

UN Environment's Environmental Rights Initiative

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Three main dimensions of the relationship between human rights and environmental protection:

- Environment as a pre-requisite for the enjoyment of human rights (human rights obligations of States should include duty to ensure level of environmental protection necessary to allow full exercise of protected rights);
- Procedural human rights as essential to good environmental decision-making (human rights must be implemented in order to ensure environmental protection); and
- The right to a safe, healthy and ecologically-balanced environment as a human right in itself

States' human rights obligations relating to the environment:

- Procedural obligations
 - access to information, to participation and to remedies
- Substantive obligations
 - Life, food, health, housing, water and sanitation, etc.
- Heightened obligations for population in vulnerable situation
 - Women, children, indigenous people, etc.

16 Framework Principles on Human Rights and the Environment (March 2018) <https://goo.gl/sjcJmr>

Strengthening Civil Society means strengthening environmental rights and environmental rights defenders:

- Weak civil society makes defenders more vulnerable
- Shrinking spaces for civil society lead to less public awareness and makes rights abuse easier
- A strong civil society protects environmental defenders



THE ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS INITIATIVE

- In 2017, **207 defenders** were killed – agribusiness, including coffee, palm oil and banana plantations, is the industry most associated with these attacks (Global Witness annual report, 2018)
- Already in 2018, around **50 defenders** have lost their lives while protecting their community's environment and natural resources
- Around 40% of those killed, harassed and intimidated are from indigenous and local communities from around the world
- This includes **five rangers** killed in the worst attack on Virunga National Park (DR Congo) to date
- This rising death toll is likely to continue if **governments and businesses fail to act**



UN Environment's Policy on Environmental Defenders

- **Objective:** To promote greater protection for people defending their environmental rights, and identify solutions to mitigate the abuse of environmental rights which affects a growing number of people in many parts of the world
- Developed in response to growing severity of environmental rights problems and shrinking civil society space
- Three-pronged approach: 1) Speaking Out (Rapid Response Mechanism – statements, letters, social media); 2) Legal Assistance; 3) Scaling up Partnerships

Outreach: Communicating your work to a global audience and to decision-makers. Provide us with your links for important materials for www.environmentalrightsinitiative.org

Rapid Response Mechanism: eyes and ears on the ground...intelligence on emerging threats and actual incidents; unenvironment-defenders@un.org

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**Special Rapporteur / Universal Rights Group / UN Environment
online resource portal:**
www.environment-rights.org

FURTHER RESOURCES

www.environmentalrightsinitiative.org

Environmental Rights Initiative video:

<https://bit.ly/2GLOimS>

UN Environment Assembly video:

<https://bit.ly/2r3ANJl>

Mini-Course on Environmental Defenders:

<https://bit.ly/2vTSRut>

UN Environment's Policy on Environmental Defenders available in all six languages of the United Nations (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, Spanish):

<https://bit.ly/2HwO4nU>