

TOP IMPACT STORIES

2017



PROTECTION
international

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PROTECTION INTERNATIONAL is an international non-profit organisation that provides protection strategies and tools for security management to human rights defenders who are at risk. Since 2004, Protection International has been working with local partners in over thirty countries across the globe.



1 Rally against the murders of HRDs in Honduras

Members of COPINH (Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras) tour Europe to denounce the murders of HRDs

WHERE:

Lenca community of Río Blanco, Honduras.

WHAT:

From 19 April to 5 May 2016 a delegation of 4 Indigenous Lenca HRDs from Honduras visited 5 European countries to denounce the murder of Indigenous and human rights COPINH leader Berta Cáceres. They called on FMO and Finn Fund to withdraw from the Agua Zarca Dam and on the EU to suspend funding to Honduras until the criminalisation and murders of environmental and human rights defenders cease.

HOW:

- More than 10 NGOs joined an action in front of the Honduran embassy, where members of COPINH, including Berta Cáceres' daughter shared her testimony.

- The European Parliament Subcommittee on Human Rights (DROI) Chair, MEP Elena Valenciano, held a special DROI hearing with other land rights defenders attended by a large number of MEPs.
- The European Union, Latin America and Caribbean Foundation (EULAC) delegation invited Berta Cáceres' daughter to a hearing at the European Parliament.
- An evening was organised for HRDs from Honduras and Liberia to share their experiences defending human rights, indigenous communities and the environment.

IMPACT:

- The Dutch, German and Finish development banks who were financing the Aqua Zarca Dam temporarily withdrew from the project.
- Media coverage from The Guardian, Deutsche Welle as well as Dutch and German national media brought the issues to the attention of the general public.
- Following Protection International's suggestion the Human Rights Democracy Network (HRDN) featured the case of Berta Cáceres in the "stand4HRDs" campaign.
- European Commission (EC) and European External Action Service (EEAS) committed to support an independent commission to investigate the murder.
- At the demonstration in front the Honduran embassy the Honduran ambassador to the EU spoke to COPINH's representatives and listened to their call for an independent investigation and an end to impunity.

2 Colombian community-based defenders thwart criminalisation

HRDs from El Guayabo community (Magdalena Medio region) successfully implemented a counterstrategy to fight back against criminalisation attempts and continue to defend their right to land.

WHERE:

El Guayabo settlement (Puerto Wilches Municipality, Magdalena Medio Region – Santander Department), Colombia.

WHAT:

The Protection Desk Colombia (PDCOL) team set up by Protection International in partnership with Pensamiento y Acción Social (PAS), provided support to four community leaders who were subject to unlawful criminal accusations.

HOW:

PDCOL helped El Guayabo HRDs to devise urgent response protocols in the case of illegal searches by authorities and a two-pronged counterstrategy based on:

I. Legal Action

- Connecting the community with defence lawyers who specialise in criminal accusations against HRDs.

- Documenting the political persecution against the accused HRDs and collecting the evidence necessary for pleading their innocence.
- Finding the emergency funds (via the ProtectDefenders.eu mechanism) necessary to cover legal defence expenses.

II. Political Support

- Alerting authorities locally and nationally on the threat to criminalise the community leaders.
- Meetings with government agencies in Bogotá to inform officials about the case and persuade the Attorney General's office (*Fiscalía General de la Nación*) about El Guayabo's rightful struggle: National Protection Unit (UNP) of the Ministry of Interior, Victims' Unit (UNV), Ombudsman's office (*Defensoría del Pueblo*), Vicepresident's office.
- Organising a meeting with different authorities to address the case in the Puerto Wilches municipality: National level -- envoys of the President's office, Ministry of Interior, National Police headquarters, National Army, the Department for National Prosperity; regional level – the departmental governor's office, the ombudsman's office, regional police and army commanders; and local level – municipal mayor, counselors and secretaries.
- Engaging in public demonstrations at the court house during the hearings and calling the media at the regional level to encourage coverage.

IMPACT:

- The prosecuting attorney asked the judge to grant the full release ("*libertad plena*") of three of the four accused community leaders.
- Persuaded political and judicial authorities that El Guayabo leaders were not criminals or subversive rebels.
- Exposed to local, regional and national authorities that the criminal charges against the leaders of El Guayabo have been part of a broader strategy of the plaintiff to keep the illegally grabbed land away from a community that is in a poor, remote and isolated territory.

Making learning tools more accessible in Indonesia **3**

How to translate a complex and challenging process into simple learning tools.

WHERE:

West, East and Central Java, West Sumatera, Bengkulu, Jambi, West and East Kalimantan, South Sulawesi, Riau Province and Jakarta, Indonesia.

WHAT:

Protection International's team in Indonesia adapted its Protection Manual to a local Indonesian context.

HOW:

The team researched how the communities of human rights defenders in Indonesia protect themselves when facing threats. They also organised workshops to get feedback from community representatives and trained NGOs staff on security to ensure the adapted manual fits their needs.

By using local words, poems, illustrations, stories of past and current events, the team ensured that the manual is accessible to readers with low formal education levels. The community members and local NGOs came up with

the idea to produce a film as a complementary tool for the manual, making the protection message accessible to a broader public, including illiterate farmers.

IMPACT:

- 7 out of 11 communities of human rights defenders have effectively mainstreamed security throughout their activities and a network created among 8 communities has been strengthened and proven as a very effective emergency response.
- All communities appointed Security Focal Points or formed a Security Committee balancing the participation of men, women and youth.
- Security Committees/Focal Points meet on a weekly to monthly basis depending on the risk situation to analyse the incidents and set up response mechanisms;
- Security Committees/Focal Points are able to reach out to the entire community. To ensure all information is accessed equally, special attention is given to the inclusion of women in the process.
- The communities are able to analyse the situation in a systematic manner before organising potentially sensitive activities such as peaceful protests, marches or even music concerts.



4 “For Those Who Died Trying” photo exhibition tour in Thailand

A photo exhibition of 37 murdered or abducted human rights defenders in Thailand.

WHERE:

Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Chang Wat Songkhla and Issaan, Thailand.

WHAT:

The Protection International team in Thailand organised a photo exhibition, “For Those Who Died Trying”, to raise awareness and achieve justice in recent cases of extra-judicial killings and enforced disappearances of Thai human rights defenders.

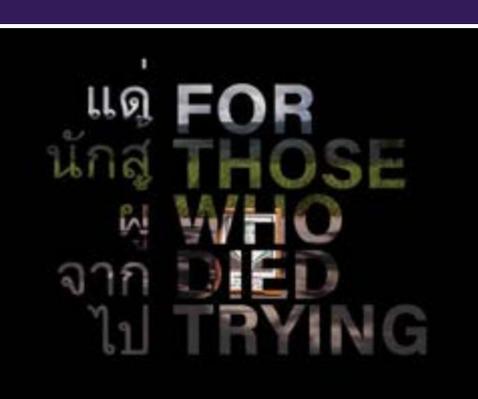
HOW:

Protection International presented 37 photographs of murdered and disappeared Thai HRDs, taken by British Bangkok-based photographer Luke Duggleby. The photos were taken at the exact place, when possible,

where the human rights defenders were killed or last seen. “For Those Who Died Trying” partnered with universities and other photo exhibitions to increase exposure as well as organised debates and documentary screenings to increase impact. The launch of the exhibition took place in May 2016 on the occasion of Thailand review by the United Nations Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

IMPACT:

- Advocating to have the cases investigated and prosecuted gave families of the victims access to information, public exposure, hope and support.
- The Thai media reported to an unprecedented extent in Thailand on the comprehensive recommendations on the cases of killing and enforced disappearance. Further, the media took up some stories for further investigation.
- International media like The Guardian, BBC and The New York Times reported about the situation of HRDs in Thailand.
- Partnering with University departments allowed the exploration of innovative ways to get involved with HRDs. Such things included practical internships and research studies on land rights and natural resources.
- The shelved case of Somchai Neelapaijit was re-opened and received a broad call for the continuation of the investigation.
- Advocating for action on the legislative level in codifying these acts as crimes and strengthening forensic investigations in human rights cases.



5

Building a security network of trainers for Kenyan LGBTIQ defenders

Building a human rights defenders team of "trainers of trainers" (TOTsO in Kenya).

WHERE:

Nairobi, Kenya.

WHAT:

Since its creation in 2010, Protection International Kenya has continuously supported LGBTIQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer) organisations. Due to the high volume of requests, the Protection International team in Kenya increased the pool of trainers for Kenyan LGBTIQ defenders to 4 and worked with them to improve their skills while training other LGBTIQ organisations in the country.

HOW:

Protection International Kenya trained over 250 LGBTIQ HRDs in 2016. About 215 were from the organisation of Persons Marginalized and Aggrieved (PEMA) Kenya and their partner organisations working on sexual and gender minority groups.



“ The yearlong re-engagement with PI was very enlightening and beneficial to our work. The additional step they took to jointly fundraise to strengthen our TOTs went above and beyond the usual organisations as it also gave each organization skills on developing their organisational security plans. We are earnestly looking for additional funds to further the process of finalising with the partner organisations and the TOTs. ”

— PEMA-KENYA

IMPACT:

- Increased security awareness.
- Introducing members of the movement to security capacity building.
- Successfully built a team of “trainers of trainers”
- PEMA-Kenya’s year long fundraising activities mainstreamed PEMA-Kenya and their partners’ membership.
- The PEMA members reduced security incidents and continue to mainstream security planning in all their activities.

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