

# Meeting of Mesoamerican\* Women Human Rights Defenders

**Oaxaca, Mexico  
April 23-25, 2010**

## **Final Statement**

We, diverse women activists and human rights defenders from Mesoamerica, having met in Oaxaca, Mexico April 23-25, 2010, are committed to the defense and promotion of human rights and share an historical memory and grave concern regarding deepening patriarchy in our region. This manifests itself in growing poverty and inequality, violence, impunity, militarism, corruption, and the entrenchment of conservatism and fundamentalism. This reality affects our work and threatens the lives of diverse women activists and human rights defenders.

The authoritarianism that dominates States in our region is accompanied by a return of political repression, which we once believed had been successfully overcome. Rights we fought for in the past are now being eliminated. Examples of this include the June 2009 coup d'état in Honduras; the growing weakness and lack of legitimacy that characterize electoral processes in the region; and the criminalization—product of the complicity between our governments and religious fundamentalists—of women who exercise their right to reproductive choice.

Furthermore, whether in partnership with States or as a result of States' inability to govern effectively, powerful non-state actors such as organized crime, transnational corporations, religious institutions, and paramilitary groups, among others, have increased their ability to interfere and control our societies, resulting in increased violence and women's rights violations.

We are women and trans people committed to fighting for freedom and against all forms of oppression and injustice. Many of us define ourselves as feminists. We fight for the rights of indigenous peoples, lesbians, trans women, working women, young women, sex workers, and many others. We work for the eradication of all forms of violence against women; the freedom to choose employment; civil and political rights; economic, social and cultural rights; the right to lasting peace, truth, memory and justice; poverty eradication; for democracy and political participation; in defense of land rights; for the environment and environmental sustainability; for the decriminalization of abortion; and for the full enjoyment of sexual and reproductive rights.

Our commitment to defending human rights is a fundamental pillar of democracy, social justice, gender equality and the eradication of all forms of violence in the region. Nevertheless, the threats, attacks and defamation campaigns, executions and feminicides, sexual attacks and violence perpetrated against our families, as well as the diverse forms of harassment to which we are subjected as a result of our work as women human rights defenders and activists, undermines democracy-building, weakens social movements and decreases active political participation.

In light of all of the above, it is fundamental that all women activists and human rights defenders in Mesoamerica enjoy the conditions necessary to do our work without fear for our personal safety, and in a climate which respects our right to defend and promote human rights.

Therefore, we demand:

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\*\* Mesoamerica is a term commonly used to refer to Mexico and Central America.

### From society

- Respect and commitment to our work as diverse women activists and human rights defenders, which contributes to the general public as a whole and to the construction of a more just and sustainable world.
- Active commitment to the eradication of all forms of discrimination, oppression and violence perpetrated against all women human rights defenders and activists, including by our families or communities, in our work places, in schools and in other spaces and institutions both public and private.
- Commitment and consistency by all social movements and civil society organizations, and especially by men involved in them, to not tolerate violence against women within these movements, and to fight such violence whenever it occurs. Similarly, we ask them to recognize the leadership and contributions made by women activists and human rights defenders, and to stand in solidarity with women who denounce such violence, to support their efforts and to work to prevent violence against women.

### From governments in Mesoamerica

- Stop the violence perpetrated against all women activists and human rights defenders, and encourage a culture based on human rights, non-discrimination and gender equality through education.
- Fulfill your obligation to protect all people, especially women and trans individuals, who work to defend and promote human rights.
- Establish programs to promote and protect access to justice for all women human rights defenders against the violence that women experience at the hands of non-state and private actors, including in our communities and families.
- Eliminate policies that promote the militarization and privatization of public security in the region.
- Repeal all laws establishing States of Emergency in the region in which human rights guarantees are suspended.
- Guarantee respect for secular States, preventing the control and intervention of religious institutions on public policy matters.

### From the inter-American system for the promotion and protection of human rights (including the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and the system's various rapporteurs)

- Publicly reprimand States that commit violence against women activists and human rights defenders.
- Follow-up, in a timely manner, on the general situation of women human rights defenders and activists in the region.
- Strengthen coordination between the Human Rights Defenders Unit and the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women, in order to respond more efficiently to violations of the rights of women human rights defenders.
- Be open to the convening of a thematic hearing on the General Situation of Women Human Rights Defenders in the Americas.
- Adequately appraise the implementation of precautionary measures granted in cases involving women human rights defenders and ensure that gender is considered as a factor in the definition and implementation of said measures, including their rapid adoption.
- Guarantee the prompt drafting and publication of the revised 2006 report on the situation of violence against human rights defenders in the Americas and assure that the implementation of its recommendations is properly monitored.

- Ensure that agendas for *in situ* visits carried out by the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women and the Human Rights Defenders Unit include the examination of violence perpetrated against a diverse array of women human rights defenders.

To the United Nations

- Publicly reprimand States that practice violence against a diverse array of women activists and human rights defenders.
- Ensure that the upcoming report by the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders emphasizes the challenging reality that women activists and human rights defenders face in Mesoamerica, while also ensuring that the report is written from a gendered perspective.
- Guarantee that the situations of a diverse array of women human rights defenders are integrated into all Universal Periodic Review processes, which are carried out by the member states of the UN Human Rights Commission, and that these processes result in binding consequences and effects.
- Support greater collaboration between the Rapporteur on Violence Against Women and the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders by, for example, producing joint recommendations or reports, or by carrying out joint missions or producing joint press releases and communiqués.
- Ensure that all the treaty bodies on torture; civil and political rights; economic, social and cultural rights; the eradication of discrimination against women; and children's rights, among others, include a gender and women's rights perspective and, in particular, that they take into account the challenging reality experienced by a diverse array of women activists and human rights defenders in the region.
- Use mass media to disseminate widely all recommendations related to the rights of women human rights defenders issued by the UN's various committees and entities to the governments of all countries in the region.

For our part, we, diverse, Mesoamerican women activists and human rights defenders, commit to strengthening the coordination amongst ourselves, which will allow us to continue acting collectively to respond in a timely and effective manner to violence and to accompany the cases of threats and attacks faced by our colleagues in the region.