



Guatemala Human Rights Commission / USA

Fact Sheet

Human Rights Defenders

THE PROBLEM: *In the face of the deteriorating rule of law and pervasive impunity for past and present crimes, human rights defenders are targets for violence. In the last eight years, assaults against human rights defenders have increased significantly. Indigenous leaders, community organizers, environmentalists, justice officials, journalists, union representatives, women's rights advocates, and LGBTQ activists have all suffered from these increased abuses while promoting and defending human rights in Guatemala. Many have been verbally threatened, physically assaulted, kidnapped, tortured, shot at, or killed.*

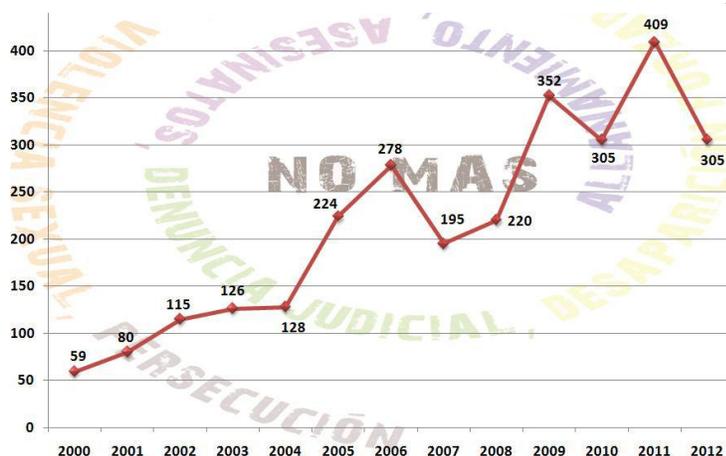
KEY FACTS

- ◆ Increase in attacks from 2000-2011: **681%**
- ◆ Highest number of attacks: **409 in 2011**
- ◆ Number of cases prosecuted: **2.2%**
- ◆ Number of prosecutors murdered in 2008: **6**
- ◆ Number of journalists killed since 2006: **7**
- ◆ Number of telephone threats 2000-2012: **288**
- ◆ Number of murders of HR defenders in 2012: **12**
- ◆ Number of written threats in 2010: **128**
- ◆ Most attacked defenders: **Indigenous people/Environmentalists (99 in 2011)**

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP:

Support the work of the Guatemalan Human Rights Commission:

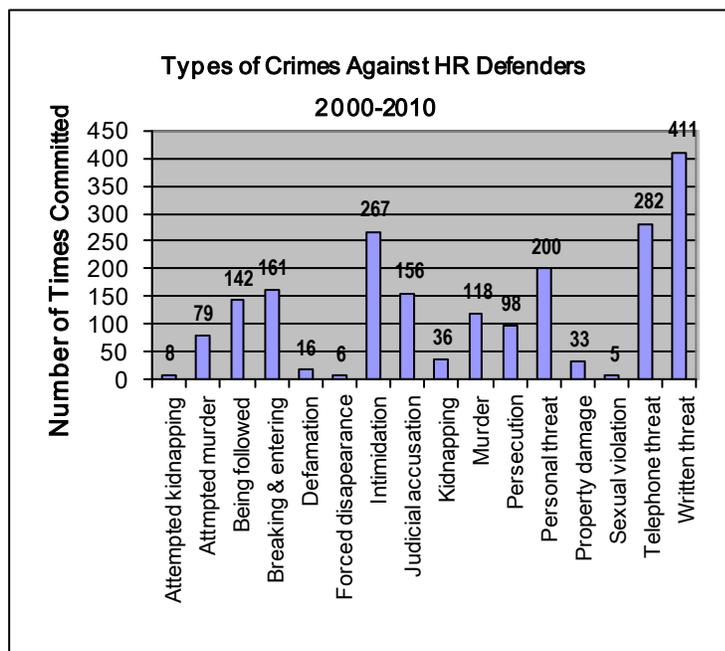
- ◆ Sign up on our website to receive **URGENT ACTION** alerts about attacks on Human Rights Defenders.
- ◆ Support this program with a tax-deductible donation.
- ◆ Host a presentation on this topic at your university, high school, church, or in your community.
- ◆ Volunteer with GHRC



Aggression against Human Rights Defenders in Guatemala

2000-2012

Source: UDEFEGUA



The Guatemala Human Rights Commission/USA is a non-profit, grassroots, solidarity organization dedicated to promoting human rights in Guatemala and supporting communities and activists who face threats and violence. GHRC documents and denounces abuses, educates the international community, and advocates for policies that foster peace and justice.

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ATTACKED! Human Rights Defenders: Targets of **Violence**

Shot: *Yuri Melini*

Yuri Melini, environmental activist, lawyer, and Director of Center of Legal Action in Environment and Social issues (CALAS) was shot outside his house in Guatemala City at 7:30 am on September 4, 2008 by masked gunmen; the bullets entered his stomach, knee, and leg.



In June 2008, CALAS won a legal process in the Constitutional Court of Guatemala to change and censure the mining law that violates Guatemalans' land, environmental, and health rights. The attack against Yuri Melini can be attributed to his role in CALAS and the work of the organization.

In 2011, he received written death threats explicitly related to his work, yet he continues the struggle for a healthy environment.

Assassinated: *Adolfo Ich*

Adolfo Ich Chamán, President of the Community of La Unión, was a respected Mayan Q'eqchi community leader and teacher. La Unión, located near El Estor, has a history of being exploited by Canadian nickel mining company HudBay Minerals Inc. Adolfo had often criticized the harmful environmental effects of the mine on his community.



On September 27, 2009, Adolfo heard gunshots fired from the mine's buildings. He went, unarmed, to investigate. When he approached, the mine's private security forces beat him, attacked him with a machete, and then shot him in the head at close range, killing him.

Shot: *Yolanda Oqueli*

Yolanda Oqueli, community leader and anti-mining activist, was shot repeatedly by two men on a motorcycle while driving to her home in San José del Golfo at approximately 6:30 pm on June 13, 2012; one bullet entered above her right kidney.



Yoli has been a vocal and passionate opponent of the installation of extractive mining operations in her community. The residents of San José del Golfo have held a peaceful roadblock to prevent tractors, excavators and other mining equipment from entering since March 2, 2012.

Days before the attempt on her life, Yoli and other pro-environment activists presented formal complaints to the Public Ministry regarding threats, intimidation, and criminalization they have suffered while defending their natural resources.