

News release

For immediate release

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### **International human rights defenders experts to launch new reports on Latin America**

United Nations and Latin American human rights experts will come together next week to discuss and launch new reports on the conditions of human rights defenders working in the Americas.

The launch will feature the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights' (IACHR) Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders, together with the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the same issue.

It is being organised by the International Service for Human Rights (ISHR) as a side-event to the 19<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations Human Rights Council, and will take place on Tuesday 6 March at Palais des Nations in Geneva.

The IACHR's Special Rapporteur, Mr José de Jesús Orozco, will present the regional body's latest report on human rights defenders in the Americas. The report highlights an increase in assassinations, extrajudicial executions and enforced disappearances of human rights defenders in the region since 2006.

It shows this problem to be particularly true in those countries where democratic rule is interrupted, where there is internal armed conflict, or where clashes occur between defenders and organised crime groups or powerful economic actors.

In response, the IACHR has ordered many American states to take specific action to protect defenders. These protection measures have been issued primarily to Colombia (27 percent), Guatemala (24 percent), and Honduras (9 percent).

IACHR Executive Secretary, Mr Santiago Cantón will also speak at the side-event, and will present the work of the IACHR in furthering the concerns of human rights defenders.

At the same event, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders, Ms Margaret Sekaggya will present ISHR's report on the situation of defenders in Colombia.

The findings are the result of research into whether recommendations made by the Special Rapporteur have been effectively implemented in Colombia, following her visit to the country in 2009.

The report portrays a Colombian Government showing a more constructive attitude in its dealings with human rights defenders. However, it also identifies a failure to mainstream this attitude among local authorities, a worrying increase in attacks on human rights defenders in the past year, and the limited success of state authorities in investigating and addressing such attacks.

Executive Director of the Colombian Commission of Jurists, Mr Gustavo Gallón will go on to provide a civil society view on the ISHR report and the situation of defenders in Colombia.

The event will take place from 12h00 – 14h00 in room XXIII of Palais des Nations.

**ENDS**