



## Peace Brigades International

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As the Unit for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders of Guatemala (UDEFEGUA) illustrated in an August 24 [press conference](#), Guatemala is in crisis.

### **Record-Setting Number of Attacks Recorded During Giammattei's Administration**

In the first two-and-a-half years of the Alejandro Giammattei administration, more attacks on human rights defenders have occurred than during the four-year terms of any other administration in post-conflict Guatemala. From 2019 to the end of 2021, according to UDEFEGUA, attacks on human rights defenders more than doubled.

### **Attacks on Rights Defenders in 2022 Among the Highest of Any Year Since 1996**

Statistics on attacks against human rights defenders in the first six months of 2022 paint a dark picture. UDEFEGUA documented 589 attacks in the first six months of this year. If attacks continue at the current rate, the number of attacks by the end of the year will be nearly a third higher than one of the worst years on record, 2014, when Otto Perez Molina—who commanded an elite Army force in the 1980s in an area where genocide was committed—was president.

Of the 589 attacks recorded from January through June 2022, justice operators (a term that covers those working to prosecute crimes, as well as judges) were hardest hit: 272 attacks were carried out against this sector. The second-highest number of attacks—114—were levied against those seeking justice. Journalists suffered 51 attacks. Attacks against defenders of land, territory, and the environment defenders numbered 47. Defamation, harassment (which includes persecution and surveillance), and malicious lawsuits accounted for the majority of attacks.

### **Attacks on Women Defenders Rise Sharply**

Forty-five percent of the attacks in the first six months of this year were against women human rights defenders. This figure represents a sharp increase. Attacks against women defenders in the first half of this year, at 263, have reached more than 75 percent of last year's twelve-month total.

The large majority of the attacks on women defenders were against justice operators (149), followed by those seeking justice (81). Among women defenders, UDEFEGUA noted an increase in the targeting of those who provide accompaniment to other human rights defenders. UDEFEGUA recorded 10 attacks against accompaniers. Students were the next-most targeted sector among women (9 attacks), followed by journalists (8 attacks).

While the number of attacks on Indigenous women human rights defenders was the lowest, at 4, UDEFEGUA pointed out that evictions of Indigenous peoples have been numerous. Police forces are not using the proper protocol for evictions, UDEFEGUA said, and during evictions, homes and crops are being burned and farm animals stolen, tactics reminiscent of the [war era] past. In relation to evictions, UDEFEGUA also pointed out that the closing of the Secretariat of Agrarian Affairs, set up under the framework of the Peace Accords to resolve land conflicts, has made dialogue impossible and led to more evictions.

UDEFEGUA characterized the attacks on women in the first half of this year as misogynistic. Female prosecutors in particular have been singled out for malicious lawsuits. The detention of women defenders, UDEFEGUA explained, has an impact on children and others whom women provide care for, and women defenders are being jailed in cruel and inhumane conditions to send a message to others. UDEFEGUA also pointed to an atmosphere that legitimizes violence against women, mentioning Vice Minister of the Interior Carlos Enrique Franco's [comments](#) attributing murders of women to their disobedience of men.

### **UDEFEGUA Warns of Authoritarian Consolidation**

UDEFEGUA in the press conference made note of the fact that after the expulsion of the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) in 2019, attacks on human rights defenders began to rise sharply, as criminal networks reconsolidated. UDEFEGUA's findings illustrate a sustained increase in violence against the defense of human rights since that time. The Giammattei administration has captured the three branches of government, increased participation of the military in civic life, and dismantled important government institutions established to fulfill the commitments of the Peace Accords. UDEFEGUA warned of an authoritarian consolidation, which has as an end goal the restoration of a regime of impunity, corruption, and violence.

To see UDEFEGUA's full press conference, [visit the link](#).

*[Peace Brigades International](#) is a nongovernmental organization that sends teams of international observers to areas of conflict and repression to provide protective accompaniment to human rights defenders whose lives and work are under threat. Founded in 1981, PBI has worked in fourteen countries and on four continents. With consultative status before the UN and headquartered in Brussels, PBI provides advocacy throughout Europe and North America to support efforts to open space for the defense of human rights. PBI currently has projects in Indonesia, Kenya, Nepal, Costa Rica (working with Nicaraguan refugees), Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico.*