

A YEAR OF ACHIEVEMENTS AND EXPERIENCES ANNUAL REPORT 2019

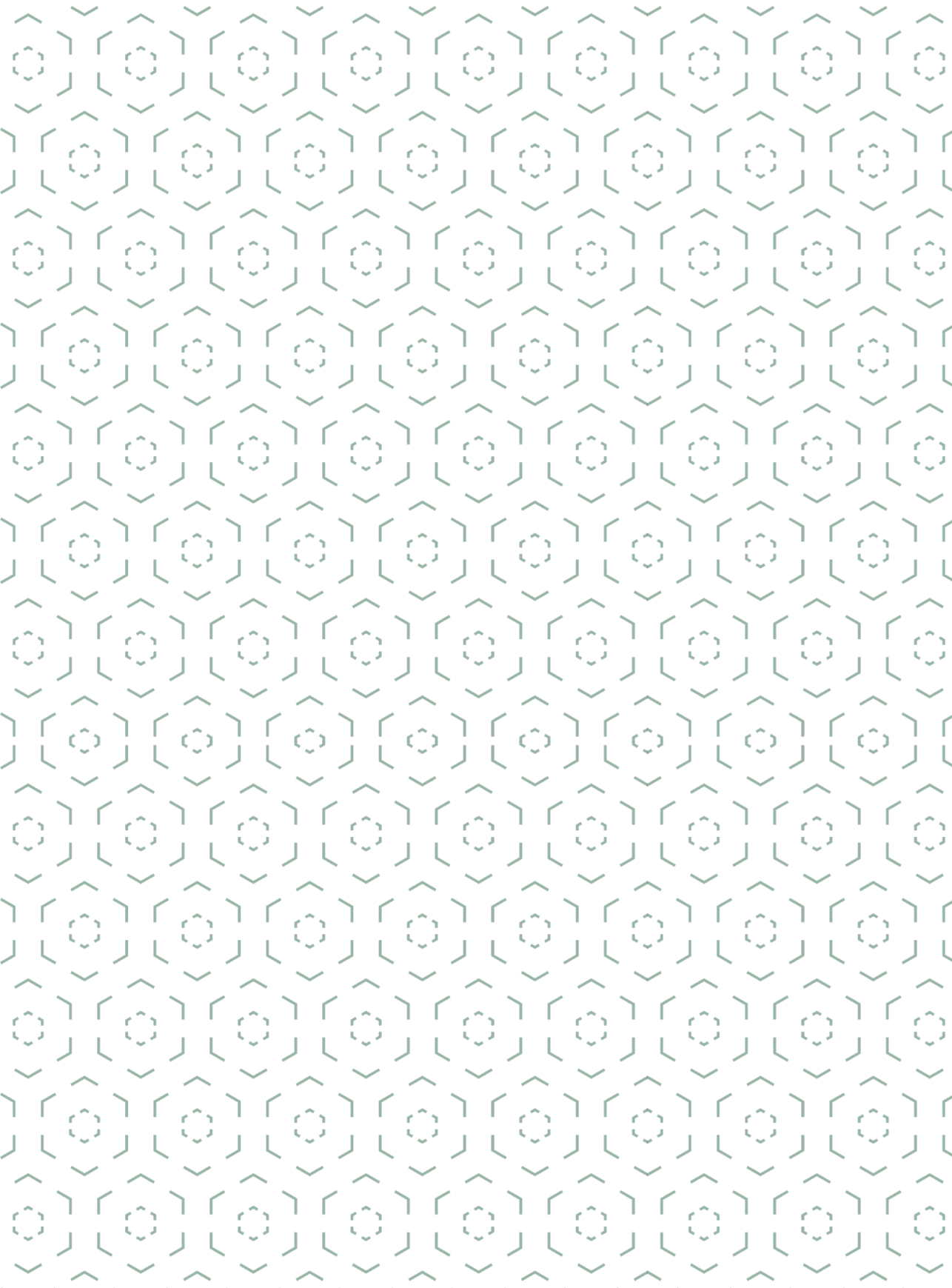
Mexican Commission for the Defense
and Promotion of Human Rights



A YEAR OF ACHIEVEMENTS AND EXPERIENCES

ANNUAL REPORT 2019





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Photo: José Antonio
Guevara Bermúdez

DIRECTOR'S REMARKS

In Mexico, the year 2019 will be remembered as a year of contrasts. At the Mexican Commission for the Defense and Promotion of Human Rights (CMDPDH), we welcomed the new year with great expectations of the opportunities that the promises of a new leftist government could mean for our work. The President's talk of an ambitious transitional justice program to address the human rights crisis and the needs of victims was heard loud and clear. We were also enthusiastic about his promise to end the bloodstained strategy behind the militarization of public security.

However, hope never gave way to naivety. By mid-2018 we knew that expectations were high and that, if the future government was going to push a robust human rights agenda, it was our duty to be prepared. Therefore, we strove to strengthen ties with our community, victims and allies in the struggle for justice, truth and reparations for human rights violations.

Similarly, we knew that changing circumstances would require us to adapt to new situations. Therefore, we made visible efforts to improve our recruitment process and make new recruits who would bring a diversity of knowledge, background and life experiences to the CMDPDH. In addition to significant changes to staff, we were able to improve our capabilities to research, analyze data, generate evidence-based information, and thus enrich our legal, psychosocial, and communication strategies as well as our national and international advocacy.

Furthermore, in 2019 we renewed the membership of our Board of Directors. This renewal has supported the incorporation of a plurality of knowledge and perspectives to the organization, which will allow us to meet emerging challenges in the defense of human rights in Mexico. We have made institutional strength a central value of the CMDPDH, which has driven significant leadership processes such as the aforementioned renewal, and which is continuously evidenced by attention to staff welfare and collaborative relationships with partner organizations both within the country and abroad.

In the end, the great changes we expected from the new government did not materialize. Nonetheless, we developed the institutional capacities to deal with an extremely complex human rights scenario. Even in this unexpected context, we took relevant steps in the defense and promotion of human rights in Mexico. Working together with victims, we succeeded in bringing a number of abusers to justice for atrocious crimes committed at different periods throughout Mexico's recent history. We exposed, both nationally and internationally, the systematic nature of serious human rights violations and the structural causes of this situation.

I am very proud to present this Annual Report which reflects the outstanding work of the CMDPDH's extraordinary and professional team.

Moreover, this report recognizes the broader community which includes the victims with whom we collaborate, the collectives and organizations with which we partner, other human rights defenders and allies who have supported our efforts in Mexico and around the world.

Thank you for a great and memorable 2019.

José Antonio Guevara Bermúdez,
Executive Director



CONTEXT

IN MEXICO IN 2019

The year 2019 could very well be remembered as the year of disenchantment (yet another) for parts of the human rights community in Mexico; in particular, for the Mexican Commission for the Defense and Promotion of Human Rights. The period from the end of 2018 to the beginning of 2019 was characterized by a very fluid political context, dominated by high expectations after a significant electoral alternation. A new party came to power, and with it, a deep change was anticipated of Mexico's political, social and economic panorama. In December 2018, a government assumed office that, in the lead up to the elections, had offered a narrative of transformation and justice for victims of human rights violations.



**The year 2019
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disenchantment**





1) the 180° turn to militarization of the federal police and public security services; 2) the decision to deal with cases one-by-one; and 3) an open defiance to the institutional basis of protection for human rights and democratic governance.



In the period following the election and prior to their inauguration, the elected leaders showed openness and receptivity to human rights issues, demonstrating an almost militant commitment. Among the campaign promises of the presidential candidate were important issues that the CMDPDH and other allied organizations had put on the public agenda, such as tools for transitional justice and extraordinary justice mechanisms.

Unexpectedly, the government moved away from the initial rhetoric that promised justice, truth, and reparations to all victims of human rights violations. Once in office, public officials went silent about the possibility of designing alternative policies or implementing concrete actions that could help overcome impunity - the structural cause of systematic human rights violations. The responses of the current government have been minimal; they attend only a few individual cases which are highly politicized in their selection, an

approach which negates the recognition of the human rights situation as a large-scale crisis. Structural solutions to these serious injustices are still pending. The most pressing challenges that emerged during 2019 were the consequences of this unexpected shift in the political human rights agenda of the current administration; a shift that went against the campaign's promise to deploy a structural strategy against impunity for human rights violations.

The most worrying and surprising changes correspond to three ongoing trends: 1) the 180° turn to militarization of the federal police and public security services; 2) the decision to deal with cases one by one;

and 3) an open defiance to the institutional basis of protection for human rights and democratic governance.

The first warning came in late November 2018, when the president-elect announced his plan to create a National Guard under military command and to involve the military in tasks that, in democratic societies, typically correspond to civilian police forces. Later, in February 2019, the newly elected government rejected the possibility of modifying its strategy even after civil society organizations vigorously denounced militarization as a structural cause of human rights violations. It was particularly disturbing that, in order to avoid a constitutional challenge to the establishment of a National Guard and the participation of the Armed Forces in public security tasks, the president and his legislative majority drafted a constitutional reform that would grant police and investigative prerogatives to the Armed Forces. This measure managed to elude a previous Supreme Court ruling that, on November 15, 2018, had determined the unconstitutionality of a bill (Internal Security Law) intended to grant the military the same powers that the new reform is providing today. Both are in violation of international treaties and the jurisprudence of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR) as well as other treaty bodies (e.g., the Human Rights Committee) and recommendations made in the Special Procedures of the United Nations Human Rights Council.

The constitutional reform to create the National Guard clarifies, in a single public policy decision, the position of the current administration with respect to human rights. The government had the opportunity to choose policies that correctly protect human rights and which address the causes of human rights violations (past and future) or, as previous administrations have done, to selectively address some of the human rights abuses committed by past administrations. Evidently the government opted for the second option; in fact, the government has maintained its position in support of the expanded role of the military in public security tasks, despite never having purged the Armed Forces of elements linked

to serious human rights violations since 1968. Moreover, the President himself has pointed out that past human rights abuses committed by the military were the result of orders given by civilian presidents; he has said that such atrocities will not happen again under his leadership, as he would never order the military to attack the population. And yet, in our work to protect the human rights of asylum seekers from heavy-handed immigration policies, we have documented that military agents, and even members of the newly created National Guard, have committed serious human rights violations.

The second cause for concern has been the government's focus on individual cases, chosen on a case-by-case basis. This politicized approach was evident in both the form and content of the public apologies offered throughout 2019 to victims of human rights violations. Public apologies can certainly be the first step in the process of reconciliation and recognition of past atrocities. Such events are an important tool in providing steps towards possible justice for victims. However, they are mere gestures when measured against the state's obligations to provide truth, justice, reparations and compensation to victims — particularly when these actions stand alone without any reference to a broader policy or program. Moreover, recent apologies from the Mexican government have only emerged in the case of human rights violations committed by previous administrations. For this reason, there are serious doubts about the government's commitment to truth-seeking processes, reparations for victims, or sanctions for perpetrators of human rights violations committed either during the current administration or by high-ranking military officials, past and present. Unfortunately, it appears that the government has simply taken advantage of the political benefits and media coverage gained from public apology events, instead of offering real compensation to victims. The strategy of public apology in 5 cases of human rights violations is, at best, an empty gesture in a context where the combined policies of

militarization, rampant impunity and corruption have left behind more than 150,000 disappeared persons in the last 40 years, of whom more than 60,000 are unaccounted for. Between 2006 and 2019, there have been more than 34,920 victims of torture nationally (with 13,560 federal and 21,360 state investigations), more than 285,000 violent murders, and more than 350,000 internally displaced persons. Meanwhile, the political effort to construct mechanisms of extraordinary justice; to create independent and impartial institutions to investigate crimes at the federal level; to refer the situation in Mexico to the International Criminal Court; and to hold state agents accountable for abuses has been abandoned. Impunity continues to be the prevailing norm, thereby encouraging public servants to continue committing human rights abuses.

The third cause of the malaise is the most technical and yet the most insidious by its structural nature. Instead of safeguarding the institutional design of independent checks and balances intended to promote the defense of human rights, the President and his political party have taken advantage of their legislative majority to unscrupulously appoint close personal supporters of the President and his political project to key positions. This practice has affected institutions that serve as autonomous, independent, and impartial bodies, such as the National Supreme Court of Justice (SCJN), The Office of the Attorney General of the Republic (FGR) and the National Human Rights Commission (CNDH). This situation leaves undesirable room for discretion where captured institutions can choose to open investigations that expose opponents, drop cases in order to protect the governing party, or target opposition governments in place of seriously investigating all atrocities committed by state agents of current and past administrations. Key institutions led by people close to the President are likely to confirm what he has publicly stated, that in his administration “there are no human rights violations.”

The President's appointment of the National Ombudsperson is the clearest example of this attack on the principle of autonomy that should govern such institutions. By July 2019, it had become clear that the ruling party intended to change the nature and scope of the CNDH. President López Obrador, members of his party in the current legislative body, and militant intellectuals sympathetic to his government publicly denounced the CNDH's record in interviews and public statements. The statements focused on the CNDH's alleged ineffectiveness and the limited nature of its actions, as well as its lack of independence from state authorities. To address this issue, the ruling party's legislative proposals called for a new process of appointment of the institution's President. The appointment would become a prerogative of the Federal Executive rather than a competitive process led by the Senate. The proposed reforms were not implemented. Regardless, presidential communications launched an open smear campaign against the CNDH, accusing the Commission of being complicit in past human rights violations. The President's cabinet followed suit: the Secretary of Social Welfare, echoing the President's statements, announced that it would not accept the CNDH's recommendations regarding the suspension of subrogated day-care centers, since this institution had been an accomplice of the previous "neoliberal regime."

The appointment of the President of the CNDH and other efforts to capture independent institutions have been consistent initiatives throughout the current President's term. Nevertheless, the nomination and appointment of Rosario Piedra Ibarra epitomizes the concerns of various experts and civil society that the CNDH—and the human rights agenda by extension—might be handed over to a member of the ruling party and friend of the President. These appointments pose a challenge to human rights advocacy, as the independence of the incumbent is a key structural safeguard when working with cases where the perpetrators are state agents. The politicking that led to this appointment demon-

strated the ruling party's commitment to defending its policies at the expense of constitutional provisions. With growing public pressure and media coverage, MORENA's legislative majority orchestrated a questionable voting process after which the decision was upheld, even when evidence emerged that the appointed candidate should not have been eligible to run for office.

The Federal Executive's capture of the CNDH was preceded by two other appointments that undermined institutional independence, mainly in bodies that, by design, are intended to function as limits to the power of elected representatives and defenders of the appropriate separation of powers. In the area of justice, the first of these maneuvers aimed at placing people close to the President in key positions within autonomous institutions was the appointment of the now Attorney General of the Republic, Alejandro Gertz Manero. Upon the presentation of the proposed shortlist to the Senate, different analysts warned of the proximity of the three profiles chosen by the President. Among the three profiles was that of Eva Verónica de Gyves Zárate, wife of the President's lawyer during his impeachment trial (*desafuero*) of 2006; the other profile corresponded to Bernardo Bátiz Vázquez, who served as Attorney General in Mexico City when the current President was Head of Government; and the third, Alejandro Gertz Manero, corresponds to the person he had informally appointed as Attorney General during the transition process. While the process of selecting the prosecutor was formally executed, Gertz Manero's appointment was factually contrary to the spirit of legislating the creation of an autonomous prosecutor's office.

In the same vein, the appointment of Margarita Ríos-Fajart as minister of the SCJN confirmed the *modus operandi* of these institutional capture processes. Despite complying with procedural formalities, the process was once again characterized by haste, little time to analyze the profiles in the Senate, and a direct link between the President and the person who was finally appointed. As with the appointment process in

the CNDH and the FGR, the SCJN took advantage of the ruling party's parliamentary majority to secure appointments to key positions, a process for which the fundamental requirement of the appointees should be independence from the Federal Executive. Prior to her appointment, Ríos-Fajart had been legal advisor to a company owned by the Head of the Office of the President. It had also been documented in 2018 that Ríos-Fajart's prior appointment as Director of the Tax Administration Service (SAT) had required a reform of SAT law in order to allow her to hold the position, since she did not have the experience required to hold the position under existing legislation. To this we must add the systematic attacks delivered by the President during his morning pressers, aimed specifically at independent press and human rights organizations, and all the more compounded by his government's ineffectiveness at guaranteeing the safety of work done by these very groups. An already weakened Mechanism to Protect Human Rights Defenders and Journalists has been compromised, while the FGR's investigation, prosecution, and punishment of those who commit crimes against such defenders and journalists remains incipient. Despite the affronts to democratic institutions, different sectors of civil society and academia have made calls to balance the pros and cons of this administration's human rights policy. Many analysts have called on civil society organizations to balance their assessments. They argue that, instead of giving negative and unilateral opinions, organizations should try to understand the chiaroscuro of this government's actions, despite the fact that institutional doors have been closed to dialogue, that after one year of government we are still in the dark about administrative plans or programs that outline the human rights policy, and that access to public information has been obstructed. Some point out that human rights constraints should be weighed against successes in other sectors such as economic policy, including an increase in the minimum wage, direct transfers to students and other vulnerable sectors, and efforts to use financial intelligence to combat corruption.

These points suggest positive steps. Nonetheless, one would have to wait for further evaluations in order to rule out the possibility that these policies are simply aimed at building a clientele system for the government and/or the political party in power. These social policies are also overshadowed by the systematic denial of the right to public information, to consultation of indigenous peoples, and violations to the right to a healthy environment which contribute to the climate crisis, as confirmed by the execution of the large development projects of this administration, such as the Tren Maya, the Dos Bocas refinery, and the Huexca thermoelectric plant.

Another positive sign in the area of human rights, according to some, is that the government has officially recognized the fact that millions of people have been forcibly displaced within Mexico.

Despite this, measures to address the needs of IDPs remain non-existent. In addition, the hardened criminalization of international migration is consistent with the current government's calculations in favor of US preferences. This stance combined with a restrictive migration policy demonstrates disregard for the human rights of migrant populations and asylum-seekers. We never imagined that in the administration of supposed transformation, administrative detentions of migrants would continue to be the standard and that migration control and verification would involve the Armed Forces as well as the militarized National Guard.

It is difficult to find a balance where there is none. Hardly could small positive indicators or the fragmented and inconsistent way in which policies are applied outweigh the risks involved in the three major trends that have marked human rights policy in Mexico during 2019. Undoubtedly, the call to focus on the *chiaroscuro* is poetic and appeals to the necessity for viewing national problems of injustice, impunity, inequality, discrimination, and human rights violations as they are: extraordinarily complex. However, the persistent and reinforced policy of militarization, the decision to prioritize symbolic justice case-by-case as opposed to effective

“Achieving a balance and bridging the dark with the light would imply an impossible transaction...”

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justice, and the destruction of institutional independence where it is most needed, will reduce the capacity of human rights defenders and organizations to challenge the actions and decisions of the State which are contrary to the legitimate claims of victims. Achieving a balance and bridging the dark with the light would imply an impossible transaction: favoring partial advances at the expense of institutions that constitute the condition of possibility for the effective application and fulfillment of human rights and, consequently, of democracy.

OUR STAFF



1. Administration

Eduardo Macías Sánchez
Ayari Hernández Cervantes
Lizbeth Montessoro Elías
Héctor Adrián Avendaño
Esperanza Garnica Garnica



2. Psychosocial support

Valeria Moscoso Urzúa
Norma García Flores



3. Communication

Luis María Barranco Soto
Marisol Tarriba
Karina Álvarez Medrano



4. Defense

Nancy López Pérez
Carla Loyo Martínez
Federico Rodríguez Paniagua
Víctor Del Pozo Rodríguez
Carolina Hernández Nieto
Anahí Ruelas Orozco



5. Institutional Development

Rodolfo Franco Franco
Riikka Andersson



6. Forced Internal Displacement

Brenda Pérez Vázquez

Ligia de Aquino Barbosa Magalhaes



7. Direction

José Antonio Guevara

Bermúdez



8. National and International Advocacy

Olga Guzmán Vergara

María Corina Muskus Toro

Jürgen Moritz



9. Investigation

Lucía Chávez Vargas

Natalia Báez Zamudio

Jorge Amaya Lule

Ana Juárez Armenta

Daniel Mata Lugo



10. Asylum

Mariana Peguero Moreno

Daniela Reyes Rodríguez

Ana Lilia Amezcua

Ana Luz Manzano



Specialized consultants:

Paulina Vega, consultant in international justice.

Laura Rubio, consultant in forced internal displacement.

Sergio Méndez Silva,

Consultant in amparo.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Alejandro Anaya

Alejandro Anaya is a professor-researcher who specializes in the intersection between human rights and international relations. His most recent research has focused on the dynamics of transnational activism, foreign policy, compliance with international standards, and international human rights regimes.

Ana Francisca Vega

Ana Francisca Vega is a well-known journalist and radio and television presenter. She is also an independent consultant for different national and international organizations on open government issues, open data, transparency and civic technology.

Carolina Coppel

Carolina Coppel is an independent film producer and human rights activist with extensive experience in the struggle for the rights of indigenous women. She also founded and led *Ambulante Más Allá*, a documentary film school for indigenous youth.

Jacobo Dayán

Jacobo Dayán is the President of the CMDPDH's Board of Directors, a specialist in international criminal law, transitional justice and human rights; professor, researcher, consultant and columnist both in Mexico and abroad.

José Ramón Cossío Díaz

José Ramón Cossío Díaz is a distinguished Mexican attorney, who served as minister in the National Supreme Court of Justice. He is a member of the National College (Colegio Nacional) and professor at the Colegio de México.

Luis González Placencia

Luis González Placencia is a researcher, professor and author. He is currently the rector of the Universidad Autónoma de Tlaxcala and was the president of Mexico City's Human Rights Commission.

Mariclaire Acosta

Mariclaire Acosta is a sociologist, the founding president of the CMDPDH and a member of the Board of Directors. She was president and secretary general of Amnesty International in Mexico and held several positions at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM).

Miguel Concha Malo

Miguel Concha Malo is the founder of the CMDPDH and a member of the Board of Directors. Co-founder of the Human Rights Center

“Fray Francisco de Vitoria, O.P.”. He is also a columnist, writer and columnist for various publications.

He has been recognized with the National Prize in Journalism and, in 2015, received the Emilio F. Mignone International Human Rights Award from the Ministry of Foreign and Religious Affairs of the Republic of Argentina.

Pilar Calveiro Garrido

Pilar Calveiro Garrido is from Argentina and a resident of Mexico since 1979, where she arrived in exile after being detained-disappeared. She is a research professor and member of the National System of Researchers and the Mexican Academy of Sciences.

Regina Tamés

Regina Tamés is an attorney with extensive experience in promoting the reproductive rights of women. She was previously the director of GIRE.

Shula Erenberg, Beatriz Solís y Ximena Andiñ.

Members of the Board of Directors whose membership concluded in 2019.



OUR STRATEGY



MISSION

The CMDPDH is a civil society organization which provides comprehensive assistance to victims of serious human rights violations and which contributes to the eradication of causes that produce them, through the design and execution of legal, psychosocial, research, advocacy and dissemination strategies for the construction of a more just, egalitarian society.

VISION

A Mexico where the human rights of all people are respected and guaranteed in a society which is fair, egalitarian, participatory and reconciled with its past.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1

Increase the capacity and scope of the actions taken by victims, movements and social organizations in the enforceability of human rights.

Specific objectives

1. Fortify victims, social movements, groups and organizations in Mexico in their autonomous capacity to demand human rights.
2. Strengthen partnerships and networks with victims, social movements, grassroots groups, academia and organizations at the national and international level.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2

Contribute to the reduction of structural causes that lead to serious human rights violations and crimes against humanity.

Specific objectives

1. Strengthen the adoption and effective implementation by Mexican institutions of normative and public policy frameworks rooted in human rights.
2. Increase visibility, at the national and international level, of the structural causes that produce serious violations of human rights and crimes against humanity.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3

Increase effective access to justice, truth and reparations for victims of human rights violations and crimes against humanity.

Specific objectives

1. Facilitate the recovery of victims' memories and the pursuit of truth for serious human rights violations and crimes against humanity.
2. Strengthen the interpretation, consistent with human rights, of the national normative framework and its compliance concerning access to justice, truth and comprehensive reparations for victims of serious human rights violations and crimes against humanity.
3. Strengthen the processes of comprehensive assistance for victims of serious human rights violations and crimes against humanity.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4

Improve the effectiveness of the Commission as an organization that works to defend and promote human rights.

Specific objectives

1. Build institutional capacity.
2. Build capacities of the staff.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1

Increase the capacity and scope of the actions taken by victims, movements and social organizations in the enforceability of human rights.



In order to strengthen the capacities of victims, groups and organizations, the CMDPDH provides comprehensive assistance to direct and indirect victims of human rights violations. Together with victims, we develop psycho-legal, communication and advocacy strategies. We offer individual and group psychosocial support sessions for victims, their families and collectives. In addition, we link victims with different networks and support spaces. Altogether, we work with direct and indirect victims of forced disappearance, torture, gender violence and femicide, forced internal displacement, arbitrary executions, and human rights defenders at risk. **In 2019, we dedicated nearly 2,000 hours of work to individual and family sessions, accompaniments, and workshops.**

We have also responded to the need for legal representation of extremely vulnerable asylum seekers, providing them with legal representation and assistance in the process of applying for asylum, psychosocial support, and information about the process for recognition of refugee status. In 2019, we legally represented 66 asylum seekers and provided guidance and assistance to more than 900 migrants.

ACHIEVEMENTS

In **February** we organized an international meeting of more than 100 human rights defenders and journalists from Mexico and Latin America, in which participants shared their experiences and strategies for dealing with the risks associated with their work. In the event, the UN Special Rapporteur for Forced Internal Displacement, the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Special Rapporteur of the IACHR for Freedom of Expression heard from victims and advocates from different states of the country.



In **April**, we coordinated the search for persons disappeared during the Dirty War in Atoyac de Álvarez, Guerrero, and in August we organized community workshops on historical memory during the commemoration of the 45th anniversary of the disappearance of Rosendo Radilla, social fighter who was disappeared by the army in 1974.

During the accompaniment, the relatives of the disappeared created a corrido about the search parties.



In June we organized the 3rd Conference on Psychosocial Work with Survivors of Torture and Family, and in December the 1st Session of Psychosocial Work with Torture Survivors and Family in Guadalajara, in collaboration with the Centro de Justicia para la Paz y el Desarrollo (Justice Center for Peace and Development). In total, we assisted 40 adults and 7 children and teenagers. The workshops that make up these sessions are aimed at the construction of joint capacity building, exchange and reflection, therapeutic work, as well as the organization and collective strengthening of the people in attendance.

Photographs on previous page:

*Left to right, Norma Garduño, Tita Radilla
Below: Enrique Guerrero*



MIGRANTS AND SEEKERS OF ASYLUM



We received second place for the “Best Ruling 2019” in the Sentencing Awards: Access to Justice for Migrants or Persons Subject to International Protection, organized by various agencies of the United Nations and the national human rights organization. The sentence was the result of a challenge to the detention of migrant children, through a writ of amparo filed by the CMDPDH and other allied organizations.



We were able to obtain the issuance of two precautionary measures by the CNDH. The first, in favor of two migrants due to their vulnerable situation and their status as asylum seekers. The second, in favor of all persons detained in the Chetumal, Quintana Roo migratory station, so that both the National Institute of Migration (INM) and the Mexican Commission for Refugee Assistance (COMAR) would guarantee the right to apply for and receive asylum, provide alternatives to detention for the applicants, and guarantee the right to health of the detained persons.

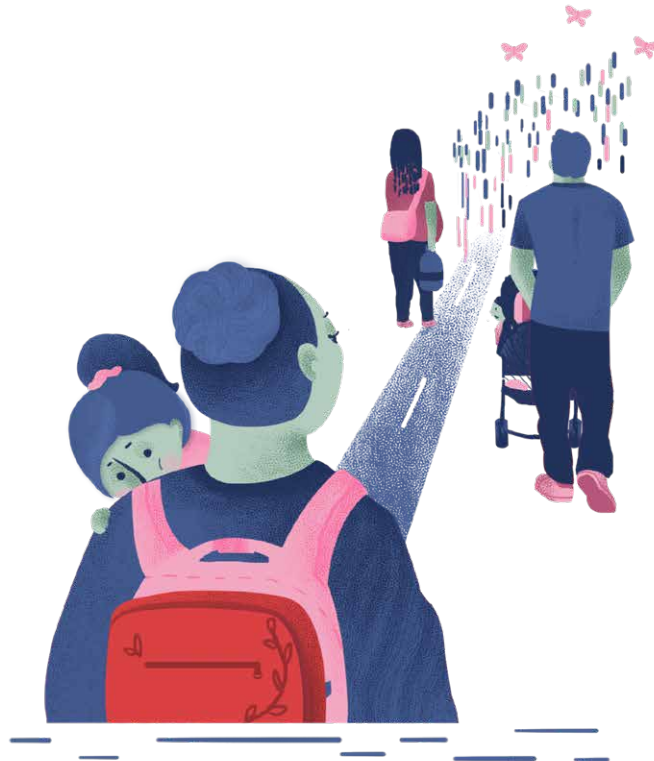


In addition, we obtained important rulings that determined the illegality and unconstitutionality of the retention of migrants’ passports at the National Institute of Migration; the rulings granted freedom, measures alternative to detention, regularization or complementary protection of migrants and asylum seekers detained in immigration stations, some for more than 18 months; they ordered the withdrawal of an immigration alert;

and they gave favorable resolutions regarding the cancellation and withdrawal of refugee status and complementary protection of persons.



We obtained an amparo ruling granting a blanket suspension in order to guarantee the access to Mexican territory for family members of a refugee. In this case, the Judicial Power granted a suspension measure for a future and imminent act of the immigration authority, an extraordinary and rare decision. The relatives of the person represented can travel to Mexico without fear of being detained or deported.








STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE **2**

Contribute to the reduction of structural causes that lead to serious human rights violations and crimes against humanity.

Widespread impunity in Mexico has been and continues to be one of the major structural causes of human rights violations and crimes against humanity in Mexico. At the CMDPDH we seek to combat these structural causes through different legal, psychosocial, communication and advocacy activities. Our support of cases before international bodies, national and international courts, and other human rights instruments is aimed at transforming this climate of impunity so that victims are guaranteed their rights to truth, justice and reparations, and that the atrocities committed against them and their families will not be repeated in the country. Similarly, we seek to ensure that the general public understands the terrible consequences of serious human rights violations in Mexico and of crimes against humanity, and that our evidence-based investigations can spearhead a national debate on how to pursue justice. We seek to collaborate constructively with society and government at all times, offering our expert advice in national consultations on policies that impact the rights of victims of human rights violations and all citizens.

INTERNATIONAL ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES

-  In 2019, we spoke with different European governments, the United Nations Special Procedures and the National Ombudsman to raise awareness of the risks involved in the reform establishing the National Guard and its possible negative impact on human rights in Mexico. Different national and international bodies expressed their concern about the National Guard and the human rights situation in Mexico.
-  We participated in a collective report submitted by civil society organizations to the Committee against Torture (CAT). As a result, the Committee made several recommendations on torture in Mexico. In addition, we accompanied Francia Henao, mother of Nino Colman —arbitrarily detained and tortured by members of the Mexico City Attorney General’s Office in 2009— in personally presenting her son’s case to the Committee.
-  We brought the attention of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances and the UN Special Rapporteur to the failure of the Mexican government to comply with the Radilla case ruling. We also facilitated the presence of Tita Radilla, daughter of Rosendo Radilla, at the 40th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council, where she and Mexican actor Luis Gerardo Méndez denounced impunity for human rights violations



in Mexico. These interventions were widely covered by national and foreign media.

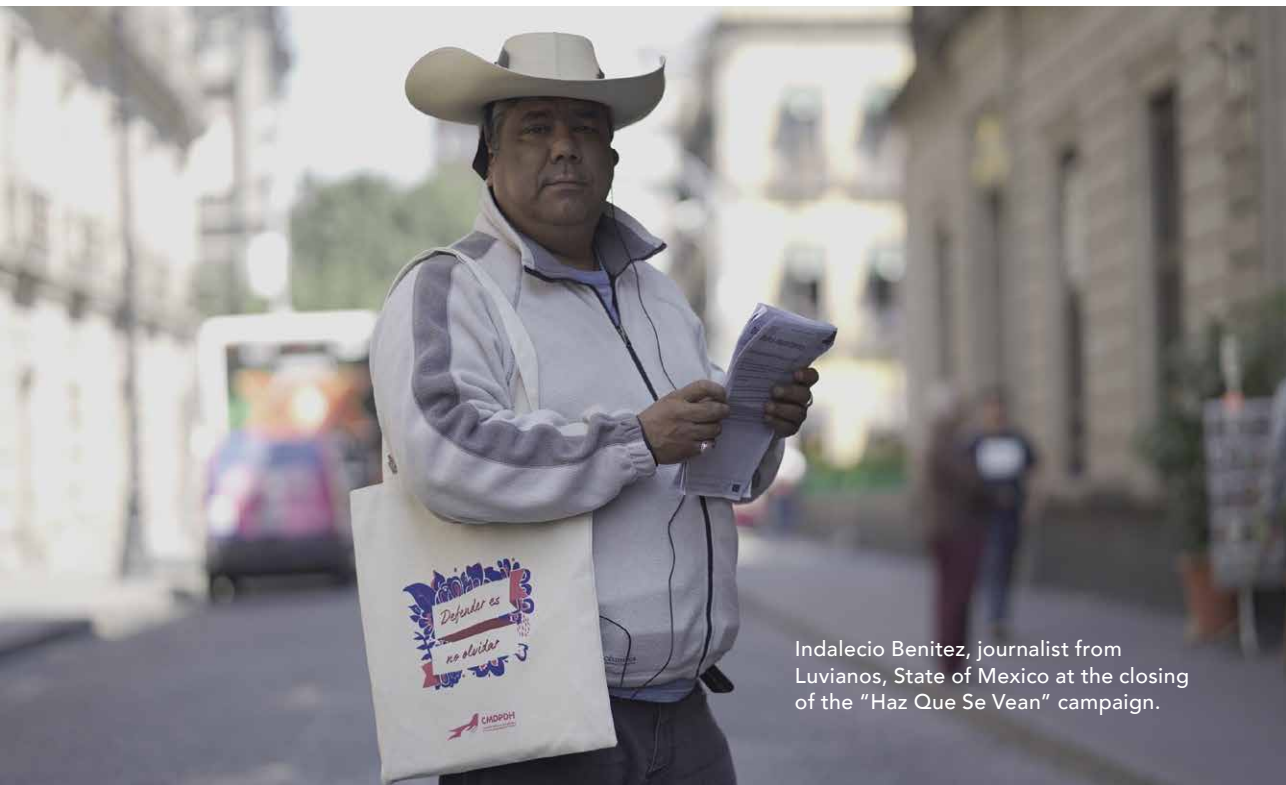
◆ In December, we organized a parallel event during the 18th session of the Assembly of States Parties to the International Criminal Court (ICC), “Should the International Criminal Court open a preliminary examination in Mexico?”, which included the participation of international organizations such as Reporters Without Borders (RSF) and the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH). We also participated in meetings organized by the ICC in The Hague to follow up on reports of crimes against humanity sent to the Court and to provide additional information about Mexico.

◆ We conducted investigations into crimes against humanity and war crimes in Mexico. We published a book on armed conflict in Mexico in conjunction with Leiden University and Iteso University that, with the support of the ICC, was presented to academics, civil society organizations and the diplomatic corps in The Hague.

Tita Radilla (daughter of Rosendo Radilla) and Luis Gerardo Médez (Mexican actor) in Geneva.

NATIONAL ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES

- ◆ We concluded the **#HazQueSeVean** campaign (Make Them Visible) which tells the stories of human rights defenders and journalists. In 2019, the campaign reached over 70,000 views on YouTube.
- ◆ We created four animations for the **#Nomasimpunidad** campaign (No More Impunity) which addresses the issues of impunity, corruption and insecurity that afflict the country, with the help of renowned artists such as [Cecilia Suárez](#), [Yalitza Aparicio](#), [Lydia Cacho](#) and [Elena Poniatowska](#). The videos reached almost 1,000,000 views on Facebook, YouTube and Twitter.



Indalecio Benitez, journalist from Luvianos, State of Mexico at the closing of the "Haz Que Se Vean" campaign.

- ◆ In 2019, we received over 600,000 visits to the Commission's website, the highest number of visits to our website in any year; we had over 300,000 views on YouTube; and we created 1,299 tweets on Twitter.

- ◆ In the context of the 45th anniversary of Rosendo Radilla's disappearance, we created a communication campaign for social media and produced, in conjunction with the Radilla family, a contest where we invited the artistic community to reinterpret Rosendo Radilla's corridos. We had almost 30 participants and featured judges such as Ana Tijoux and Mare Advertencia Lirika.

- ◆ The CMDPDH led the organization of and accompanied the first exploratory mission to Mexico by the Joint IDP Profiling Service (JIPS) — an international organization based in Geneva that was formed to provide technical support to governments, civil society and international agencies in the process of generating and managing information on forced internal displacement. The visit resulted in recommendations to the Government of Mexico focused on strengthening existing capacities for information management and, in addition, established an intersectoral working group in which the CMDPDH participates.



From left to right: Rosendo Radilla's daughters: Rosa, Evelina, Agustina, Judith, María del Carmen, Ana María, María del Pilar and Tita Radilla at the award ceremony for Rosendo Radilla's corrido reinterpretation contest.



Defenders at the closing of the campaign “Haz Que Se Vean” holding a poster protesting the militarization taking place in the country.

- ◆ We participated in the collective **#Fiscaliaquesirva**, Justice that Serves, to advocate for an independent office of the Attorney General’s Office (FGR) and we continue to collaborate with the collective **#Seguridadsinguerria**, Security without War, to challenge the militarization of public security in Mexico.
- ◆ We actively collaborated with the federal government in several meetings that culminated in the creation of the still unpublished National Human Rights Program and the National Program against Torture.

PUBLICATIONS



In 2019, we published 13 reports, investigations and books. Among them, three publications on forced internal displacement and one on clandestine graves; a book on regional experiences in the eradication of impunity; collective reports directed to international actors on the human rights situation in Mexico; a book on experiences with justice, truth, and memory in confronting state crimes which will be presented at the LASA 2020 Congress; publications on militarization, torture, and transitional justice; and a book on the legal concept of arraigo as a crime against humanity.

In addition, **we participated in the development and presentation of a new platform,** sintortura.org, to monitor the application of the General Law to Prevent, Investigate and Punish Torture in cooperation with other civil society organizations.



We created three microsites on the CMDPDH website that specialize in seekers of asylum, forced internal displacement, and torture in Mexico.

We published 49 blogs in Animal Político (Verdad, Justicia, Reparaciones) on a variety of human rights issues.



During 2019, 527 journalistic articles were published that reiterated the research carried out by the CMDPDH on the subject of forced internal displacement.

We promoted the official visit of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons, which was scheduled for October 2020.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3

Increase effective access to justice, truth and reparations for victims of human rights violations and crimes against humanity.



Regarding effective access to justice, the CMDPDH represents paradigmatic cases which offer the potential for strategic litigation actions in order to generate precedents and interpretations in accordance with international human rights standards, and which have positive and broad impacts on legal opinions and practices in the justice system. In 2019, the CMDPDH represented 32 cases with 177 direct and indirect victims (87 men, 42 women, 24 boys and 24 girls), distributed throughout 14 states of the country. Our work provides comprehensive assistance to victims of torture, forced disappearance, extrajudicial execution, femicide, and forced internal displacement, by means of legal tools, public communication, political advocacy, and psychosocial work. By the same token, we encourage the International Criminal Court to initiate a preliminary examination that will allow for an investigation into the crimes against humanity committed in Mexico since 2006 within the framework of the militarized security policy.

SUCCESSSES

IN THE PROVISION OF JUSTICE



The CMDPDH was recognized in the fourth edition of the ***Sentencing Awards: Access to Justice for Migrants or Persons Subject to International Protection***, organized by the United Nations High Commissioner, the CNDH, the IACHR and other organizations. This recognition was earned for work done in a case of forced internal displacement and the consequent ruling that confirmed the autonomous power of the Executive Commission for Attention to Victims (CEAV) to register the victims of forced internal displacement as victims of human rights violations and to grant all the benefits to which displaced persons are entitled.



Family member of the Ponce Ríos family (victims of forced internal displacement) and members of the CMDPDH's Defense Team.



A group of CMDPDH staff.

- ◆ 80 people from the state of Chihuahua, victims of multiple human rights violations, were recognized as victims of forced internal displacement through the issuance of CNDH Recommendation 94/2019.
- ◆ The CMDPDH obtained a favorable ruling that granted comprehensive reparations, from the CEAV, to 9 police officers from the city of Tijuana who were recognized as victims by the CNDH recommendation. In this same case, the IACHR decided to issue a resolution by which it determined accrued admissibility based on the merits of the case.
- ◆ Arrest warrants were issued for three cases in which the CMDPDH is a contributory. As a result, criminal proceedings are currently underway against a former federal police officer accused of acts of sexual torture, two members of the armed forces, and an officer of a detention center, all of whom are accused of various crimes against a victim of torture.

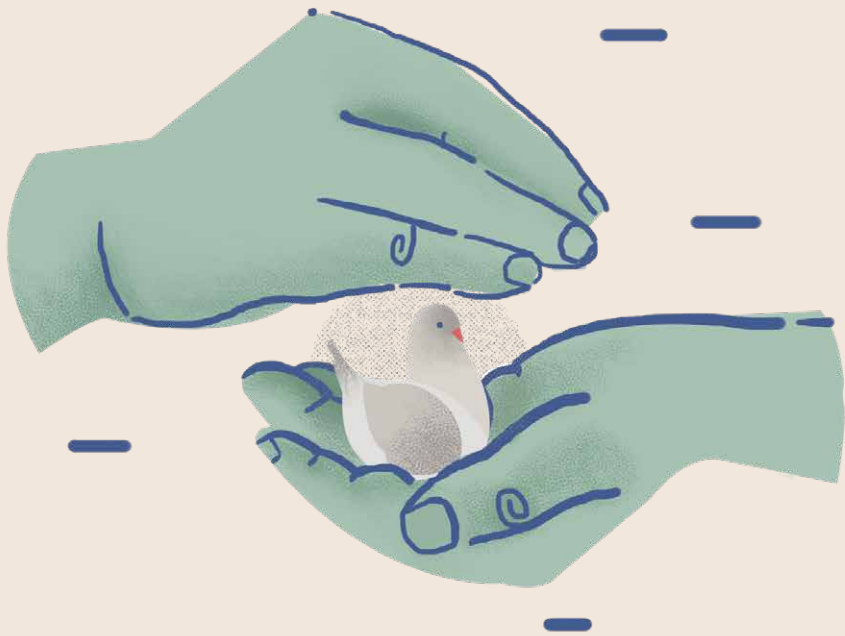
- ◆ The United Nations Secretary General included the case of 4 civilians in his report to the United Nations General Assembly on reprisals committed against people who cooperate with the United Nations, the only case concerning Mexico.
- ◆ In 2019, public apologies were made in the case of Lorena González Hernández, victim of arbitrary detention by the Mexico City Attorney General's Office; and in the case of the González Pérez sisters, victims of arbitrary detention and sexual torture by members of the army.
- ◆ In October, an individual communication was presented to the United Nations Human Rights Committee for the case of six people who were victims of torture.



Lorena González Hernández when she received an apology from the executive and judicial branches of the Mexico City government.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4

Improve the effectiveness of the Commission as an organization that works to defend and promote human rights.



The organizational effectiveness of the CMDPDH is our way of ensuring that our human rights advocacy work and public service endure. Maintaining the institutional framework that enables us to do effective work, provide needed services to all victims, and maintain our accountability to funders, donors, partners, staff and our community is an absolute responsibility. Keeping our management and work capabilities current is crucial, as is the constant care for the emotional health and well-being of those who collaborate with us. For this reason, we constantly update our digital and technological tools for activity reporting and evidence-based research, while also providing training and emotional support workshops to the CMDPDH staff. An effective organization is also an organization with great capacity for adaptation and transformation. In 2019, we have been increasingly creative in integrating the background knowledge and work of different areas in order to improve our messaging strategies, our ability to influence public debate, and our resonance with non-human rights audiences. We also succeeded in designing an Operational Planning Protocol to set annual goals and thus be able to evaluate our work. The adaptation of tools and the integration of different areas has been instrumental for us in being able to innovate and notably boost our capacity to influence the public debate on human rights in Mexico.

ACHIEVEMENTS

We presented over 30 narrative and financial reports to donors for 14 active projects. In 2019, we began 3 new projects, improved research practices and continued to document cases. We are implementing new investigative techniques, both in our case work and in the analysis of networks contained in case files.

We have consolidated our work with the I-Doc database, which contributes to the systematization of cases of human rights violations and crimes against humanity through variables that help to disaggregate the facts, identify the actors or institutions responsible for the crimes, and profile the victims. This makes it possible to identify patterns of criminal action and chains of command in human rights violations.



In 2019, 69% of staff positions in the CMDPDH were held by women and 31% by men; six women held department coordinator positions. In addition, 50% of the members of the Board of Directors were women and 50% were men. The President of the Assembly of Members is a woman whereas the President of the Board of Directors is a man.

Our staff is the pillar of our organization. For this reason we have introduced policies and activities that ensure their wellbeing, such as a sabbatical policy and consistent emotional support for the whole team.

Photographs

Previous page:

José Antonio Guevara, Alejandro Encinas, José Ramón Cossío and Tita Radilla

Family member of a person disappeared during the Dirty War period in Atoyac de Álvarez, Guerrero.

Below: Cecilia Jimenez-Damary, Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons and Jan Jarab, representative in Mexico from the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.



WE APPRECIATE ALL THE SUPPORT OF OUR FUNDERS DURING THE YEAR 2019.

0.5%

European Union

0.6%

Switzerland

2.0%

UN VFVT

5.0%

PADF

5.0%

OHCHR

5.3%

FGDH

6.2%

MacArthur

12.1%

SRT

12.3%

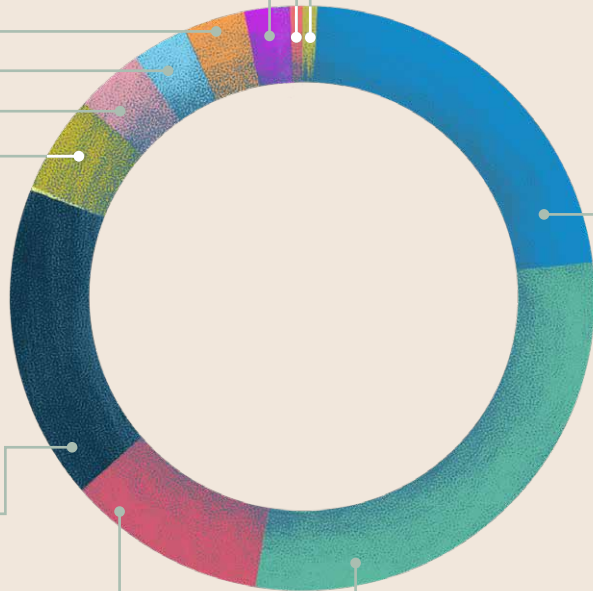
Open Society Foundation

28.8%

Enfoque DH

22.0 %

Ford



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- ◆ **Isaac Lara García,**
Consultant in the psychosocial sessions project
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Consultant in forced internal displacement
- ◆ **Arturo Mora Huiza,**
Consultant in information technology



WE ALSO THANK OUR
VOLUNTEERS AND INTERNS WHO
PROVIDE A VALUABLE CONTRIBUTION
TO THE WORK OF THE COMMISSION.



2019 PUBLICATIONS



ASISTENCIA LEGAL POR LOS DERECHOS HUMANOS, CASA DEL MIGRANTE DE SALTILLO, CENTRO DE DERECHOS HUMANOS "FRAY BARTOLOMÉ DE LAS CASAS", CENTRO DE DERECHOS HUMANOS "FRAY MATÍAS DE CÓRDOVA", CENTRO DE DERECHOS HUMANOS "MIGUEL ÁNGEL PRO JUÁREZ", CENTRO DE DERECHOS HUMANOS PASO DEL NORTE, CENTRO DE DERECHOS DE LA MONTAÑA, TLACHINOLLAN, CENTRO DIOCESANO PARA LOS DERECHOS HUMANOS "FRAY JUAN DE LARIOS", CENTRO DE JUSTICIA PARA LA PAZ Y EL DESARROLLO, CENTRO DE INVESTIGACIÓN Y CAPACITACIÓN PROPUESTA CÍVICA, COLECTIVO CONTRA LA TORTURA Y LA IMPUNIDAD, COMISIÓN CIUDADANA DE DERECHOS HUMANOS DEL NOROESTE, COMISIÓN MEXICANA DE DEFENSA Y PROMOCIÓN DE DERECHOS HUMANOS, COMITÉ DE DEFENSA INTEGRAL DE DERECHOS HUMANOS GOBIXHA, COMUNICACIÓN E INFORMACIÓN DE LA MUJER, CONSORCIO PARA EL DIÁLOGO PARLAMENTARIO Y LA EQUIDAD OAXACA, DOCUMENTA, ANÁLISIS Y ACCIÓN PARA LA JUSTICIA SOCIAL, EQUIS, JUSTICIA PARA LAS MUJERES, SERVICIO INTERNACIONAL PARA LA PAZ. (2019) INFORME ALTERNATIVO DE LAS ORGANIZACIONES DE LA SOCIEDAD CIVIL DE MÉXICO AL COMITÉ CONTRA LA TORTURA DE LA ONU 2012-2019. [ALTERNATIVE REPORT BY MEXICAN CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS TO THE UN COMMITTEE AGAINST TORTURE 2012-2019.] AUTHOR. <http://cmdpdh.org/project/informe-alternativo-de-las-organizaciones-de-la-sociedad-civil-de-mexico-al-comite-contra-la-tortura-de-la-onu-2012-2019/>



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