



global witness

# DEADLY ENVIRONMENT

**THE DRAMATIC RISE IN  
KILLINGS OF ENVIRONMENTAL  
AND LAND DEFENDERS**

1.1.2002–31.12.2013

# DEADLY ENVIRONMENT

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# DEADLY ENVIRONMENT

## THE RISE IN KILLINGS OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND LAND DEFENDERS

### Executive summary

Never has it been more important to protect the environment, and never has it been more deadly. Competition for access to natural resources is intensifying against a backdrop of extreme global inequality, while humanity has already crossed several vital planetary environmental boundaries.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, more and more ordinary people are finding themselves on the frontline of the battle to defend their environment from corporate or state abuse, and from unsustainable exploitation.

This report shines a light on the sharp end of this rapidly worsening and poorly understood problem. The issue is notoriously under-reported, but between 2002 and 2013, we have been able to verify that 908 citizens were killed protecting rights to their land and environment. Three times as many people were killed in 2012 than 10 years previously, with the death rate rising in the past four years to an average of two activists a week. There were almost certainly more cases, but the nature of the problem makes information hard to find, and even harder to verify. However, even the known level of killings is on a par with the more high-profile incidences of 913 journalists killed while carrying out their work in the same period.<sup>3</sup> The death rate also points to a much greater level of non-lethal violence and intimidation, which are not documented in this report.

This rapidly worsening crisis appears to be hidden in plain sight. A lack of systematic monitoring or awareness of the growing threat to environmental and land activists is enabling killings and a wide range of other abuses, while national governments and judicial systems are regularly failing to protect their citizens from harm.

In June 2012, Global Witness' report, *A Hidden Crisis*, was released at the Rio+20 Summit.<sup>4</sup> Nearly 25 years after the assassination of Brazilian rubber tapper and forest activist Chico Mendes, the report warned of a growing human emergency in the world's land and forestry sectors – killings were steadily rising as protection of the environment emerged as a key battleground for human rights.

The report's findings and recommendations were noted at the summit, with UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay commenting, "It is shocking, but it is not a surprise to me because this is what my own office has been finding in respect of the land claims of indigenous people, not only here in Brazil but elsewhere."<sup>5</sup>

Yet in the month after the Rio summit, 18 environmental and land defenders were murdered across seven countries. The day the summit closed, two advocates for fishermen's rights were abducted nearby in Rio de Janeiro state. Almir Nogueira de Amorim and João Luiz Telles Penetra<sup>6,7,8,9</sup> were found executed a few days later. They had long campaigned to protect Rio's fishing communities from the expansion of oil operations. To date, no-one has been held to account for their killings.

They were just two of 147 known killings of activists in 2012, making it the deadliest year on record to be defending rights to land and the environment.

In December 2014 government officials from around the world will gather for the next climate change talks in Lima, Peru. Without urgent action, they are once again likely to be discussing ways to protect the conditions for life on the planet, while the murder and intimidation of ordinary people actually defending the environment and land go ignored.

This report aims to increase awareness and improve understanding of this crisis, asks why so little is being done to address it, and makes recommendations for what must happen. Given that a lack of information on this issue was identified as a key driver of the problem in *A Hidden Crisis*, we have refined our data-gathering methodology and definition of those affected. We hope this will provide a solid foundation for future research and monitoring by Global Witness and others. We have also looked into the underlying causes of the problem globally and in specific countries, and consulted widely with partners in the field to see what work is being done, and how it can be supplemented. Finally, we have updated our statistics to cover the two years since our last publication.

People have died protecting a wide range of environmental needs and rights, but dominant themes also emerge. Many of those facing threats are ordinary people opposing land grabs, mining operations and the industrial timber trade, often forced from their homes and severely threatened by environmental devastation. Indigenous communities are particularly hard hit. In many cases, their land rights are not recognised by law or in practice, leaving them open to exploitation by powerful economic interests who brand them as 'anti-development'. Yet local communities are invariably struggling to secure good livelihoods as a result of their stewardship of natural resources, which is fundamental to sustainable development. Often, the first they know about a deal that goes against their interest is when the bulldozers arrive in their farms and forests.



Above: 25 years after the assassination of forest activist Chico Mendes, Brazil is the most dangerous place to be an environmental and land defender. © Miranda Smith

*"At first I thought I was fighting to save rubber trees. Then I thought I was fighting to save the Amazon rainforest. Now I realise I am fighting for humanity."* — Chico Mendes<sup>1</sup>

This problem is poorly understood and addressed. Where cases are recognised or recorded, they are generally seen in isolation and not as part of a larger trend. Definitions of those affected vary widely, with the unique set of problems these defenders face often seen solely in terms of their human rights or environmental dimension. Plenty of excellent and highly courageous work is being done by NGOs in specific contexts, generally in a single country or region, but they need more and better support from outside. A key theme emerging from our consultation process was the view that a more coordinated, concerted effort is required from governments, civil society and international bodies such as the UN to monitor and tackle this crisis as a global phenomenon in its own right.

Our analysis highlights an endemic culture of impunity, which national governments and their aid donors have a responsibility to address. Often, defenders face threats from the very people supposed to protect them – a number of cases involve state security forces, often in collaboration with corporations and private landowners. The lack of political will to ensure large resource deals are done fairly and openly appears matched by the lack of political will to deliver justice for those killed in resulting conflicts. Evidence suggests that responsibility rarely only lies with the person pulling the trigger – complex and secretive networks of vested interests ultimately lie behind these crimes. Just 10 perpetrators are known to have been tried, convicted and punished between 2002 and 2013<sup>10</sup> – around one per cent of the overall incidence of known killings.



Above: In the month after the Rio+20 UN Conference on Sustainable Development, 18 defenders were murdered across seven countries.



Above: João Luiz Telles Penetra was killed in the days following the Rio+20 Summit. © AHOMAR

This lack of redress for victims and their families has an additional silencing effect on environmental activism, in turn deterring others from protecting rights to the environment and land. In the words of Isolete Wichinieski, National Coordinator of the Comissão Pastoral da Terra (CPT) in Brazil, “what feeds the violence is the impunity.”<sup>11</sup>

Weak understanding of rights or ability to exercise them is one of the main reasons why environment and land activists are one of the most vulnerable groups of human rights defenders,<sup>12</sup> according to Margaret Sekaggya, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights Defenders: “[they] are particularly disadvantaged due to the often limited knowledge they have about their rights and lack of information on how to claim them, scarce resources and weak organisational capacity.”<sup>13</sup>

Meanwhile, UN Independent Expert on Human Rights and the Environment John Knox commented to Global Witness:

*“Human rights only have meaning if people are able to exercise them. Environmental human rights defenders work to ensure that we live in an environment that enables us to enjoy our basic rights, including rights to life and health. The international community must do more to protect them from the violence and harassment they face as a result.”<sup>14</sup>*

The aim of this report is to push for this to happen, firstly by making the problem more visible and urgent for governments, policymakers and the wider public. We have included extended case studies that focus on countries where the issue is particularly serious, in the Philippines and Brazil, to help better understand these contexts. Brazil is particularly badly affected, accounting for over half the global total of deaths from 2002–2013.

These findings are very likely just the tip of the iceberg in two important respects. Firstly, rising fatalities are the most acute and measurable end of a range of threats including intimidation, violence, stigmatisation and

criminalisation. However, lack of public information around these threats and security implications for those in danger make it very difficult to track and systematise this data.

Secondly, there are without doubt more cases than we have been able to verify. Because of the live, under-recognised nature of this problem, an exhaustive global analysis of the situation is not possible. For example, African countries such as Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic and Zimbabwe that are enduring resource-fuelled unrest are highly likely to be affected, but information is almost impossible to gain without detailed field investigations. In future, Global Witness hopes to carry out such work to further bring this issue to national and international attention.

But others must act as well, and they must do so now. What we can say with grim conviction is that we have a dramatically worsening global situation, and that national governments, companies and the international community must do much more to stop the violence, intimidation and murder of those we should be celebrating as heroes.

KEY FACTS
Between 2002 and 2013, 908 people in 35 countries are known to have been killed because of their work on environment and land issues
Three times as many people were killed in 2012 than 10 years previously, with the rate doubling to an average of two people a week in the past four years
2012 was the bloodiest year yet, with 147 deaths recorded
Only 10 perpetrators are known to have been tried, convicted and punished between 2002 and 2013 – around one per cent of the overall incidence of known killings
Brazil is the most dangerous place to be defending rights to land and the environment, with 448 cases, followed by Honduras (109) and the Philippines (67)

## RECOMMENDATIONS

These killings are increasing because competition for resources is intensifying in a global economy built around soaring consumption and growth, even as hundreds of millions go without enough. They are going unrecognised because of a lack of visibility and accountability. The rights of environmental and land defenders must be recognised and respected; they should be able to carry out their work without fear of killing, persecution, intimidation or threats to their lives, families or colleagues. National governments, civil society and international human rights bodies should properly monitor abuses against and killings of such activists, and ensure that those responsible are brought to justice. Companies must carry out effective checks on their operations and supply chains to make sure they do no harm.

The work of environmental and land defenders to protect indigenous land rights, opposing powerful economic interests and protesting the activities of extractive industries and development projects leaves them particularly vulnerable to abuse, and therefore they should be given special attention. The often isolated, rural context of their struggle, poor resources and lack of understanding of their rights adds to their exposure.

*National governments, including those in acutely affected countries such as Brazil and the Philippines, must take immediate steps to:*

- Publicly reaffirm and recognise the important work that environmental and land defenders do, and take steps to respect, protect and promote their rights, as stipulated by the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders in 2011.<sup>15</sup>
- Implement and respect all provisions set out in the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders,<sup>16</sup> with special attention to a state's duty and responsibility to protect, promote and implement all human rights including the right to a safe and healthy environment.
- Ensure prompt and impartial investigations into allegations of attacks and violations against defenders, and carry out appropriate redress and reparation for victims.
- Recognise and implement the right of communities potentially affected by investment and extractive projects to genuinely free, prior and informed consent before a deal is done.
- Sign and adhere to (where eligible) the Aarhus Convention,<sup>17</sup> giving citizens the right to participate in environmental decision-making, to have access to environmental

information and to seek justice in environmental matters. In addition, the Convention should be opened up for signature and ratification by all UN member states

- Address the heightened risk posed to environmental and land defenders in the UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review process, both in their own reports and in their recommendations to other states' reports

*All governments must:*

- Take firm and decisive steps to address the heightened threat posed to environmental and land defenders. In the first instance we recommend calling for a UN Human Rights Council resolution to this effect and ensuring all member states provide improved and properly resourced protection plans.

*International bodies:*

- The Human Rights Council's Special Procedures, specifically those mandated to Human Rights Defenders, Indigenous Peoples, Business and Human Rights, Environment and Human Rights and Extrajudicial Killings should address the increase in risk posed to environmental and land defenders in their reporting procedures.
- The ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) Human Rights Commission and African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights should establish a mechanism based on the Inter-American Human Rights Commission's framework to provide emergency protection for human rights defenders (“precautionary measures”).

*Companies operating in areas where environmental and land defenders are under threat must take immediate steps to:*

- Refuse to make any investment decision or project plan unless genuinely free, prior and informed consent is given by potentially affected communities.
- Refrain from operating in militarised areas, or using private security where there are credible allegations of prior involvement in human rights violations.
- Implement due diligence checks on supply chains to ensure that their purchasing policies are not linked to companies whose operations cause social and environmental damage.
- Adopt and implement the Voluntary Principles on Human Rights and Security,<sup>18</sup> the UN's Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights<sup>19</sup> and other relevant international human rights standards.
- Adopt and implement the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests.<sup>20</sup>

# METHODOLOGY AND SCOPE

*“As pressure on natural resources increases, land and environment rights defenders have become one of the most vulnerable groups in terms of killing. These defenders must be recognised in their own right. They must be protected. They must be empowered because they are not only fighting for their lives but also for ours.”*

— Antoine Bernard, FIDH CEO and coordinator of the Observatory for the protection of human rights defenders

This second report draws on the scope Global Witness used for *A Hidden Crisis* (2012), and applies a refined methodology that we hope will provide the basis for future work by Global Witness and others to galvanise attention and action around this problem.

Details of the full methodology and definition can be found in the Annex, but its key features can be summarised as a three step process:

1. Opportunistic: we took the initial dataset of over 700 cases and 141 sources identified in our 2012 survey and further researched each case and source. This identified more potential leads to investigate. We have also removed some cases that failed to meet our new criteria for verification (see Annex).

2. Systematic: we looked at 74 countries in the following regions as defined by the UN: Africa (Southern, Middle, Eastern, Western), Asia (South Eastern), The Americas (Central, South). In each of the 74 countries we searched for recent communications made by Special Procedures of the UN Human Rights Council<sup>21</sup> to the governments in question and looked at the documentation provided by stakeholders and the UN High Commission for Human Rights (UNHCHR) in the UN Human Rights Council’s Universal Periodic Review of Human Rights (UPR) sessions.<sup>22</sup> Further detail was added to the resultant cases and reports we found by using specialised resources such as human rights search engine HuriSearch,<sup>23</sup> which indexes around 5000 human rights websites.

3. Partner-based verification: where possible, we submitted our initial findings to in-country or regional partners for further research and verification.

In cases that met the broad scope outlined above, inclusion in this report’s analysis has depended on meeting or exceeding the following criteria:

- That there was a credible, published and currently publicly available online source of information. We have archived over 1000 sources during our research.
- That the victim was named, that the type of act and method of violence was specified, and that the exact date and precise location of the killing was documented.
- That in each case, there was further biographical information about the victim, such as their occupation, organisational and political affiliations, and where relevant, their ethnic or indigenous identity.
- That there was a clear, proximate and documented connection to an environment or land issue.

We have structured the data about the cases using the HURIDOCS Event Standard Formats and Micro-Thesauri,<sup>24</sup> an approach which is widely used to manage and analyse material of this nature.

All the cases we have included in this report’s analysis meet the scope and standards we have set. As with all criteria and standards, they are challenged by what we have found during the course of investigation. There have been many reports of killings that did not meet our evidential standard but warrant further investigation. More details of these can be found in the Annex.



Above: At least 150 killings have taken place amid struggles over mining and extractive projects. © Global Witness

# GLOBAL FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS



Photo: Indigenous Mundurukú men at the Belo Monte Dam project in the Brazilian Amazon. Indigenous communities appear to be on the frontline of the rise in violence. © Taylor Weidman Zuma Wire ZUMAPRESS.com

## A sharp increase in killings

Worldwide, between 2002 and 2013, known killings of environmental and land defenders have dramatically increased. Three times as many people were killed in 2012 than 10 years before. Overall, we have documented 908 people in 35 countries who have died during this period because of their work on environment and land issues. Eleven defenders have also been forcibly “disappeared” and are presumed dead. Beyond the killings lie a wide range of non-fatal threats such as intimidation, violence and others that we have not recorded in this research, but which pose great risks to defenders and their families and act as a deterrent to further activism.

An environment and land activist has been killed on average at least once a week during this time period. In the past four years, this has doubled to an average of two people a week, while no fortnight has passed without a fatality.

2012 was the bloodiest year yet, with 147 deaths recorded. This continued an unbroken upward trend observed since 2008. A time lag on reporting means that killings in 2013 are likely to be higher than the 95 documented so far.

The deaths are mostly assassinations of specific individuals, or extrajudicial killings in the context of demonstration and protest actions or assassinations of specific individuals. The principal causes leading to these deaths are opposition to land-grabbing and unfair land ownership, large-scale mining operations, deforestation, illegal logging and hydro-electric projects. Other environmental issues linked to killings include pollution, waste disposal, toxic and radioactive contamination, protection of seas and coastlines, wetlands and wildlife conservation.

The data shows how indigenous peoples, landless groups and peasant movements are on the frontline of this upsurge in violence. We have documented 92 events with 115 victims related to indigenous peoples. This is a conservative figure as under-reporting of whether a victim’s indigenous identity is likely, and because cases related to indigenous people often take place in remote areas.

## ANNUAL NUMBER OF DEATHS OF LAND AND ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENDERS BY COUNTRY

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	TOTAL
ARGENTINA							1		2	1	3		7
BRAZIL	43	73	39	39	39	29	28	27	34	28	36	33	448
CAMBODIA				5	1	3			1		3		13
CHAD											5		5
CHILE	1												1
CHINA				3		1				1			5
COLOMBIA				1					1	27	8	15	52
CONGO, DR									1		4		5
COSTA RICA												1	1
ECUADOR		1								1			2
EL SALVADOR								3		1			4
GHANA				1									1
GUATEMALA		3						1	5		6	6	21
HONDURAS		2			2	1	3	1	26	36	28	10	109
INDIA					2	1			1	2			6
INDONESIA						1			3	2			6
KAZAKHSTAN												1	1
KENYA					1								1
MALAYSIA						1							1
MEXICO		2		2	2	2	1	7	7	4	10	3	40
NEPAL								1					1
NICARAGUA										2		1	3
PAKISTAN								1		2		1	4
PANAMA										1		1	2
PAPUA NEW GUINEA												4	4
PARAGUAY											10		10
PERU	1	1	2	1	3	1	5	9	3	11	15	6	58
PHILIPPINES	2			4	14	2	2	4	9	8	15	7	67
RUSSIAN FEDERATION						1						4	5
SIERRA LEONE										1			1
SRI LANKA									1				1
SUDAN					3								3
THAILAND	4	2	3	1					1	1	3	1	16
UKRAINE								1			1		2
VENEZUELA		1										1	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>908</b>

# GLOBAL FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

## CONTINUED

*“Land and environmental rights are interconnected. Activists and communities protecting their land rights are those on the frontline of ecosystem stewardship. They are the first ones to be attacked. We work with them to combat criminalisation of peaceful protest and end impunity.”*

— Luca Miggiano, Secretariat of the International Land Coalition

### Geographical area

Global Witness found credible evidence of killings and enforced disappearances for the period 2002-2013 in 36 different countries. The problem is particularly prevalent in Central and South America. The death toll in Brazil accounts for just under half of the recorded killings, with a regular annual rate of between 30 and 40 deaths, while in Honduras, 93 known killings relate to the live conflict in the Bajo Aguán valley over palm oil and land redistribution. The World Bank's private lending arm, the International Finance Corporation, recently admitted failings in its social and environmental safeguards after it was shown to have lent US\$30 million to agribusiness Dinant, a company accused of assassinations and forced evictions of farmers in this region.<sup>25</sup>

Parts of Asia also account for significant numbers of killings of defenders. A contributing factor could be that, like South America, some Asian countries have strong social movements and awareness of rights, with good civil society monitoring of environmental and land issues. The Philippines is the worst-hit country in Asia with 67 known killings, the majority over mining conflicts.

Our dataset shows a high incidence of killings of defenders in the Philippines, Thailand and Cambodia, countries where land-grabbing and deforestation – the drivers of much of the violence recorded in this report – are rife.

Based on what we can prove, there appears to be significant under-reporting in Myanmar, Central Asian countries, China and West Papua, where human rights monitoring is prohibited or restricted.

As part of this study we trawled extensively for information on killings in Africa but found very little reliable evidence. Given the prevalence of land, forest and mining disputes across the continent, this is unlikely to mean defenders are not being threatened or killed. Instead, it may be due to limited monitoring and documentation of the problem as capacity and resources of government and civil society organisations are restricted, especially in rural areas. There are a number of live situations where activists are known to face grave threats in Africa, for example in Virunga National Park in the Democratic Republic of Congo.<sup>26</sup>



Photo: Community groups protesting against land grabs clash with police in Cambodia in 2012. Asia-Pacific is the world's second worst hit region, after Latin America. © Jeff Vize

### Main drivers:

#### Land grabbing and unfair land distribution

Land rights form the backdrop to the majority of the killings we have researched. At least 661 – over two-thirds – of the known killings took place in the context of conflicts over the ownership, control and use of land, in combination with other factors. In the remainder of cases, land conflicts were linked to other issues such as mining operations, pollution or deforestation.

Globally, competition for land is rapidly intensifying. The World Bank has reported a fourfold increase in global large-scale farmland investments between 2001 and 2009,<sup>27</sup> largely driven by agribusiness. Global Witness' work has shown how companies and governments routinely strike secretive deals for large chunks of land and forests to grow cash crops such as rubber, palm oil and soya. In the process, they push communities off their land and out of their homes, often with the help of state forces.<sup>28</sup> The direct impacts on local people in terms of food prices and poverty are often severe, as are the overall effects on global food security. Since 2008, the world has seen a series of food price crises which have triggered widespread social unrest – in this period the number of environmental and land-related killings has also doubled to two a week.

Unlike most other commodity trades, the agribusiness industry is not regulated. Voluntary commitments to end

land grabbing (such as the Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure<sup>29</sup>) have not been met, so laws are needed to protect the environment and local people, and they must be enforced. This research shows that in the absence of such measures, citizens are increasingly left to defend these basic rights themselves, often with lethal consequences.

The conflict over land is worsening – some of the most egregious cases have taken place in the past few years. On 15 June 2012, security forces in Curuguaty, Paraguay, killed at least nine landless campesinos who had occupied a soy estate.<sup>30,31</sup> Exhaustive NGO investigations demonstrate strong evidence that these killings were executions, not accidents related to crowd control or self-defence police claimed.<sup>32</sup> This is one of the largest single losses of life we have found through our research.

Meanwhile between 2010 and 2013, 93 small-scale farmers were killed in the Bajo Aguán valley in Honduras, the site of a protracted dispute between landowners and campesinos over the distribution of farmland.<sup>33</sup> And in Kratie, Cambodia on 16 May 2012, military police shot dead a 14-year-old Hen Chantha during an operation to evict a village to make way for a plantation.<sup>34,35</sup> Her death follows six killings related to land grabbing in Cambodia since 2005.

## Main drivers: mining and extractive industries

As global demand for resources rises, extractive companies are increasingly pushing their operations' frontiers into new, more remote areas. The expansion of mining activities in and around areas of indigenous, community-held or contested land has given rise to many grave conflicts. The environmental effects of mining are well-documented<sup>36</sup> and violence against these opposing projects is increasing, for example in Mexico and Central America.<sup>37</sup>

At least 150 killings have taken place in the context of struggles with mining and extractive projects. Many of these have taken place during protests. In Peru, for example, between 2002 and 2013 there were 46 extrajudicial killings of demonstrators at mining sites around the country.<sup>3</sup>



Above: © CIFOR



Above: Logging trucks in Liberia. In the last two years alone, 23 killings were connected to deforestation and illegal logging. © Global Witness

## Main drivers: illegal logging and deforestation

We have also documented the deliberate targeting of activists who lead or participate in organised opposition to the expansion of mining activities. In the Philippines, 41 defenders were killed opposing mining or extractive operations, many by unknown gunmen on motorcycles. In Colombia in 2012 and 2013, seven anti-mining activists were killed in connection with their resistance to mining and extractive companies operating on indigenous lands. Four of those killed belonged to the indigenous Awá group:

On 11 February 2012, in Turmaca municipality, Nariño, Gilberto Paí Canticús and Giovanni Rosero were shot dead by unknown gunmen on motorbikes.<sup>39 40 41</sup> They were members of a non-violent group of indigenous guards, established to defend ancestral lands. On 12 July 2012, Libio Guanga, indigenous Awá governor of Cartagena Alto reserve, was stabbed to death in Ricaurte village.<sup>42 43 44</sup> Statements from the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (ONIC) relate his murder to the arrival of mining in the area. On 29 November 2013, another indigenous Awá leader, Pai, died after being twice shot in the head by unknown gunmen.<sup>45</sup> Pai had led attempts to stop the contamination of his community's water supply by oil spills.<sup>46</sup>

The industrial logging trade's expansion is taking a huge, unsustainable toll on the planet. Recent satellite analysis by the University of Maryland and others shows that an area of forest the size of 50 soccer pitches has been lost every minute since 2000.<sup>47</sup> These forests are home to half of all terrestrial plant and animal species, and soak up vast amounts of carbon that would otherwise accelerate climate change; the planet cannot survive without them

Logging is also taking a severe toll on humanity: 1.6 billion people depend on forests for their survival,<sup>48</sup> while about 60 million indigenous people are almost wholly dependent on them.<sup>49</sup> Our research suggests that these people and those who support them are increasingly putting their lives on the line to protect their forests and all that they provide.

Globally, from 2002-2013, 94 known killings and four enforced disappearances were connected to deforestation and illegal logging – in the past two years alone, 22 environmental defenders have been killed in nine countries over this issue. The logging trade operates in remote areas with weak law enforcement, and is widely recognised as one of the most corrupt on the planet. Worth at least

US\$30 billion annually, the global illegal logging trade has strong links to organised crime.<sup>50</sup> For example, the UN estimates that illegal logging is the second biggest source of revenue for criminal syndicates in Asia-Pacific.<sup>51</sup>

Two-thirds of documented killings were in Latin America, which may be partly attributable to renewed contest over forest rights. A third of forests in Latin America are owned by the state, compared to 66 per cent in Asia and 98 per cent in Africa.<sup>52</sup> Given the increasing influence of large landowners looking for new land to grow commodities for export, there is more likely to be contested forest area in Latin America and this may lead to conflict. In 2013, Interpol announced it had arrested nearly 200 people and seized around US\$8 million worth of illegal timber in a major international crackdown on illegal logging and timber trafficking in Central and South America.<sup>53</sup>

In the case of Mexico, some killings are linked to organised crime and the high levels of violence associated with it:

In the town of Cherán, in Michoacán, Mexico, three killings in 2012 and 2013 continue a trend in violence linked to the community's struggle against illegal logging. Following

two killings in 2009<sup>54</sup> and growing deforestation, in April 2011 the Cherán community blockaded the town, evicted the police and started denying logging trucks access to the area.<sup>55 56</sup> In the subsequent months, Pedro Juárez Urbina and Armando Hernández Estrada were shot dead by an armed group of illegal loggers whilst manning a barricade.<sup>57 58</sup> Former city mayor Leopoldo Juárez Urbina was abducted by unknown perpetrators on 8 May 2011 and found shot dead the next day. Ten days later, Domingo Chávez Juárez disappeared and was then found burned, his body decomposed on the foothills of a nearby volcano.<sup>59</sup> On 16 May 2012, the killings continued: Jesús Sebastián Ortiz, a 70-year-old farmer disappeared and was later found dead.<sup>60 61</sup> Ortiz was a member of the Elders' Council of Cherán, the autonomous municipal council set up to govern the town. On 8 July 2012, unknown perpetrators abducted farmers Urbano Macías Rafael and Guadalupe Gerónimo Velázquez. They were also found dead 30 km away near the town of Zacapu.<sup>62 63</sup>



# GLOBAL FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

CONTINUED

*“Environmental defenders are our outspoken voices. These are the people who are telling the world what’s going on.”*

— Natalia Viana, Pública – Agência de Reportagem e Jornalismo Investigativo, Brazil

## Type of perpetrator – state and non-state actors

Of the 908 killings documented, we have been able to find information about perpetrators in 294 cases from 33 countries. In this set of cases, 69 specifically named perpetrators are alleged to have been involved directly (as triggermen or getaway drivers) or indirectly (as ultimate masterminds) in the killing of 42 environmental and land defenders.

In some cases, while the identity of the perpetrator is not known, there is information about their affiliations and occupation. In 52 killings, the perpetrators have been identified as military or police units. Some deaths were the result of excessive force or extrajudicial killings during protests or demonstrations. In countries such as the Philippines, there is evidence to show killings were at the behest of private sector interests or political actors.

In the majority of cases the identity of perpetrators is unknown. At best, the sources available to us contain details of how many perpetrators there were, how they killed the victim and how they got away. We have been able to find this information in the cases of 171 killings where perpetrators operate mostly in small groups of between two and six people. Many of these are suspected operators for private interests such as individual landowners.

## Institutionalized impunity

Impunity is a prevalent feature in the vast majority of cases of killings of environmental and land defenders. From the research gathered for this report, we have found that only 34 perpetrators are currently facing charges. We have documented only 10 perpetrators who were tried and convicted between 2002 and 2013.

This low figure, although illustrative of severe levels of impunity for these crimes, is also a result of the lack of information available. While information generated at the time of killings can be captured, follow-up reporting on cases is much harder to find.

Although conviction rates are minuscule, in some prominent cases political pressure has borne fruit. For example, two of the three assassins arrested for the high-profile murder of Brazilian ecologists José Cláudio Ribeiro da Silva and Maria do Espírito Santo in May 2011 have been convicted.<sup>64 65</sup> Similarly, the notorious killing of Jose Doton in the Philippines on 16 May 2008, the result of his opposition to the San Roque Dam, has led to convictions.<sup>66 67</sup> However, it is extremely rare that the true authors of such crimes are ever held accountable.

The fact that some high-profile killings have led to convictions suggest that the vast majority of unsolved cases are hampered by a grave lack of political will.



Above: The elderly Frédéric Moloma Tuka was beaten to death during protests over logging operations in the Democratic Republic of Congo. © Greenpeace DRC

## Lack of attention, systematic information and monitoring

The 908 killings in our database are substantiated by more than 1000 distinct articles and reports from NGOs, media organisations, research groups, national human rights institutions and commissions of inquiry. All are published publicly and are currently available online.

But this kind of information is hard to find and verify. Often, published information is partial or lacking the basic details needed to help establish links to the wider environmental or social context. Further, with some notable exceptions, such as the work of the Comissão Pastoral da Terra in Brazil, cases are rarely tracked over time. It is unusual to find publicly available information about the most recent state of the case, or its progress through a legal system. More rigorous and extensive field and desk investigations in specific contexts are needed, which adhere to internationally recognised and accepted definitions and data-gathering methodologies.

Lack of coverage is another factor leading to gaps in data gathering. Many cases occur in remote rural areas, where capacity to collect and safeguard evidence is very limited and the risks of doing so are high. Countries with weak human rights monitoring networks or limited press freedoms may not record some cases of violence against environmental and land defenders, particularly if there is no presence of civil society-linked groups in remote areas.

Many killings take place in countries where the rule of law is weak, with insufficient government monitoring of human rights violations, poor judicial systems and few press freedoms. The involvement of non-state actors in many cases means often there is a lack of evidence of the identity of either the direct perpetrators or the masterminds of the crime. The common scenario of two gunmen on a motorcycle, hired through a chain of contacts, makes accountability a true challenge.

A final important consideration is the lack of attention currently paid to this issue by the international community. One conclusion of our qualitative research is that a wide range of excellent work is being done by different organisations on this issue in specific contexts, but there is little common understanding of its thematic scale, urgency and causes. Within the UN and other bodies, it appears so far to have fallen into the gaps between mechanisms designed to protect human rights, such as the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and those agencies mandated to protect the environment and promote sustainable development. Global Witness wants to see this issue mandated and addressed in its own right within the UN and other bodies.



Photo: José and Maria da Silva were murdered by masked gunmen. José's ear was ripped out as proof of execution. © Felipe Milanez

## General overview and socio-political context

On December 22 1988, Brazilian rubber tapper Chico Mendes was assassinated after years of fighting to protect forests and farmers' livelihoods from increasingly powerful business and economic interests.<sup>68</sup> Today, 25 years after his death, Brazil is the most dangerous country to be an environmental and land defender.

In part, this can be attributed to Brazil's land ownership patterns, which are among the most concentrated and unequal in the world. Despite strong overall economic growth driven by agribusiness exports, much of Brazil's population remains poor and the bulk of their food is produced on small and medium-sized farms.<sup>69</sup> This brings subsistence farmers and indigenous groups into conflict with powerful, well-connected landowners over who has the legal right to forests and land. Between 2002 and 2013, 448 environmental and land activists are known to have been murdered, accounting for around half the global total, with indigenous communities particularly affected.

Dr Clifford Welch, Professor of the Contemporary History of Brazil from the University of California, says:

*"The main model of land usage values commodity production and large land holdings, and devalues nature, devalues forest. It devalues the people who already live there, and tends to then push them out of the way."*<sup>70</sup>

These land conflicts in Brazil are also closely linked to deforestation in the Amazon, which accounted for 68 per cent of all murders linked to land disputes in Brazil in 2012.<sup>71</sup> Many of these take place in recently logged forest areas, which are then opened up to further commercial uses such as cattle farming and soya plantations.

The high number of known cases in Brazil is also partly attributable to a greater awareness and better monitoring of this issue compared to other parts of the world. Brazil has a strong civil society with wide-ranging observation of human rights concerns, with several groups focusing specifically on protecting rights to the environment and land. The Brazil data for this report was provided by the Comissão Pastoral de Terra – an organisation that works with rural communities in compiling a comprehensive annual report on land conflicts in Brazil. The strength of this data is a contributing factor to the high levels of killings that are able to be recorded in the country; it also highlights the need for systematic recording of fatalities in other badly affected countries.

As elsewhere in the world, impunity for killings linked to environmental and land issues is a major problem, with fewer than 10 percent of cases taken to court and just over 1 per cent resulting in a conviction.<sup>72</sup>

## Main driver: land conflict and illegal logging

Conflict over land and forest rights is the main driver of defender killings in Brazil, with the Amazon being the frontier of the struggle over indigenous and environmental rights. Driven by the powerful agricultural interests at the heart of Brazil's export-focused economy, farms push ever deeper into the forest and spawn many conflicts. Natalia Viana, of the Brazilian investigative NGO Publica, has looked at this issue over time:

*"The most conflicted areas are those where there is recent deforestation. First the illegal loggers come and take out the wood. Then the second industry is cattle, and then some soya. This is the natural cycle of the Amazon frontier."*<sup>73</sup>

In Global Witness' experience of investigating the logging trade, this process is not unusual. Industrial logging in untouched tropical forests paves the way for plantations and other commercial activity, triggering a cycle of decline that brings few lasting benefits to communities and spells the beginning of the end for the forest.

Despite some successes in recent years in efforts to curb logging in the Amazon, Brazil's deforestation rate jumped 28 per cent in 2013.<sup>74</sup> Sixty-one per cent of deforestation occurred in two of the states worst-affected by acts of violence against activists: Pará (41 per cent) and Mato Grosso (20 per cent). Brazil amended its forest code in May 2012 to give amnesty provisions for illegal deforestation<sup>75</sup> and concentrate land ownership further, raising fears that the extension of large farms into the forest will continue and the culture of impunity for environmental crimes will deepen.<sup>76</sup> Paulo Adario of Greenpeace comments;

*"If you don't punish crimes, you give a good signal for the future crimes: if nobody was punished, and the last government gave in to pressure for an amnesty for everybody, why are they not going to do the same thing in five years from now?"*<sup>77</sup>

## Main perpetrators: landowners and loggers

In many parts of the Brazilian Amazon, legal title for lands on which communities have lived on for generations is unclear or non-existent. There are also serious gaps in the rule of law and a weak state presence in remote territories

often covering many hundreds of miles.<sup>78</sup> Meanwhile, logging and agricultural business interests hold enormous influence in regions where killings have been perpetrated against activists.

In Mato Grosso do Sul province, for example, the political class has long been dominated by agribusiness interests including beef, soya and sugar cane. These elites have clashed frequently with the Guarani and Kaiowa people, who have settled in the region over a number of centuries. Half the killings of defenders occurred in the period in this region, along with 250 other indigenous persons between 2003 and 2010.<sup>79</sup> Of this, Dr Welch remarks;

*"We've seen a real uptick in violence against the Guarani and Kaiowa in the last 10 years that coincides very much with the pressure to produce agrofuels (...) You can practically map the deaths with that new demand, particularly in the centre-west region where the indigenous population density is higher and sugarcane and soybean agribusiness interests have come to predominate the political and judicial power structure of the states of Mato Grosso and Mato Grosso do Sul"*<sup>80</sup>

## José Cláudio Ribeiro da Silva and his wife Maria do Espírito Santo da Silva

A case that shocked Brazil and the global environmental movement was the 2011 killing of environmentalist José Cláudio Ribeiro da Silva and his wife Maria do Espírito Santo da Silva:

On 24 May 2011 José Claudio Ribeiro da Silva, also known by his nickname "Ze Claudio", was shot dead along with his wife, Maria do Espírito Santo da Silva, in Nova IPIXUNA, a rural town in the northeast Brazilian Amazon state of Para. They were murdered by masked gunmen in an ambush near the Praia Alta-Piranheira sustainable reserve where they had worked producing nuts and natural oils for the past 24 years. José Cláudio had one of his ears ripped out by the killers as proof of execution.<sup>81</sup>

The couple had denounced the encroachment of illegal loggers in the reserve and had previously received threats against their lives. In November 2010, during a speech at an international event in Manaus, José Cláudio allayed concerns that he was at risk of being killed due to his stance against loggers that were illegally exploiting the rainforest.<sup>82</sup> Shortly before his death, José Cláudio had been injured after shots were fired into his backyard. Both he and his wife were members of the National Council of Extractive Populations, an NGO founded by Chico Mendes for the preservation of forests in the Amazon.



Photo: Indigenous leader Jimmy Liguyon was shot dead in front of his wife. He had refused to sign permits allowing mining in ancestral lands.  
© Human Rights Watch

## General overview and socio-political context

In the Philippines, the risks to environmental and land defenders are acute. Between 2002 and 2013, 67 activists were killed and two have disappeared, presumed dead. People have been killed opposing numerous environmental threats including illegal logging,<sup>83</sup> waste dumping,<sup>84</sup> expansion of biofuel plantations<sup>85</sup> and the construction of large-scale hydroelectric dams.<sup>86</sup> Yet it is opposition to mining operations that dominates the suspected motives behind most of the killings. Conflicts over mining account for 42 murders of environmental and land defenders since 2002.

Our research shows that of 67 confirmed killings, only two perpetrators have been imprisoned for their actions. The vast majority appear to enjoy total impunity for their crimes. Of the few cases where the identity of the perpetrators have been documented, state forces are suspected of being behind the killings. Key state institutions, including the judiciary and law enforcement agencies, are weak and the military and police are known to commit human rights violations with little accountability.<sup>87</sup>

## Main driver: mining conflict

The Philippines is rich in natural resources and has a significant mining industry.<sup>88</sup> But there is very little transparency in this sector, with mining contracts and data seldom made public.<sup>89</sup> Rules requiring mining companies to consult with and gain consent from communities who live in the areas in which they seek to operate are not consistently followed.<sup>90</sup> The Philippines has yet to pass a freedom of information law<sup>91</sup> and was ranked 129 out of 181 countries in Transparency International's 2011 corruption index.<sup>92</sup>

Land conflicts related to the mining sector are a highly politicised issue in the Philippines. Clemente Bautista Jnr, National Coordinator of the Kalikasan People's Network for the Environment (Kalikasan-PNE) says:

*"A part of the government's counter-insurgency program is the harassment and silencing of political activists, to protect its priority projects and economic policies. One of these is allowing the entry and operation of large scale mining. This mining liberalisation has resulted in various human rights*

*violations, particularly land grabbing, community displacement of peasants, fisher folk and indigenous peoples areas."*<sup>93</sup>

The capacity and willingness of the judicial system to deliver justice for victims and their families is low in the Philippines, where "involuntary disappearance" only recently became a recognised crime and few killings have been resolved.<sup>94</sup>

It is in this context that our research found 41 killings of environmental and land defenders over the past 12 years, linked to protests and opposition to mining in the Philippines. Many of those killed were directly involved in resisting the operations of international and domestic mining companies. For example:

On 5 March 2012, indigenous leader Jimmy Liguyon was shot dead in front of his family.<sup>95</sup> Reports suggest he was killed for not signing a certificate of ancestral domain to grant mining rights for an area of 52,000 hectares of the Matigsalog tribe in San Fernando.<sup>96</sup>

The bodies of Manuela and Expedito Albarrillo were found by relatives in their village in San Teodoro, Mindoro Oriental on 8 April 2002. Earlier that day, at 5am, eight armed men used force to remove the Albarrillo couple from their hut.<sup>97</sup> The victims were reportedly active in opposing the mining operations of Crew Minerals in Mindoro Oriental.<sup>99</sup>

Romeo "Romy" Sanchez, a leader of the Save the Abra River Movement (STARM) was shot dead in Bagiuo City, Benguet, on 9 March 2005.<sup>100</sup> NGO reports say Sanchez was a campaigner against mining operations in the Illocos and Cordillera areas of the Philippines.<sup>101</sup>

## Main perpetrators: security forces

The most common form of killing of Filipino activists is contract-style, by two-man teams on motorcycles. Most perpetrators are unknown but of those documented, a striking number are alleged to have been killed by state agents. We found that 14 killings can be attributed to the armed forces, three to local government officials and two to the police. The case of Gerardo Ortega demonstrates the deep political ties to some of the assassinations:

At 10.30am on 24 January 2011, Gerardo Ortega, a well-known environmentalist and anti-corruption campaigner, was shot dead whilst trying on clothes in a shop in Puerto

Princesa City, Palawan. Ortega was an outspoken critic of Palawan Governor Joel Reyes, having previously made an unsuccessful gubernatorial [Governorship] run himself. Ortega opposed illegal logging in the region and spear-headed a campaign called "Ten Million Signatures for the Banning of Mining in Palawan".<sup>102</sup> Ten people have been charged and are facing trial for his murder. Their roles in the killing range from pulling the trigger, being a lookout, procuring the weapon and ammunition, to planning and ordering the action.<sup>103</sup> In May 2012, a number of senior politicians were charged with masterminding the killing but in March 2013 were cleared by the Supreme Court after procedural errors by the Department of Justice.<sup>104</sup><sup>105</sup>

## The case of Juvy Capion

A particularly harrowing case is the alleged extrajudicial killing by the Philippines Armed Forces of an indigenous woman and her children in the mining areas of South Cotabato on the island of Mindanao:

On 19 October 2012, in the village of Fayahlob in Mindanao, Juvy Capion and her two young sons were shot dead by soldiers of the 27th Infantry Battalion. A fact-finding mission by 30 NGOs found reports that the soldiers peppered her house with machine gun fire, before removing their dead bodies and leaving them outside.<sup>106</sup> An indigenous anti-mining activist, Juvy was also the wife of Daguil Capion, a leader of the B'laans indigenous peoples in South Cotabato. Daguil had taken up armed resistance against the Tampakan Gold Copper Project and the security forces protecting it. The Tampakan project is operated by Sagittarius Mining Inc (SMI), an initiative in which Glencore-Xstrata owns a majority stake.<sup>107</sup>

The Tampakan open-pit gold copper mine has been condemned by some environmental experts as it lies 10km from Mount Matutum, an active volcano.<sup>108</sup> Long-term opposition to the project from the B'laans indigenous community appears to have led to the killings of at least seven<sup>109</sup> leading figures, including Juvy Capion. Three children have also been killed in these attacks. While peaceful protest continues, the struggle has also become armed, further increasing militarisation and instability in the area.

# CONCLUSION

Global Witness campaigns for a world in which all can thrive without destroying the biosphere – or each other. For 20 years, we have worked to show how unsustainable and unfair management of natural resources fuels conflict, encourages corruption and does irreparable damage to the environment.

In this time, we have seen communities, NGO workers, individuals and journalists intimidated, attacked and killed resisting the exploitation of their environment and land. This new research shows that as pressure on the world's finite resources intensifies, such threats are increasing sharply. There can be few starker or more obvious symptoms of the global environmental crisis than this dramatic upturn in killings of ordinary people who are protecting rights to land and a healthy environment. Yet it is going largely unnoticed and those responsible tend to get away with it.

Far too little is being done to tackle this problem at all levels – and this must change. Large land and resource deals continue to be struck behind closed doors, without the consent of those who live on the land concerned, or sufficient consideration of the human and environmental cost. National governments appear to collude with unscrupulous companies in this exploitation, and fail to investigate crimes or seek redress for victims. State and private security forces are regularly used to protect private interests against ordinary people, many of whom do not know their rights or have the capacity to exercise them.

The lack of accountability at the national level is compounded by an inadequate international response. NGOs, donor governments and international bodies have so far failed to collectively recognise, monitor or address this problem. Indeed, many activists are themselves unaware of their “human rights defenders” classification, and often possess no knowledge of protection mechanisms or international human rights law. Currently, the issue is often treated as a subset of wider human rights abuses and not as a specific problem with distinct root causes. This is why the UN's Human Rights Council should pass a resolution specifically addressing the heightened threat posed to environmental and land defenders. Similarly, regional human rights bodies such as the ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations), the Human Rights Commission and African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights should establish mechanisms that provide emergency protection for activists.



Photo: Governments gathering for climate talks in Peru in December 2014 must act to protect those defending the environment. © CIFOR

In addition to protecting rights, action is urgently required to protect the environment at national and global levels. Land, forests and the biosphere itself are all finite, yet we are liquidating them faster than ever, largely to feed soaring, wasteful consumption in the rich world. This means that in many developing countries, indigenous groups and local communities who defend their economic, social and cultural rights are brought into conflict with powerful vested interests and stigmatised for being “against development”.

Yet a model of economic development that undermines planetary life-support systems and kills and intimidates those who would protect them cannot be called “development” at all. Human progress can't be based on the unfair and unsustainable exploitation of natural resources in lower income countries to feed overconsumption elsewhere. Nor, while that continues, can the crisis described in this report be stopped. It is more likely to worsen. A new approach to management of the world's resources is required, and it must begin with communities being able to manage and benefit – securely and in environmentally sustainable ways – from their own natural resources.

The time for action is now. Governments, international bodies and companies must do their duty. They have a duty to address the flawed economic models which are placing such a strain on the environment. And they have a duty to protect citizens from harm and bring those responsible for crimes to justice. If they do not, more killings will take place, and perpetrators will continue their violence, secure in the knowledge it will go unnoticed and unpunished.

# ANNEX: METHODOLOGY AND SCOPE

- The subjects of this research are environmental and land defenders, whom we define as people who take peaceful action to protect environmental or land rights, whether in their own personal capacity or professionally. Environmental and land defenders are human rights defenders, and as such are afforded without discrimination all the protections specified in the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.<sup>110</sup>
- The scope of violations covered in the research range from extrajudicial killings to murders and enforced disappearances. Extrajudicial killings often involve official state security forces, organisations controlled by the state or organisations that should be controlled by the state. In a large number of the documented killings, the perpetrators are either unknown or non-state actors, such as paramilitary groups, agents of organised crime and people in positions of power. We have classified these as murders that should be considered common crimes. While they are not included in the analysis in this document, we have also researched a number of attempted killings. Behind the rising number of killings lies a wide range of threats including intimidation, arbitrary detention, violence and other abuses that environmental and land defenders face on a daily basis, but it has not been possible to measure these within this research.
- Geographically, we have not excluded any countries and our data includes cases from every continent. However, given time and resource limitations we have concentrated our proactive efforts on regions where the problem is considered to be most acute, such as Asia Pacific and the Americas,<sup>111</sup> and where we believe it to be under-reported – that is, Africa.
- The period of time covered by the research is 1 January 2002 to 31 December 2013. Our first briefing, *A Hidden Crisis*, covered until the end of 2011. The research for this second report was undertaken between September 2013 and March 2014.

To identify cases and uncover reliable sources, we have used a three-step process:

- **Opportunistic:** we took the initial dataset of over 700 cases and 141 sources identified in our 2012 survey and further researched each case and source. This identified more potential leads to investigate. We have also removed some cases that failed to meet our new criteria for verification (see below).
- **Systematic:** we looked at 74 countries in the following regions as defined by the UN: Africa (Southern, Middle, Eastern, Western), Asia (South Eastern), The Americas (Central, South). In each of the 74 countries we searched for recent communications made by Special Procedures of the UN Human Rights Council<sup>112</sup> to the governments in question and looked at the documentation provided by stakeholders and the UN High Commission for Human Rights (UNHCHR) in the UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review of Human Rights (UPR) sessions.<sup>113</sup> Further detail was added to the resultant cases and reports found by using specialised resources such as human rights search engine HuriSearch,<sup>114</sup> which indexes around 5,000 human rights websites.
- **Partner-based verification:** where possible, we submitted our initial findings to in-country or regional partners for further research.

In cases that met the broad scope outlined above, inclusion in this report's analysis depended on meeting or exceeding the following criteria:

- There was a credible, published and currently publicly available online source of information. We have archived over 970 sources during our research.
- That the victim was named, that the type of act and method of violence was specified, and that the exact date and precise location of the killing was documented.
- That in each case, there was further biographical information about the victim, such as their occupation, organisational and political affiliations, and where relevant, their ethnic or indigenous identity.
- That there was a clear, proximate and documented connection to an environment or land issue.

We have structured data about the cases using the HURIDOCs Event Standard Formats and Micro-Thesauri,<sup>115</sup> an approach which is widely used to manage and analyse material of this nature.

All cases included in this report's analysis meet the scope and standards we have set. As with all criteria and standards, they are challenged by what we have found during the course of investigation. There have been many reports of killings which did not meet the particular evidential standard for this report but warrant further investigation. Here are some examples:

- In the Lower Omo Valley in Ethiopia, there are reports that in 2012-2013, between 10 and 150 killings took place in a dispute over water rights.<sup>116</sup> However, we were unable to find secondary sources to corroborate this.
- In Myanmar, NGO reports cover 107 killings that allegedly took place during the construction and operation of the Kanbawk to Myaing Kalay oil pipeline between 2002 and 2009.<sup>117</sup> Unfortunately, we were not able to establish contact with the organisations concerned in the time available, so were unable to corroborate this information.
- Reports in Venezuela suggest there have been over 200 killings of campesino organisers documented by the Ezequiel Zamora National Farmers Front over the last decade.<sup>118</sup> However, we were unable to find sources where these cases are listed and evidenced in the research period.
- In August 2013 at the platinum mine in Marikana, South Africa, 34 protestors were shot dead during a union-led demonstration about working conditions. A strong enough link to environmental issues was not found in this case. While set in the context of mining, with its significant environmental and social effects, the immediate concern here was the excessive use of force against workers striking for better conditions at a specific facility.<sup>119 120 121</sup>
- In Indonesia in 2011, 15-20 people were reported killed at the headquarters of a West Papua armed liberation group;<sup>122 123</sup> a further three people were reported killed while attending an indigenous peoples congress.<sup>124 125 126</sup> There is also information about killings of nine indigenous people but with no close links to environmental or land-related motives.<sup>127</sup>
- In Zimbabwe, during three weeks in October and November 2008, Human Rights Watch reports that Zimbabwean armed forces killed at least 83 informal diamond miners in Chiadzwa, near the Marange diamond field. The research is excellent, but the ongoing dangers to witnesses and the families of victims means few details about the victims were mentioned, so we have excluded it from this report.<sup>128</sup>

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• *East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project (EHAHRDP), Uganda*

• *Secretariat of the International Land Coalition (ILC), Italy*

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Global Witness, 6th Floor, Buchanan House,  
30 Holborn, London EC1N 2HS, United Kingdom

Phone +44 207 492 5820 Fax: +44 207 492 5821  
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