

THE CRISIS WAS ALREADY HERE

Women Mesoamerican defenders facing the COVID19 situation

Collective authorship¹

INDEX

The crisis was already here.....	2
The health emergency is being used as an excuse to shore up authoritarianism.....	4
<i>They kill us</i>	
<i>They arrest us and place us at risk</i>	
<i>They attack us for protecting common property</i>	
<i>They smear and harass us</i>	
The impacts of the health crisis on our lives and our struggles.....	9
<i>Restrictions and absence of conditions for defending human rights</i>	
<i>Deterioration of our conditions of life</i>	
<i>Impacts on our emotional and psycho-social health</i>	
<i>New limitations for defenders facing criminalization processes</i>	
APPENDIX - SITUATION BY COUNTRY	
<i>El Salvador.....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Honduras.....</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Mexico.....</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>Nicaragua.....</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Guatemala.....</i>	<i>20</i>



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The crisis was already here

When the Coronavirus got to Mesoamerica, we women defenders were already dealing with the consequences of a structural crisis provoked by a colonial politico-economic model, keeping our region submerged in violence, extractive looting and a deep inequality that impacts our lives, bodies and territories.

The health emergency has underscored the collapse of public services produced by neoliberal policies leading to pillage, job insecurity and privatization that occurred during decades: unsanitary hospitals filled to overflowing, health personnel --mainly women-- without basic rights, victims of attacks. Material aid for alleviating the lack of basic resources is insufficient, and in countries like El Salvador and Honduras is delivered on a discretionary basis.

The Honduran government, internationally known for its ties to drug trafficking, is taking advantage of increases in the health budget to perpetrate new acts of corruption. The so-called "solidarity bags" of food are denied to government critics.¹

Home confinement has intensified poverty. Millions of people who live one day at a time from informal work have lost their livelihoods or have had to keep on working at the risk of contagion. Many others continue to migrate in order to escape poverty and violence, but have been arrested or abandoned along the way. Entire communities are now experiencing famine.

In El Salvador, people who have nothing to eat hang white banners outside their houses. In Honduras, people from different communities are going outside to demand food from the authorities: Some carry signs saying "We are hungry."²

Staying at home **heightens the vulnerability of families who live in overcrowded conditions without access to water** and has **increased women's domestic and care workload.** Home confinement exacerbates domestic violence against women and children and obscures the fact that **more women are dying from femicidal violence than from COVID-19.**

1 National Network of Women Human Rights Defenders in Honduras

2 National Network of Women Human Rights Defenders in El Salvador and National Network of Women Human Rights Defenders in Honduras

- **In El Salvador**, the number of complaints filed for violence against women has risen by 70%.
- During the pandemic **in Honduras**, 83 femicides and more than 18,000 cases of domestic violence have been documented.
- **In Mexico** as of April 13, 100 women have died from coronavirus, while 367 have been murdered in the same time period.³

At the height of the health emergency, **private companies are committing serious abuses against their workers** with government approval: mass layoffs, the obligation to work in high-risk conditions, refusal to comply with health measures, and the circulation of faulty information, among others.

On May 12 in Tijuana, Mexico, two women –mother and daughter- who worked in the Smith Medical maquila plant, died of COVID-19 after being denied disability leave. “I don’t want to know anything else about God,” said the husband and father of the two women.⁴

3 Sources: México. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/es/post-opinion/2020/04/13/mexico-abandona-las-mujeres-violentadas-en-esta-contingencia/> El Salvador. <https://arpas.org.sv/2020/04/alarmando-aumento-de-feminicidios-en-el-salvador-durante-cuarentena-denuncian-organizaciones/>. Honduras. <https://www.latribuna.hn/2020/05/07/durante-pandemia-han-asesinado-a-83-mujeres/>

4 <https://editportal.jornadabc.mx/tijuana/12-05-2020/madre-e-hija-murieron-por-covid-familia-culpa-maquila-donde-laboraban>

The health emergency is being used as an excuse to shore up authoritarianism

Before the Coronavirus, militarization, repression of social protest and violence against women were constant in the region. Between 2017 and 2018 alone, we of IM-Defensoras documented 3,305 attacks against women defenders in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Nicaragua. **The pandemic became the perfect pretext for continuing to weaken democracy and make authoritarianism stronger.**

- Several months after the president of **El Salvador** barged into Congress with a group of military agents, the government imposed a “**State of quarantine,**” in which 2,424 people have been arrested.⁵
- **In Honduras** the **suspension of constitutional rights and guarantees** has been decreed, including the freedom of expression and the right to inviolability of the home.
- **In Guatemala** the “**total shutdown**” of the country has been imposed, leaving thousands of communities isolated and confined.
- **In Mexico**, even though the federal government has not openly advocated repression, many local authorities are applying punitive, social control measures.
- **In Nicaragua** **political persecution and the repression of social protest** go unabated, while the official denial of the pandemic poses a threat to all who contradict the official view.

Disinformation and fear prompt a society to accept or support authoritarian measures, and this heightens the risk for women human rights defenders and weakens social support for our work. With presidents promoted as “saviors of the people,” the governments, which are the main aggressors against women defenders,⁶ can now rely on greater impunity and social tolerance for silencing those of us who denounce human rights violations.

⁵ According to official data. <https://covid19.gob.sv/>

⁶ According to the IM-Defensoras Registry of Attacks.

From March 8 until now, **we of IM-Defensoras have issued 44 Alerts**, 25 of which are directly related to attacks that have occurred in the context of the implementation of COVID-19 measures.

They kill us

Home confinement has not kept women human rights defenders from being killed during this period, a fact that exemplifies the tolerance and impunity with which assailants act.



Karla Camarena, also known as Valentina Ferrey, was a widely recognized defender of the rights of LGBTI communities. On Sunday, March 29, she was murdered in San Felipe, Guanajuato.⁷



Paulina Gómez Palacios Escudero, a campesina from San Luis Potosí, Mexico, was found murdered on March 22. The territorial defender worked with the Wixárika Regional Council, and had struggled to impede mining activity in their territory since 2009.⁸



The Mexican journalist **María Elena Ferral** died in the hospital from wounds suffered on March 30 in a firearms attack in Papantla, Veracruz. Due to her work of denouncing acts of corruption and crimes committed in the political sphere, she had been threatened and attacked in social networks.⁹



Iris Argentina Álvarez, a member of the Cerro Escondito Campesina Cooperative, was killed in Honduras on April 2, during a violent, illegal eviction by private security agents of the La Grecia Sugar Mill. Police agents were present in the area when the assailants opened fire on several families, yet did nothing to stop the violence.¹⁰

7 <http://im-defensoras.org/2020/04/whrdalert-trans-community-rights-defender-karla-camarena-killed-in-guanajuato-mexico/>
 8 <https://www.rompeviento.tv/justicia-para-paulina-gomez-palacios-defensora-de-territorio-wirikuta/>
 9 <http://im-defensoras.org/2020/04/whrdalert-mexico-journalist-maria-elena-ferral-hernandez-killed-in-papantla-veracruz/>
 10 <https://im-defensoras.org/2020/04/whrdalert-honduras-defender-killed-by-security-agents-in-violent-illegal-eviction/>

They arrest us and place us at risk

In all the countries in the region, we women defenders and our communities have experienced police abuses under the pretext of confinement measures implementation. In many cases, police forces have used COVID-19 as a pretext for continuing to criminalize and restrict our work. In El Salvador and Nicaragua high-risk conditions imposed on imprisoned women defenders are particularly serious.

*In Nicaragua, on March 24, **María Esperanza Sánchez**, held prisoner in the women's prison for participating in demonstrations in 2018, had bronchitis, an asthma attack, and a high blood pressure crisis while she was in custody. She was denied health care, medicine and protective measures against the Coronavirus. Four other women are now being held for political motives, including a transgender prisoner. All four suffer respiratory problems associated with the risk of COVID-19 contagion.¹¹*

*In El Salvador, on April 13, **Ana Cristina Barahona**, of the Network of Mesoamerican Women in Resistance, was arrested by the National Civil Police when she was on her way to obtain medicine for her hospitalized 3-year-old son, even though she had a justification for being on the streets. She was taken to a detention center with unsanitary conditions in which several other women were being held. They did not give her a mask, disinfectant gel, or access to medicine for the diabetes that she suffers. She was held for more than 30 days.¹²*

*In Honduras, on March 24, **Evelyn Johana Castillo**, of the Ojojona Women's Network, was arrested at 3:30 pm when she had gone out to look for food. She was held until 6:00 am the next day. At the time of her arrest, an agent said: "We already know she's got a high-and-mighty attitude, we'd better take her straight to the cell..."¹³*

*In México, on April 24, police agents in Mérida, Yucatán, arrived at the Clinic directed by defender **Sandra Peniche Quintal** and threatened to arrest three people who were working there. The defender had been granted protective measures based on the National Mechanism for the Protection of Defenders and Journalists after an attempt on her life in 2018.¹⁴*

11 <https://im-defensoras.org/2020/03/whrdalart-nicaragua-health-care-and-access-to-medicine-denied-to-activist-and-political-prisoner-esperanza-sanchez/>

12 <http://im-defensoras.org/etiqueta/derechos-de-las-mujeres/>, <http://im-defensoras.org/2020/05/alerta-defensoras-sv-actualizacion-las-defensoras-cristina-barahona-y-sara-benitez-siguen-retenidas-en-centro-de-contencion-de-covid-19/>

13 <https://im-defensoras.org/2020/03/whrdalart-honduras-police-arbitrarily-arrest-defender-evelyn-castillo-on-pretext-of-covid-19-emergency/>

14 <http://im-defensoras.org/2020/04/whrdalart-mexico-yucatan-authorities-and-police-harass-feminist-defender-dr-sandra-peniche-quintal/>

They attack us for protecting common property

Extractive activity has not ceased in spite of its adverse effects on the health and security of the people. Taking advantage of the limitations of communities determined to engage in resistance, governments and business interests are expanding extractive projects and touting them as the only alternative to the economic emergency.

*The Canaan, Hatillo and Támara communities were repressed by the National Police of Honduras with teargas bombs and tanks for having carried out a peaceful takeover and demanding food and water in order to be able to cope with the quarantine. Many of the demonstrators were women.¹⁵ As **COPINH** and **OFRANEH** have stated, the government has also harassed the communities, tolerated violence against them, and posed obstacles to the health measures that indigenous organizations and communities are successfully using to protect themselves from COVID-19.*

*In **El Estor, Guatemala**, the Guatemalan Nickel Company continues to work despite the curfew decreed by the government. Municipal authorities and the Q'eqchi people are implementing the official measures for the prevention and containment of the virus, but the company's refusal to suspend operations heightens the risk, all of which has caused unrest among women, their families, and mine workers.¹⁶*

They smear and harass us

Governments have taken advantage of a greater social tolerance for its social control measures in times of the pandemic in order to defame women human rights defenders. It is a matter of great concern that in countries like El Salvador, smear campaigns and network violence against defenders --often using private information or sexist attacks-- have increased drastically.

*In **El Salvador**, on March 29, **President Nayib Bukele** said on Twitter that "It sometimes seems that some human rights organizations only work to make more humans die..." Two days later, the Secretary of Labor, **Rolando Castro**, used slander and misogynous insults to attack defender **Bertha María Deleón**. These attacks were previously incited by **Walter Araujo**, a person close to the president, who slandered the defender by questioning her "sexual morality" and publicizing both her professional history and her private life.¹⁷*

15 Report to UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Human Rights Defenders. IM-Defensoras

16 <https://medium.com/@PrensaComunitar/ni-la-covid-19-ni-la-corte-de-constitucionalidad-detienen-las-operaciones-mineras-9f476ba0d8f7>

17 <http://im-defensoras.org/2020/04/whrdalert-el-salvador-officials-of-bukele-government-foster-smear-campaigns-and-attacks-in-social-networks/>

In México, on April 7 around 10:00 pm, a group of local police from Oaxaca, following orders of the municipal president, arrived at the home of defender **Miriam Pascual** to intimidate her. Given the absence of information about COVID-19 from state and local governmental institutions, she has been a source of information and counseling for the community.¹⁸

In Guatemala, on April 15, the radio program of the **La Cuerda Feminist Association**, transmitted on the Zoom platform, was intervened with pornographic images and insults during an interview with a worker of the Public Health System of Guatemala.

In Nicaragua, on April 15, the April Mothers' Association denounced police harassment, besiegement, attacks against their homes, and violation of their freedom of movement in commemoration of the murder of their family members in repressive acts in 2018.

The impacts of the health crisis on our lives and our struggles

Now, when the work that we defenders do is crucial in denouncing abuses of power and human rights violations committed in the context of the health emergency, our conditions of life and work have notably deteriorated as a result of State measures being implemented. **For this reason, we of IM-Defensoras are making a diagnosis of the impacts of COVID-on our lives and our work**, which we will soon be presenting. Some of our main documented findings to date are noted as follows.

Restrictions and absence of conditions for defending human rights:

- The majority of our organizations have had to **limit, restrict or suspend programmed activities** and we are deeply concerned about **not being able to demonstrate, get organized and continue to denounce** human rights violations.
- **The impact of virtual work.** Although we have made a tremendous effort to work virtually, not only do we lack adequate conditions and resources (limited access to Internet and other forms of communication, small spaces without the necessary conditions, and an overload of household work), but the truth is that virtual work is no substitute for accompaniment and the close community work that we do in our communities.
- **Prohibitions on mobilizing and demonstrating** are leaving spaces open to the perpetrators of human rights violations. This is the case with extractive corporations and organized crime groups, which, with government complicity or inaction, continue to pillage and do violence to the communities.
- The social organizations and movements that can contribute alternatives to the crisis that are respectful of human rights have been **excluded from processes of definition and implementation of responses to the pandemic.**
- As in other crisis situations, **the rights of women are being relegated to second place**, which further limits the work of women's and feminist organizations in the region.

Deterioration of our conditions of life:

- **Restrictions on the mobility necessary for acquiring basic products and medicines;** such restrictions include arbitrary arrests, which especially affect women heads of families.
- **Loss of the means of economic family support.** Many women defenders do not have fixed salaries or job benefits, and we may have been fired or prohibited from conducting our economic activities.
- **Lack of access to food and economic support.** In El Salvador and Honduras, for example, we have documented refusals to deliver this type of aid to women defenders as a reprisal for their work in denouncing human rights violations.
- **Lack of access to health services and restricted access to medicines,** which especially affects women defenders and dependent family members who have pre-existing conditions that require ongoing medication and health services.
- **Shortages and limited access to water** and especially water fit for human consumption.
- **An overload of domestic and care work.** Home confinement, lack of economic resources, the care and maintenance of dependent persons, and the closure of schools has increased our load of care work.
- Even though they may represent a small percentage of the whole, some comrades report a greater **risk of experiencing macho violence in their homes.**

Impacts on our emotional and psycho-social health:

- **Fear, anxiety and even cases of depression** due to uncertainty and the impact of the current situation on ourselves, our families, communities and organizational processes.
- **A higher degree of stress and emotional exhaustion due to work conditions:** virtual work; longer work-days; work in reduced, shared spaces; lack of communications infrastructure; and a heavier load of domestic work.
- **Anguish and tension produced by confinement itself,** and all that this implies in our lives and political action: when we can't meet together and hug each other, we feel isolated.
- **Despair and unease** over the current situation.

New limitations for defenders facing criminalization processes:

- Many of the **hearings** related to the trials of **criminalized women defenders** have been suspended, which means that they will continue to drag on.
- Even when the hearings are not suspended, **companion organizations cannot participate** in them, and thus cannot do their support work.
- Women defenders unable to go to the courtrooms to sign in periodically due to restrictions on mobility risk being accused of not fulfilling this obligation.

Despite this highly adverse situation, we defenders, our organizations and communities, were the ones who rapidly organized ourselves to deal with the crisis and support the most vulnerable collectives. We have engaged in the distribution of food and highly necessary items, the creation of health centers and alternatives, the provision of aid to victims of domestic violence, the accompaniment of defenders at risk, and the denunciation of human rights violations, among other responses. In these months we have witnessed the wisdom and force of original peoples in safeguarding the health of their communities, the creation of feminist, mutual care networks, and the creativity of everyone who continues to protest despite confinement.

APPENDIX- SITUATION BY COUNTRY

EL SALVADOR¹

“The situation is unsustainable; in one month alone we have had 15 attacks against women defenders. As we see about who to support, people are already dying of hunger.”

- People in many areas of the country are experiencing famine, and people who have nothing to eat are hanging out white banners in a plea for help. The economic aid from the government is insufficient, and the parties and local governments hand it out discretionally. In this situation, violence in the home has grown worse.
- In a situation where the country’s president is bolstering authoritarianism, militarization, and the violation of a secular State, the decreed “State of quarantine” involves confinement, restrictions on mobility and meetings, and detention centers in which numerous human rights violations have been documented.
- According to official data, 2,424² persons have been arrested for “violating the quarantine”, including many women, women human rights defenders, trans persons, and heads of families who are being held prisoner in unclean conditions of overcrowding, separated from their families, without receiving information about the tests administered to them. Defenders are fearful and are not keeping up the same level of activities for fear of being sent to a containment center.
- **In this period there has been a 70% rise in complaints of violence against women.³**
- Dissident voices against government measures are smeared in digital media, above all from the Presidency (They defend criminals,” “They act outside the law,” are some of the criticisms). Attack campaigns have not only been orchestrated against critical voices, but also against the persons and organizations that they support. In this period the attacks in social networks against women defenders –with a clear sexist component—have increased at an alarming rate.
- The Chief Executive met with oligarchic power figures to determine the reconstruction of the economy instead of with the heads of other branches of government. Civilian social organizations have been totally excluded from the dialogue over the handling of the pandemic and the reconstruction of the country in crisis.
- **The Salvadorean Network of Women Defenders has documented a considerable increase in attacks compared to prior years (15 in a single month).** In addition to attacks related to the current state of affairs, attacks against the defenders of sexual and reproductive rights continue.

1 Main source: Salvadorean Network of Women Human Rights Defenders.

2 According to official data. <https://covid19.gob.sv/>

3 <https://arpas.org.sv/2020/04/alarmante-aumento-de-feminicidios-en-el-salvador-durante-cuarentena-denuncian-organizaciones/>.

EL SALVADOR¹

ALERTS

1. [15/05/2020] [Las defensoras Cristina Barahona y Sara Benítez, siguen retenidas en centro de contención de COVID-19](#)
2. [04/05/2020] [La página web de la Agrupación Ciudadana por la Despenalización del Aborto El Salvador, tuvo más de 13,000 intentos de sabotaje para dar de baja al sitio.](#)
3. [17/04/2020] [Fueron hackeadas las cuentas de Twitter, Facebook y correo electrónico de la periodista Yaneth Estrada.](#)
4. [16/04/2020] [Agentes de la Policía Nacional Civil, amenazan a periodista de Radio Victoria – Arpas, haciendo uso de fuerza excesivo](#)
5. [15/04/2020] [Defensora es detenida y llevada a centro de contención, por salir a comprar artículos de primera necesidad para sus hijas menores](#)
6. [14/04/2020] [En el marco de Covid-19, policía envía a centro de detención a defensora por salir por medicamentos para su hijo hospitalizado](#)
7. [03/04/2020] [Movimiento ecofeminista de El Salvador es atacado por su posicionamiento ante la crisis generada por COVID-19](#)
8. [02/04/2020] [Ataques, calumnias y hostigamiento en redes sociales contra la defensora Camila Portillo](#)
9. [01/04/2020] [Officials of Bukele government foster smear campaigns and attacks in social networks](#)
10. [17/05/2020] [Defender harassed and insulted in social networks for denouncing unhealthy and overcrowded conditions of persons quarantined due to Covid-19](#)

HONDURAS¹

“Between never-ending repression and the pandemic converted into a tool of repression, hunger is attacking many comrade defenders.”

- In 2019, the collapse and corruption of the health system sparked strong protests that were heavily repressed. In the current situation, the population’s health conditions continue to deteriorate, and new acts of corruption are perpetrated, using the rise in health investment as a pretext. Moreover, the priority of attending to COVID has left other health needs unattended. One example of this is that women are afraid to go to public health centers to give birth. Midwives, who were formerly prohibited, are now reorganizing to be able to attend to these women.
- The situation of poverty and famine spreads throughout the country. The distribution of government “solidarity bags” filled with basic products is discretionary, and government critics are denied this support. Two especially vulnerable groups are the maquila workers who are no longer employed and can’t return to their communities because these are closed, and the migrant population in transit.
- **During the pandemic, 83 femicides and more than 18,000 cases of domestic violence have been documented.²**
- The country’s President, accused of ties to drug trafficking, continues the authoritarian drift initiated at the time of the 2009 State Coup. In Honduras the government has decreed the suspension of constitutional rights and guarantees, including freedom of expression, the right to free circulation, and the right to the inviolability of the home. This decree includes exceptions for some sectors, but not for human rights defenders.
- The Army has assumed the management of the pandemic, and the opposition has denounced the President’s intention to annul the elections.
- The eventual enactment of the new Penal Code, despite the postponement ordered by Congress and the fact that it is considered a human rights violation by national and international human rights organizations, would involve even more acts of violence and abuses of power in the country.³

1 Main source, Network of Women Defenders in Honduras. For more information see the Defender Network Newsletter: <http://im-defensoras.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Boletin-Honduras.pdf>

2 <https://www.latribuna.hn/2020/05/07/durante-pandemia-han-asesinado-a-83-mujeres/>

3 <https://twitter.com/RedDefensoras/status/1258792151401533440>

HONDURAS¹

- In the same vein, the call to decongest the jails has given rise to a process of selective justice: While persons accused of corruption are released, territorial defenders such as the **Guapinol** defenders of water stay in jail.⁴ This means that the persons accused of the assassination of **Berta Cáceres** could go free.⁵
- Attacks against territorial defenders continue. Of special concern are the attacks, acts of violence and harassment against the Lenca and Garifuna communities, which have played a historic role in the defense of territory against extractive projects and, furthermore, are implementing important community health measures against COVID-19.

ALERTS

1. [26/05/2020] [Con mensajes misóginos y fascistas atacan cibernéticamente a compañeras de la plataforma Somos Muchas](#)
2. [21/05/2020] [Por no entregar la llave de portón de bioseguridad asesinan al compañero de OFRANEH, Edwin Fernández](#)
3. [24/04/2020] [En plena crisis sanitaria, habitantes de varias zonas del país son víctimas de marginamiento gubernamental y represión](#)
4. [09/04/2020] [Autores materiales e intelectuales del asesinato de Berta Cáceres podrían ser liberados](#)
5. [03/04/2020] [Defender killed by security agents in violent, illegal eviction](#)
6. [30/03/2020] [Familias migrantes de origen haitiano y africano echadas en la calle en la ciudad de Choluteca](#)
7. [30/03/2020] [Police arbitrarily arrest defender Evelyn Castillo on pretext of Covid-19 emergency](#)
8. [17/03/2020] [Activist Aleyda Huete arbitrarily arrested and criminalized during Covid-19 curfew](#)

4 <https://cejil.org/es/guapinol-urge-revocar-prision-preventiva-defensores-del-agua-frente-riesgos-covid-19>

5 <https://copinh.org/2020/04/la-justicia-para-berta-esta-en-riesgo/>

MEXICO¹

"In the context of the COVID quarantine, attacks against women journalists have increased, as have smear campaigns against them in social networks."

- The management of the pandemic has extreme limitations due to the previously existing pillage, precariousness, and collapse of the health system. Furthermore, many verbal and physical attacks against health personnel have been documented, most of them against women.
- Homicidal violence still goes on without diminishing a bit.² As of April 13, 100 women had died from the coronavirus, while 367 had been killed during the same period; furthermore, there has been a rise in phone calls seeking help in cases of domestic violence.³
- Although the federal government has not openly promoted the use of repressive measures in handling COVID-19, this is not true in all states. In the states of Jalisco, Puebla, Oaxaca and Yucatán, abuses of power and other attacks have been documented against rights defenders, journalists and the general public (patrols equipped with long arms as in Yucatan, arbitrary arrests, threats from authorities, and legislation to restrict human rights introduced in the case of Puebla).⁴
- The questioning of the news media and the doubts expressed by the President of Mexico regarding the serious nature of the violence against women have been a cause for concern in human rights organizations.
- Recent denunciations focused on the use of activated robots on internet by the State news agency NOTIMEX to disparage certain journalists including Lydia Cacho and Carmen Aristegui.
- The State has tolerated serious health violations by private companies. Deaths and outbreaks of COVID-19 in maquila plants and mines and the refusal of businesses to shut down or implement sanitary measures are some examples of this. Furthermore, the State continues to bet on an extractive economy.
- In this period steps were taken to achieve legal reforms allowing the presence of the Army in public security work, with no effective process of justice for crimes committed in prior administrations and with no clear mechanisms of control against violations and abuses of power.

1 Source: National Network of Women Human Rights Defenders in Mexico

2 <https://www.animalpolitico.com/2020/04/dia-mas-violento-mexico-114-homicidios-cuarentena/>

3 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/es/post-opinion/2020/04/13/mexico-abandona-las-mujeres-violentadas-en-esta-contingencia/>

4 Sources: <https://elpais.com/sociedad/2020-04-21/los-gobernadores-mexicanos-endurecen-el-aislamiento-y-se-enfrentan-a-lopez-obrador.html>

<https://www.lajornadadeoriente.com.mx/puebla/red-nacional-de-periodistas-noticias-falsas/>

<https://desinformemonos.org/no-reprimir-al-pueblo-por-covid-19-demandan-organizaciones-en-oaxaca/>

MEXICO¹

- **The number of attacks committed against women defenders thus far in 2020, are as follows: 31 in January, 59 in February, 64 in March, and 34 in April. The states registering the highest number of attacks are Oaxaca, Puebla, Veracruz and Mexico City. In March alone, three women defenders and journalists were murdered.**

ALERTS

1. [24/05/2020] [Atentan contra la periodista María Fernanda de Luna Ferral en el Estado de Veracruz](#)
2. [24/05/2020] [Amenaza de nuevo ataque armado al Pueblo Ikoots de San Mateo del Mar, Oaxaca](#)
3. [04/05/2020] [Violent attack against Ikoots People in San Mateo del Mar, Oaxaca](#)
4. [26/04/2020] [Yucatan authorities and police harass feminist defender Dr. Sandra Peniche Quintal](#)
5. [12/04/2020] [Hostigamiento hacia la comunicadora y defensora de Derechos Humanos Miriam Pascual](#)
6. [09/04/2020] [Retiran protección a defensora y víctimas de violencia con medidas cautelares en Yucatán](#)
7. [01/04/2020] [Trans community rights defender Karla Camarena killed in Guanajuato, Mexico](#)
8. [31/03/2020] [Journalist María Elena Ferral Hernández killed in Papantla, Veracruz](#)
9. [26/03/2020] [Asesinan a Paulina Gómez Palacio Escudero, guardiania del territorio sagrado de Wirikuta](#)

NICARAGUA¹

“The fear produced by secretiveness and the lack of information about COVID adds to the fear of political persecution that has existed since 2018”

- The political and human rights crisis initiated in April 2018 is still in effect with the persistence of a climate of violence and harassment against women defenders and their families, even as political assassinations go unpunished.
- When the worldwide health alert was first sounded, the government responded by calling for massive demonstrations to show that “people are not afraid of COVID.” Since then the government has not decreed any measures of confinement, and continues to engage in a discourse of denial with regards to the virus. In response to international pressure and the fact that some individuals and even government entities have begun to implement unilateral measures, the government is beginning to implement some prevention and health measures, but confusion and contradictory messages prevail.
- The right to information is restricted. Medical personnel have been fired for denouncing the absence of conditions for confronting the pandemic, and authorities threaten the news media that disseminate information contrary to the official posture.
- Imprisoned defenders are at high risk due to the terrible conditions in the prisons (overpopulation and overcrowding), other illnesses that they suffer, and the precarious medical attention.² At this time, four women are imprisoned for political motives, one of them transgender.³ In this period more than two thousand prisoners were released, mainly men, not including anyone imprisoned for political motives. Women victims of violence whose assailants were released and the defenders and organizations that support these women are now in risk situations.
- Women defenders and especially liberated political prisoners and their lawyers now face the risk of being criminalized if they demand their rights during the pandemic and their lack of access to public health services due to the stigmatization and persecution to which they are subjected. Police and para-police harassment against them still goes on.
- In this period, prisoners charged with sexual violence and femicide were released.
- **In April alone 136 attacks against women defenders were documented.**

¹ Source: Nicaraguan Women Human Rights Defenders Initiative

² <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/es/statement-report/nicaraguan-government-continues-put-lives-imprisoned-women-human-rights-defenders>

³ <http://im-defensoras.org/2020/04/alerta-urgente-nicaragua-la-policia-detiene-de-manera-arbitraria-a-la-joven-activista-transgenero-celia-cruz-de-la-isla-de-ometepe/>

NICARAGUA

ALERTS

1. [01/05/2020] [Released political prisoner Karla Escobar subjected to violent arrest and taken to “El Chipote” penitentiary](#)
2. [22/04/2020] [La policía detiene de manera arbitraria a la joven activista transgénero Celia Cruz, de la isla de Ometepe](#)
3. [21/04/2020] [As of April 15, countrywide police harassment of mothers and families of persons killed in 2018 protests](#)
4. [20/04/2020] [Al menos 70 mujeres activistas y defensoras de derechos humanos han sido agredidas por policías y paramilitares desde el 15 de abril, en el marco del 2º aniversario del inicio de la crisis en Nicaragua](#)
5. [18/04/2020] [Intensifican represión y hostigamiento contra activistas, periodistas y defensoras en el marco del segundo aniversario de la crisis política y de derechos humanos en Nicaragua](#)
6. [14/04/2020] [Acuerdo entre patronal, sindicatos oficiales y gobierno por COVID-19 vulnera derechos laborales y agrava precariedad económica de trabajadoras de maquilas](#)
7. [10/04/2020] [Policías allanan ilegalmente la casa de la presa política excarcelada Ruth Matute, detienen a su esposo e incautan materiales de trabajo](#)
8. [06/04/2020] [Government aligned forces attack women journalists through smear campaigns, hate speech and threats of sexual violence](#)
9. [05/04/2020] [Policía asedia y amenaza a las activistas Guisella Ortega, Dolly Mora y Flor Ramírez](#)
10. [27/03/2020] [Police lay siege to home of activist Flor Ramírez and block her exit](#)
11. [24/03/2020] [Health care and access to medicine denied to activist and political prisoner Esperanza Sánchez](#)
12. [23/03/2020] [Social network users post threats, hate speech, and incitements to sexual violence against Kenia Gutiérrez](#)
13. [20/03/2020] [Student leader Dolly Mora threatened, harassed and expelled from university](#)
14. [13/03/2020] [Police arbitrarily detain, beat and threaten defender Irma Centeno](#)

GUATEMALA¹

“All the financing as of now has come from the donations of businessmen and collaborators (mainly from extractive industries and agents with links to drug trafficking) who are mortgaging the political capital of the current government and will pass on devastating middle and long term costs to the large part of the population.”

- In a State that has been fortifying impunity from abuses of power, corruption and crimes against humanity, the imposition of the “State of Calamity” (which includes a 5 am to 5 pm curfew, the total shutdown of the country from Friday to Monday, prohibitions on meetings and restrictions on interstate mobility) there have been constant threats against the people by the President of Guatemala, who says, “If you don’t behave yourselves I’ll establish a State of Siege,” and the confinement of entire communities through badly implemented health blockades and the blockage of the most minimum supplies from a multitude of communities at risk.
- The work of journalists has been constantly subjected to defamation, and they have been denied all access to public information. Press conferences have been prohibited, as has access to health care, at the same time that the habitual communications channels between the government and the mass media have been sharply cut off.
- Despite the approval of million dollar loans from the BCIE for attention to emergencies in the country, only 1% have been financed. Social auditing processes are stagnant and intentionally blocked, and Congress is not prioritizing the auditing of investments in health. In the entire country there are only three special centers for attention to COVID-19 and these are totally inundated with people seeking treatment despite the total lack of respirators, beds, and products for the protection and bio-security of the health personnel.
- There are no effective measures for guaranteeing coverage of basic services to the population: the shortage or absence of water affects 30% of the total population of the country, the right to food is being denied and politicized through conditioned party concessions, and the inability to control hikes in prices of the most basic products is evident. In the face of all this, the Army is charged with delivering highly necessary assistance to the people, thereby reinforcing its presence.

GUATEMALA

ALERTS

1. [23/05/2020] [Sujetos desconocidos allanan el domicilio, agreden físicamente y roban equipo de trabajo de la defensora Tania Palencia](#)
2. [30/04/2020] [Trabajadoras del Hospital Nacional Roosevelt denuncian no tener acceso a equipos médicos de protección ni a pruebas de COVID-19 pese a haber pacientes que han dado positivo](#)
3. [19/04/2020] [Ataque digital durante transmisión en Zoom de programa radial de la organización feminista La Cuerda](#)