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**One-stop website on protection
for human rights defenders**

Protection International

11 rue de la Linière - 1060 Brussels – Belgium

Tel: +32 (0) 2 609 44 07 or 05

Fax: +32 (0) 2 609 44 06

pi@protectioninternational.org

www.protectioninternational.org



Annual Report

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Foreword

Human rights defenders are key actors in the rule of law, the struggle against impunity and the establishment of democracy in any society. They sometimes have to work clandestinely, often at the risk of their own lives and “off the radar” of mainstream media.

2009 has been another very challenging year for human rights defenders. Unfortunately, the number of cases of harassment, threats, forced disappearances and assassinations remained very high over these twelve months.

In Colombia, defenders have deliberately been accused of collaborating with guerrillas, leading to systematic stigmatization, noted by UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders Margaret Sekaggya as one of the essential causes for defenders’ insecurity in the country. In Burundi, Ernest Manirumva, a prominent defender from the anti-corruption organization OLUCOME, was stabbed to death at his home in April and his colleagues who led the campaign “Justice for Ernest Manirumva” consequently received serious death threats. In the neighbouring Democratic Republic of the Congo, impunity prevailed for the murders of the journalists Serge Maheshe, Didace Namujimbo, Bruno Cirambiza and the human right defender Pascal Kabungulu. The aftermath of the military coup against Manuel Zelaya in Honduras was marked by heavy repression against demonstrators and media, whilst defenders in Sri Lanka faced tremendous difficulties due to emergency and anti-terrorism laws preventing citizens to enjoy fundamental rights and freedoms.

These are just a few examples of the abuses suffered by defenders in some of the countries where Protection International runs its global protection programme, dedicated to advising defenders on improving their security and to the fulfilment of national and international obligations regarding their protection.

Whilst the above-mentioned methods of harassment are quite evident, some governments have also developed less visible techniques to muzzle defenders. In Uganda for instance, MP David Bahati introduced the draft anti-homosexuality bill, which seeks to heavily criminalize homosexuals and to prohibit what has been named the “*promotion of homosexuality through advocacy work*”. In addition to a serious violation of the fundamental right to sexual orientation, this represents a clear threat to the internationally recognized right for human rights defenders and their

organizations (in particular LGBTI defenders) to defend all human rights.

This tendency to criminalize and restrain defenders' activities through repressive measures taken by the executive, legislative or judicial powers is increasing in several countries, for example in Latin America. To address this worrying trend and develop preparation and prevention strategies, Protection International's partner - UDEFEGUA (Unit for Protection for Human Rights Defenders in Guatemala) and Aj Noj - Protection Desk Guatemala (a project jointly run between UDEFEGUA and Protection International) organized an international forum on the criminalization of HRDs in November 2009.

Throughout 2009, Protection International continued its activities in the areas of capacity building on protection and security, research, advocacy and video-advocacy, publication of manuals and dissemination of tools and information through its website www.protectionline.org. Activities in the field have also increased with the opening of two new Protection Desks in Colombia (in partnership with PAS – Pensamiento y Acción Social) and in the Democratic Republic of Congo (where Protection International has been registered as INGO).

Protection Desks, an outcome of over 25 years combined theoretical and field experience in the protection of HRDs, are a PI concept and have been integrated in its global strategy for the protection and security of HRDs. PDs represent an innovative approach to field protection of human rights defenders. Working in close conjunction with local human rights organisations and defenders, Protection Desks are set up to enhance the capacity of HRDs and their organisations to manage their security by improving security measures and protection mechanisms. In those countries or regions where HRD networks or units already exist, Protection Desks are set up to complement their activities through capacity building and training activities tailored to the networks' specific needs.

Between September 2008 and December 2009, Protection International's five Protection Desks (Nepal, Guatemala, Uganda, Colombia and DR Congo) delivered security and protection trainings to 1,478 defenders. They also provided continuous advice to more than 600 defenders and their organisations from more than twenty countries from all over the globe.

Through its advocacy programme, Protection International emphasized the fact that the primary responsibility to protect HRDs lies with States and key stakeholders, either in their own territories or through their foreign policies and diplomatic missions. Throughout the year 2009, Protection International's work in this area aimed at reinforcing preventive action.

Besides, PI collaborated with the European Union Missions in developing and setting up their local implementation strategies of the EU Guidelines on human rights defenders. In order to increase pressure from parliamentary bodies, PI further developed its network with national parliaments in Spain, Belgium, the United Kingdom and Germany, to set up a forum of Members of Parliament willing to contribute to the protection of human rights defenders.

PI puts emphasis on field research and knowledge transfer through publications and visual media and in 2009 published, amongst others, the documentary "Loktantra" depicting the role of human rights defenders in the democratic transition in Nepal, a new protection manual for LGBTI Defenders and a comparative study on national HRD protection mechanisms.

We would like to thank the institutions; donors and individuals who made this work possible and helped us contribute to improving the security of HRDs from so many different contexts throughout the world.

We are especially grateful to the human rights defenders whose incredibly important and courageous work continues to inspire us and teaches us new things every day. This report is dedicated to them.

The team of Protection International

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Christoph Klotz
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Steve Ashton
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The staff of PI and its Protection Desks

Text

Prepared by Quentin Noirfalis. Article on Advocacy by Christoph Klotz. Article on DR Congo by Quentin Noirfalis and Sophie Roudil. Interviews, information gathering and review were made with the collaboration of the staff of PI and the Protection Desks.

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Israel Carías assassination trial: hints of justice in Guatemala

In impunity-plagued Guatemala, two hit men were found guilty during the trial for the assassination of peasant leader Israel Carías Ortiz in February 2007. The tribunal established a precedent by recognizing that Carías was killed due to his activities of defending human rights. Exceptionally, the court left the case open to investigate who ordered the assassination.

June 22nd 2009 marked a turning point in the fight against impunity in Guatemala: that day, the Tribunal in Zacapa found two men, Jacobo Salguero and Manfredo Ramirez, guilty of the 2007 murder of Israel Carías Ortiz (age 33) and his two sons Ledwin Anilson (age 9) and Ronald Aroldo (age 11). Israel Carías was president of the regional peasant farmers' association (ACUS) and head of the Association for Community Development of Los Achiotés

(ACIDEA). For many years he struggled not only against the deforestation of the mountains in Zacapa Department, but also to reclaim about a thousand hectares of common land situated in the village of Los Achiotés that had been taken over illegally by *finqueros* (large land-owners). Thanks to the action and the negotiations led by Israel Carías and the 80 families who supported him, this community land – effectively a state property since

1951 – was measured and returned to the community in 2007.

As a result of his struggle, Carías was frequently subject to intimidation and death threats from the *finqueros*. According to Amanda Kistler, an observer for the Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala (NISGUA), these acts were part of a context of increased repression towards people claiming their right to land and resources, and



Peasants gathered in front of Zacapa's court to ask for justice before the beginning of the trial for the murder of Israel Carías Ortiz

“had one sole objective: to compel him to stop his campaign”. In February 2007, as he was heading to Zacapa with his two sons to get some medication, all three were assassinated. The investigation quickly led to the identification of two suspects.

Protection International’s partner UDEFEGUA (Unit for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders in Guatemala) offered protection to the members of ACIDEA and carried out a verification of the case in 2007.

One year later, facing inaction from the public prosecutor, UDEFEGUA discovered that the killers were threatening the community again and asked the police to arrest them in accordance with the arrest warrants that were previously issued against them. In June 2008, the suspects were apprehended. At the same time, UDEFEGUA, after having analysed security-, practical- and law-related questions, came to the conclusion that it was essential that Israel Carías’ widow be registered as co-plaintiff during the legal proceedings. To compensate for her – and the association’s – lack of resources, UDEFEGUA offered its support throughout the proceedings, hired a lawyer, Edgar Fernando Perez (see boxed text on the right), and succeeded in the case being transferred to the prosecutor in charge of crimes committed against human rights defenders. Hearings commenced in March 2009. Throughout the proceedings, ECAP (Community Studies and Psychosocial Action Team), the Dutch platform against impunity and Protection International provided support to UDEFEGUA.

A historic verdict

During the trial preparation phase, Aj Noj (Protection Desk-Guatemala) assisted in evaluating and coordinating the necessary security measures for the protection of witnesses and community members. Aj Noj also carried out trial

observation (three sessions), in the course of which many pieces of evidence were produced that proved the commitment of Carías: *“We do not want to claim land that already has papers. We fight for state-owned land. I am only the spokesman for the needs of this community. I am not a judge, I do not take decisions. You are entitled to this land”*, before he declared in a recorded speech, that *“no matter the persecution, I will not take one step back”*.

On June 22nd 2009 the Tribunal announced a historic verdict: not only did it condemn the two suspects to 25 years in prison, it also recognized that Israel Carías had been assassinated as a result of his activities as a human rights defender and mandated an investigation to identify those responsible for the

assassinations. The verdict, known as *“dejar abierto”*, implies that the case is not completely solved and must therefore be left open. At the end of the hearing, Israel Carías’ widow commented on the verdict: *“It’s a little something already”*. The strong symbolic value of the verdict is what prevails - for the memory of Israel Carías and as a message to those who benefit from the prevailing impunity in Guatemala. But it also comes as a reward for the work that ACIDEA and UDEFEGUA accomplished with the support by the Protection Desk-Guatemala. Claudia Samayoa, head of UDEFEGUA, emphasizes however that *“the process has been long and is still on-going today; the Israel Carías case must remain at the heart of our agenda”*, for the investigation commissioned by the judge not to go unheeded.

Interview

EDGAR FERNANDO PEREZ, lawyer of the plaintiff

“Thanks to the Israel Carías trial, it was made possible for a community to believe in the system and for the system to respond to that belief by pronouncing a condemnatory sentence. The fact that the Tribunal recognized the motive is a major breakthrough in the fight against impunity, which has been the general rule in such cases. The excellent work done by UDEFEGUA and Aj Noj must also be pointed out: in this type of situation people rarely dare to take action on their own because of the risks they bring upon themselves and because they tend to be unaware of their rights. The help provided by Aj Noj and UDEFEGUA in the follow-up of the proceedings and in preparing and coordinating the mobilization has certainly contributed to the ongoing struggle against impunity. Generally speaking, and although the situation has improved in terms*



of human rights, we cannot say we live in a State that offers all the guarantees. Though one can note significant progress in terms of disclosure and defense, this does not mean there are fewer violations committed against the rights of those most vulnerable.”

* The tribunal recognized that Israel Carías Ortiz was assassinated for his human rights protection activities

Interview

CLAUDIA SAMAYOA, Head of UDEFEGUA (partner of Protection International in Guatemala)

“The lack of legal support for the land struggle is a major problem”

“The case of Israel Carías is paradigmatic in several ways. First, he embodies the peasant leadership that refuses violence and chooses dialogue, which earned him considerable support amongst his community. He also worked with environmentalists, which is fairly unusual; and he is one of the few defenders who was killed with his children. It is an unprecedented fact that the judge accepted the testimony of the UDEFEGUA expert and recognized it as evidence that Israel

was a defender, as is the use of a video to prove he was nonviolent. The lack of legal support for the land struggle is a major problem for most defenders in Guatemala. But there are also poverty, malnutrition, housing and healthcare issues. There is no clear public policy regarding land distribution and rural development, there is no budget for healthcare, education or housing in rural areas. As a consequence, human rights defenders must address these needs in addition to



having to confront the state, the powerful and the organized crime who constantly try to take control of land in Guatemala.”

Background



GUATEMALA

President: Álvaro Colom Caballeros

Population: 14 million

Figures of attacks against defenders (2009/2008/2000): 353/220/59

Attacks by gender (M/F): 32%/62%*

Protection Desk: set up in October 2008

Coordinator: Jabier Zabala

Partner: UDEFEGUA

* 6% institutional

counted by Protection International's partner UDEFEGUA. The Government's response towards the situation proved inadequate, if not worrying. The Agency for the Analysis of Attacks against Human Rights Defenders was not set up, although the state agreed on its creation, and the Unit for Human Rights of the national police was pushed aside. The country has also been suffering from the aftermath of a civil war that lasted for 36 years and ended in 1996.

717 women killed

The Commission for Historical Clarification (CEH) has estimated that over 200,000 people were killed during the conflict and that 93 percent of the human rights abuses were committed by state security forces. The Human Rights Office of the Archbishop of Guatemala (ODHAG) estimates that 99 percent of these crimes remain unpunished. Impunity also prevails for crimes committed today.

According to UDEFEGUA, the defenders that were most hit in 2009 were those working in the area of women's rights (52%), development (18.5%) and environment (8.5%). Human Rights Watch's world report for 2009¹ points out that journalists, particularly those covering issues of corruption, drug trafficking and impunity, are often the target of threats and aggressions.

Violence toward women is another acute issue in Guatemala. In February 2009 the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) called upon the government to increase efforts to tackle violence against women, to curb poverty and social exclusion and to eliminate disadvantages encountered by women on the labour market. In 2009, 717 women were assassinated (most of them after being raped and mutilated), compared to 687 in 2008.

¹ Human Rights Watch, World Report, 2010, p.225

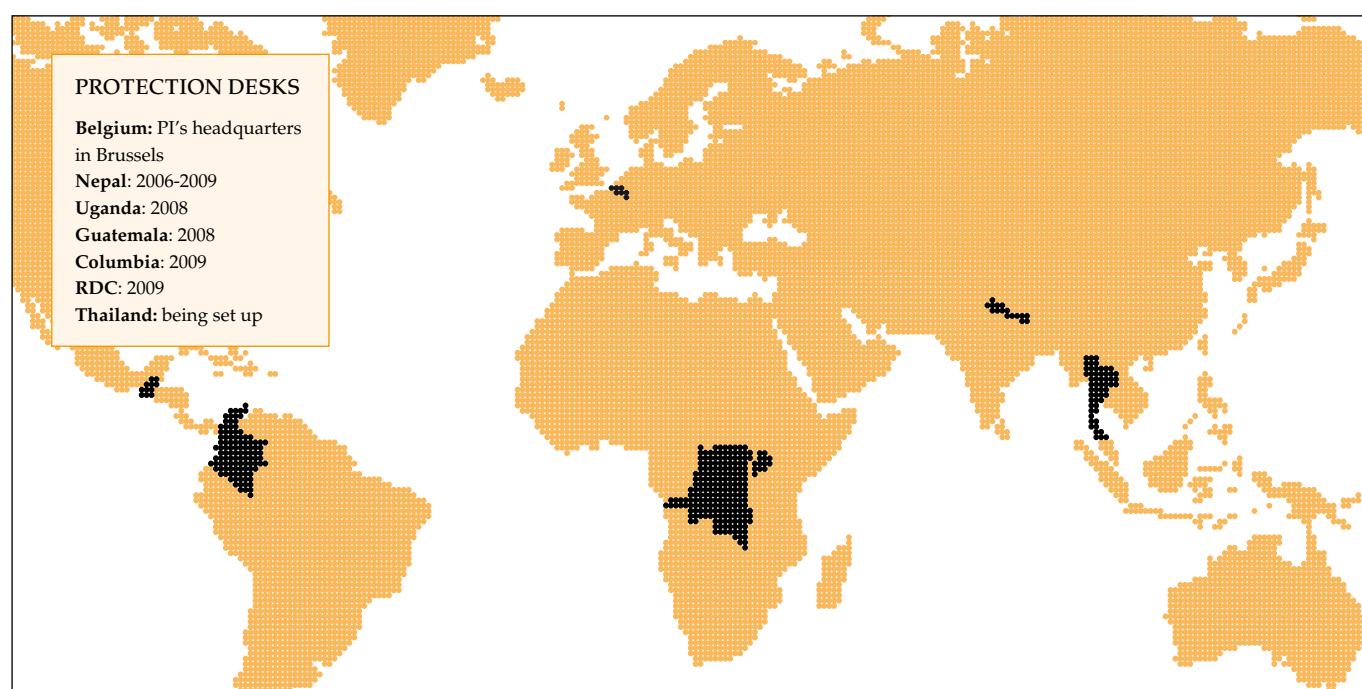
The year 2009 was particularly difficult for human rights defenders in Guatemala, as 353 aggressions against them (compared to 220 in 2008) were

What is a Protection Desk?

Protection Desks are a concept developed by Protection International. They are structures allowing for easier access to information for a large number of Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) and help individuals and organisations to identify and assess security-related risks in their particular contexts. When partnership with a local organisation or HRD network is possible, PI Protection Desks are located within our partners' facilities and activities are carried out together.

We consider Protection Desks to be the most effective way to meet direct needs faced in the field, as we:

- 1 Act locally while being part of a comprehensive national and international network;
- 2 Support advocacy efforts towards the authorities carried out by local organizations with the aim of development and implementation of legislation and protection mechanisms for human rights defenders;
- 3 Share, at a local level, progress made in other countries related to legal texts, mechanisms, policies and experiences in protection and security;
- 4 Serve as a meeting point for local organizations offering them the possibility to forward their messages on a regional and global level.



In 2009, PI has seen an expansion of Protection Desks (PDs). In addition to those established between 2006 and 2008 in Nepal, Uganda and Guatemala, new PDs were opened in Colombia (in March 2009, together with PAS, *Pensamiento y Acción Social*, Social Thought and Action) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (in

October 2009, with PI as sole manager). Additionally, preparations were started for the establishment of a Protection Desk in Thailand.

Between September 2008 and December 2009 these five Protection Desks delivered, together with PI's Research and Training Unit, 84 trainings on protection and security,

benefiting 1,400 defenders in countries where Protection Desks are established but also in Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Mexico, Sri Lanka, Kenya, and in the East and Horn of Africa. The PDs also provided almost 600 defenders with follow-ups on the management of security-related risks.

Journalists and human rights defenders in danger

Since 2004 Protection International has been present in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, supporting the work of HRDs by focusing on their protection and security through trainings and case monitoring. In addition, PI has persistently carried out advocacy activities in favour of Congolese HRDs upon the EU Delegation and EU member states, the diplomatic missions, the United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), and has accompanied the local NGOs in their activities of advocacy upon local and national authorities concerning HRDs protection. The end of 2009 marked a turning point for PI's work in the DRC, when a new Protection Desk opened in Bukavu (South Kivu).

In 2009 the human rights situation in the East of the country deteriorated. In January, an agreement, signed between the Congolese President Joseph Kabila and his Rwandan counterpart Paul Kagame, led to two military operations resulting into an increase of violence and human rights violations against civilians from both government forces and rebels.

Through this agreement, the Rwandan army contributed to putting an end to the CNDP rebellion (National Congress for the Defence of the People) and to the arrest of its leader

Laurent Nkunda. In exchange, Rwandan forces were given permission to enter in the East of DRC for five consecutive weeks, carrying out joint military operations against the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), a Hutu rebel group, some of whose members took part in the Rwandan genocide. The consequences of these military operations and the rebel response were disastrous for the civilian population, with countless occurrences of internal displacement, looting and mass rape. Civilians in eastern DRC continue to bear the brunt of these

military operations, which also impacted negatively on HRDs and journalists who spoke out to denounce the human rights violations and the abuses which took place.

PI increases its activities in DR Congo

The establishment of a Protection Desk in Bukavu in October 2009 (see boxed text), allowed PI to increase and improve its activities in favour of defenders. During the year 2009 PI continued to organize training courses in protection and security for HRDs, HR NGOs and journalists of Radio Okapi, a UN and Fondation Hironde sponsored radio network. In coordination with local networks of HRDs, PI also followed up on several cases of HRDs at risk, through personalized security advice and advocacy with authorities.

PI conducted advocacy activities with EU diplomatic missions in the DRC for the adoption of a local implementation strategy of the EU Guidelines for HRDs. Furthermore, PI worked with Congolese NGOs on the drafting of a provincial bill for protection of HRDs in South Kivu, and to raise awareness among the members of provincial parliament and political authorities on this project. Finally, PI observed some



Congolese demonstrators asking for justice for the assassination of the human rights defender Pascal Kabungulu

judicial cases related to the murder of defenders in Bukavu.

Looking back on the Maheshe trial

In 2007 and 2008 PI observed the trial of the alleged killers of Radio Okapi journalist Serge Maheshe, who was shot dead in Bukavu in June 2007. The trial took place at the first instance and appeal before the Bukavu Military courts and ended in May 2008 with the three suspects sentenced to death. Several human rights organizations, including PI and the MONUC, noted that a number of serious violations occurred during the investigation and court hearings, including many violations of the rights of the defendant, which generates a risk of miscarriage of justice. Moreover, the hearings took place in a climate of intimidation towards the plaintiff, lawyers and the observers. PI's observations of the Maheshe trial led to the compilation of an extensive report, which was presented at press conferences in Kinshasa on May 22nd 2009 and in Brussels on June 24th 2009. The report was also at the centre of a conference organized at the UK House of

Commons (London, June 24th 2009), organized with the All Party Parliamentary Group on the Great Lakes of Africa.

During the trial and the subsequent press conferences, PI called for a re-examination of the case by a civilian rather than a military jurisdiction (in accordance with the 2006 Congolese Constitution and international standards), for in-depth investigations and for DRC to comply with international fair trial norms. PI also deplored the fact that death sentences were issued in contradiction with the right to life as it has been set up in the Congolese Constitution. In the recommendations attached to the Maheshe report, PI insists on the need to accelerate the reform of current military penal and judicial codes, which still include dispositions contrary to the Constitution, as well as on the need for Congolese authorities to implement an effective strategy to fight impunity for violations committed against journalists and other HRDs. In this context, a law on the protection of HRDs (including journalists) is currently being drafted, reminding that freedom of

information and expression is a cornerstone in the building of a democratic state and the rule of law.

Impunity for Kabungulu and Cirambiza cases

The assassination of Serge Maheshe is unfortunately not an isolated case. Only to give one example, PI along with Congolese NGOs called for the unblocking of the Kabungulu file. Pascal Kabungulu was the executive secretary of *Héritiers de la Justice*, a major human rights organisation in the DRC, and vice president of the regional human rights umbrella group in the Great Lakes. He was assassinated in Bukavu in 2005, and his case is still waiting for an examination by a jurisdiction. The same can be said for Bruno Koko Cirambiza, a journalist at Radio Star (Bukavu) who was killed on August 22nd 2009 in unclear circumstances. PI also called for the examination by an independent jurisdiction of the Didace Namujimbo case, another journalist at Radio Okapi who was assassinated in Bukavu in November 2008. The Namujimbo trial started at the beginning of 2010, and was observed by PI, Congolese NGOs and the MONUC.

Opening of the Protection Desk Bukavu

In order to make the project sustainable and to increase the assistance to defenders, PI opened a Protection Desk in Bukavu (South Kivu) at the end of 2009. The main objective of the Protection Desk is to strengthen HRDs' protection and security, and to closely follow up on their situation, so as to strengthen their capacity to network concerning protection issues.

Actions for 2010:

- 1 Support and strengthen HRDs' networks and platforms
- 2 Develop an Early Warning/ Reaction system for HRDs in danger
- 3 Observe the trial involving the alleged killers of Radio Okapi journalist Didace Namujimbo
- 4 Raise awareness and inform local authorities and the international community on the situation of HRDs in the DRC
- 5 Support the civil society in launching specific actions concerning the HRDs protection
- 6 Train HRDs to analyze risks, manage security and elaborate security plans.



Sexual Minorities Defenders at risk

Discrimination against sexual minorities is increasing in Africa. These persecutions are paired with legislative processes seeking to stigmatize and condemn sexual minorities. In 2009, the Parliament of Uganda debated a bill that provides for the death penalty for “*aggravated homosexuality*”. At the end of 2009, the law was not adopted yet. In view of this homophobic atmosphere, Protection International, through its Protection Desk-Uganda (PD-U), has joined the Civil Society Coalition for Human Rights and Constitutional Law in order to follow LGBTI defenders’ security closely, and help them develop strategies for reacting to intimidation.



Kasha Jacqueline, Mawanda Nikki, David Kato, Frank Mugisha and Pepe Julian Onziema have been at the forefront of the struggle against David Bahati's anti-homosexuality bill

*“You cannot say to me that people are born homosexuals. The cause is the influence of the western world.”*² These words alone, pronounced by Ugandan MP David Bahati, 36, a member of President Yoweri Museveni’s NRM party (the National Resistance Movement), are a symbol of the growing stigmatization and prejudice against sexual minorities in certain African countries. Today, homosexuality is considered illegal in 38 countries on the continent, and can attract a death sentence in Mauritania, Sudan, Somalia and northern Nigeria. In April 2009 Burundi prohibited homosexuality at the same time as it abolished the death penalty. Those identified as having engaged in a voluntary homosexual relationship are now facing a sentence of 2 to 3 years in prison and a fine of up to 100,000 Burundian francs (\$84), which amounts to almost three times the average monthly salary in Burundi. Violations of the rights of sexual minorities are not however limited to

countries where homosexuality is illegal. In Rwanda for example, homosexuality has never been declared illegal but still causes social isolation and stigmatization, as certain media and politicians frequently manipulate the issue and sometimes bring up the possibility of banning it. In the past, Emmanuel Kilini, Archbishop of the Episcopal Church of Rwanda, has described homosexual relationships as a “*moral genocide*”, and security forces seem to follow his discriminatory example, as they proceed to multiple arbitrary arrests of LGBTI defenders.

A few months after the passing of the Burundese law, a bill was drafted in Uganda at the initiative of MP David Bahati. The name of the bill says it all; “*Anti-homosexuality Bill*” and the provisions therein are even more draconian than in Burundi. The Ugandan Penal Code already provides for a possibility of life imprisonment for any person who “*has carnal knowledge of any person against the order of nature*”, an inheritance of British colonialism.

Besides, a 2005 constitutional amendment prohibits same sex marriage, but the bill goes even further.

In its current state, the bill not only repeats the possibility of a life-long imprisonment sentence for people proven guilty of homosexuality, it also provides for the capital punishment of “*aggravated homosexuality*”, an unclear concept which would aim at people having a sexual relationship with people under 18, disabled or HIV-positive people and “*serial offenders*”. Failure by any person to denounce any homosexual acts within 24 hours is punishable by three years of prison. This would include parents, siblings, teachers, doctors etc. The proposed law also seeks to prohibit what it calls “*promotion*” of homosexuality through advocacy work, which is a threat to the internationally recognized right for human rights defenders to promote and protect all human rights.

It is no accident that this bill should arrive at this precise moment. PD-U believes that one of the explanations could be the vulnerability of the Museveni regime, which has been in power for 23 years. After the riots that took place in September 2009 and caused around twenty people to die in the streets of Kampala, and with the prospect of the February 2011 presidential elections, “*it is always easier to point at a minority rather than to try and solve other problems like corruption*”, says a defender. “*The bill proposed by the Honourable David Bahati could foster his personal ambition, but above all it is destined to meet the desires of people in*

² Anti-gay bigots plunge Africa into new era of hate crimes, The Observer, 13 December 2009

higher places. James Nsaba Buturo, the Minister of State for Ethics and Integrity, had already warned he would try to introduce an anti-homosexuality law.” Human Rights Watch’s 2010 world report says at least 5 people were arrested and charged with homosexuality in 2009 in Uganda.

PI’s action

In response to the bill, Protection Desk-Uganda and PI’s local partner, EHAHRDP, got actively involved in Uganda’s Civil Society Coalition on Human Rights and Constitutional Law, then consisting of 28 organizations. As a member of the security committee of

the coalition, PD-U closely follows the the situation and the security of LGBTI defenders; is part of analysing cases of threats and violations perpetrated against them; and assists in risk assessments and subsequently developing a strategic response for each specific case to reduce the risk of the individual and their organisations. PD-U has also offered its expertise in risk assessment and security management for all members of the coalition. This included a visit to organizations in order to discuss threats they were facing, to understand the security strategies already in place, and to jointly develop adequate

responses to minimize identified risks. PD-U also organized several training courses on security management for LGBTI defenders and remains in close collaboration with many of their leading defenders. Thanks to this work, LGBTI defenders have become more aware of their own security and their ability to manage it. The challenge remains to mainstream security into all aspects of defenders’ life including during free time where defenders remain exposed to risks in public places as a result of their sexual orientation.

Link:
Uganda’s Civil Society Coalition on Human Rights and Constitutional Law: www.ugandans4rights.org

Interview

FRANK MUGISHA, Executive Director of Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG)

// We worked with progressive churches and diplomatic missions to stop the bill //

Q. Had you anticipated the emergence of the bill?

Frank Mugisha: Yes, I have seen it coming and in a sense I was prepared for it. The Minister of State for Ethics and Integrity has always talked about implementing a law against the ‘promotion of homosexuality’, and the issue landed in the media well before the bill was proposed. We had felt this growing homophobia before through the increased resistance we experience coming from the anti-gay groups, which are organized by the churches and their leaders. Ugandans are 90% Christians, and if their religious leaders tell them to be hostile towards homosexuals, they listen.

Q. Who supports the law and how did you react to it?

F.M: The greatest support comes from churches and local and international Christian organizations, although law-makers and officials also support it. Conservative religious groups in America have what’s more brought a moral and financial support to the

Ugandan churches. When I heard about the introduction of the bill into Parliament I instantly informed all of SMUG’s local partners and mobilized the LGBTI community so as to keep anybody from panicking and assure them that we would do everything in our power to stop this law. We created solidarity groups through relations with local, national and international organizations for human rights and international media. After they had condemned the law, we witnessed a certain change of attitude in the local media, which beforehand did not cover favourable points of view for LGBTI persons. We called for demonstrations all around the world to prevent the passing of the bill, we worked together with progressive churches in Uganda and other countries to condemn the supporters of the law, and we worked with diplomatic missions so that they should demand the withdrawal of the bill by the government of Uganda. But we still need to be careful: it is a parliamentary bill, we must therefore make it clear that the government



must not accept to bring the law into force if it is adopted by Parliament, we must stress on the supremacy of international law over local law.

Q. What has been the role of Protection International and its Protection Desk-Uganda?

F.M: The Protection Desk-Uganda has worked along with us to analyse and assess the risks we face in terms of security. It has played a crucial role within the coalition of civil society, and its recommendations were very useful during the period that followed the introduction of the bill, allowing the defenders to work out security plans in a very hostile environment.

10 years after Johannesburg, challenges remain

More than a hundred defenders from all over Africa gathered in Kampala, from April 20th to 23rd, 2009, for the All-Africa Human Rights Defenders Conference. It was the occasion to assess the achievements made since the first conference of this kind, held in 1998 in Johannesburg, and to take a look at the future.

The needs and challenges faced by Human Rights Defenders need not only consideration and coordination from a local point of view, they must also be addressed on a regional, and even a continental scale. Basing itself on this, the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project (EHAHRDP), Protection International's partner in the East and Horn of Africa, hosted the All-Africa Human Rights Defender Conference in Kampala from April 20th to 23rd 2009. That is, more than a decade after the first one, held in 1998 in Johannesburg. Participants had, at the time, agreed on a series of actions to be undertaken, so as to identify the challenges faced by defenders and improve their security.

In 2009, more than 100 defenders from 45 African countries, as well as many international partners, including PI, met to examine the results obtained since the Johannesburg conference. Broadly speaking, the major issues remain: harassment, intimidation, legal obstructions to their work and in some cases assassinations still prevail on the continent, participants stated in the Kampala Declaration of HRDs.

However some progress has been noted, like the appointment of a Special Rapporteur of the United Nations on HRDs and a Special Rapporteur of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights on HRDs; or the setting up of regional networks of defenders having contributed to increasing awareness of HRDs' work. *"We have come a long way over the last ten years. In terms of protection, collaboration, development of a movement for human rights on the continent, and in terms of*

victories claimed in our struggles against impunity and violations of these rights", Mr Hassan Shire Sheikh, Executive Director of EHAHRDP, declared during the conference.

Promote legislations on defenders protection

In concrete terms, the Kampala summit led to the establishment of a Pan African Human Rights Defenders Network (PAHRD-Net), whose mission is to implement the Kampala Plan of Action (KAPA), and whose

subject that would repeatedly be brought up during the deliberations and discussions at the conference.

In addition, the presentation delivered by María Martín, a member of Protection International's Research and Training Unit, on best practices and lessons learnt in terms of legislation and national policies regarding defenders in Latin America, initiated discussions on what could be done in this regard on African level. The resolutions expressed at the end of the negotiations identified



Workshop at the Johannesburg +10 All Africa Human Rights Defenders Conference in Kampala

main contribution will consist of rendering technical assistance to all the existing sub-regional networks.

Protection International's presence at the conference was useful for several reasons. Ahead of the conference, PI had the opportunity to train defenders from the East and Horn of Africa on security and protection issues. The training course was able to focus participants' attention on the security aspect of their work, a

security and protection as the central concern of human rights defenders in the course of their work and suggested a study of the means of promoting specific legislations for the protection of defenders on national and regional level. Through its partnership in Protection Desk Uganda with the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project (EHAHRDP), Protection International remains committed to provide support in these areas.

E-defenderh, a new space to protect human rights defenders

On June 28th 2009, a military *coup d'état* overthrew Manuel Zelaya, the President of Honduras who had been elected in 2006 for a four-year non-renewable term. The coup took place after Zelaya's decision to hold a poll regarding a possible revision of the Constitution that would allow him to run for a second term. Originally a conservative, Zelaya had changed political positions during recent years and moved closer to Latin America's left-wing Presidents, such as Evo Morales and Hugo Chavez. When he attempted to revise the Constitution, Zelaya faced the opposition of the Honduran Congress, Supreme Court and army, which refused to organize the referendum. Beyond the political motivations of the coup, the deteriorating situation with respect to human rights must be spotlighted too. Less than three months after Zelaya's removal and his replacement by Roberto Micheletti (Liberal Party) on the very same day, more than a dozen political assassinations had been registered. Human Rights Watch in their report on the situation of human rights in 2009 highlighted numerous

human rights abuses (notably during the anti-coup demonstrations organized by the *National Popular Resistance Front*, a wide coalition of grassroots organizations and political parties aiming at restoring Manuel Zelaya and drawing up a new constitution), as well as the tendency of Micheletti's *de facto* government to use repression to establish its authority.

In the aftermath of the repression of the demonstrations, when several hundreds of people were arbitrarily arrested, the Center for the Prevention, Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims and Their Families (CPTRT), the Committee of Families of Disappeared Detainees of Honduras (COFADEH), and the Association to Promote Participatory Citizenship (ACP) created *E-defenderh*, a new initiative dedicated to the protection of human rights defenders. Its aim is to give more visibility to their work and to demand safeguarding of their rights by the state.

Aj Noj, the Protection Desk launched in Guatemala by Protection International in partnership with UDEFEGUA (the



Workshop jointly run with *E-defenderh* for the women NGO "Visitación Padilla"

Guatemalan Human Rights Defenders Protection Unit), was able to initiate a working relationship with *E-defenderh* during a forum organized by the Center for Justice and International Law (CEJIL). Through conducting trainings, *Aj Noj* was able to support risk analysis and the development of security plans, thereby reinforcing the capacities of *E-defenderh* staff. In addition, a dozen trainings, including two on digital security, were given to Honduran organizations. Overall, a high degree of sensibility regarding the need for security-related risk management and the implementation of protection measures is emerging. According to the website defensoresenlinea.com, the medium-term objective of *E-defenderh* is to draft and introduce a law and mechanism of protection to the National Congress.

Interview

MERY AGURCIA, of the Committee of the Families of the Disappeared in Honduras (COFADEH), and coordinator of the *E-Defenderh* platform in Honduras

Q. What do you feel has been the impact of the work carried out in Honduras by *Aj-Noj* – Protection Desk-Guatemala in support of organizations of defenders who are in danger?

M.A: We consider the most visible impact to be the awareness-raising amongst leaders of HRDs and their organizations regarding the need to create secure spaces to carry out their activities and reduce the risks faced by their staff and associates. A strategic understanding between the different organizations has been put forward so as to be able to share concerns and risks with regard to defenders' security.

Similarly we can highlight that introducing the issue of security into the internal discussions of organizations has led to systems of recording security incidents as well as a systematic process of reflection that has fostered the emergence of new behavioural patterns among social actors who benefited from the work of *Aj-Noj* – Protection Desk-Guatemala.

Q. How do you feel the cooperation between HRDs and organizations of the *E-Defenderh* platform and *Aj-Noj* should evolve in order to remain most useful to organizations at risk?

M.A: In coordination with the small space of the *E-Defenderh* platform, it

should focus on the support of Honduran organizations in terms of defenders' protection, which would help institutionalizing the system of recording, monitoring and documenting incidents, and help adopting general policies and minimal levels of protection, providing a progressive shift towards security management for the organizations and their members. This coordination must focus on the local level, the one at which defenders are most exposed, due to the weakness of the rule of law and to the lack of political will to support defenders in danger.

A Campaign for the right to defend defenders

As a response to the increasing threats and abuses against Colombian defenders and to the stigmatization of social and non-governmental associations, a wide campaign for the right to defend human rights defenders was launched on September 9th 2009 in Bogota. Its objective: to exert coordinated and continued pressure on the Colombian government to improve the situation of defenders and to raise awareness of their work among the population.



Martin Sandoval Rozo, Colombian defender, from a video produced by PI for the Campaign

Infiltrations of Congress by paramilitary groups, extrajudicial executions of civilians by the army, attacks against the Supreme Court – these practices have often been denounced by human rights defenders, who in return have been constantly accused of collaborating with the guerrillas and being terrorists as well as having had their work being labelled as “subversive”. After her mission to Colombia in September 2009, Margaret Sekaggya, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, pointed out in her report this perpetual stigmatization, which is

*“the essential reason for the insecurity of human rights defenders”.*³

The mission of the Special Rapporteur confirmed the observations made by Hina Jilani, her predecessor. After her visit to Colombia, the then Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations⁴ on the situation of HRDs had concerns about “the climate of intimidation and insecurity” in which defenders were working. She

³ Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Margaret Sekaggya – Addendum – Mission to Colombia (7-18 September 2009) – para 60.

⁴ At this time, her title was Special Representative, which became Special Rapporteur afterwards

observed numerous abuses perpetrated against them, “including threats, murders, and forced displacements”.⁵ Ms Hina Jilani estimated in her report that violence affected the whole of civil society “including State officials working on human rights related questions”, but some groups, notably trade unionists, ethnic minorities, women and internally displaced persons were particularly targeted. Since the visit of Hina Jilani, abuses against defenders have intensified continuously.

The DAS wiretapping scandal

In June 2009, Protection International, in partnership with PAS (Pensamiento y Acción Social, or Social Thought and Action), concluded the setting up of a Columbia-based Protection Desk in a particularly vulnerable climate, as the weekly newsmagazine *Semana* had four months earlier confirmed one of the concerns raised by Hina Jilani in her 2002 report; the use of “certain practices by the police and the army against human rights defenders, particularly the holding of intelligence files containing false information” on defenders and “telephone-tapping of NGO offices”). Since 2004, Colombian intelligence (DAS, Departamento Administrativo de Seguridad) had been conducting – through an internal cell known as the G3 group – a large-scale spying operation (phone-tapping, e-mail interceptions, surveillance) on individuals

⁵ Report of Mrs Hina Jilani, Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the situation of human rights defenders, Mission in Columbia (23-31 October, 2001), E/CN.4/2002/106/Add.2, page 3.

considered critical of President Alvaro Uribe. The targets of the operation were politicians of the opposition, judges, journalists and diplomats, but also national as well as international human rights defenders organizations. The objective of the DAS was no less than to hinder, if not neutralize, their activities.

Semana writes that an investigation was initiated by the public prosecutor but was limited to surveillance operations that were carried out between 2002 and 2005 in spite of evidence indicating that they went on until the revelations at the beginning of 2009 and beyond. *"In September 2009, during the debate in Congress, Democratic Pole party member of Parliament Gustavo Pedro presented evidence showing that defenders were not paranoid when over the last ten years they denounced threats and attacks aiming at preventing them from pursuing their work"*, says Beatriz Pedraza, coordinator of the Colombian Protection Desk.

From the Roundtable on Guarantees to the Campaign

In November 2008, a few months before these revelations, HRD organizations joined in four platforms and several social organizations engaged in a dialogue with the Government in order to establish the necessary measures to guarantee human rights defenders can carry out their work. As a result, in April 2009 a National Roundtable on Guarantees (Mesa Nacional de Garantías) was created. It brings together social sectors, human rights organizations coalitions, Government representatives, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the embassies of the G24. *"It was the only possibility for civil society and the Colombian Government to resume the common effort to build the National Plan of Action on Human Rights"*, Beatriz Pedraza explains.

The DAS scandal adds to a long list of unacceptable abuses frequently observed in Colombia. In the presence

of Margaret Sekaggya, a wide campaign for the right to defend human rights defenders was launched on September 9th 2009 in Bogota as a response to the *"waves of assassinations, forced disappearances, sexual violence, death threats, raids and the theft of sensitive information"*⁶ and to the impunity for the – sometimes fatal – abuses committed against defenders. *"Without you democracy will not exist. Without your struggle and your work peace will never be achieved. Without you, human rights would be forgotten in Colombia and in the rest of the world"*, Ms Sekaggya declared. The campaign was supported by 274 organizations, amongst which were several dozens of Colombian and South-American organizations⁷ as well as international organizations, including Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and Protection International.

Protection International produced a video for the campaign showing testimonies of several Colombian

defenders, amongst which Ramiro Orjuela Aguilar from the Comité de derechos humanos del Ariari, Luis Guillermo Perez from the International Federation on Human Rights and Martin Sandoval Roza from the Comité permanente de derechos humanos de Arauca. Protection Desk Colombia participated in the steering committee in charge of coordinating the campaign. In cooperation with all actors involved, PD-Colombia was thus able to take part in the drafting and revision of press releases, reports and urgent actions, while at the same time preparing several key activities and represent the campaign coalition in meetings with diplomats, authorities and the Church.

It will be easier to assess the overall results of the campaign, and particularly the impact of Protection Desk Colombia, at the end of 2010. However, it is essential to stress the fact that Margret Sekaggya has taken up all of the campaign recommendations in the report she will present to the Human Rights Council in March 2010.

⁶ <http://www.colombiadeffenders.org/page.asp?p=4664>

⁷ <http://www.colombiadeffenders.org/signatories.asp>

Which are the changes advocated for by the campaign?

- 1 Putting an end to impunity for abuses committed against defenders by holding impartial investigations leading to convictions of perpetrators.
- 2 Putting an end to bad practices by State intelligence, i.e. the use of false or defamatory information in civilian, military or police intelligence, leading to defenders being sued (in unfounded judicial investigations), harassed and delegitimized.
- 3 Putting an end to systematic stigmatization of HRDs by State authorities which tend to associate their work to guerrilla movements.
- 4 Putting an end to unfounded judicial procedures, as this form of persecution often leads to depriving defenders of their liberty by manipulating testimonies and information and fabricating evidence.
- 5 The Colombian state offers protection programs to human rights defenders. But there is a need to structurally improve them as they do not cover all vulnerable groups. Moreover, a rise in aggressions and abuses perpetrated against defenders calls into question its efficiency.

Limiting freedoms in a post-war environment

After the end of the civil war, which pitted governmental military forces against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), in May 2009, there has been little progress in the strengthening of democracy in Sri Lanka. The last months of the war have had a tragic impact on the civil population with more than 15,000 wounded and between 7,500 to as many as 20,000 civilians killed between mid January and early May 2009. Over that same period, 300,000 civilians were trapped in combat zones without access to food or medical assistance⁸. PI observed that the post-conflict political context was characterized by three essential features: the negation of fundamental freedoms (such as freedom of speech and association or movement), the erosion of democratic practices and the concentration of power in the hands of one family, that of President's Mahinda Rajapaksa who came to power by a margin of votes in 2005.

Within this context, human rights defenders faced considerable difficulties. Emergency anti-terrorism laws, which remained in force in 2009 obstructed the enjoyment of fundamental freedoms guaranteed by the 1978 constitution and hindered defenders from doing their work for the promotion and protection of human rights in the search for justice and equality.

The Prevention of Terrorism Act, moreover, threatened the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, the right not to be tortured, the right to life and finally the right to enjoy the fundamental principles of justice, such as presumption of innocence. The blurring of roles of the army and law-enforcing institutions have also presented a significant

challenge to human rights defenders and other members of Sri Lankan civil society.

In January 2009, the European Union invited Protection International to Sri Lanka to work with defenders and the EU diplomatic missions in order to develop a Local Implementation Strategy (LIS) of the EU Guidelines for Human Rights Defenders. Protection International had previously visited the country for research for its Protection Manual for LGBTI Defenders in 2008.

In defiance of restrictions on mobility ordered by the government and the army, around twenty defenders from all over the country took part in a workshop aimed at formulating recommendations for the drafting of an effective LIS, which were then discussed by members of the diplomatic community. *"Over the next few months, as the situation in the country for defenders and journalists deteriorated"*, explains PI representative in Asia, *"PI and other organisations such as Amnesty International recognised that perhaps there was a need to work with defenders directly, giving advice on immediate security concerns and perhaps even suggesting ways of coping with the then high levels of aggression"*.

Thanks to the financial support of the Royal Embassy of the Netherlands in Colombo, Protection International undertook two more brief missions to Sri Lanka in the second half of the year to assess the follow-up of the recommendations, hold security management trainings and meet with individual defenders at risk. A total of 60 defenders were trained and meetings were convened with more than one hundred defenders, including journalists and LGBTI defenders, to discuss the threats they face and ways to improve their security. Due to the prevailing situation in the country, meetings could often not take place in



Political poster

defenders' offices, which were subject to monitoring and surveillance, hence defenders suggested other places they themselves identified as "safe" to not draw unwanted attention when meeting with outsiders or internationals.

Using feedback from defenders given during these trainings and meetings, PI contributed to the development of a strategy that was presented to the European Union in September 2009. PI also gave suggestions to the European Union on how to increase their involvement with the Sri Lankan government and civil society for better compliance with universally recognised human rights and fundamental freedoms enshrined in international human rights law in Sri Lanka.

⁸ International Crisis Group, Sri Lanka Conflict History, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/key-issues/research-resources/conflict-histories/sri-lanka.aspx>

Protection in a country in transition

Persistent hurdles remain on the road to justice and lasting peace in Nepal. In May 2009, the UCPN (Maoist) party (Unified Communist Party of Nepal – Maoist), who won the 2008 elections, withdrew from the government. A new government coalition led by the CPN-UML (Communist Party of Nepal – Unified Marxist-Leninist) was formed. Impunity for human rights violations committed during and after the decade long conflict by both the Royalist government and Maoist forces, and weak state institutions continue to obstruct the peace process of the young democratic republic.

Developed with the support of the British Embassy in Nepal as part of their Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) *Tool kit to Promote and Protect the Human Rights of LGBT People*, PI launched its *Manual for the Protection of LGBTI Defenders*. The event was presided over by Mrs Sheba Rosier, political secretary of the British Embassy in Kathmandu, representatives from the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and defenders from all over Nepal.

In her speech, Sheba Rosier mentioned that the protection of the

human rights of LGBTI persons was the final frontier in the struggle for the universal recognition and enjoyment of human rights. She applauded the contribution that those defending the rights of LGBTI persons in Nepal and across the globe make to this struggle and offered the support of the Embassy and the British Government to encourage them to become more vocal and increase their visibility. “*You’re making history for us in Nepal*”, said one of the young LGBTI defenders after the ceremony.

During the first part of 2009, the Protection Desk Nepal, a pilot project initiated and supported by PI in 2006 continued to hold security management trainings, both inside the country and at a regional level (for LGBTI defenders as well as other HRDs from South Asia). PI also facilitated relocation of threatened defenders from Nepal and Sri Lanka and coordinated protection processes for several emergency cases in collaboration with Peace Brigades International, embassies, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and local networks.

Video – Loktantra: Democratic Transition in Nepal

On May 28th 2008, Nepal became a federal republic after 239 years of Hindu monarchy and 10 years of a Maoist rebellion led by Pushpa Kamal Dahal, better known as Prachanda (“the fierce one”). In August 2008, Prachanda was elected Prime Minister by the Constitutional Assembly, which, after the April elections, was mostly made out of Maoists. Civil society organizations and HRDs played an important role in the change of regime. Because of their involvement, many of them faced threats, harassment, torture, exile and in some cases murder. Through this documentary, which covers the recent history of Nepal, from the royal “coup” of February 1st 2005 to the events of May 2008, Protection International offers the



testimonies of these defenders about that period, a turning point which saw the “people’s movement” open a new era for Nepal. In Nepali, this movement is called Loktantra, which is also the title of the documentary.

Loktantra! Democracy!

A documentary by Pascale Boosten and Eric Juzen, 25 min.
Languages: English.
Subtitles: French, Spanish

Protection in a country in transition (continued)

In the first quarter of the year, Protection Desk Nepal and PI continued their regional consultations, which were commenced in November 2008. The consultations, the first of their kind in Nepal, covered the five development regions and included marginalized defenders (such as LGBTI and women defenders). The NHRC, the OHCHR and the EU Working Group on human rights defenders lent their support to this successful and important activity. More than 600 defenders gave their input on their specific protection needs and formulated recommendations for the improvement of human rights in the country, published in a report. After the consultations, the European

Union asked the Protection Desk Nepal to develop a strategy to support the implementation of these recommendations which included awareness raising about defenders, victims and other marginalized groups, increasing the knowledge of victims and defenders regarding protection mechanisms and judicial remedy, and the strengthening of human rights defenders networks to ensure the protection of defenders at risk in coordination with other stakeholders and human rights organizations.

By the end of 2009, PI decided to open a regional desk for South and Southeast Asia in Bangkok.

Protection Desk Nepal will be developing its own activities and mandate, independently from PI. In the near future, PI will fill in gaps that are identified with defenders in Nepal, such as supporting local HRD organisations to set up their own security management, develop a civil society based victims and witness protection scheme in the context of transitional justice in Nepal, or provide technical support to national legislations and policies for HRD protection.

Further reading:

Regional Consultations: The Recommendations Implementation Strategy Phase One 2009
http://www.protectionline.org/IMG/pdf/090427_RC_Strategy_2_2_.pdf

Protection and security for HRDs in Thailand

An arms robbery in January 2004 gave rise to an onslaught of killings and attacks marking the intensification of a historically low-key conflict involving Malay Muslim insurgents in the three Thai Southern border provinces of Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat, where approximately 80% of the population are Malay Muslims. With 2,3 million people (almost 3% of the overall Thai population, of which a large majority are Buddhists), Muslim minorities in Thailand face different situations depending on their location.

Whilst Muslims in Bangkok and its outskirts (around half a million people) are fairly well integrated, this is not the case in the South of the country, where many Malay Muslims feel there is a lack of recognition for their distinct culture, language (Yawi, related to the Malay language) and religion. In 2005, the International Crisis Group (ICG) claimed that separatist trends and frequent attacks occurring in the Southern provinces should not be viewed as *"simply another manifestation of Islamic terrorism. The violence is driven by local issues."*⁹

Southern Thailand remains one of the poorest regions of the country and,

according to the ICG, the Muslim population, harbours a deep sense of grievance against what it considers as a historic discrimination *"against the ethnic Malay Muslim population"* and *"the attempts at forced assimilation by successive ethnic Thai Buddhist governments in Bangkok for almost a century."*¹⁰ Repressive measures against the insurgents implemented under the rule of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra seem to have aggravated this crisis.

⁹ Asia Report n° 98, 18 May 2005, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/south-east-asia/thailand/098-southern-thailand-insurgency-not-jihad.aspx>

¹⁰ Idem

Several grave human rights violations occurred during the first years of the conflict. One of the most gruesome examples is what has become known as the Tak Bai massacre in Narathiwat province. On 25 October 2004, around 1,500 local Muslim men demonstrating at a police station for what they considered was the unlawful arrest of six fellow villagers, were arrested by security forces and transported to an army camp to be taken into custody. Seven men were allegedly shot, while 78 others died during the journey, mostly from suffocation and crush injuries. They had been stacked up and thrown on the army trucks like

Protection and security for HRDs in Thailand (continued)

cattle. To date none of the perpetrators have been brought to justice.

HRDs working in the South, on cases such as the Tak Bai massacre, have often been threatened and hindered in their work for justice and to end impunity. PI observed that they have been victims of intimidation, persecution, enforced disappearances and arbitrary killings. The State has often accused HRDs of sympathizing with or even being part of the insurgency. Therefore, they have not been recognized as a legitimate part of civil society, nor have they received protection from the government. Similarly, HRDs have often been afraid of criticizing violations of international human rights and humanitarian law committed by members of the insurgency for fear of reprisals. The situation for Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRD) also continues to be challenging, for they are often criticized and intimidated by conservative Islamic groups in the region.

Even though the rate of violence in the Southern border provinces

remains high (since the flaring up of the conflict in 2004 more than 4,400 people have died), the working space for HRDs slightly improved in 2009, with them receiving less direct threats and intimidation and more recognition for their work. However, a peaceful solution to the conflict remains a distant future and the situation in the Deep South of Thailand continues to be volatile with both the Emergency Decree and Martial Law still being in effect.

PI started working with Southern Thai HRDs in March 2008 in collaboration with the Cross Cultural Foundation (CrCF) and the Working Group for Justice and Peace (WGJP). From 2008 to 2009, a number of activities were carried out, including training of university students who organise aid camps for communities affected by the conflict, and a visit of Thai HRDs to embassies of EU member states in an effort to strengthen the relationships between Southern Thai defenders and the European Union. PI continued to follow up on these activities throughout 2009 with continued advocacy and monitoring of the situation of HRDs.

From 19 to 21 April 2009, PI held a workshop for about 30 participants, all of whom were members of organisations based in Bangkok, but also working on the Southern Thai conflict. The aim of the workshop was to develop a common approach towards the situation in the South

and identify the main stakeholders regarding protection issues.

According to PI Asia representative Shaun Kirven *"one of the results from this workshop is that it evidenced the need for defenders and organisations to work in coordination with each other and that if agendas are really to be effective then inclusive platforms need to be created where those based in the South are able to not only access the stakeholders in Bangkok but also set the agendas of the bigger organisations working at a regional and global level."*

Beyond the Southern Thailand context, the political situation in the country, ever since the military coup of 2006 which ousted then Prime Minister Thaksin, has known many challenges and led to an increasingly polarized society; the royalist yellow shirt movement, roughly made up of the urban middle and upper class, are in direct opposition to the so-called Red Shirts, whose supporters are mainly farmers and workers from the countryside and whose loyalty remains with the ousted Prime Minister. It remains to be seen what the impact of the increased politicization and polarization of Thai society will be on HRDs and the important work that they do.

In order to increase the effectiveness of its activities in Thailand, a Thai translation of the "New Protection Manual for Human Rights Defenders" was published. Also in 2009, plans were made to establish a more permanent PI presence in the region and set up an office in Bangkok to cover countries in the region in 2010. The regional office will first focus on Thailand, Nepal and Indonesia, where PI has previously run programmes. According to needs and requests, however, there will be possibility for expansion to other Asian countries.



Protection through advocacy on EU guidelines

During the first half of 2009, 171 attacks were registered against HRDs in Guatemala. In Africa, there was an increasing tendency to marginalize and even criminalize LGBTI people and the defenders working to defend SOGI (sexual orientation and gender identity) rights. These are just two examples of the dramatic situation faced by defenders in the countries where PI works. In 2009 PI advocacy was very much aimed at strengthening preventive action in mainly two areas. First, PI assisted EU missions in drafting local implementation strategies (LIS) of the EU Guidelines on human rights defenders jointly with partners and other human rights organisations. Second, PI initiated a network with EU (national) parliaments to protect HRDs, the MP4HRD network.

There is no doubt that the approval of the EU Guidelines on human rights defenders in 2004 - revised by the end of 2008 under the French EU Presidency - constitutes a major step ahead. The guidelines provide clear recommendations to EU delegations and member state missions on how to collaborate with defenders in countries abroad. Several states such as Norway followed the example and have formulated similar instruments. Since then, the support and protection of defenders forms an explicit and crucial element of EU foreign policy.

The Guidelines are based on the UN Declaration for human rights defenders, adopted in 1998 unanimously by 185 states represented in the UN General Assembly. Unfortunately, today's reality in many of the signatory countries tells another story. It is well known that defenders suffer from all kinds of attacks and abuses, often with direct involvement or the implicit consent from authorities.

This is where the role of third governments comes in. In the past years there has been a growing awareness regarding the need to expand the responsibility to protect defenders towards third governments; states should contribute to the protection of defenders, be it on their own territory or through foreign policy and diplomatic missions. This should not to be mixed up with discussions about humanitarian intervention, which often seeks to legitimize armed intervention

on the grounds of protecting humanitarian law or human rights.

Development of the Local Implementation Strategies

In 2007, under the German Presidency, the creation of Local Implementation Strategies for the EU Guidelines was encouraged. Concretely, these strategies contain a country specific approach for the support and protection of defenders. The advantage of a local strategy clearly lies in deciding about the appropriate actions in line with the local context. More importantly, it could initiate a process in which EU missions, jointly with defenders, their networks, the wider civil society and even public institutions, agree upon on how support and protection of defenders can be implemented in a coordinated and systematic way.

To PI's knowledge, there are only a handful of countries where this process has been successfully concluded. A much referred example is Nepal, where in 2006 EU missions together with non-EU missions have set up a Working Group on human rights defenders, in which HRD networks, the UN-mission in Nepal and the national human rights Commission participate. The LIS Nepal was publicly launched in 2007 and has been accessible to defenders through the website of the EU delegation. Since then, continuous collaboration has contributed to joint actions such as field missions, enhanced capacities to analyse security incidents as well as protection and relocation capacities.

Until the end of 2009, the number of publicly known LIS remained small and the information about 50 existing LIS – according to the EU Services – could not be validated by defenders or INGO's, as all information on them has so far been kept confidential. EU Member States usually explain the decision of confidentiality with two arguments, that, by making the LIS public, they fear opposing national governments and second, that defenders themselves have requested not to publicize them, fearing reprisals by authorities.

However, when checking on the ground with defenders networks, Protection International finds little evidence where a public strategy would endanger EU missions' effectiveness in supporting defenders. The fact that the EU would openly handle its strategy towards HRD protection would rather contribute to transparency towards national authorities about its actions. On occasion of several annual EU-NGO Fora on Human Rights, defenders have expressed the opinion that the LIS should be known by them. According to their analysis, but also in the opinion of PI, there would be only a handful of countries worldwide where such a step would provoke direct negative consequences on defenders' security. These individual cases need to be assessed in depth and specific strategies need to be elaborated so that defenders know what they can expect from the EU in terms of their protection.

Moreover, in all countries where PI has worked on the LIS in 2009, we found no examples of defenders having asked for a confidential EU strategy due to the fear of reprisals. To the contrary, they insisted on their right to be consulted in the process and for the strategy to be shared with them. It is therefore necessary to clearly identify those few countries where defenders insist on a confidential strategy.

For the same reason, together with other INGOs, PI has repeatedly asked the EU to provide the list of countries claiming to have a LIS, so that defenders can contact respective EU delegations. Until the end of 2009, no information on this had yet been granted. According to PI this poses a clear contradiction and raises the question of how a strategy, not known to defenders themselves, can be effectively implemented and revised to support them. In fact, this approach goes against the EU's own policy. The EU document "Ensuring Protection – European Union Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders" clearly states that *"EU Missions should involve human rights defenders and their organizations in the drafting and monitoring of local strategies"*.

The described difficulty to reach an agreement with the EU for a coordinated approach to the LIS, has motivated many HRD networks and INGOs to put pressure on individual EU Member State countries and EU delegations in third countries to come forward with an effective and inclusive LIS.

Protection International involvement in the LIS

In Asia, PI was invited to provide advice on LIS consultations with HRDs in Thailand and Sri Lanka. Defenders provided recommendations to the EU on how to promote the EU Guidelines, such as setting up a working group of diplomats and defenders to meet regularly, or to translate the Guidelines in Tamil and Sinhala and publish translations widely in local languages. Yet until the end of 2009, no LIS had been shared in these countries.

In a public Conference in March 2009, defenders in Nepal presented the results of a Regional Consultation with 600 defenders from the five development regions, which PI and Protection Desk-Nepal had organised in late 2008. In its systematisation for the EU working group on human rights defenders, Protection Desk-Nepal identified specific measures according to 6 objectives as follows: improved awareness of defenders, victims and other marginalized groups and generate greater accessibility to the NHRC (National Human Rights Commission, OHCHR (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Nepal) and the EU, in order to close the gap between grassroots level and these institutions; support defenders to set up a safe house mechanism; strengthen defenders networks with stakeholders to ensure their protection when at risk; encouraging state authorities to develop constitutional and legal mechanisms for the protection of defenders; monitoring of the recommendations and documentation of best practices. The EU working group worked along these recommendations. By end of 2009 a revision process of the LIS had been initiated.

During the EU-Presidency of Czech Republic, PI undertook several missions to Turkey to make recommendations on a LIS. Meetings were held with both the EU-Delegation and the embassies of the Czech Republic, the UK, Belgium, Sweden, the Netherlands, Germany and France. PI contributed to the creation of a platform covering a wide range of Turkish defenders, with LGBTI networks, trade unionists and Muslim human rights organisations, which came up with a draft LIS and provided ongoing recommendations to the EU missions on the process. Yet, until end of 2009 no LIS had been agreed upon for Turkey.

In several other countries such as Rwanda and Burundi, bilateral meetings with EU Missions were held to provide information and contribute to the drafting of a LIS or to set up focal points for HRDs. In Rwanda, on invitation of the Embassy of the

Netherlands, PI and its local partner EHAHRDP provided technical assistance on setting up a focal point for HRDs and provided consultancy to threatened journalists. In Burundi, several meetings with leading human rights organisations, lawyers, journalists and members of the French, Belgian and Dutch diplomatic community where held on new legislations and their negative impact on HRDs.

In Ethiopia, with the support of PI and on invitation by EU missions, local partner EHAHRDP provided advice on an Ethiopian LIS, which was finally approved in November 2009 under the Swedish Presidency.

In DR Congo, PI had numerous meetings with EU missions and was invited by the EU Working Group on human rights to provide expertise on several emblematic cases and trial observations undertaken by PI. PI also continued to emphasise the need for a LIS.

In conclusion it can be said that besides Nepal (2007) and Ethiopia (November 2009), no new LIS were reported in the 20 priority countries where PI works.

Collaboration with parliaments on emblematic cases and promoting new protection mechanisms

In 2009 PI further developed its approach of networking with national EU parliaments. In 2008/09 PI achieved an intensive consultation with Members of Parliament (MPs) and human rights/foreign affairs commissions of the parliaments of the UK House of Commons, Spanish Congress, German Bundestag and Belgium Chambers Senate/Congress, which have all shown interest in collaborating with PI on targeted action for the protection of defenders. PI suggested to set up a parliamentary network, with the aim to contribute to the formulation of new protection policies and gain better practices leading to more targeted and coordinated action for the protection of defenders whose rights are being violated or who are in danger.

For this purpose, PI has developed a network of Members of Parliament

Protection through advocacy on EU guidelines (continued)

(MP4HRD). This network will coordinate its approach with other relevant actors conducting advocacy with parliaments, such as Amnesty International or Peace Brigades International who have a long standing work experience with MPs. The work with MPs draws on PI's experience when it was still part of PBI as the PBI EU office from 1998 to 2007 and organised the first hearing of defenders from Colombia and Guatemala at the EU Parliament in 1998, and initiated the first resolution for HRDs in the national parliaments of Belgium (2003) and Spain (2007) with Amnesty International, the OMCT and other INGOs.

Even though PI's activities in 2009 were very much focussed on setting up the necessary technical infrastructure, several parliamentary

questions and hearings were launched. In February and September respectively, PI assisted in round tables with German MPs and with the German HR Ombudsman, both in Nepal. On invitation of the UK House of Commons Great Lakes Parliamentary Group in June, PI presented the report from its trial observation of the murder case of Congolese journalist Serge Maheshe and in July and September met the Human Rights Commission of the German Bundestag to follow up on the PI initiative for an EU parliamentary network for defenders protection.

PI also supported initiatives of EU MPs linking up with their colleagues in countries where PI works. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, PI assisted an initiative of HRDs and MPs from the regional

parliament of South Kivu to pass a provincial motion for the protection of journalists and other HRDs. Unfortunately the initiative was not approved by parliament and will need to undergo a second round of discussions in 2010. Local HRD networks estimate that a higher interest of parliaments from other countries, who have already approved such legislation or motions, will encourage the South Kivu parliament to adopt a similar one and become more engaged in HRD protection. PI sees many opportunities in the elaboration of policies for the protection of HRDs and will therefore focus on the systematisation and promotion of already existing initiatives of the kind (see article on "Protection of human rights defenders: Best practices and lessons learnt. Vol.I" publication).

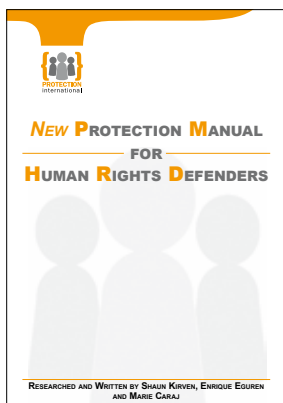
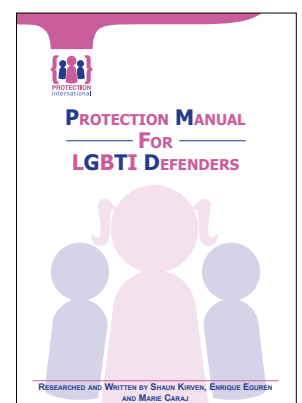
New Publications

Protection Manual for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) Defenders

By exploring sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) rights in different contexts and giving examples of issues that can affect the security of LGBTI defenders, this manual aims at integrating protection and security into LGBTI defenders' work plans and lives. It does so, through risk analysis and subsequent suggestions on the drafting of security and protection plans and processes. These elements are based on the same logical processes PI uses for all defenders. The underlying argument is that LGBTI defenders face repression and violations like all other defenders and yet, face additional threats because of their, discrimination and lack of equality before and subsequent protection from the law.

Authors: Shaun Kirven, Enrique Eguren and Marie Caraj.

2nd edition – Protection International 2009. 179 pages.



New Protection Manual for Human Rights Defenders

In the new manual, Protection International is putting forward management logic that can be taken up in different organizational environments and structures, arriving at the same outcome: the incorporation of the security plan into the work plan. This manual thereby aims at ownership by human rights defenders of the whole security-protection logic and process. Ownership is a component of security itself. The manual contributes to independence and sustainability of security-protection of human rights defenders. Protection International differentiates between the security of the human rights defenders – towards him/herself – and the protection of the human rights defender – from other stakeholders towards the human rights defender.

Authors: Enrique Eguren and Marie Caraj.

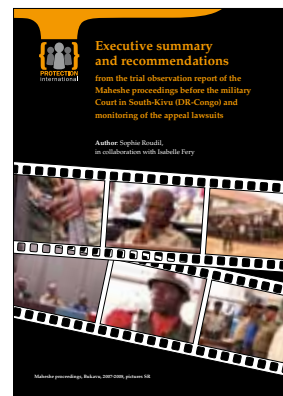
3rd edition – Protection International 2009. 212 pages.

New Publications (continued)

Summary and recommendations from the trial observation of the Maheshe proceedings (DR Congo)

Trial observation and monitoring is a key part of the advocacy work to struggle against impunity in order to ensure that trials exist, that they are fair, and to avoid any interference intended to hide the truth. Taking into account the general state of impunity in DR Congo, especially with regard to violations against Human Rights Defenders, including journalists, in 2007 and 2008, Protection International carried out a trial observation of the presumed killers (and individuals alleged to be behind the killing) of the Okapi Radio journalist Serge Maheshe, who was killed on the 13th June 2007 in Bukavu (DR Congo). The trial, which took place before the Military Jurisdictions, respected neither the norms of a fair trial nor led to the manifestation of the truth. In spite of this, three civilians were condemned to death in May 2008, two of whom are in prison.

Author: Sophie Roudil, 2nd edition – Protection International 2009. 8 pages
The full trial observation report is available in French.



Best practices: a study on national protection mechanisms

The existence of legislation and institutions for HRDs at a regional and international level is now well known. Notable examples are the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, adopted by the United Nations in 1998, or the position of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, created in 2000 to focus on issues regarding HRDs, nowadays known as the Special Rapporteur on HRDs, occupied by Margaret Sekaggya from Uganda. Since 1999, the Organization of American States (OAS) has adopted annual resolutions on defenders in Latin America and the Caribbean, and created an entity dedicated to defenders within the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (CIDH) in 2001. Africa and Europe have also developed specific organs and mechanisms on HRDs issues.

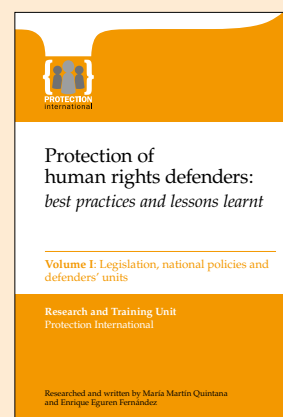
The Declaration on Human Rights Defenders adopted by the United Nations is not legally binding, but through a number of articles, for example Article 12, it reminds States of the fact that they are supposed to guarantee the security and protection of defenders. The declaration contains principles and rights based on human rights norms that are included in legally binding texts such as the ICCPR (the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights), which came into force in 1976 and State parties to the ICCPR are therefore legally obliged to be committed to the application of the Declaration.

Over the past years PI has contributed to the development of national mechanisms for the protection of defenders in Latin America, Asia and Africa. These policies and pieces of legislation have been adopted on the basis of the UN Declaration on HRDs after advocacy and cooperation among local and international organizations.

Mechanisms and legislation: what are the impacts?

Protection International's Research Unit has carried out an in-depth study of the nature and the impact of national protection mechanisms on defenders. This long term investigation, carried out on the basis of interviews with defenders and officials, took place in 16 countries, over three continents. The results are included in a two-volume handbook entitled "Protection of human rights defenders: Best practices and lessons learnt". The first volume, "Legislation, National Policies and Defenders' units", was published in 2009, and the second, which more specifically focuses on practical aspects of defenders' protection, is to be published in 2011.

Protection of human rights defenders: best practices and lessons learnt. Volume 1: Legislation, national policies and defenders' units. 144p. (<http://protectionline.org/Protection-of-human-rights.html>)



Interview

ENRIQUE EGUREN FERNANDEZ, the co-author of the handbook, along with **María Martín Quintana**, shares with us his view on the issues raised by national protection initiatives

Q. *What is a national protection mechanism?*

Enrique Eguren: It is a system designed to improve the protection of human rights defenders in countries where they are attacked as a consequence of their work. These mechanisms are created by official organs (i.e. recently created or *ad hoc* organs, or newly created functions attached to pre-existing organs, like the Office of the Ombudsman), and by *ad hoc* governmental policies and pieces of legislation. In Southern countries these developments have mainly taken place in Latin America, where protection mechanisms exist or are under discussion in five countries (Brazil, Guatemala, Columbia, Mexico and Peru). There are thoughts and debates on the subject in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Nepal as well.

Q. *Some defenders reckon that these mechanisms are not the best way to solve protection issues. How do you explain that opposition?*

Q.E: This question has been raised several times during the interviews. Is it necessary for the state to create specific mechanisms (laws, offices, policies) dedicated to the protection of defenders, or is it better to make sure that institutions (the legal system and the security forces) will fulfil their obligations and guarantee protection? It is an important debate, because mechanisms made available to human rights defenders generally have very limited power of implementation, in a legal sense (these are secondary pieces of legislation) as well as in a practical one, since these organs lack the necessary resources and are unable to either launch an investigation or to wield any political power to guarantee an appropriate protection for defenders.

Defenders opposed to *ad hoc* tools consider those to be merely a formal response to the national and international pressure, only used to dampen the pressure by giving responses that have no real impact, and enabling those who attack defenders to go on doing so in total impunity. A second issue is one regarding the bureaucratic barriers that these tools generate, and which only make the work of defenders -more complicated when they want to hold investigations or take offenders to court. It has also been suggested to us that the financing of these mechanisms could have been used to improve the response capacity of state institutions (e.g. the police or the judiciary).

On the other hand, those in favour of these initiatives admit their weaknesses but also feel that they can open the door to an improvement in protection, be it by making the access to places otherwise inaccessible easier (e.g. inside the walls of security forces) or by providing an immediate support (e.g. funds for the relocation of defenders, means of communication, escorts) that can solve serious protection issues, at least on the short term. We see that sometimes we can make good use of the potential lying in these mechanisms, while at the same time bearing in mind that the entire state apparatus (and not only one office) is the one responsible for protection. Taking the necessary measures to guarantee an appropriate protection of human rights defenders is the responsibility of the executive and the judiciary.

Q. *Why is it important to work on these mechanisms?*

Q.E: Given the tragic situation human rights defenders have to face in many countries, we think it is best to make propositions instead of



asking questions. We think it is important to relegate questions that are too general to the background (how does this mechanism have to be?) and choose a more pragmatic approach: how can we improve the protection of defenders pragmatically? This allows us to work on protection from the beginning, without neglecting fundamental questions.

Q. *What does this handbook represent for you?*

Q.E: The defenders working in each country are the real actors of the existing changes. We, as Protection International can provide an added value by offering our advice on the lessons learnt in other countries by defenders and international organizations, and by giving information on, and support to the current and future discussions on the subject. We hope this handbook represents a source of information on the lessons learnt and best practices for defenders in all countries. The handbook is a symbol of our work in many aspects: it is a compilation of the effective work carried out by defenders in many countries, with whom we collaborate directly in many cases through our Protection Desks. We feel it is a step forward in the protection of defenders.

Protection International AISBL-Financial Report

Year ended 31 December 2009

The report on the Annual Accounts for the fiscal year ended 31 December 2009 of the A.I.S.B.L. Protection International. All figures are provided in Euros.

Balance 31/12/2009

	31/12/2009	31/12/2008
ASSETS		
Fixed Assets	8138.97	8230.25
Equipment and furniture	8138.97	8230.25
Current Assets	158912.11	408816.24
Amount receivable	128166.43	67173.21
Current investments and cash at bank	30745.68	341643.03
TOTAL ASSETS	167051.08	417046.49
LIABILITIES		
Funds of the association	78982.86	35456.33
Accumulated profits	78982.86	35456.33
Debts	88068.22	381590.16
Suppliers	23391.17	39880.52
Taxes, remunerations and social security	58177.05	29841.48
Deferred income	6500.00	311868.16
TOTAL LIABILITIES	167051.08	417046.49

Results

	Year 2009	Year 2008
I. OPERATING INCOME AND CHARGES		
Operating Income		
Sales manuals and DVD's	3638.17	192.50
Provision of services	6311.09	35576.59
Donations	54.56	4059.52
Grants	945501.56	458393.90
Other operating income	2729.83	17106.92
Total operating income	958235.21	515329.43
Operating Charges		
Services and other goods	-458375.03	-256628.05
Remunerations and social security	-444678.05	-226659.48
Depreciations	-5006.49	-3855.73
Other operating charges	-373.16	-1928.91
Total operating charges	-908432.73	-489072.17
OPERATING RESULT	49802.50	26257.26
II. FINANCIAL INCOME AND CHARGES		
Financial income	2487.68	1321.66
Financial charges	-1794.03	-2094.05
Profit before tax	50496.15	25484.87
III. EXCEPTIONAL INCOME AND CHARGES		
Exceptional income	0.00	0.00
Exceptional charges	0.00	-15484.87
Profit for the year	50496.15	10000.00
Profit for the fiscal year to be allocated	43526.53	10000.00
Profit brought forward from previous year	35456.33	25456.33
PROFIT TO BE CARRIED FORWARD	78982.86	35456.33

Auditors Opinion

In our opinion the financial statements ended December 31 2009 present fairly the assets, liabilities, financial position and results of the AISBL. Without prejudice to formal aspects of minor importance, the accounts are kept in accordance with legal and regulatory requirements applicable in Belgium.

Braine le Comte, 23rd March, 2011

Patricia VANOSBEECK
Expert-Comptable IEC

Thank you

We would like to thank all individuals, groups and institutions who have supported our work in 2008 and 2009.

We would especially like to thank:

Diakonisches Werk Germany
EIDHR

Embassy Finland Nairobi

Embassy NL Colombo

Embassy NL Kinshasa

Fondation Hirondelle

Federal Ministry for Cooperation and Development BMZ Germany

Foreign Affairs Ministry Belgium

Foreign Affairs Ministry Germany/
ifa e.V. (Zivik)

Foreign Affairs Ministry Norway

Norwegian LGBT Association

Pax Christi NL

Peace Brigades International
Germany

The fund for global human rights
Washington

Private Donations.

In countries where the respect for human rights and freedoms is constantly challenged, Human Rights Defenders play a key role in supporting the existence of a free and just society and, consequently, face intimidation, security incidents and violence.

Protection International's contribution towards supporting defenders is to implement comprehensive protection programmes, designed so that they can undertake their activities in as safe an environment as possible.

For that purpose, **Protection International**'s programmes will focus on:

- empowering defenders and increasing their capacity to effectively manage their own protection and security,
- raising awareness amongst authorities concerning their legal duties to ensure defenders' protection in order to comply with international standards for the protection of defenders and human rights,
- promoting the collaboration of all key stakeholders in protection (i.e. third-party governments, international and regional bodies, and, generally, any institutions or entities with a role to play in promoting this notion),
- undertaking research and systematisation of activities in relation to the main protection issues at stake,
- publishing manuals, videos and other tools on protection.

We, at **Protection International**, believe in putting our commitment into practice by:

- ensuring that our contributions are made in partnership with the defenders we work with, respecting and promoting their own voices and their spaces, without interfering in their working objectives,
- delivering our activities both in the countries where defenders face repression and attacks, and also in the political centres where relevant decisions are made by those who hold the balance of power,
- paying special attention to promoting the protection of isolated or non-fully integrated groups of defenders,
- trying to do our work in a low-key manner, crediting the defenders themselves as the central players in this struggle,
- working in close collaboration with peer organisations and other key stakeholders in protection.



Supporters



Co-partners

