

## Latin American Consultation on Human Rights Defenders (Mexico City, 13 to 15 June 2001)

### Summary

#### Background

The "Latin American Regional Consultation on Human Rights Defenders" took place on 13 to 15 June 2001, in Mexico City, Mexico. This consultation was arranged by the Human Rights Defenders Office (HRDO) of the International Service for Human Rights together with the "***Ad-Hoc Committee of Defenders in Colombia***", the "***Human Rights Defenders Committee of the National Network of Human Rights Organs 'All Rights for All'***" and "***Amnesty International***".

The consultation was the first opportunity for the new UN Special Representative on Human Rights Defenders, Ms **Hina Jilani**, to meet human rights defenders from the Latin America region.

Ms Jilani had expressed an interest in the situation of the human rights defenders in Latin America. Based on her interest, arranged for a "Latin American Consultation on Human Rights Defenders".

The consultation was arranged with the ultimate goal of furthering the protection of the rights of the defenders of human rights. Despite the important democratic changes that have taken place in Latin America, there are currently still many violations and attacks on basic human rights in the region. The United Nations recently recognised some of the important works that human rights defenders have completed, in their efforts for the universality of human rights and fundamental values. The UN has also recognised human rights protection through the adoption of the "Declaration of Human Rights Defenders" and with the appointment of Ms Hina Jilani, as Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Human Rights Defenders. Nevertheless, there remains a great deal of work to be done in order to complete the goal of adequate protection for human rights defenders. In order to achieve this goal, our first task would be to strengthen the mandate of the Special Representative, starting by recognising the problems human rights defenders face in this region.

44 human rights defenders participated in the event where representatives of regional NGOs met with the Special Representative, including representatives from the following countries: Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Venezuela. The participants reflect the severity of the problems facing human rights defenders in particular countries of the region. Present were also invited observers from Mexican and international NGOs. The meeting aimed to recognise and analyse the problems and dangers facing human rights defenders

within Latin America, with the goal of creating a joint agenda with the UN Special Representative on Human Rights Defenders.

### **Follow-up**

The issue of human rights defenders is currently being considered by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, with a view to taking regional initiatives. A report produced from the consultation will therefore be offered to this regional body, based in Washington D.C.

The Secretariat of this body has already reacted positively to a proposal that a formal audience be organised with the Special Representative, Ms Hina Jilani, around the time when she presents her report to the General Assembly, nearby in New York.