

Twelfth Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

Thank you very much Mr. President.

My name is Silvia Perez Yescas; I am a Zapoteca Indigenous woman, representing CIARENA, an organization of Indigenous Women.

I would like to share with you the difficult situation that we, indigenous human rights defenders, are facing in the state of Oaxaca in Mexico.

All over Mexico, there has been an alarming increase of violence against Human Rights Defenders. In Oaxaca, over 20 women have been murdered recently. The State of Oaxaca holds the first place in the country when it comes to violence against Human Rights Defenders. This violence has been minimized and has become invisible because of the country's context of impunity, violence and the criminalization of social protest.

Most of us, indigenous women human rights defenders, are living under persecution, death threats and forced displacement from our communities.

We, the defenders, are suffering under these situations because we are denouncing and raising awareness on the violence that indigenous women and girls are facing, such as forced prostitution, the plunder of our land and territories, our sacred places, our lakes, our sea. We are facing violence from the extractive industries, for example, the construction of windmill generators in the region of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec Oaxaca.

Nowadays, the indigenous defenders are facing persecution, harassment and death threats. Like some of my sisters, I was personally attacked on January 16, 2013. There are so many more of us in this situation, like Reyna Luis, Betina Cruz, Rogelia Gonzalez Ruiz, Evit Estrada, and many others in the State of Oaxaca in Mexico.

I would like to call upon the help and support from the international community here at the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues so that you can pay special attention to the situation of indigenous human rights defenders in the State of Oaxaca and in the Republic of Mexico.

Therefore, we make the following recommendations:

1. Investigate the murders and attacks against the indigenous women defenders and guarantee that the relevant authorities punish the perpetrators according to the laws.
2. Guarantee access to justice and to effective measures of protection for the families of the defenders who have been victims of forced disappearances; femicide; organized crime violence; attacks from the army, paramilitary groups, para-police groups, corporations, and individuals.
3. Implement a complete analysis of the weaknesses in the implementation of the precautionary measures granted by relevant national organizations and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR). This analysis should include a gender perspective as well as an intercultural perspective, with the participation of indigenous women human rights defenders.
4. Implement prevention and protection protocols, which include gender and intercultural emphasis, in each and every single States of the Republic of Mexico.

The international community, the Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues must stand firmly to guarantee the comprehensive security of the indigenous women human rights defenders.

Today, through this statement, I am here to testify on the violence against us. Our indigenous women defenders have been killed have disappeared and been raped... How much longer should we wait until the international community reacts?

Thank you very much.