



HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

34th Session, 2nd March 2017

Item 3 – Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders (A/HRC/34/52 and Add.1, Add.2, Add.3, Add.4)

ORAL STATEMENT FROM PEACE BRIGADES INTERNATIONAL AND ALIANZA SIERRA MADRE

Speaker: Aida Isela González Díaz

Mr President,

Peace Brigades International y Alianza Sierra Madre welcome the presentation of the report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, in the context of a worsening situation for human rights defenders in Latin America. It is alarming that within the first months of 2017, 25 defenders have been killed in the region, the majority of whom were land and environmental rights defenders and who had previously suffered aggressions against them.

We are troubled by the killings of Isidro Baldenegro on 15th January of this year during the visit of the Special Rapporteur to Mexico, and of Juan Ontiveros who was killed on 1st February, barely 24 hours after returning to his community, having denounced the grave situation of violence and insecurity in which they are living in the Sierra Tarahumara in the north of Mexico. Both indigenous rights defenders defended its natural resources with the accompaniment of Alianza Sierra Madre, the organisation which I represent. They carried out this work in a context of the *de facto* occupation of their lands by organised criminal groups, which also resulted in the displacement of dozens of families in the Sierra Tarahumara.

In order to address the situation of risk in which environmental rights defenders carry out their work, we consider it especially important that the States adopt the recommendation to **develop holistic measures to protect human rights defenders, in line with the seven principles set out in his report to the Council in March 2016**. In Mexico, human rights organisations have drawn attention to the absence of a comprehensive protection approach in relation to the State-planned measures of the National Mechanism for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders and Journalists. They specifically highlight the lack of initiative to end impunity. In Chihuahua, one of the most dangerous states in Mexico for human rights defenders, we welcome the Contingency Plan as an initiative to address the main challenges faced and we ask that the Special Rapporteur follow and give special attention to the implementation process.

Thank you Mr President.