

FOR THE PROTECTION OF SOCIAL LEADERS IN COLOMBIA

New York. March 1, 2020

The 2019-2020 holders of the National Award for the Defense of Human Rights in Colombia express our support for the rigorous and technically supported reports, written by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Colombia (OHCHR) and the Special Rapporteur, concerning the situation of human rights defenders.

These reports reflect the reality of Colombia's human rights crisis; especially, the daily aggressions experienced by human rights defenders working for peace and the defense of individual and collective rights in our territories.

We closely follow the work the Office has conducted in the country since 1997, and we value its many contributions to the promotion of human rights. Its recommendations and technical assistance to the State have always been aimed at creating better conditions for the protection of human rights.

The 2019 report conducted by Alberto Brunori addresses the serious situation occurring in Colombia: such as the killing of hundreds of social leaders, massacres, forced displacement, widespread threats, attacks and other types of assaults on civilians and social leaders. The report indicates how the impact is disproportionate to Indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants and women.

In the face of this serious crisis and in the face of the state's shortcomings in protecting human rights defenders and their communities, it is vitally important to ensure the presence of the Human Rights Office in Colombia—with a comprehensive mandate for observation, and with guarantees to make recommendations that it considers relevant under the International Human Rights System. We are concerned about the Colombian government's disproportionate and persistent reaction to reports by international protection agencies.

The National Government not only prevented the Special Rapporteur Michel Forst's second visit and that of other rapporteurs, but has also devoted more effort to criticizing the report than in implementing their recommendations; the same situation is occurring with the report by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. We demand that the Colombian State provide comprehensive protection to social leaders, and with guarantees, so that international protection agencies can carry out their work for the benefit of life, peace, and democracy in Colombia.

Clemencia Carabali Rodallega:

Category: Defender of the Year 2019-2020

Member of the Association of Afro-Descendant Women of the North of Cauca (Asociación de Mujeres Afrodescendientes del Norte del Cauca-ASOM)

Cimitarra River Valley Farmer Association (Asociación Campesina del Valle del Río Cimitarra –ACVC)

Category: Collective Process

Ricardo Esquivia Ballesta

Category: "A lifetime"

Association Sowing Seeds of Peace, "Sowing Peace"

Marco Romero Silva

Category: Non-Governmental Organization

Director for Consulting for Human Rights and Forced Displacement (Consultoría para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento Forzado—COHDES)