

## THREATS TO HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS AND INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

### RECORD ATTACKS ON HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Mexico is the deadliest country in the world for environmental activists, [with 54 land and environmental rights defenders killed in 2021](#) according to Global Witness. Across the country, Peace Brigades International supports **human rights defenders facing threats, attacks, smears and trumped up charges** as a reprisal for standing up for their rights. President López Obrador has shown a worrying intolerance of criticism, frequently [criticising and demonising human rights organisations, while also pursuing legal restrictions on NGOs](#).

A governmental protection programme for human rights defenders and journalists was established by law in 2012, but a lack of political will and resources mean it has never been implemented effectively and consistently. **The Mexican government is currently consulting on a proposed General Law which could revolutionise the protection of defenders and journalists**, overcoming the current failures of the protection mechanism, but **only if these consultations include the [Espacio OSC](#)** - a civil society coalition which monitors the effectiveness of the current protection policy, and has produced informed and clear proposals for what a new law should look like.

- [Please urge the UK Embassy](#) to redouble its efforts to implement the [UK's policy on support for human rights defenders](#) in Mexico, offering targeted support for land and environmental defenders, and echoing the proposals of the *Espacio OSC* in regards to the proposed law.
- [Please urge the Mexican government and legislature](#) to pass a General Law for the protection of human rights defenders and journalists which has been effectively consulted with a range of civil society organisations and which takes into account the proposals of the *Espacio OSC*.

### ENFORCED DISPLACEMENTS NEED AN URGENT, LEGISLATED RESPONSE

[According to the Government's own calculations](#), up to **357,000 people are internally displaced in Mexico**, with civil society studies showing [Chihuahua as the most affected state](#). While some have been displaced by climate change and natural disasters, the majority have been ousted from their homes by either organised crime groups fighting for control of territory, or companies seeking access to natural resources.

**The draft Law to Prevent, Attend and Comprehensively Repair Forced Internal Displacement would mandate the Government to put in place programmes to prevent and punish these crimes**, while properly attending to the victims' needs. It was unanimously approved in the Chamber of Deputies, but has been held up in the Senate for over a year. In September, the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of internally displaced persons [urged the Mexican government to legislate](#) and resource human rights guarantees for internally displaced persons.

- [Please urge the Mexican government and Senators](#) to pass the aforementioned law on enforced displacement and [encourage the UK Embassy](#) to support this legislative initiative.

### THE SIERRA TARAHUMARA - ENVIRONMENTAL AND INDIGENOUS RIGHTS AT THE PRECIPICE

The Sierra Tarahumara is a mountainous region in southwestern Chihuahua, home to 90% of the state's indigenous population. Rich in resources, **it has been the target for extractive projects including logging and mining**. It is also a prized corridor for drug production and trafficking into the neighbouring USA, **which threatens both the climate crucial forests and indigenous communities of the region**. Enforced displacement is rife, with indigenous communities - already exposed to discrimination, poverty and weak legal protections of their territorial rights - bearing the brunt. Indigenous Rarámuri and Ódami communities face merciless violence from cartels: **extortion, death threats, disappearances, sexual violence, kidnappings, murders, burning of their homes, forced recruitment, and dispossession of their lands for narcotics production**. The response of both state and Federal authorities is insufficient, with the **militarised approach to public security exacerbating the violence**. In October 2022, a diplomatic delegation with representatives of multiple embassies visited Chihuahua to meet with human rights defenders. **The UK did not participate**.

- [Please encourage the Mexican government](#) to pursue the constitutional reforms necessary to effectively enshrine indigenous rights in national law, and to engage with civil society organisations such as CONTEC (who visited the UK this October) on what is needed in this regard.
- [Please urge the UK Embassy](#) to visit Chihuahua and take action to support human rights defenders there.