

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL  
50<sup>th</sup> Session, 17<sup>th</sup> of June 2022

Item 3: Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association

### ORAL STATEMENT OF PEACE BRIGADES INTERNATIONAL

**Speaker: Kim-Mai Vu**

*Transcript (Full version of the statement below):*

PBI welcomes the report of the Special Rapporteur on the Protection of human rights in the context of peaceful protests during crisis situations.

In Kenya, we deplore the killing of four protesters by the police in Masimba on 2 June. It is essential that the Kenyan government protect the right to peaceful assembly in the context of the upcoming elections.

In Honduras, we are concerned that the reform of the Penal Code, which further intensifies the criminalisation of peaceful protest, remain in force. Bureaucratic obstacles to access to justice for criminalised defenders, such as the Guapinol defenders, persist.

In Colombia, while investigations into the abuses perpetrated by state and para-state actors in the context of the National Strike lack adequate progress, the prosecutions of young protesters are increasing. Recent attacks against the Nydia Erika Bautista Foundation are alarming.

In Guatemala, the ratification of the so-called NGO Law puts more than 1000 NGOs at risk. We have observed a sharp increase in violent evictions of peasant communities in Verapaz regions and Izabal, along with escalating hate speech and attacks by state and non-state actors against defenders.

In Mexico, 82 indigenous communities, members of the People's Front in defense of Land and Water, have been criminalised and evicted by the National Guard from their sit-in in Apatlaco after peacefully protesting against the Morelos Integral Project.

These countries need to end hostile rhetoric and actions that stigmatise peaceful protests, including by portraying them as destabilizing and as a threat.

**PEACE BRIGADES INTERNATIONAL**

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## ***Full version of the statement***

Thank you Mr. President

PBI welcomes the report of the Special Rapporteur on the Protection of human rights in the context of peaceful protests during crisis situations.

In Kenya, we deplore the killing of four protesters by the police in Masimba on 2 June. Moreover, during the Covid-19 crisis, Kenya has restricted peaceful assembly, exemplified by the numerous arrests of protestors, often under the guise of contravening Covid-19 rules, including the arrest of 63 people in one day. The conviction of 6 protestors from Mombasa is extremely worrying. We join the UN High Commissioner in hoping that Kenyans can freely exercise their rights during the upcoming elections, including the right to peaceful assembly.

In Honduras, we are concerned that the reform of the Penal Code of October 2021, which further intensifies the criminalisation of peaceful protest, remain in force. Despite some recent advances through the Amnesty Law, bureaucratic obstacles to access to justice persist for criminalised defenders, such as the Guapinol defenders. Furthermore, freedom of expression and association of the LGBTI+ community in Honduras continues to be limited by the multiple attacks that put their physical safety at risk.

In Colombia, while the investigations into the abuses perpetrated by state and para-state actors in the context of the National Strike (accused of human rights violations during the protests, including homicides, sexual violence, eye injuries and forced disappearances) lack adequate progress, the prosecutions of young protesters from the “front lines” are increasing. Likewise, threats and aggressions against those who represent them persist, such as the recent very serious case of a break-in and theft of information against the organisation of victims of forced disappearances - Nydia Erika Bautista Foundation (FNEB) and the threats in recent months against members of the Committee in Solidarity with Political Prisoners (CSPP).

In Guatemala, the ratification of the Decree 04-2020, the so-called NGO Law puts more than 1000 NGOs at risk, as it limits the scope of their possible activities and as introduces an administrative burden which is nearly impossible to comply with. Moreover, we have observed a sharp increase in violent evictions of peasant communities in Verapaz regions and Izabal, together with more frequent hate speech and attacks by state and non-state actors against defenders, including from the Association for the Defense of Private Property (ACDEPRO).

In Mexico, water scarcity and overexploitation of wells and rivers for large-scale industries are putting pressure on rural areas. 82 indigenous communities from Morelos, Puebla and Tlaxcala, members of the People's Front in defence of Land and Water, have been criminalised and evicted by the National Guard from their sit-in in Apatlaco after peacefully protesting against the Morelos Integral Project and the overexploitation of the Cuautla river.

These countries need to end hostile rhetoric and actions that stigmatise peaceful protests, including by portraying them as destabilizing and as a threat.