



Continental meeting on closing civic space

Joint statement

As human rights defenders, journalists and members of civil society organizations, independent media and social movements in the American continent, we express our concern about the new rise in authoritarian practices and the accelerated closure of civic space in the Americas. We recognize that we have reached a juncture where many states are trying to reduce the political cost of violating human rights, through narratives that delegitimize their value and validity, and a situation where the people and communities that defend them, as well as the independent press that documents and reports on the human rights situation in our countries and territories, are openly attacked and criminalized.

Alarmingly, we have seen the states of countries in the Americas intensifying the adoption of authoritarian practices to concentrate and hold on to power at any cost. They do this by unduly and arbitrarily restricting human rights, weakening or removing checks and balances, including the judiciary, and silencing dissenting voices. These tactics are coupled with the militarization of public security, often supported by international cooperation funding; the abusive use of states of emergency; extraction processes that disrespect human rights; and the siege of territories belonging to Indigenous peoples and nationalities, Afro-descendants and farm workers; and harassment and direct attacks on defenders and journalists.

While some countries in the region have authorities that have been systematically implementing authoritarian practices for years, others are adopting them at an accelerated pace. Even countries that have previously enjoyed a more open civic space are now facing a deteriorating human rights situation. As a sign of this, we note with concern the alarming proliferation of restrictive regulations that threaten the existence of civil society and hinder the ability to resist the authoritarian and arbitrary exercise of power. In some cases, the existence of these authoritarian regulations and practices have led to unjust criminalization, forced internal displacement, imprisonment and exile of human rights defenders.

We recall that organized civil society has been fundamental to guaranteeing human rights on our continent; without it, the rule of law is weakened and people are left defenceless against abuses of power. That is why we call on our movements to strengthen alliances that allow us to exchange knowledge and lessons learned from our own experiences, as well as to establish regional networks for cooperation and coordination. At this critical moment, we accept that our resistance is collective, so we must establish common agendas and recognize that our cause is for the defence of human rights.

Our context analysis shows that the mechanisms available for the defence of human rights are, in the current context, insufficient. Therefore, we extend the call to international organizations and the international community, to take up the challenge of rethinking strategies that respond effectively and creatively to a changing environment, where what is at stake is the legitimacy of the concept of human rights itself.

Faced with this high-risk situation, it is more important than ever to promote and protect the work of human rights defenders, journalists, civil society organizations and the independent press.

We will not abandon our commitment to safeguarding human rights along with the people and communities that defend them, and we will not stop demanding that states comply with their international obligations. It



is once again time to increase the political cost of failing to respect human rights, and to reiterate that our fight is, above all, for the recognition of the dignity of all people.

Signatory organizations

Alianza de Organizaciones por los Derechos Humanos del Ecuador

American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) (Regional)

Amnistía Internacional (Global)

Centro de Derechos Humanos de la Montaña Tlachinollan (México)

Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales (CELS) (Argentina)

Centro de investigación de mujeres juristas por los derechos humanos (CEMUDEJU) (República Dominicana)

Contracorriente Honduras

Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos (Perú)

Defending Rights & Dissent (Estados Unidos de América)

Foro del Agua (El Salvador)

Fundación Ciudadanía y Desarrollo (Ecuador)

Fundación Sin Limites (Costa Rica/Nicaragua)

Fundación Status Queer (Ecuador)

Kanan Derechos Humanos (México)

INESC, Instituto de Estudos Socioeconômicos (Brasil)

Movimiento sociocultural de trabajo humanitario y ambiental (MOSCTHA) (República Dominicana)

People in Need (Global)

Prensa Comunitaria Km.169 (Guatemala)

Reconocido (República Dominicana)