

TOP IMPACT STORIES

2016



PROTECTION
international

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- 1 Colombian protection network gains recognition
- 2 Encouraging legal protection for HRDS in DRC
- 3 Better security for Kenyan LGBTIQ defenders
- 4 Freedom for Joel Ogada
- 5 Fighting impunity against the killings of environmental Thai defenders

PROTECTION INTERNATIONAL is an international non-profit organization that provides protection strategies and tools for security management to human rights defenders who are at risk. Since 2004, Protection International has been working with local partners in over thirty countries across the globe.



1 Colombian protection network* gains recognition

Human rights defenders from Magdalena Medio successfully advocated in Bogota for rights to their land

*A protection network brings together communities with similar claims to protect each other in case of threats.

WHERE:

Colombia, Magdalena Medio (El Garzal, Las Pavas, El Guayabo, Bella Unión and Nueva Esperanza)

WHAT:

The Protection International Colombia team supported the Magdalena Medio protection network to visit national authorities, officials and journalists in Bogota to bring visibility to their legitimate land property claims against illegal occupation by companies and former paramilitaries.

HOW:

- Meetings with national authorities: the State Department, National Police, National Victims Unit (NVU), the Ombudsman and Senator Iván Cepeda.
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- Talks with international organizations and embassies: USAID, OHCHR and the Mission to support the Peace Process in Colombia (MAPP/OEA); embassies (UK, Canada, Switzerland, USA and the Netherlands)
- Interviews with international and national media: EFE Agency, El Espectador, Miami Herald, Revista Semana, Verdad Abierta.com, Canal UNO – Contravía, Telesur and Prensa Rural.

IMPACT:

1. The NVU registered Las Pavas and El Guayabo communities as victims.
2. An inter institutional working group accompanied by the MAPP/OEA was created to share information on Magdalena Medio land cases and protect these defenders which resulted in the suspension of an eviction order against El Guayabo community.
3. The Constitutional Court ruled on Las Pavas case failing against INCODER (the lands institute) and recognizing the farmers legal possession of the lands in dispute.

2 Encouraging legal protection for HRDS in DRC

The South Kivu Provincial Assembly passed a bill for the protection of human rights defenders (HRDs) and journalists

WHERE:

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), South Kivu

WHAT:

Since 2014, the Protection International DRC team gave technical advice to members of the commission in charge of this bill and advocated for its approval along with civil society organizations.

HOW:

During the last two years, the DRC team spoke to embassies and legislators and partnered with emblematic defenders such as Dr. Denis Mukwege to advocate for the bill. On 4th April 2015, the team in DRC met with members of the Provincial Assembly in charge of editing the edict to give them advice and recommendations. The team also briefed the UN and African Commission special rapporteurs on HRDs and engaged the local UN office in the process to proactively support the legislation.

IMPACT:

In January 2016, the Governor of South Kivu in the Democratic Republic of Congo promulgated the edict on the protection of human rights defenders and journalists in South Kivu.

3 Better security for Kenyan LGBTIQ defenders

Attacks and threats against HRDs within the NYARWEK network have been reduced by 50%

WHERE:

Kenya, Nyanza, Rift Valley and Western Kenya (NYARWEK)

WHAT:

NYARWEK successfully created a protection network to strengthen the defense of LGBTIQ rights in Kenya.

HOW:

Starting with trainings in 2012, Protection International accompanied NYARWEK in the creation of a security network.

IMPACT:

A lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender group based in Kisumu, successfully took charge and set up their security network. Since their security policy was established, violations against HRDs within the NYARWEK network went down by 50%, even if violations against HRDs by authorities, institutions and society in Kenya increased 16% in 2014.

4 Freedom for Joel Ogada

Criminalization is an arising global trend to stop the work of human rights defenders

WHERE:

Kenya, Malindi, Kilifi County

WHAT:

Protection International Kenya supported the Malindi Rights Forum to call for the release of Joel Ogada, a farmer and criminalized human rights defender in the Marereni area at the Kenyan coast who resisted the eviction carried out by Kurawa Salt Company. He was in prison for 16 months wrongfully convicted of arson while defending human rights.

HOW:

- Assisting Ogada's lawyer and the organization by providing strategic legal support.
- Trial observation: Engaging with prison officials to ensure that he was not arrested again after his release.
- Mobilising the community to attend the court case.
- Online advocacy campaigning in Kenya and internationally.



SUCCESS:

Thanks to the advocacy campaign Joel Ogada was released. Using this experience and many others, Protection International compiled a global report on the criminalization of human rights defenders: *Criminalization of Human Rights Defenders – Categorization of the Problem and Measures in Response* aims to provide answers to protection challenges for criminalized HRDs, civil society organizations and rural communities.



5 Fighting impunity against the killings of environmental Thai defenders

Protection International, alongside the EU, the regional office for South East Asia and the UN High Commissioner for human rights denounced the impunity of the killing of Chai Bunthonglek, member of the Southern Peasant's Federation of Thailand (SPFT)

WHERE:

Thailand, Surat Thani Province

WHAT:

Protection International denounced, briefed and informed state authorities, media, civil society organizations (CSO) and international stakeholders on the consistent case of impunity on the murders of environmental and land rights defenders in SPFT communities.



HOW:

The Protection International Thailand team met with a Member of the European Parliament (MEP), Barbara Lochbihler, to inform her on the case.

IMPACT:

1. MEP Lochbihler put forward to the EU High Representative a written question on the situation of HRDs in Thailand asking for an adequate, transparent and comprehensive investigation on the killing of land rights defender Mr. Chai Bunthonglek
2. In October 2015, the European Parliament passed an urgency resolution on Thailand. The final text of the resolution included explicit HRDs references present on Protection International briefing sent to concerned MEPs.
3. Through Protection International's advocacy the OHCHR South East Asia office issued a public statement urging the Thai Government to promptly investigate the killing and increase security measures for environmental and land rights defenders in the south of Thailand including the members of SPFT.



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