024, Indigenous Peoples represented more than 60% of all attacks registered in the country, while 64% of all attacks the same year were against those defending territory.

¹⁰ <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/statement-report/india-arrest-human-rights-defender-arul-arumugam-and-judicial-harassment-key>

The highest number of attacks related to mining, followed by industrial agriculture and livestock. Police forces were the most common alleged perpetrator. In 2024, military, police, and energy company PT PLN Persero officials forcibly entered the Indigenous Pocoleok community in Manggarai to conduct a road survey, resulting in injuries, arrests, detention and suppression of documentation of the incidents.¹¹ This occurred following the community's opposition to the expansion of a geothermal power plant and despite ongoing investigations by the Indonesian human rights commission KOMNAS-HAM and an independent team commissioned by the KfW Development Bank, which provided a loan for the project.

AFRICA

Across the continent, Indigenous, land and environmental defenders continued to face risks for their opposition to extractive and land-intensive projects in 2023 and 2024.

UGANDA

Ongoing patterns of criminalization and oppression in Uganda have continued to center on the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) project. Eighty percent of all attacks in Uganda with sector-level data available were connected with the oil and gas sector. Arbitrary detention and judicial harassment combined accounting for the majority (61%) of attacks across the two years, with police and the judiciary featuring prominently in cases where alleged perpetrators were named.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), three female environmental defenders in the Uvira region of South Kivu faced death threats and intimidation for advocating for women's land rights. Mary Lawlor, the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, noted that two of the women are members of the Youth Movement for Change (LUCHA) and have been targeted by the Twigwaneho armed group since November 2023.¹² When they organized public protests against attacks on their village, the rebel group sent armed forces to arrest them, forcing the defenders into hiding. One of the women's mothers was abducted by the same group in February 2024 and reportedly executed for refusing to disclose her daughter's location. Further attacks were documented in Virunga National Park, where defenders received death threats after submitting a petition to the National Assembly calling for the evacuation of military forces from parts of the park and preventive measures against attacks. In 2024, nearly a third of all incidents against defenders involved death threats.

¹¹ <https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/latest-news/pocoleok-indigenous-community/>

¹² <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/09/democratic-republic-congo-un-expert-warns-abuses-against-women-human-rights>

Community leaders and members accounted for 96% of cases where data was available, while state actors—including police, national officials, and armed forces—were most frequently identified as alleged perpetrators. The Special Rapporteur highlighted that the DRC adopted a law in 2023 on the protection of human rights defenders, which meets minimum international standards and provides special safeguards for women defenders and their families. Full implementation of this law remains critical.

MOZAMBIQUE

A cluster of attacks were registered in Mozambique in 2023, reported by local data collector Natural Justice, involving community leaders and members opposing the construction of the Mphanda Nkuwa hydroelectric dam on the Zambezi River, a project financed by the African Development Bank (AfDB). In 2023, eleven community members were summoned for questioning by the police and unlawfully detained for a reported 10 hours. Arbitrary detention, intimidation and torture were documented. Police, local government and corporations were all named as alleged perpetrators, underlining the nature of violence against communities often stemming from cooperation between government officials and private investors.





WHEN ATTACKS TURN DEADLY: A SPOTLIGHT ON LATIN AMERICA

Now in its fifth year of data collection, the ALLIED dataset is increasingly able to reveal patterns of escalating violence against defenders and their communities. Between 2020 and 2024, at least 10 defenders who had previously experienced non-lethal attacks documented by ALLIED were later killed. In some cases, threats and harassment spanned decades before culminating in the killing of a defender, while in others, violence escalated within days.

This section examines cases of such escalation in Latin America, highlighting the fate of defenders who faced documented attacks prior to their killing in 2023 or 2024. These cases illustrate how non-lethal attacks, whether recurring or quickly escalating, can become lethal, underscoring an opportunity for intervention and the need for robust protection mechanisms.

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE AS METHOD OF CONTROL

Over the past two years, ALLIED has documented multiple cases of enforced disappearance in western and southern Mexico, particularly targeting defenders who raised concerns about mining projects. The UN Working Group on Enforced Disappearances¹³ notes that as a tactic, enforced disappearance functions as a mechanism of fear and social control, generating a chilling effect that suppresses human rights defense.

Recent cases from the ALLIED dataset illustrate how this pattern continues to shape risks for Indigenous, land and environmental defenders.

On April 1, 2023, the Indigenous Nahua defender Eustacio Alcalá Díaz, known as “Tacho,” disappeared from the community of San Juan Huizontla in Michoacán. He was stopped on the road while he was transporting a group of nuns. Alcalá had publicly opposed concessions granted to ArcelorMittal and Ternium, major transnational mining corporations operating in the area. The community had decided by assembly decision to take actions against the mining company and Alcalá acted as their legal representative. His body was found three days later, on April 4.

¹³ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/wg-disappearances/about-enforced-disappearance>

Four months later – and some 20 kilometers to the south – Lorenzo Froylán de la Cruz Ríos was kidnapped. A member of the communal guard of Santa María Ostula and a member of the Nahua Indigenous guard, de la Cruz had defended his territory from land grabbing and resource extraction. The 19,000 hectares owned by the Nahua have been the target of tourism developers and organized crime due to the presence of high-value timber species and iron deposits. On August 1, 2023, he was detained at a roadblock and did not return. He was missing for nine days before his body was found showing signs of torture on the Coalcomán-Águila road in Chinicuila, Michoacán. According to local records, an estimated 40 members of the Santa María Ostula community have been killed and another five have disappeared.¹⁴

In Jalisco, 300 kilometers north of Chinicuila, another Indigenous Nahua defender – Higinio Trinidad – disappeared on November 24, 2024, after being summoned by the municipal president of Cuautitlán de García Barragán.¹⁵ A defender from Ayotitlán, Trinidad was under protection by the Federal Protection Mechanisms for Human Rights Defenders and Journalists at the time of his disappearance. A defender of Nahua collective land rights, Trinidad had raised concerns about illegal logging and the Peña Colorada iron mine, which had displaced his community and driven deforestation. His body was found days later, showing signs of violence.

El País described the killing of Trinidad as evidence of the “power of organized crime in the Pacific corridor,” underlining the “vulnerability of defenders even under the protection of the state.”¹⁶

WEAKNESSES IN PROTECTION MECHANISMS

The killing of defenders like Higinio Trinidad exposes the significant vulnerabilities of protection mechanisms.

Despite being formally included in the federal protection program, Trinidad was neither accompanied nor monitored when summoned to meet a local official who was later identified as central to his disappearance. His case illustrates how protection systems – while important – can fall short when measures are poorly implemented, inconsistently monitored or inadequately adapted to local political dynamics.

More broadly, the case reflects a regional pattern in which protection frameworks tend to be reactive, fragmented and politically constrained. Too often, as noted by human rights organizations in Mexico, these mechanisms operate as administrative registries rather than robust systems of risk prevention.

14 <https://cemdadefensores.org.mx/directorios/lorenzo-froylan-de-la-cruz-rios/> and https://centroprodh.org.mx/sididh4_0/2023/08/14/asesinan-a-guardia-comunal-de-ostula-lorenzo-froylan/

15 <https://cemdadefensores.org.mx/directorios/higinio-trinidad-de-la-cruz/>

16 <https://elpais.com/mexico/2023-11-28/el-asesinato-de-un-activista-contra-la-mineria-en-jalisco-ilustra-el-poder-del-crimen-en-el-corredor-del-pacifico.html>

Defenders are recorded, but not shielded, and in some instances, enrollment may even heighten exposure by increasing state surveillance that makes defenders easier to track.

As Frontline Defenders notes, regarding Mexico, “the decision, process and subsequent implementation of these measures has not yet responded adequately to the needs of HRDs.”¹⁷

COLLECTIVE PUNISHMENT

ALLIED had highlighted the link between violence against individuals and attacks targeting entire communities. In Chicomuselo, in Chiapas, Mexico, armed groups entered communal lands in 2023 under the pretext of controlling illegal extraction. The occupation intensified in 2024, accompanied by acts of intimidation, including the removal of water and electricity, and culminated in the forced displacement of more than 2,300 people.¹⁸

On May 12, 2024, community leader Ignacio López and 10 members of his family were executed in their home in Chicomuselo. López was well-known for his defense of the community against the expanding presence of organized crime and illegal mining.

The escalation – from occupation to displacement to the targeted killing of an entire family – illustrates how collective punishment is used to erode social cohesion and destroy the community networks that protect defenders. The execution of an entire family also signals an intent to intimidate other community members, weakening resistance and undermining their collective struggle for land and rights.

LEGISLATION AS A TOOL OF REPRESSION

Judicial harassment, a form of criminalization, remains one of the most common attacks on defenders. The Inter-American Commission of Human Rights has noted that criminalization serves “with the purpose or effect of delegitimizing their work”.¹⁹ Once a defender is formally accused, their killing becomes politically less costly, reinforcing patterns of impunity.

For example, Father Marcelo Pérez Pérez, an Indigenous Tzotzil Maya Catholic priest and environmental defender, was killed on October 20, 2024, two years after an arrest warrant had been issued against him. Father Marcelo had long advocated for Indigenous rights, communal land protection, social justice and peaceful conflict resolution, undermining community dignity and self-determination.

17 <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/location/mexico>

18 <https://www.sipaz.org/article-documenting-to-make-visible-el-obse-de-chiapas-confronting-violence-against-human-rights-defenders/?lang=en>

19 <https://www.corteidh.or.cr/tablas/32687.pdf>

The *Federación Internacional por los Derechos Humanos* (FIDH) reported that he had endured “years of threats and intimidation” prior to his murder, illustrating how criminalization can precede and facilitate lethal attacks against defenders.²⁰

ESCALATION AND IMPUNITY

Taken together, these incidents reveal a continuum of repression against defenders:

- » Disappearances remove defenders from public visibility and instill fear.
- » Judicial harassment criminalizes resistance and provides institutional cover for subsequent violence.
- » Collective attacks and family killings dismantle the social networks and community structures that sustain collective defense.

Criminalization, disappearances and collective violence are not isolated events, but rather interlocking stages in regional patterns of escalation. Latin America remains, according to Global Witness and ALLIED data, the most dangerous region in the world for Indigenous, land and environmental defenders.

While protection frameworks exist, they have struggled to interrupt these cycles. Impunity following disappearances, killings or judicial attacks reinforces a broader pattern of repression. And the escalation from direct attacks to bureaucratized and institutionalized forms of control reflects not a decline in violence, but its strategic embedding within state and social structures, combining fear, law and state-sanctioned silence to suppress defenders and weaken community resilience.

²⁰ <https://www.fidh.org/es/temas/defensores-de-derechos-humanos/mexico-asesinato-del-padre-marcelo-perez-perez>

FIVE YEARS, FIVE COUNTRIES: TRENDS AND LESSONS ON VIOLENCE

The incidents highlighted above illustrate how repression against defenders unfolds as a continuum – from threats and judicial harassment to collective attacks, disappearances and the institutionalization of violence. The following section presents a brief five-year retrospective analysis from the five ALLIED pilot countries – Colombia, Guatemala, Kenya, Mexico and the Philippines – capturing key developments and emerging patterns that can inform future protection strategies.

In 2018, ALLIED began testing an approach to the integration of data on attacks against defenders in five pilot countries. This was with the hope and aspiration that across many organizations documenting violence against defenders and their communities, ALLIED might find a way to integrate diverse databases, translating violence across languages and contexts into a single dataset that might come closer to representing the scale and nature of non-lethal attacks.

The pilots, at the beginning of this process, were identified in part due to the presence of a well-established local data collector or protection organization, which was critical to capturing the extent of violence that was not appearing in the media or official records. These were organizations working directly with communities or with networks that provided them access to these communities and a basis for documenting attacks that would require presence at the territorial level.

The analyses here were conducted by local data collectors at the forefront of documentation efforts. While this section provides an overview and highlights major trends, a more detailed, in-depth examination of the findings will be provided in a separate document.

Across these **five countries**, over the **five year period, more than 4,000 attacks** were documented, almost half (**47%**) **were against Indigenous Peoples**

Across Colombia, Guatemala, Kenya, Mexico and the Philippines, attacks documented in the period between 2020 and 2024 highlight a **spectrum of non-lethal harassment** – such as threats, digital attacks, judicial harassment and defamation – to more severe forms of violence, including disappearances, forced displacements and targeted killings. These strategies are often interlinked, with early-stage intimidation or criminalization serving as precursors to lethal attacks.

In **Mexico**, violence has been closely linked to federal megaprojects and the militarization of public security, disproportionately affecting Indigenous and community leaders defending land and environmental rights. **Guatemala** continues to experience high rates of criminalization and prolonged legal persecution of defenders challenging mining and agribusiness. **Colombia** remains one of the most dangerous contexts for Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and peasant communities, where non-state armed groups, corporate interests and weak state protection intersect to create chronic insecurity. In **Kenya**, intimidation, arrests, and evictions have escalated in areas affected by conservation initiatives, infrastructure, and energy projects, with women defenders facing heightened visibility and risk. In the **Philippines**, red-tagging has emerged as a normalized form of repression, with a notable shift from overt physical attacks under the Duterte administration to more covert, legal, and digital harassment under Marcos Jr.

Across the five countries, data underlines that **Indigenous Peoples face heightened risk**.

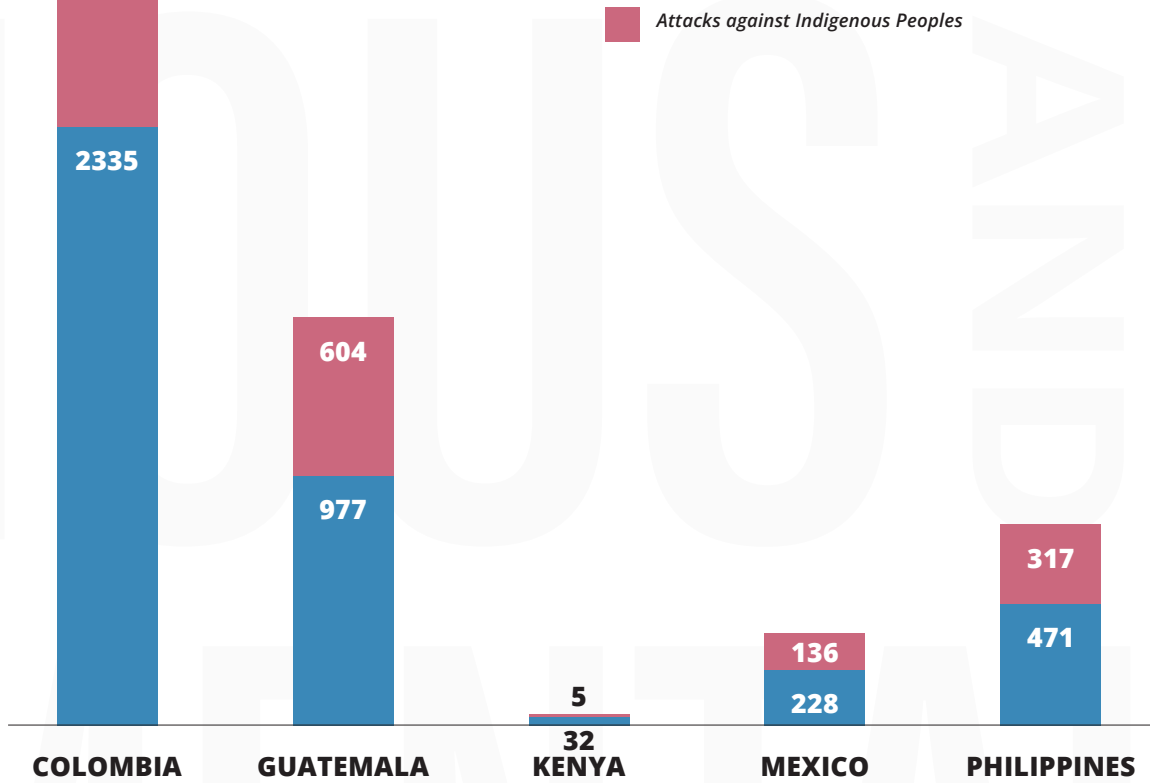
Globally, Indigenous Peoples accounted for one in three attacks documented, while over five years in these five countries, the rate rises to nearly half of all documented attacks, underlining their extreme vulnerability in these contexts.

Other **gendered and intersectional impacts** can be seen across the pilot country contexts: in Guatemala, Kenya, the Philippines and Mexico, women defenders faced a heightened risk of sexual violence, family-targeted intimidation and social isolation. And while more common attacks persisted, **digital attacks and harassment**, including online surveillance, were documented in Colombia, Guatemala, Kenya and the Philippines, noted as a tactic used to silence dissent and defame defenders in the digital sphere, in some cases setting the stage for offline violence.

In all of the pilot countries, concerns were raised about the use of what were described as **legal, bureaucratic and digital mechanisms of repression**, deployed alongside traditional threats. These often described processes of criminalization, including arbitrary arrests, judicial harassment, defamation and red-tagging. The role of state actors was prominent across violence documented in the five countries over five years, with government authorities and private companies often acting in coordination. This was closely linked with observations of **institutional weakness, limited access to justice and high rates of impunity**.

FIVE COUNTRIES IN FOCUS

ATTACKS RECORDED IN PILOT COUNTRIES BETWEEN 2020 AND 2024



COLOMBIA-CINEP

In Colombia – local partner CINEP, Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular / Programa por la Paz,²¹ maintains a Database of Human Rights Violations and Political Violence, also known as Noche y Niebla,²² together with a biannual publication that summarizes data, aggregated data and case analyses, documenting incidents of human rights abuses and political violence across Colombia. A sub-set of this data looks at the violence endured by Indigenous, land and environmental defenders in Colombia, which includes the category of social leader. In operation since the 1990s, Noche y Niebla works directly with victims, relatives and community leaders to develop narrative reports of verified incidents from across rural Colombia. Its consistency facilitates the analysis of trends, work on historical memory and makes it central to long-term accountability efforts.

²¹ <https://cinep.org.co/>

²² <https://www.nocheyniebla.org/>

Between 2020 and 2024, Colombia exhibited one of the world's most entrenched and expansive patterns of non-lethal violence against Indigenous, Afro-descendant, campesino, environmental, and human rights defenders, with threats – delivered through *panfletos*, verbal warnings, digital messages, and anonymous armed visits – emerging as a dominant form of repression across conflict-affected regions such as Antioquia (548 cases), Cauca (525), Chocó (180), Putumayo (151), and Valle del Cauca (117). Non-lethal attacks documented in this period include forced displacement, intimidation and digital harassment, with at least 72 arbitrary detentions documented, often accompanied by judicial harassment or physical assault, 35 enforced disappearances, theft of sensitive documents, and sexual violence, with a vivid example being the June 2020 attack against a member of the Emberá community. Indigenous Nasa, Awá, Pastos and Inga peoples, Afro-Colombian community councils, campesino reserve zones, environmental collectives opposing extractive projects, and organizations linked to movements such as *Marcha Patriótica* or the National Illicit Crop Substitution Programme (PNIS), were disproportionately targeted, particularly in territories under dispute by armed groups and in areas shaped by illegal mining, coca economies, and large-scale infrastructure or energy projects. Repression is driven by territorial control and resource extraction, enforced through physical threats, digital monitoring, anonymous armed visits, forced recruitment, extortion through messaging apps, and strategic theft of information, while collective protection structures such as Indigenous, Afro, and campesino guardias face increasing but under-recorded attacks. Significant blind spots – including the underreporting of gendered violence against women leaders, the exclusion of teachers, traditional healers, communication teams, and families of defenders, and the absence of data on territorial defence processes – limit visibility into the full spectrum of coercion. High levels of impunity, repeated threats against the same communities across multiple years, and systematic intimidation in municipalities with overlapping legal and illegal economies suggest structural patterns of repression rather than isolated incidents. Together, these trends reveal a coercive ecosystem in which non-lethal violence functions as a tool of territorial governance, social control, and pre-emptive neutralization of collective resistance, underscoring the need for strengthened local documentation networks, gender-responsive data collection, and integrated protection strategies capable of addressing both visible and hidden forms of violence.

MEXICO—CENTRO DE DERECHOS HUMANOS ZEFERINO LADRILLERO

The *Centro de Derechos Humanos Zeferino Ladrillero* (CDHZL)²³ is a human rights organization founded in Guerrero, Mexico and focused on protecting and defending the rights of Indigenous Peoples, land defenders, environmental defenders and local communities. It monitors and documents threats, attacks and abuses, specifically those connected to extractive industries, megaprojects and territorial conflicts. Data is collected through direct engagement with affected communities, field monitoring and testimonies. Because it works through direct engagement, CDHZL is able to capture incidents that are often invisible in mainstream media or official statistics.

Between 2020 and 2024, environmental defense in Mexico unfolded amid accelerating militarization, federal legal shielding of megaprojects, and the structural expansion of organized crime, producing a sharp rise in attacks against environmental defenders –from 23 aggressions documented in 2020 to 73 in 2024 – and expanding territorial control by state and non-state actors. Municipal authorities were the primary aggressors, followed by companies and criminal groups, with particularly severe impacts on community leaders (152 attacks) and Indigenous Peoples (136 attacks). Those most targeted were working in territorial defense (143 attacks), a trend that peaked in 2023, a year marked by intensified militarization ahead of the constitutional transfer of the National Guard to SEDENA and by heightened political violence in the run-up to the 2024 federal elections. Megaprojects such as the *Tren Maya*, *Tren Transístmico*, and the Interoceanic Corridor, classified as matters of “national security,” became drivers of rights violations, while legal avenues for communities were obstructed, resulting in increased criminalization of protest. Across sectors, attacks connected to the mining sector were most prominent, accounting for 49 attacks, with new subsectors such as rail, real estate, and transport aligning with federal and state development agendas. Repressive practices were documented through 25 physical assaults, 35 cases of judicial harassment, 32 intimidations, 16 threats, and 49 arbitrary detentions over the five-year period, with police being allegedly responsible for 52 aggressions and the judiciary for another 62, institutionalizing criminalization through fabricated charges and vague penal categories. Parallel to this, organized crime diversified its operations – from macro-criminal cartels to localized cells – and its documented aggressions jumped five in number from in 2023 to 27 in 2024, affecting both communities and ecosystems through illegal logging, monocultures, extortion and territorial siege. Together, these dynamics reveal a landscape where militarization, megaproject-driven extractivism, and criminal economies converge to erode community autonomy, escalate risks for defenders, and reshape territorial governance across Mexico.

23 <https://www.zeferinoladrillero.org/>

GUATEMALA-UDEFEGUA

In Guatemala, the *Unidad de Protección a Defensoras y Defensores de Derechos Humanos, Guatemala* (UDEFEGUA)²⁴ – founded in 2004 – collects and verifies reports of human rights violations, producing detailed reports summarizing the number and types of aggressions, trends, as well as at-risk populations and the geographic distribution of violence. UDEFEGUA work on documentation is closely linked to the legal services it offers, including the establishment of protection measures for defenders under threat. In addition to killings, the organization monitors harassment, judicial persecution and digital attacks, many of which are not reported by the media or in judicial records. Their documentation includes gender-sensitive data and support, recognizing the distinct risks faced by women.

In Guatemala, attacks against land, territory, and environmental defenders have escalated and diversified over the past five years, with digital harassment becoming dominant in the years following COVID-19. In 2024, digital aggression cases accounted for 58% of all attacks collected by UDEFEGUA. Arbitrary detentions have risen steadily – from 6.4% of all attacks in 2020, 13.6% in 2022, and 15.6% in 2024 – often targeting leaders identified in dialogue processes. Defamation campaigns have also intensified, increasing from 10.9% of UDEFEGUA cases in 2020 to 18.2% in 2023, many of these stemming from the creation of territory-specific Facebook pages in the Verapaces, Izabal, Huehuetenango, and the South Coast targeting defenders in the regions. Sector-based aggressions remain concentrated in industrial agriculture and livestock and mining: in 2021, these business sectors were linked to 47.16% of attacks, with mining accounting for another 27.27%, shifting in 2024 to 66.7% and 16.7%, respectively. Violence during evictions has worsened, involving home burnings, crop destruction, theft of animals, forced displacement, and judicial detentions. Gender-based targeting, likewise, has sharply increased over this period: in 2020, women represented only 6.22% of victims, but by 2022 women comprised 50.7% of all attacks. These aggressions often include sexualized threats and harassment against family members. Criminalization processes against all defenders – rooted in stigmatization, defamation, and hate speech – peaked in 2022 and have increasingly affected entire communities, including through the issuance of mass arrest warrants. Alleged perpetrators range from landowners, private security, extractive-industry workers, police and pro-project community groups to organized crime. State actors, likewise, have played a significant role: police aggressions rose from 14.29% in 2021 to 26.8% in 2022, while private actors opposed to human rights defense were linked to 52.38% of aggressions in 2021. The 2021 creation of the Specialized Prosecutor's Office for Crimes of Usurpation further facilitated evictions and criminalization. Persistent justice-system cooptation, lack of protective mechanisms, and widespread underreporting – especially among women and Indigenous communities in resource-rich regions – has maintained a high-risk environment for defenders.

²⁴ <https://udefegua.org.gt/>

KENYA-NATURAL JUSTICE

Natural Justice²⁵ is an NGO specializing in human rights and environmental law, working with Indigenous Peoples and local communities across Africa. Founded in 2007 in Cape Town, Natural Justice operates through regional hubs including in Kenya, where it partners with other organizations to support communities facing threats from land grabs, extractive industries, infrastructure or conservation-related developments. Their work centers on legal empowerment, legal support for defenders, strategic and public interest litigation, community support, documentation and advocacy. They monitor threats including legal harassment, forced displacement, evictions and criminalization, often convening meetings directly with affected communities to gather data on drivers and impacts of land appropriation, evictions and environmental harm.

Between 2020 and 2024, Kenya experienced a sustained rise in non-lethal repression against Indigenous, land, and environmental defenders (ILEDs). In 2020, the country accounted for 4.2% of the 355 global non-lethal attacks recorded in ALLIED pilot countries, with at least 23 individuals, five organizations, and seven communities documented as targets over the five-year period. Between 2021 and 2022, two killings that illustrate escalation from harassment to lethal violence were documented. Indigenous communities such as the Sengwer and Ogiek suffered repeated forced evictions in which up to 1,500 Sengwer homes were burned by Kenya Forest Service guards, despite court orders. Non-lethal attacks – including displacement, harassment, intimidation, property destruction, arbitrary detentions, and judicial harassment – increased during 2020 and continued across business sectors linked to geothermal, infrastructure, mining, agriculture and livestock, with five incidents of judicial harassment and one threat documented in 2021 and further harassment and one arbitrary detention recorded in 2022. This same year, pastoralists in Laikipia and Isiolo faced arrests, SLAPPs, threats and surveillance, while a peaceful protest in May 2023 in Isiolo was met with live ammunition and tear gas. Gendered violence has also been documented, underlined in the January 3, 2022 killing of defender Elizabeth Ekaru. Repression of defenders and their communities has become increasingly coordinated, involving state agencies, private companies, local militias and courts; notable cases include the assault of 35 activists opposing the LAPSSSET project in Lamu and the unsolved 2021 assassination of Joannah Stutchbury. Civic space sharply deteriorated: in 2024, CIVICUS downgraded Kenya to “Repressed” after crackdowns left 60 dead, 1,200+ arrested, and 130+ missing, while the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights documented 39 deaths, 361 injuries, 627 arrests and 32 disappearances during the 2024 “Gen Z” protests, followed by eight deaths and more than 400 injuries on June 25, 2025. These patterns show a systematic pathway from threats and legal harassment to violent repression and killings, exacerbated by data gaps, gendered underreporting, misuse of security laws and state–corporate collusion, underscoring the urgent need for gender-responsive, community-centered protection and enforcement of existing legal safeguards.

²⁵ <https://naturaljustice.org/>

PHILIPPINES-ANGOC

In the Philippines, the Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC)²⁶ has been working since 2014 to map ongoing land and resource conflicts, affected households and contested lands. As part of this work, ANGOC also documents human rights violations including forced displacement, dispossession, criminalization, ecological damage and red-tagging, among other abuses linked to land and resource claims. Through its involvement in regional efforts such as Land Watch Asia (LWA),²⁷ ANGOC maintains a common database and framework for documenting conflicts and violations across six Asian countries. The organization publishes periodic monitoring reports that provide critical analysis of drivers and impacts of violations, helping frame them in broader socio-economic and policy contexts.

From 2020–2024 in the Philippines, non-lethal attacks against Indigenous, land, and environmental defenders were dominated by 64 defamation and smear-campaign cases, 63% of which occurred in 2020–2021, with digital defamation first appearing in 2024. Judicial harassment rose sharply from five cases in 2020 to 13 in 2023 and 10 in 2024, while disappearances, though fewer, increased from two in 2020 to four in 2023 and three in 2024. In contrast, arbitrary detention dropped from 34 (2020) and 24 (2021) to 10 (2023) and six (2024), and displacement fell from 28 (2020) to three (2023), with a slight rise to eight (2024). Red-tagging repeatedly acted as a precursor to more severe violations: in 2020, 80 people were red-tagged, 61% of whom were detained and 28% killed; in 2023, nine red-tagged victims eventually became three killings and five disappearances; and in 2024, five additional cases were linked to abduction, illegal detention, or threats. The weaponization of the Anti-Terrorism Act and terrorism-financing laws intensified repression, exemplified by the freezing of accounts of 28 humanitarian workers in May 2024 and terrorism-related charges against three Kadumi officials in October 2024. State armed agents remained primary perpetrators, while the judiciary's involvement grew from three incidents in 2020 to 14 in 2024. Corporations – especially in mining, construction, real estate and energy (including hydropower) – were consistently implicated. And across the years, Indigenous Peoples were the most targeted group, representing 52% of victims in 2021 and 47% in 2024, with community leaders also heavily affected. Gender patterns shifted dramatically over the time period: women increased from 7% of victims (2020) to 57% (2024). Data gaps – especially in digital attacks, gendered violence, and psychological harm – contribute to underestimation and hinder timely protection. Overall, the trend shows a shift from overt physical repression toward covert legal and digital mechanisms, with defamation/red-tagging, criminalization, and online harassment emerging as key early-warning indicators of escalating lethal violence.

26 <https://angoc.org/portal/>

27 <https://angoc.org/portal/2023-land-watch-asia-lwa-land-and-resource-conflict-monitoring-report-regional-training-cum-planning/>

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28 <https://angoc.org/portal/>

29 <https://angoc.org/portal/2023-land-watch-asia-lwa-land-and-resource-conflict-monitoring-report-regional-training-cum-planning/>

FROM EVIDENCE TO ACTION

Urgent action is needed to halt violence against these individuals and communities. With five years remaining in Agenda 2030, and with emerging global and regional frameworks raising the protection of human rights defenders as a central tenet of any development agenda, ALLIED provides the following recommendations:

- » **States must strengthen and sustain mechanisms to collect and report data** on attacks against Indigenous, land, and environmental defenders, using this information to inform more effective policies and protection strategies that reduce risks to these defenders and their communities.
- » **States should develop and support National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs)** that adhere to the Paris Principles, ensuring their role as independent and authoritative monitoring bodies engaged in data collection with state support, as outlined in the Marrakesh Declaration.

GOOD NEWS

Over the past two decades, the **number of NHRs that are fully compliant with the Paris Principles (A status) has nearly tripled** and their participation in the 16.10.1 reporting process has significantly improved.

- » **States should commit to reporting on violence against defenders in all relevant international frameworks**, including the 2030 Agenda and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KM-GBF), where indicator 22.CT.2 calls for states to report verified cases of killings and other attacks against environmental human rights defenders.³⁰
- » **Legal protections and protection mechanisms must be strengthened**, and governments should work with defenders and communities to build effective programs that provide tailored individual and collective protection strategies.
- » **States and reporting agencies must recognize and support the critical role of local data collectors**, engaging them in official reporting mechanisms and sustaining their advisory role in monitoring and documentation processes.

GOOD NEWS

In 2024, ALLIED data collected by civil society organizations was sent to the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights, which validated the incidents and included them in their 2024 VNR report.

30 <https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-16/cop-16-dec-31-en.pdf>

- » ***The international community, including multilateral organizations, should fully consider available data*** on attacks against defenders and their communities, using it to guide support, solidarity, and development aid programming and evaluation.
- » ***Business actors have a responsibility under international law*** to engage in human rights and environmental due diligence, including meaningful stakeholder engagement and respecting Indigenous Peoples' rights to self-determination and free, prior, and informed consent.
- » ***Business actors must adopt and implement public policy commitments which recognise the valuable role of HRDs*** and commit to zero-tolerance for attacks throughout their operations, supply chains and business relationships.
- » ***Business actors must be held accountable*** for violence linked to their operations, particularly in sectors prone to land conflict. States must pass mandatory human rights and environmental due diligence legislation to ensure businesses respect human rights across their supply chains.





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