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Violence Exposure in Human Rights Defenders' Work

Marko Carrasco Lundgren
SIT Graduate Institute

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VIOLENCE EXPOSURE IN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS' WORK

Marko Antonio Carrasco Lundgren

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Advisor: Professor John Ungerleider, EdD

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Student name: Marko Antonio Carrasco Lundgren

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Gracias a Ingrid, por incondicionalmente creer en mí, siempre.

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ABSTRACT

The work carried out by Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) is fundamental for a more just and democratic society. Therefore, the acts of aggression against them, whether committed by individuals, the State, armed groups or corporative interests, constitute an indirect attack against the rights of the whole population. By restricting access to information and limiting political participation, these aggressions impede society from actively engaging in public affairs, something that ultimately takes the power away from the people.

From a perspective empathetic to HRDs, this Independent Practitioner Inquiry Capstone paper (IPIC) explores possible causes of violence exposure in HRDs' work and its consequences, some of the actions that are being developed to confront this violence and also, potential pathways of how to better address risk in rough contexts. The work is the result of working with the Protection and Defense Program of Article 19 in Mexico City during the summer of 2017 and with the joint project "Protection and Welfare at the Time of Reporting" implemented by the Plurinational Legislative Assembly (PLA) of Bolivia and the Journalists Association of La Paz (JALP) during the spring of 2018 in La Paz.

Keywords: Violence, human rights, journalism, activism, risk, security.

INTRODUCTION

The night of September 26 of 2014 three buses travelling from Ayotzinapa to Mexico City with 43 rural college students - to participate, ironically, in the memorial of the students massacred by the government on 2 October 1968 in Tlatelolco - forcibly disappeared in Iguala, a city in the state of Guerrero. A year later a report by an independent group of experts appointed by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights revealed that the buses were attacked by officers from municipal, state and federal police corps, resulting in six people murdered, 40 wounded, and 43 disappeared. The case gave birth to Ayotzinapa protesters' constant chant: "*Fue el estado*" (It was the State).

On May 15 of 2017, 50-year-old Mexican journalist Javier Valdéz Cárdenas was murdered in Culiacán, Sinaloa. As a shockingly deliberate symbolism, he was shot twelve times outside his work place, *Ríodoce*, the only independent newspaper in the city, which is the heartland of the Sinaloa cartel. Javier's murder was an act of terror in the battle for power that followed the extradition to the United States of America of Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán, the head of the Sinaloa cartel, in January of 2017.

In Colombia, according to the Ombudsman's Office, a state body, the murder of a human rights defender is reported every three days. Those worst affected are the community, Indigenous or Afro-descendant leaders and those who defend the rights of the victims of the armed conflict, the oldest one in the region, in which a comprehensive peace agreement is still on hold. In Sudan a report published by the African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies (ACJPS) about the

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situation of Women Human Rights Defenders from June 2016 to February 2018 concludes that “the ideologues in power today tend to abuse these already oppressive laws in order to restrict women’s participation in public life. Women face unmerited legal action and trials, arbitrary arrest and incommunicado detention, prohibitions against travel and work, physical abuse, sexual harassment or assault and threats of violence or even death.” (ACJPS, 2018). In Turkey, Saudi Arabian journalist Jamal Khashoggi, who went to self-imposed exile in 2017 and was known as critical of the Saudi government, entered the Saudi Arabian consulate in Istanbul on October 2nd of 2018, but did not leave the building. Amid news reports claiming that he had been killed and dismembered inside. Initially the Saudi Arabian government denied the death, saying the journalist had left the consulate alive, but on October 20th they admitted that Khashoggi was killed inside the consulate, claiming he had been strangled to death after a fight had broken out. In Argentina on August 1st of 2017, in the midst of a confrontation between the Lof Cushamen Mapuche community in Patagonia and the Argentine Gendarmerie (border patrol), activist Santiago Maldonado went missing. Multiple witnesses saw Maldonado being detained by the Gendarmerie and put into a van. Maldonado's body was found months later in a nearby river with no signs of violence. The autopsy of the body indicated that Santiago's cause of death was "drowning by immersion" in the Chubut River.

We frequently hear about cases of human rights violations as facts themselves and about the direct victims such phenomenon generates. Whereas a large part of the work in the field is aimed at preventing this from happening, there is not enough reflection about the reality which those who work for the defense of human rights in the field confront, especially in adverse contexts where the daily performance of their work leads to a sustained violence exposure. The incidents raised in Mexico, Colombia, Sudan, Turkey and Argentina mentioned in the previous

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paragraphs illustrate the severity of the problem. In 2017, Front Line Defenders received reports on the murder of 312 human rights defenders in 27 countries; an analysis of the work of those killed is instructive: 67% were engaged in the defense of land, environmental and indigenous peoples' rights and nearly always in the context of mega projects, extractive industry and big business. With a problem that seems to be increasing in some areas of the planet - predominantly the poorest and most unequal - it is necessary to work on approaches that go beyond censure; although the latter is still important and should not be overlooked, reflecting empathically from a human rights defender's perspective opens up the possibility of imagining approaches better suited to their needs and proposals that can be used in the future as tools for both work and education.

The question guiding this research derives from the above: how should those human rights defenders, whose work entails some level of danger on a daily basis, constructively address risk? What brought me to this point was working with the Protection and Defense Program of Article 19 in Mexico City during the summer of 2017 and with the joint project "Protection and Welfare at the Time of Reporting" implemented by the Plurinational Legislative Assembly (PLA) of Bolivia and the Journalists Association of La Paz (JALP) during the spring of 2018 in La Paz. Article 19 monitors and analyzes abuses, publicizing the plight of individuals under attack and providing security training and security measures for journalists. The organization also actively demands transparency and accountability by testing government's transparency practices and access to information provisions, and by campaigning for the disclosure of information of public interest. The Protection and Defense Program, which I was a part of, is mainly responsible for three areas: (a) training journalists in protection and defense affairs, (b) documentation and disclosure of attacks on journalists and finally, (c) free legal

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advice to journalists and activists whose rights have been violated. On the other hand, PLA/JALP's pilot project seeks to apply Peace Journalism as a critical lens to diagnose whether the way in which information is disclosed by both journalists and public officials contributes to democratic strengthening or not at the present time.

Working with journalists was not a coincidence. Before starting my practicum, I found contradictory that the role of media in peacebuilding processes is not precisely a topic so often explored in the field of Peace Studies. Even considering that information flow is most often among the first elements of a society to be disrupted in an overt conflict, while covert conflict usually entails a systemic weakening of freedom of expression, generating a direct impact in the maintenance of a healthy democratic order. Therefore, the importance of working with the media in the field of peacebuilding lies in the fact that media is a double-edged sword. It can be a frightful weapon of violence when it propagates messages of intolerance or disinformation that manipulate public sentiment, but it can also be an instrument of conflict transformation, when the information it presents is reliable, respects human rights, and represents diverse views. The kind of media that upholds accountability, exposes malfeasance and enables a society to make well-informed choices is the precursor of democratic governance, it reduces conflict and fosters human security (Howard, 2002).

Nevertheless, on this occasion I will refer to human rights defenders in general and not exclusively to journalists. I accordingly intend, within the process of trying to answer my research question, to raise awareness on the violence that many human rights defenders working in adverse contexts face. The main goals are: first, to analyze the normalization of violence within the human rights field. I will take Mexico and Colombia as case studies for this purpose; second, to reflect on sustained violence exposure in human rights defenders' work and its

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implications. This means I will explore aspects such as the consequences of sustained exposure to violence and how they manifest, the notion of self-care as an act of political warfare and some pragmatic tools that have been developed to counteract the effects of sustained violence exposure; and third, to propose potential pathways that could lead to help breaking cycles of violence within the human rights field. Here I will present a very concrete and simple working scheme that speaks simultaneously to both peacekeeping and peacebuilding by suggesting the integration of two approaches' principles: Integrated Security and Peace Journalism. The foregoing is preceded by a review of some of the literature that has been written on the subject, which I hope will constitute a solid theoretical foundation to build upon.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Most of the literature on the struggle for human rights has focused on how they are constantly disregarded; nevertheless, little has been said about those who actively advocate for human rights in adverse contexts. Initially, a clear description of what human rights defender are and the scope of their work will be provided. Afterwards, the potential consequences of a sustained exposure to violence in the life of human rights defenders both personally and professionally are addressed by taking elements from the areas of Peace Studies and Conflict Transformation such as: nonviolent action, violence and its normalization and the risk-danger-security relationship. The potential of self-care as a restorative practice will also be included from a psychological perspective. Finally, Integrated Security and Peace Journalism will be presented as two approaches whose principles, if integrated, could constitute a tool that contributes to the well-being of human rights defenders through violence prevention and the breaking of cycles of violence.

Human Rights Defenders – what are they?

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Before the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms – frequently abbreviated to “Declaration on Human Rights Defenders” (DHRD) – was adopted by the UN in 1998, terms such as “activist”, “professional”, “worker” or “monitor” had been most common in the field of human rights. Since then and because it is seen as a more accurate and useful denomination, the name human rights defender (HRD) has been increasingly used. According to the DHRD, anyone – professional and non-professional as well - working for the promotion and protection of human rights (e.g. activists, journalists, lawyers, volunteers, etc.) or carrying out, even on an occasional basis, a human rights activity can be considered an HRD (OHCHR, 2018). Even so, they are defined foremost by what they do and it is through a description of their actions that the term can best be explained. According to Amnesty International UK (2018), a HRD might:

- Document abuses by collecting evidence of human rights violations.
- Raise awareness of abuses through public campaigns in the media, online and in their community.
- Report violations to international bodies like the UN.
- Put pressure on perpetrators of abuses to change their behavior.
- Lobby people in positions of influence and power (e.g. representatives of governments, corporations, and other non-state actors).
- Pursue legal avenues for justice through casework, advice and legal representation.
- Offer practical support to people who have survived human rights abuses (e.g. by offering temporary shelter or advising on how to seek justice).
- Educate people about their rights, teach them how to defend them and empower them to challenge those who deny them).

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The sensitive nature of human rights defenders' work means they and those close to them can be targeted by several kind of abuses from different actors such as governments, armed groups, security forces, businesses and even members of their own community. This happens when those parties feel like their power or authority is compromised or reputation called into question. The DHRD acknowledges the huge risks that defenders face. It outlines the collective responsibility of all states in the UN to ensure that defenders are supported in their work and protected from harm by stating what follows:

- Defend human rights
- Associate freely with others
- Document human rights abuses
- Seek resources for human rights work
- Criticize offending government bodies and agencies
- Access protection from the UN and regional mechanisms.

Human Rights defense, activism and nonviolence

Trying to catalogue the huge variety of contexts in which human rights defenders (HRDs) are active might be impractical. The DHRD refers to “individuals, groups and associations contributing to the effective elimination of all violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms of peoples and individuals” (Art. 5). Some of them advocate through professional activities, whether paid or voluntary (e.g. UN officials, NGO’s professionals, journalists, scholars) and there are others who act within non-professional contexts (e.g. students, activists, leaders of social organizations, indigenous leaders). Even so, common to most defenders are a strong determination and service-minded behavior, a commitment to international human rights standards and a belief in equality and in non-discrimination.

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Although the figure of HRDs is rooted in activism – note HRDs were still called "activists" some time ago - what mainly distinguish them are the non-use of violent means in their role and the way of conceiving institutions. In his article *"Activism, social and political"* (2007) Brian Martin tries to define concisely what activism is, its historical relevance, methods and the areas it covers. What is most notable is that while all kind of activism is an action on behalf of a cause, action that goes beyond what is conventional or routine, not all activism is peaceful as usually thought; it can also be used for aims such as attacking minorities or promoting war. Based on a typology developed by researcher Gene Sharp (1973), Martin also emphasizes the fact that among the methods of activism the use of violence is not ruled out. In this regard, he points out, for example, that from activism to armed struggle there is an intermediate point that is still considered activism. He mentions violence towards objects, of which sabotage is one variety. This can include, for example, damaging a pipeline, destroying genetically engineered crops, defacing a website or hacking bank accounts.

The causes of activism are diverse and respond to the vision and interests of a certain group. From activism, those humanly devised constraints that structure political, economic and social interactions that are better known as "institutions", are questioned. The latter are devised as formal rules (e.g. constitutions, laws, property rights, human rights) and informal restraints (sanctions, taboos, customs, traditions, codes of conduct) which existence is justified because they usually contribute to the perpetuation of order and safety within a society (North, 1991). The work for the defense of human rights does not necessarily entail questioning the institutions that govern life in society, rather it aims to make its compliance prevail as a way to guarantee the rights of people.

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The exclusive use of nonviolent means in the work for the defense of human rights can be justified essentially for two reasons: its potential effectiveness in meeting goals and not legitimizing the opponent's response. Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan analyze the above in their study "Why Civil Resistance Works. The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict" (2011). Based on empirical information (aggregated data on 323 violent and nonviolent resistance campaigns from 1900 to 2006 and the comparison of three case studies), the research sets three goals: "First, to determine whether violent or nonviolent resistance campaigns have a better record of achievement stated objectives; second, to explore which variables matter in contributing to campaign outcomes; and third, to discern whether structural factors influence nonviolence campaign failure or success" (Chenoweth & Stephan, 2011, p.15). The results show that major nonviolent campaigns have achieved success 53% of the time, compared with 26% for violent resistance campaigns. The authors identify two main reason for this success. "First, a campaign's commitment to nonviolent methods enhances its domestic and international legitimacy and encourages more broad-based participation in the resistance, which translates into increased pressure being brought to bear on the target. Recognition of the challenge's group grievances can translate into greater internal and external support for that group and alienation of the target regime, undermining the regime's main sources of political, economic and even military power. Second, they can easily justify violent counterattacks against armed insurgents, regime violence against nonviolence movements is more likely to backfire against the regime. Potentially sympathetic publics perceive violent militants as having maximalist or extremist goals beyond accommodation, but they perceive nonviolent resistance groups as less extreme, thus enhancing their appeal and facilitating the extraction of concessions through bargaining" (Chenoweth & Stephan, 2011, p.9). The former reinforces the idea that HRDs turn to non-

violent action not necessarily because of moral or ethical aspects, but because it is more effective.

Violence and its normalization

In the preface he wrote for George Sorel's book "Reflections on Violence," Isaiah Berlin (2005) notes that "man resists all forces that seek to reduce his energy, deprive him of his independence and dignity, kill his will, crush everything what in it strives for irreplaceable self-expression and reduce it to uniformity, impersonality, monotony and, ultimately, extinction" (Berlin, 2005, p.13). It is possible that in human's life instinct inherently resists everything that threatens its existence, as it partially posits the inherency school of thought; but it is also possible that the conditions that surround the individual (the structure) determine whether he/she resists or submits, whether he/she oppresses or is oppressed. In his essay "A Structural Theory of Aggression" Johan Galtung (1964) proposes that the relationship of tension between antagonistic groups, which he calls "topdogs or underdogs", is what determines the social order. The discontent of one or the other with this social order can become a driver towards change, even against the will of others; Galtung calls the latter "aggression." The extreme forms of this phenomena - fight (individual level), revolutions (group level) and wars (nation levels) - are cause of concern and prevention, since they become a drive to harm because they stand in the way of one's own self-assertion, and not look at the good cause this may serve in the aggressors' own mind. The author points out that aggression is most likely to arise in social positions of *rank-disquilibrium*, that is, between those who have a generalized idea of frustration with how things are and those who perceive that through aggression one can get out of that situation.

The aforementioned is the genesis of Galtung's well-known categorization of violence. For him, violence is present when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic

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and mental realizations are below their potential. Violence is manifested in society whether as direct, structural and cultural. Direct violence is an effect one can physically see and experience. For instance, a person being anatomically harmed, this is the form of violence we are accustomed to discussing as interpersonal or interstate violence. Structural violence is less immediately visible. Often referred to as social injustice, structural violence may be built into political institutions, education practices, religious institutions, or anywhere “unequal power leads to unequal life chances” (Galtung, 1969). Structural violence implements discriminatory practices which may include: unjust laws around but not limited to land ownership, lack of access in the political and decision-making sphere, as well as nepotism and corruption in government. These practices may result in lack of economic opportunity for some, while advancing others. Through these societal channels, structural violence results in negative consequences for the health and peace of a society. Structural violence exists even before the first outbreak of direct violence, and is built into governments through laws, public policies, and preferential subsidies (Johnston, 2018). Cultural violence is any aspect of a culture that can be used to legitimize violence in its direct or structural form. These aspects of culture, which inform our behavior, whether consciously or subconsciously, range from ideology, religion and language to science and technology. Unlike structural violence, that is a process and direct violence that constitutes a fact, cultural violence is an *invariant*, it remains for a certain period of time, making the first two look and/or feel right or at least not wrong, thus rendering acceptable in society (Galtung, 1990, p. 292, 293, 294).

The psychological mechanism through which cultural violence acquires a legitimizing effect is called internalization. “We then schematically divide control mechanisms into internal and external, positive and negative: identifying internal, both positive and negative as good and

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bad conscience respectively; external positive as reward and external negative as punishment. Internalization is conscience deeply rooted in the person system, institutionalization is punishment/reward deeply rooted in the social system. Both serve to make the act come forth naturally, normally, voluntarily” (Galtung, 1990, p. 291, note 3). The different aggressions to which HRDs are exposed daily, sometimes as direct victims and sometimes as witnesses, lead to violence being seen by them as something normal and that must be accepted as "part of the trade". This normalization is understood as a process of resignation, of everyday life and of accustomedness. Those who see it as an exception assume that violence should always outrage, should always be thought of as regrettable, as something that should not have happened and, therefore, not to consider it exceptional is a way of suspending the struggle to eradicate it. (Hernández, 2013, p. 15).

Julietta Lemaitre Ripoll (2014) in her essay "*Lawless areas and the normalization of violence in Mexico and Colombia*" addresses the normalization of violence by analyzing the way in which the press and human rights reports choose which violent deaths deserve to be described as extraordinary, worthy of a moral rejection, and which are implicitly or explicitly, deaths that are considered "everyday" deaths. Lemaitre Ripoll identifies what is mentioned above in press coverage and human rights reports that include two stories: the so-called "guilty victims" in Mexico and the "*falsos positivos*"¹ in Colombia. While the facts and context of each story are different, both stories share the premise that there are violent deaths that are justified or at least can be considered as everyday deaths. In these violent deaths, both victims and victimizers, are commonly young men who usually did not complete their secondary education. Their deaths have been consistently presented, both by the government and by the press, as the result of

¹ The killing of civilians by the military as a corrupt act; civilians who then pass off as combat deaths and that the military collect as rewards.

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quarrels between criminal groups and therefore as a matter that should not dismay public opinion.

The adaptation to violence is reflected, for example, in the widespread use of a new vocabulary to talk about homicide, and the use of the prefix "*narco*" to refer to everything that is related to illicit drug trafficking: narco-music, narco-fashion, narco-graves, narco-churches, narco-politics, etc. A narco, as a noun, is a someone involved in the trafficking of illicit drugs and by definition, a person whose violent death is normal. In addition to the extensive use of the word narco, other new words indicate the habitual of violent death: "*encajuelados*" to speak of corpses in the trunk of the cars, "*levantón*" to talk about kidnappings, "*borrado*" for murdered or disappeared, "*ejecuciones*" for dramatic homicides with a staging that denotes the relationship with organized crime and dejection to talk about the killing of criminals by state forces. This language is widely used by the media. It diminishes the importance of the fact and its frequent use has an anesthetizing effect on consciousness (Lemaitre Ripoll, 2014, p. 4, 5).

In an interview for National Geographic Latinoamerica (2018) Ana Cristina Ruelas, Regional Director for Mexico and Central America of Article 19, said that "violence against the press is to kill the messenger to turn him/her into the message." After receiving the International Press Freedom Award in 2011 from the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), journalist Javier Valdez Cárdenas said:

"Where I work, Culiacán, in the state of Sinaloa, Mexico, it is dangerous to be alive, and to do journalism is to walk on an invisible line drawn by the bad guys--who are in drug trafficking and in the government--in a field strewn with explosives. This is what most of the country is living through. One must protect oneself from everything and everyone, and there do not seem to be options or salvation, and often there is no one to turn to. (...) I dedicate this award

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to the brave journalists, and to the children and youths who are living a slow death. I have preferred to give a face and a name to the victims, to create a portrait of this sad and desolate panorama” (2011, November 22). He was murdered almost six years later.

In 2017 Front Line Defenders received reports on the murder of 312 defenders in 27 countries (80% of the killings took place in just four countries: Brazil, Colombia, Mexico and the Philippines) having criminalization still as the most common strategy employed to obstruct and delegitimize the work of HRDs. An analysis of the work done by those killed is instructive: 67% were engaged in the defense of land, environmental and indigenous peoples' rights and nearly always in the context of mega projects, extractive industry and big business. In many countries, governments and security forces were, at best, unresponsive to threats and attacks faced by HRDs and, at worst, state security forces were themselves responsible for the killings (Frontline Defenders, 2017). It should be noted that HRDs who experience intersecting forms of discrimination and structural inequality are at an increased risk of attack for what they do and who they are. Discrimination and oppression may be based on age, sex, gender, language, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, race, caste or class, Indigenous identity, disability, religion or belief, nationality or other status. These different forms of discrimination can overlap and interact, intensifying and diversifying an individual's experience. They are often denied resources, opportunities and security, and are commonly excluded from decision-making (Amnesty International, 2017).

Risk, danger and security

Although risk, danger and security are intrinsically related, differentiating them allows us to identify more clearly what HRDs are exposed to and when their integrity is being threatened. Risk is defined as the possibility that an event with negative consequences will occur. The

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factors that comprises it are: threat and vulnerability. The first is a process, phenomenon or human activity that may cause loss; the second are the characteristics and circumstances of an individual, a community, system or good that make them susceptible to the harmful effects of a threat. Since it is inherently a possibility, risk is something that no one is exempt from, no matter what we dedicate ourselves to, we cannot make it disappear. However, what is feasible is to work on its potential negative consequences, assuming it is something that we can evade or reduce. Risk avoidance and risk reduction are two ways to manage risk, the first one deals with eliminating any exposure of risk that poses to a potential loss, while risk reduction deals with reducing the likelihood and severity of a possible loss (UNISDR, 2018).

According to Merriam Webster, danger is the exposure or liability to injury, pain, harm, or loss (Danger, n.d.). Unlike risk, which is a possibility present in basically any activity, danger is a situation of potential harm to which you can choose to expose yourself or not. Although the latter is a conscious action (e.g. accepting or not to work in an area of armed conflict or reporting a case of corruption within the State), the way to react to danger is not a "rational" act, but a very instinctive one. Humans have natural defense mechanisms that developed through our evolution, one of these is often called intuition; those powerful irrational feelings that we tend to have about a particular situation at times. "When our intuition is signaling untrustworthiness or danger, it is often because we have picked up multiple, subtle indicators which alone do not identify a particular threat, but taken together strongly suggest the presence of danger. Many HRDs have been saved by paying attention to their intuition or 'trusting their gut', even when they could not explain how they knew they were in danger" (Ó Clunaigh, 2016, p. 26). Responses to fear that generate survival responses are driven by specific brain structures and supported by biological

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changes too. When this happens, we move from a reasoned behavior to an instinctive one, which creates different ways of responding to danger:

1. The “freeze” response: is when a person becomes utterly still while remaining highly alert and poised for action. This response relies on escaping notice until the danger has passed.
2. The “flight” response: is when a person quickly tries to get as far away from the danger as possible. Move our operations to a safer location, abandon certain activities or modes of communication, or separate ourselves from people who might cause us harm.
3. The “comply” response: involves doing what an aggressor instructs in the hope that cooperation will result in the attack ending quickly and with less injury.
4. The “tend” response: happens when people try to protect other, more vulnerable people who are being similarly victimized. Many HRDs are motivated to help others because of our own experiences of oppression and exploitation.
5. The “befriend” response: involves trying to build some kind of relationship with the aggressor in the hope that this will limit the harm perpetrated against oneself or others.
6. The “posture” response: is an attempt to drive off the danger by pretending to have greater power than one actually does. HRDs often threaten to expose and publicize threats of violence so as to publicly embarrass our adversaries.
7. The “fight” response: is when a person attacks with the intent of driving off or destroying the aggressor. (Idem).

No matter how powerful our survival mechanisms are, in situations of danger our brain must react quickly to many stimuli, which makes it difficult to process all this information in a systematic and logical way. It is necessary to be able to "order" how we react to danger and to generate resources that help us evade or mitigate threats, because ultimately, security constitutes in a set of measures that promote a notion of safety. According to Shahrbanou (2005), security can be defined as "absence of insecurity and threats". To be secure is to be free from both fear (of physical, sexual or psychological abuse, violence, persecution, or death) and from want (of gainful employment, food, and health, etc.). Feeling safe allows us to better perform our work,

but the feeling is generated only when we know we are protected, that is, when we develop the capacity to identify threats, to avoid them when possible, and to mitigate their effects when they do occur. To feel unsafe for extended periods of time on the other hand, does not allow HRDs to relax their bodies, keep a calmed mind and recuperate from the frequent exposure to violence. Therefore, learning how to cope with the consequences of the widespread insecurity in contexts of human rights violations (e.g. privacy violation, digital threats, isolation, etc.) becomes vital to keep performing positively in the field.

Self-care as political warfare

In 1988, the words of the African-American lesbian writer Audre Lorde became a rallying cry: “Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare.” In this formulation, self-care was no longer a litmus test for social equality; it was a way to insist to a violent and oppressive culture that you mattered, that you were worthy of care (Kisner, 2017). Ignoring the importance of self-care has real consequences on people's health. According to a research conveyed by Alice Nah (2017) in five countries - Colombia, Mexico, Egypt, Kenya, and Indonesia – 86% of human rights defenders at risk in our study expressed that they were “somewhat concerned” or “very concerned” about their mental and emotional wellbeing. They were as concerned about this as they were about their physical security and digital security. In human rights circles, there are strong social and cultural norms about self-sacrifice, heroism, and martyrdom. Especially in hostile conditions, risks are deemed as inherent in human rights practice. HRDs are expected to make personal sacrifices and to struggle; they are expected to face and manage risks or leave the work. After addressing issues such as the reliance on private rather than collective coping strategies, the financial aspects of wellbeing, culturally mediated understandings of wellbeing and the creation of spaces to interact with other

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colleagues, Nah concludes it is important for policy-makers, practitioners, and human rights defenders to:

- Develop spaces for self-reflection on the individual and collective wellbeing of human rights defenders, especially those at risk.
- Recognize and address norms and expectations that make it difficult for defenders to engage in discussions about wellbeing.
- Move beyond “Western” approaches to understanding wellbeing. Recognize, document and share other social and cultural forms of conceptualizing and strengthening wellbeing.
- Approach wellbeing not as the sole responsibility of individual defenders but as a collective responsibility.
- Review how individuals, groups, communities and stakeholders strengthen individual and collective strategies for wellbeing. These include mainstreaming practices of self-care and care for others; embedding wellbeing practices in collectives; and understanding the effect of funding practices on sustainable activism.
- Devote financial resources to wellbeing practices that are culturally relevant and contextually appropriate. These may include provision for healthcare, counselling, insurance, and pensions.
- Recognize that for some defenders – such as LGBT+ and women defenders – spaces of work are crucial spaces for wellbeing. It is therefore important to understand how spaces of work need to be reshaped so that they do not replicate oppression, discrimination and violence, and how participation, acceptance and inclusivity can be strengthened in human rights communities

Self-care can be approached from different angles. For example, when using Holistic Security as a framework, Ó Cluanaigh indicates that “In spite of threats to our space for work and personal expression, we do not often give up: we decide to keep challenging the injustices which we see in the world. For this reason, we can think of security for human rights defenders as well-being in action: being physically and emotionally healthy and sustaining ourselves while continuing to do the work that we believe is important, and carrying out the necessary analysis

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and planning to stay secure on our own terms” (Ó Cluanaigh, 2016, p. 21). Kyle D. Killian explores the potential consequences of ignoring self-care in his article “*Helping Till It Hurts? A Multimethod Study of Compassion Fatigue, Burnout, and Self-Care in Clinicians Working with Trauma Survivors*” (2008). By conducting interviews with more than 100 clinicians, Killian inquires about their caseloads, trauma history, coping styles, emotional self-awareness, work stress, compassion satisfaction, compassion fatigue, and burnout. The research is based on the concepts of “compassion fatigue” and “burnout”. Compassion fatigue - also known as vicarious or secondary trauma – is, according to Cunningham, McCann & Pearlman, a process by which a professional’s inner experience is negatively transformed through empathic engagement with clients’ trauma material (as cited in Killian, 2008); Figley defines burnout is a condition characterized by emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (as cited in Killian, 2008). Killian concludes that helping professionals should maintain social support, and this might take the form of sustaining an active social network and perhaps processing or debriefing with especially tough cases.

In their article “*Burnout in Social Justice and Human Rights Activists: Symptoms, Causes and Implications*” (2015) Cher Weixia Chen and Paul Gorski enhance what is developed above, by exploring the notion of “culture of martyrdom” among social justice and human rights activists. According to Pyle (as cited in Chen & Gorski, 2015), unfortunately most activists in the United States are not intentional about tending to their own well-being. Doing so is associated in some activists’ circles with a lack of commitment or with self-indulgence. Rogers (as cited in Chen & Gorski, 2015) notes that some HRDs and activists perceive self-care as contradicting an implicit pact of “selflessness” as found in her study of people working with Amnesty International. Rettig emphasizes that the combination of the emotional toll of activists’

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work and the culture of selflessness can hasten “activist burnout”, a condition, described in more detail later, which often results in people scaling back on or fully disengaging from their social justice and human rights activism (as cited in Chen & Gorski, 2015). Chen and Gorski analyzed data from interviews with 22 United States-based activists who self-identified as having experienced activist burnout. The primary research question was: How do United States-based social justice and human rights activists characterize the symptoms, causes, and implications of activist burnout? Analysis revealed three different symptoms categories: (1) the deterioration of physical health; (2) the deterioration of psychological and emotional health; and (3) hopelessness.

Integrated Security

The United Nations (UN) General Assembly’s adoption of the 1998 Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (commonly known as the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders) marked a milestone in the development of a multi-level, multi-actor international protection regime for the rights of human rights defenders (Bennet, Ingleton, Nah & Savage, 2015). The latter has been translated into an approach of protection known as “integrated security” or “holistic security”; it means that rather than looking separately at the importance of our digital security, psycho-social well-being and organizational security processes, it attempts to integrate them and highlight their interrelatedness. Integrated security is designed to guide a process of establishing or improving security strategies for individuals, collectives, or organizations. It is divided into four themes, which are conceived as steps in an evolving, cyclical process:

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- 1) **Prepare** begins by recognizing that each of us already has and takes security measures: our strategies for health and well-being, our personal beliefs and sources of resilience and our instinctive responses to threat and danger.
- 2) **Explore** follows a series of steps in order to analyze HRDs' socio-political context and come to some conclusions about the concrete threats that may arise from their work and those who oppose it.
- 3) **Strategize** begins with the identified threats and considers how to create security strategies to deal with them, as well as develop concrete plans and agreements in order to maintain HRDs' well-being in action.
- 4) **Act** involves learning new tools and tactics for security in action. This step is accompanied by short, scenario-focused guides that focus on concrete tools and tactics - from the technological to the psychological and beyond - for security in particularly high-risk activities. The topics shall be chosen on the basis of being frequently experienced by HRDs'. The tactics which can be recommended should be less context dependent and highly unlikely to cause harm (Ó Cluanaigh, 2016).

There are five key features of integrated security as part of a HRDs' protection regime: first, it derives its principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which actor expectations converge from the international human rights regime; second, it is goal driven, its aim is to protect and support HRDs who operate in their own contexts in the face of threats and risks (e.g. harassment, verbal/written threats, stigmatization, criminalization, restrictions on funding and registration as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), arbitrary arrest and detention, spurious investigations, fabricated charges, unfair trials, kidnapping, torture, ill-treatment and killings); third, it adopts a human security paradigm, with individuals, groups and communities as subjects of security rather than states; fourth, it is a multi-level regime which means formal protection mechanisms for human rights defenders exist at the national, regional and international levels; and fifth, it has many stakeholders – civil society groups, donors, national human rights institutions, states, multilateral bodies and individual defenders – who

create and use different types of tools, strategies and tactics to identify, support and protect the rights of human rights defenders (Bennet, Ingleton, Nah & Savage, 2015, p. 884, 885).

Peace Journalism

Most of media effects research has concluded that media contribute to the social construction of reality, for one thing, by introducing specific topics into public discourse (agenda setting) and, for another, by the way they treat these topics (framing); but since Galtung (1998) and Kempf (1996) outlined their first ideas of an alternative to mainstream war reporting, their models of peace journalism (PJ) have stimulated a broad debate among peace researchers and journalists, as well as practical thought about how to achieve this type of journalism and a large body of basic theoretical and empirical research about the effect of media on conflict (Kempf, 2011). In 1986 Yoel Cohen became one of the first scholars to investigate the significance of the media as a form of modern diplomacy; in her book *“Media Diplomacy”* she distinguished three types of relationships between media and diplomacy: media as information sources, media as communication channels between decision-makers, and media as a means to secure public support (as cited in Kempf, 2011).

The importance of working with the media in the field of peacebuilding lies in the fact that media is a double-edged sword, it can be a frightful weapon of violence when it propagates messages of intolerance or disinformation that manipulate public sentiment; but media can also be an instrument of conflict transformation, when the information it presents is reliable, respects human rights, and represents diverse views. The kind of media that upholds accountability, exposes malfeasance and enables a society to make well-informed choices is the precursor of democratic governance, it reduces conflict and fosters human security (Howard, 2002).

According to Lynch and McGoldrick (2005) Peace Journalism is when editors and reporters

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make choices – of what stories to report and about how to report them – that create opportunities for society at large to consider and value nonviolent responses to conflict. Peace Journalism: 1) Uses the insights of conflict analysis and transformation to update the concepts of balance, fairness and accuracy in reporting; 2) Provides a new route map tracing the connections between journalists, their sources, the stories they cover and the consequences of their journalism – the ethics of journalistic intervention; 3) Builds an awareness of nonviolence and creativity into the practical job of everyday editing and reporting.

Kempf (2011) notes that the legal anchoring of the media peace mandate in international law and its practical implementation are two different things. Compared with the enormous expenditure that has been made to optimize propaganda strategies, military - media management, and psychological warfare, efforts to utilize the media as instruments for constructive conflict management and peacekeeping have taken a back seat. There is an attempt by different factions to prove that peace journalism is an “imaginary” journalism approach that has “low practicability”. Ultimately, as Wolfsfeld notes, the battle over media is one of the great elements in modern conflicts. Each stakeholder tries to promote its own approach to conflict in the media of communication as an attempt to mobilize political support for its cause (as cited in Nicolás, 2017). Nevertheless, since hate speech, alienation, prejudices, and dogmatic ideas are transferred from generation to generation throughout history, all these are frequently seen in the news. Even after many years pass, we still can trace the remnants of the seeds of “hate” planted in our brains from since early age. Humankind cannot acquire the rancid feeling of “hate” simply on his or her own faculties. They are transplanted through formal and informal ways: through our parents, friends, teachers, school, and media. Media has a crucially important role in endorsing the construct of “peace” and “language of peace.” Although journalists have a hard time accepting

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this role since it overshadows the “objectivity,” at the end of the day, it would be correct to take advantage of the power of media to establish a peace culture and language (Ersoy, 2017, p. 458, 459).

In her article “*Reporting On Conflict*” independent journalist Cate Malek (2017) explores how peace journalism at the micro level and how could the media contribute to build a language of peace in the occurrence of war and conflict. Malek sets a list of questions that could help journalists implement a PJ approach:

1. Do you really understand what is going on?
2. What are the underlying causes of the conflict?
3. What are the full effects of the conflict on different constituency groups?
4. Where are you getting your "facts"?
5. Are your stories contributing to conflict escalation?
6. What can I do to help de-escalate a conflict?

In summary, the existing literature on violence exposure in HRDs' work is moderately extensive; most of the material - at least that I had access to - available is based mostly on official reports from international organizations and reports of NGOs who work in human rights field. Although the latter is still valuable input, it seems that from the Peace Studies and Conflict Transformation field there is a need for research specially on violence as a phenomenon that affects the lives of HRDs. Also, if more case studies were available, there would be better chances to develop suitable tools that enhance HRDs' well-being and efficiency in their work place.

INQUIRY DESIGN

Due to the nature of my research question and the potential answers it might generate, the methodology of my research was predominantly qualitative. Since this inquiry project focuses on describing and interpreting violence exposure in HRDs' work, the approach is both ethnographic

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because it considers HRDs as a social group and narrative since seeks to explore a part of these people's lives so their stories can be told. The data collection had two main sources. The first came from personal observations gathered from the work done by the two organizations which I have worked with during my reflective practicum phase, Article 19 in Mexico City and the Plurinational Legislative Assembly of Bolivia, through the project with journalists "Protection and Welfare at the Time of Reporting" in La Paz. In both cases I accumulated field notes that allowed an effective prioritization of topics and the development of working themes such as violence exposure, violence normalization, and self-care and integrated security, which ultimately represent the layout of my research. Most of my field notes are the product of reflections and conclusions after work meetings, findings within the participatory design of workshops with HRDs and the feedback received after organizing events to promote freedom of expression; even so, none of them constitute HRDs' personal testimonies themselves. The second source of information is entirely secondary and is based essentially on the compilation and review of periodic institutional reports of organizations working with HRDs (e.g. Article 19, Front Line Defenders, Amnesty International), reports of international organizations such as UN and OAS, audiovisual material (documentaries and interviews) that reflect the testimony of some HRDs and finally, all the literature available in general. I must also point out that since my work in Mexico last summer until last month, I was part of a virtual working group that coordinated the actions of "Red Rompe el Miedo", a network that was originally created with the objective of protecting HRDs and electoral observers throughout the 2018 electoral process in Mexico. The communication among its members was entirely virtual (whatsapp groups, emails, FB groups, Google docs, etc.) and although I was not actively involved in all its actions, it felt like a

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community of practice to me. It helped me nourish my reflections and turned out to be an effective way of receiving valuable feedback as well.

I only used secondary data collection throughout the research mainly for two reasons: first, because the organizations that work advocating for the protection of HRDs generate sufficient inputs for my purpose; and second and most importantly, to avoid a potential backlash against HRDs by reinforcing targeting. I acknowledge the latter as a limitation in my research, but I could not guarantee the security of my sources if I were collecting primary information.

I have taken Mexico and Colombia as two case studies to analyze the violence to which HRDs are constantly exposed. I chose these countries because they both clearly illustrate how violence against HRDs operates not only from organized crime or drug trafficking, but also from the State, something that I believe is absolutely necessary to emphasize. In both cases I have classified the information into three categories for the analysis: a) violence exposure, which consists of trying to interpret figures of aggressions against HRDs through the analysis of the methodologies that some organizations use to classify this information; b) violence normalization, where concrete examples were taken of how the normalization of violence operates especially through media and the State; c) confrontation of violence, where I review a few of the actions that are being developed to counteract the violence to which the HRDs are exposed.

The framework used to guide my analysis was that of Conflict Transformation, encompassing cultural violence to interpret the normalization of violence and integrated security to examine the potential and results of confronting violence in HRDs' work. Finally, based on what I have analyzed, I present a brief proposal as a way of conclusion, that I put to consideration at the end. Using secondary data collection throughout the research comes in

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response to two main reasons: first, because the organizations that work advocating for the protection of HRDs generate sufficient inputs for my purpose; and second and most importantly, to avoid a potential backlash against HRDs by reinforcing targeting. I acknowledge the latter might constitute a limitation in my research, but collecting primary data would have increased the risk of someone potentially using the information presented to somehow harm the sources. To guarantee that this does not happen would require more time and resources, and perhaps, a more experienced researcher in journalistic work.

ANALYSIS OF VIOLENCE OPERATING IN HRD'S WORK

In this section, the way violence operates in HRDs' work is analyzed. Firstly, a summary of the categories that two organizations in both Mexico and Colombia use to classify violence exposure in HRD's work is posed. Although only two cases are offered as examples, the analysis has been fed with the review of other additional documents. Secondly, a reflection on the normalization of violence in Mexico and Colombia is presented by taking two cases in particular: the one of the guilty victims and the one of the false positives, respectively. Thirdly, I review how the violence against HRDs is being confronted and what kind of tools have been developed in the last time to combat this violence.

1. Violence exposure

According to information reported in 2018 by the Mexican National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) Mexico had 31,174 homicides in 2017. This is an increase of 27% compared with 2016, which saw 24,559 homicides. The country had 25 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants nationwide, up 20 per 100,000 in 2016, which means 2017 represents the higher rate of homicides since at least 1990 (INEGI, 2018). In Colombia, the murder rate is at an all-time

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low, murders have generally declined since the Peace Accords were signed in 2016, dropping from 12,252 in 2016 to 11,781 in 2017. Yet, its HRDs continue to be killed. Nearly 300 community organizers and activists have been murdered in the last two years and hundreds more have been threatened. Most of the HRDs assassinated in Colombia over the past year were political activists from three largely rural communities: indigenous people (3% of Colombia's population), Afro-Colombians and small-scale farmers generally called "peasants". The crimes do not seem to be racially motivated. Rather, they appear to be political crimes, a retaliation against the country's 2016 peace process.

The violence to which HRDs are exposed is here illustrated by describing the figures published in institutional reports by two civil society organizations (one in Mexico and one in Colombia) that advocate for HRDs' welfare. Nevertheless, the analysis focuses on the categories these organizations use to classify the information and the complexity that finding a common language that is applicable to the reality of all HRDs represents. If we intend to offer alternatives on more suitable ways to address the risks that being a HRD sometimes entails, inquiring into the types of aggressions that those who work protecting HRDs have already identified as the most frequent, plays an important part into the analysis.

Mexico

The report titled "Libertades en Resistencia" was published in 2017 by Article 19. It narrates stories that unfold on a daily basis around individuals resisting permanent conditions of marginalization and aggression. These are the people whose work, whether requesting information from their communities, tracking documents that expose corruption or putting aggressors under the spotlight on social media, allows advocates for human rights to carry on

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with their work. The report is divided into an introduction and eight chapters. The following table presents the categories that are used to describe the information collected.

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TABLE 1

Libertades en Resistencia		
Chapter	Main topic	Categories
Intro: La plata o el plomo	Official publicity as an instrument of indirect/subtle censorship and aggressions against the press as a element of direct censorship and self-censorship.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Federal government spending on propaganda (\$ annual) 2. Number of aggressions per capita per state 3. Number of aggressions by federal entities in each state 4. Aggressions against the press in Mexico (2000-2016) 5. Main aggressors (public official, organized crime, political party, individual, others) 6. Public officials who attacked the press (federal, state, municipal) 7. Types of aggression against the press (Threat, attack on the media, physical or material attack, assassination, harassment, intimidation, intervention of communications, unauthorized intrusion, deprivation of liberty, institutional violence, enforced disappearance, forced displacement) 8. States with murders of journalists 9. Number of journalists murdered in Mexico (2000-2016) 10. Aggressions against the press during elections (Threat, attack on the media, physical or material attack, assassination, harassment, intimidation, intervention of communications, unauthorized intrusion, deprivation of liberty, institutional violence, enforced disappearance, forced displacement) 11. Aggressions against women journalists (2009-2016) 12. Gender-based aggressions against women journalists (harassment, threat, physical or material attack) 13. Aggressions against journalists according to their position at work (e.g. editor, reporter, correspondent, photographer, freelance, cartoonist, community manager) 14. Aggressions according the type of media (TV, radio, digital, freelance, others)
1 Chiapas: tan cerca y tan lejos de la transparencia	Manipulation of information in rural communities	
2 El control de la información y la censura del pasado	How the access to official information is restricted by the State	
3 Verdades en tiempos de espionaje	Spying on journalists	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Aggressions against the press on the internet (Threat, harassment, intimidation, intervention of communications) 2. Aggressors against the press on the internet ((public official, organized crime, political party, individual, others) 3. Hacking (email, mobile, social media accounts, phone, malware)
4 Protesta: la persecución que no termina	Aggressions against journalists during protests	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Aggressions against the press during protests (Threat, attack on the media, physical or material attack, assassination, harassment, intimidation, intervention of communications, unauthorized intrusion, deprivation of liberty, institutional violence, enforced disappearance, forced displacement) 2. Aggressors of the press during protests (public officials, individuals, unknown) 3. Public officials who attacked the press (federal, state, municipal)
5 El silencio En Tamaulipas	Censorship and its consequences	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of aggressions against the press in Tamaulipas (2009-2016) 2. Missing journalists in Tamaulipas (2010-2014) 3. Number of journalists murdered in Tamaulipas (2000-2013)
6 Impunidad: las ausencias y las violencias que la	Impunity and the discredit of the victims	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of journalists murdered per state (2000-2017) 2. Topics covered by murdered journalists (politics, crime, nota roja)
7 Pedro Tamayo: protección fallida a periodistas	Protection and defense of journalists	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Protection measures granted by the State (e.g. police escort, panic button, police patrolling)
8 Moisés Sánchez: la reivindicación del periodista	Journalism: Legal and institutional framework in Mexico	

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Colombia

The annual report 2017 published by Programa Somos Defensores is titled “A Stone in The Shoe. Information System on Attacks Human Rights Defenders – ISAAHRD” and it was presented in a year when the armed conflict and its victims ceased to be the daily news. The signing of the Peace Accords with the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC), as well as the start of the Negotiating Table with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), brought along a substantial decrease in deaths in the country; however, in midst of this positive trend, the murder of social leaders and human rights defenders became increasingly evident and sustained. The report is divided into five chapters and an epilogue (Information System on Attacks Human Rights Defenders) analyzing hard data. The following table presents the categories that are used to describe the information collected:

TABLE 2

Stone in The Shoe		
Chapter	Main topic	Categories
1 Profession: Danger	Situation of risk in which human rights activists live in the country	
2 Bang... Bang... Peace	Regulations for security and protection, arising from the peace agreements and that, if implemented, constitute an opportunity to close this dark chapter of the country's history	1. Individual protection vs collective protection
3 The Half Empty Glass	Results of the different governmental and state instances in relation to the problem	1. Investigation status/stage (Interrogation, investigation, imputation, trial, verdict, conviction execution, anticipated termination, filed, no information).
4 Déjà Vu	Situation of stigmatization that falls particularly on the social and popular leadership of the country	
5 Twenty Years Are Nothing	20-year memory of the United Nations Declaration on human rights defenders	
Information System on Attacks Human Rights Defenders	Figures on aggressions against human rights defenders during 2017 are analyzed	1. Individual aggressions according to the type of violence (threats, murders, attacks, arbitrary detentions, disappearances, arbitrary use of the penal system, information theft, sexual violence) 2. Type of defender or leader (communal defender or leader, community defender or leader, peasant or agrarian defender or leader, indigenous defender or leader, union defender or leader, student or education defender or leader, victims or displaced persons defender or leader, LGBTI defender or leader, lawyer defender or leader, communicator defender or leader, DESCAs defender or leader (Economic, Social, Cultural or Environmental Rights), women defender or leader, youth or infancy defender or leader) 3. Type of weapons homicides (firearms, stab wounds, blows) 4. Alleged responsible of the aggression (unknown, paramilitaries, public force, ELN, EPL, FARC dissidents) 5. Type of the threat (text message, email, phone call, harassment, pamphlet or condolence card)

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Although what is presented above summarizes the categories used in two reports, it should be noted that I have also reviewed the following others:

- International Annual Report 2017. Defending Freedom of Expression and Information around the World – Article 19
- The Duty of the Mexican Government – Espacio OSC
- Annual Report On Human Rights Defenders at Risk 2017 – Front Line Defenders
- Situation of the World's Human Rights Defenders - Amnesty International
- Defender los derechos humanos en México: el costo de la dignidad junio de 2012 a mayo de 2013 - Comité Cerezo
- Information Series On Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights. Women Human Rights Defenders - OHCHR

The first thing that should be highlighted is that all or most of the reports on the situation of HRDs make sure to contextualize the information presented, not only by indicating a territoriality (national, state, municipal, community) and temporality, but also by thoroughly describing the socio-political implications of a certain moment and its influence on human rights struggle. For example, the report "Libertades en Resistencia" emphasized the increasing of murdered journalists during the last two years of Enrique Peña Nieto's administration, whose government was strongly questioned for its links to organized crime at all levels and for constantly harassing journalists (e.g. the Mexican government acquired from Israel a software called "Pegasus" for 22 million USD to spy on journalists). Likewise, in the report "A Stone in the Shoe" the Peace Accords signed during the administration of former President Juan Manuel Santos play a similar role. They seemed to end more than 50 years of uninterrupted violence, something that ironically also represents a threat to those who have made out of the armed conflict a mean of profit and privilege over decades. This is why the work of the HRD becomes a "stone in the shoe" for those who benefit from the violence in Colombia. It should also be

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mentioned that, although the organizations promote a non-discriminatory and sexist language, recognizing that violence against HRDs has unavoidable characteristics according to the gender identity of the victims, the most of them end up using traditional binary schemes (male-female) when classifying information. The latter becomes a limitation since it hides the fact of how intersectionality makes some people more vulnerable to becoming possible targets.

The classification of the types of aggression is very similar in all cases, almost all the reports reviewed synthesize the aggressions against HRD in three areas: physical, psychological and digital. Although violence can reach fatal consequences (e.g. killings), the most common form of aggression is the psychological (e.g. threats, intimidation, harassment). Psychological aggression is related to the notion of risk and the mental waste that living in a constant state of alert produces. Since it is inherently a possibility, risk is something that no one is exempt from, no matter what we dedicate ourselves to, we cannot make it disappear. This makes the HRDs that are victims of permanent threats or harassment, feel vulnerable by not feeling in control of what their work may trigger.

The kind of activity of the HRD or their position at work are also a form used to classify the information. This is useful if it is conceived as a way of alerting other HRDs about the possible activities or positions that imply greater risk in a given context. In the same way, it becomes a useful input to those organizations who carry out protection and defense programs for HRDs, especially when deciding what to prioritize and for instance, how to allocate funds more efficiently. Violence against HRDs is also classified by identifying the alleged responsible, even though the majority of measurements and organizations point out the difficulty in identifying those responsible for aggressions. In this case this category could easily be divided into the subcategories of "official and unofficial". In this sense, it is alarming that the amount of

aggression from the State is easily comparable to the amount of aggression perpetuated by organized crime, armed movements or corporate interests. Finally, classifying aggressions as "individual or collective" allows to analyze what are the most urgent security needs among HRDs; that is, if it is necessary to demand greater measures of intervention and security from the State such as police custody, panic buttons, patrolling or, if necessary, prioritizing the design of prevention strategies from the organizations/media/communities that are more comprehensive, such as security protocols, legal advice such or recovery spaces.

2. Normalization of violence

The most violent areas of the planet are often poorer and more unequal than their neighbors, perhaps this is why the literature that considers violence as an externality of poverty, or as part of radical poverty also known as structural violence has been well accepted (Galtung 1991; Farmer et al, 2004). However, this does not mean there is a causal link between poverty and inequality, on one hand, and things such as homicide, torture and harassment on the other. Actually, there are several spaces where radical poverty exists without there being violence in the sense described above. Violence calls for research focused on its own dynamics.

Mexico: what are the deaths that must be condemned?

Since the government of Felipe Calderon (2006-2012), which fought against organized crime and the armed repression of drug trafficking, violence increased exponentially. Of those killed, victims as well as assailants are poor, dark-skinned young men who generally had not graduated high school. Their deaths were presented by the State as well as the press as the byproduct of the struggle between criminal groups, so as not to alarm the public. In one of his public addresses, Calderon reassured his audience by stating that "only 5 percent of the dead were not a result of organized crime."

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The media portray Mexicans as accustomed to living with narco-related gang violence, but not with the violence that emanates from the State. It is public opinion that determines the types of violence that deserve moral condemnation. The stories published by the media tell us that people murdered in the bloody manner typical of organized crime are what could be considered "normal" murder victims. Moral condemnation is reserved for the murder of innocent victims: children, enslaved workers, or, most commonly, those killed by stray bullets in the crossfire.

The difference between dead criminals and innocent victims appears frequently in the way in which the media covers violence. For example, an article from the weekly publication *Proceso* on November 1st of 2010 is titled, "The Weekend in Guerrero: Shootings, Innocent Victims, Slayings..." The body of the article gives details of the way in which victims died, and the dead and wounded considered innocent are those who were caught in the crossfire, but not those who might have been deliberately murdered. Another telling example is the title, "Nuevo Laredo Lived Through Twelve Hours of Terror: Six Dead and Four Innocent Victims." The "dead" are assumed to be narcos and the innocent are unarmed bystanders, of whom were two women and one young child. The innocent man was killed by a stray bullet that ripped through his own home.

Another differentiation between dead criminals and innocent victims also reflects in the way criminal organizations communicate amongst themselves through "narco-mantas", which are handwritten messages on sheets or posters in public spaces, that are often reproduced by the press, particularly on the popular "Narco Blog". These messages threaten and accuse rival gangs and the government of various crimes and abuses, while they justify their own actions. On occasion they are directed to the vernal public, insisting that the author of the narco-manta "does

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not kill innocent people". For example, the narco-manta revealed on the January 29th of 2012 and republished by the Narco Blog points out: "Do not be afraid, citizens, we aren't coming for you".

Something similar happens with the speeches of public officials and human rights activists. In 2010, when the homicide rate reached a historical record of 25,757 homicides (23 per 100,000 according to the INEGI), the National Commission for Human Rights (CNDH) expressed its concern for the 111 innocent victims. All of them civilians killed in military or police operations, unarmed, identified by their relatives as innocent and who had no criminal record or investigations. Human rights organizations also fall into this differentiation sometimes, however in a subtler way. For example, Human Rights Watch (2011) in its report on human rights violations by the police and the military includes only cases in which it is clear that the victim had an irreproachable conduct. In the same line Amnesty International (2012), although it recognizes the existence of torture and ill-treatment of criminal detainees, in its coverage of specific cases it concentrates on innocent victims. The first image of the report shows two young women hugging each other and the text says that one of the girls was raped and tortured at 17 by a group of soldiers. Thus, even when referring to the violation of the rights of criminals, the emphasis of the reports is on the innocent victims.

Peoples' comments on the Narco Blog quite often assume death is normal for the perpetrators, both in the sense that it is frequent and in the sense that it is justified. A typical example is the line of comments on a story of twelve young people kidnapped in a municipality in the state of Mexico. They were identified in the press as "Tepiteños", which is from Tepito, traditionally a working-class neighborhood in Mexico City famous for its huge street markets where smuggling and more recently drug trafficking became common. While the news did not

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worry about whether they were innocent or guilty, describing them as "tepiteños" already suggested that they weren't innocent. Comments on internet continued on the same line, insisting that the young people were linked to drug trafficking: "these brats were narcos"; "These tepiteños were just delinquents".

To public opinion, criminals are not victims and victims are not criminals. When criminals die their violent deaths - in the tradition of outlaws - is considered normal, and is even glorified by others as an act of bravery. On other occasions, their death is celebrated as the necessary elimination of a disease, especially if this person was someone who violated the rules of adherence between criminals.

Colombia: the case of "*falsos positivos*"

"Falsos positivos" can be understood as the extrajudicial killing by the Colombian army of civilians who are subsequently presented as guerilla casualties to inflate the combat "body count". The scandal came out between 2006 and 2009 after a series of press articles revealed the killing of civilians by the military; civilians who were then passed off as combat deaths to collect military rewards. The perpetrators were soldiers of the Army in a network of extensive corruption inside the institution. The victims were mostly poor young men, both anonymous peasants and inhabitants of impoverished areas of large cities who were selected at checkpoints or deceptively recruited to work in other parts of the country, and whose deaths were later reported as if they had died in combat. To do so, soldiers would set up false combats scenes, including the use of ammunition, guerrilla uniforms and weapons for corpses, radio, grenade and other war paraphernalia that served to "pass" the false positive as a true one. They even took care of details like getting worn-out boots for the feet of the dead. The process, according to numerous testimonies, was called a "legalization" and the implements used "the legalization kit".

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The soldiers and officers involved received various rewards, in cash, days off and honors. False reports increased dramatically under former President Álvaro Uribe's administration, which gave more weight to enemy combat deaths as an indicator of military success.

What is above implies that there are true positives. A positive is a legal homicide committed by state agents (as in "we have a positive."). It is the dense fabric of rules and regulations of the use of lethal force by the Police and the Army that distinguishes a true positive from a false one. While the real ones follow the rules, the fake ones do not. Concern about the falsity of a positive reflects a broader concern with avoiding human rights violations and legal responsibilities, rather than avoiding homicides themselves. The covering of the media used several times language that shows its indignation and rejection before the facts: "creepy, horrible, disgusting, infamous, degraded...". At the same time, media insists on the innocence of the dead affirming that these could not have been guerrillas, indicating that they were good boys who supported their families, or young people with disabilities, or destitute drug addicts who could not be part of an armed movement. The description of false positives as a corruption problem in the Army avoided the problem of the routine murder of insurgents and criminals. These homicides are accepted as the normal consequence of being in the insurgency or being part of drug trafficking networks. The homicides that, as in Mexico, are not innocent, are part of the daily war, and this logic normalizes even the mistakes made in the identification of alleged guerrilla. Thus, the homicides of guerrillas, and to a lesser extent of paramilitaries and other criminals, in combat or out of combat, are the normality of which false positives appear as the abnormal exception.

The selective homicides of civilian enemies are part of the logic of violence in the civil war and they are daily homicides in irregular wars. The executions of collaborators of the

guerrilla and of unarmed guerrillas are considered homicide under Colombian law. However, the scandal of *falsos positivos* and the insistence on the innocence of its victims, shows that selective homicides of guilty people are part of the armed conflict, and are seen as the normal and silenced part, which does not generate moral rejection. The possibility that those who died were guilty is a sensitive issue in Colombia, even with organizations advocating for HRDs. Victims' organizations and the courts refuse to go into this point. There is no talk of selective homicides of guerrillas or guerrilla collaborators, or of people who were falsely accused of being guerrillas. *Falsos positivos* are presented as innocent victims in human rights reports. Even organizations protesting against selective homicide for political reasons insist that the victims whose memories they honor were neither insurgents nor criminals. Is it always about murders of people without any relation to the guerrillas? This is the most uncomfortable question for a HRD and one that seems to imply that whoever does it is also justifying selective homicides by talking about the guilt of the victims. Thus, selective homicides, rather than deaths in combat, define the normalization of violent death in the country.

3. Confrontation of violence

Feeling safe allows HRDs to perform better at work, but the feeling is generated only when they know are protected, that is, when they develop the capacity to identify threats, to avoid them when possible, and to mitigate their effects when they do occur. To feel unsafe for extended periods of time on the other hand, does not allow HRD to relax their bodies, keep a calmed mind and recuperate from the frequent exposure to violence. Therefore, learning how to cope with the consequences of the widespread insecurity in contexts of human rights violations (e.g.: privacy violation, digital threats, isolation, harassment, etc.) becomes vital to keep performing positively in the field.

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Although most HRDs are individuals who consciously assume the risks their work encompasses, in fact many of them have dealt with direct attacks in the past without faltering, generally what ends up wearing away their individual welfare is low-targeting (intimidation and harassment). The latter is a critical element for basically two reasons: the first one is that low-targeting is more difficult to identify, denounce, eradicate/fight. Generally, intimidation and harassment are not expressly manifested as direct attacks, most often they are anonymous and clandestine. Likewise, for the design of security protocols it is necessary to be able to identify first the threat and its origin, in the case of low-targeting this is more complicated. The second reason is that it pushes HRD to live in a constant "state of alert" that they are often not aware of. This tension, generated by sustained exposure to episodes of daily harassment and intimidation such as hacking attempts of personal accounts or unusual surveillance outside their homes and workplaces, tends to be confused with mere work-related stress. While it does not seem like something of high intensity, from the aggressors' side, this is thought of as a sustained behavior that mostly wear down the individual mentally. As an old expression says "*De tanto golpear la gota de agua, termina perforando a la roca*".

Within the human rights field, we tend to think about security and self-care in rather narrow terms such as protecting ourselves from direct violent attacks (armed groups, judicial harassment, office raids, etc.), but we do not pay attention to the aforementioned and that threats may also include structural forms of violence and harassment: economic and other types of marginalization, extremely heavy workloads, lack of financial security, stress and traumatic experiences among other factors. It must be recognized that these types of threats not only affect those who work as HRDs, but also have an impact on their immediate surroundings, such as family and friends.

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Since they are based around structure knowledge, but also influenced by individual attitudes and organizational behaviors, protection and security are complex areas. Although the reflection on the subject should be adapted to the needs of each case and to the characteristics of each organization, as Eguren and Caraj (2009) note, what matters is to promote the importance of giving the issue of security the time, space and energy it deserves, despite overloaded work agendas and the severe stress and fear all defenders and their organizations are under. This means going beyond people's individual knowledge about security and moving towards an organizational culture in which security is inherent.

Currently within the field of human rights, there are those who dedicate to fostering a culture of self-care and offering support to those who are targeted. These organizations make available **(a)** generic protection/defense tools and **(b)** appropriate spaces for physical and emotional recovery to HRDs. Among the first group it is worth mentioning risk analysis & protection planning, online information & digital data management workshops and documentation protocols design as well. The first aims to facilitate knowledge, experience and the exchange of skills, to provide HRD with additional information and tools that can help address security and personal and organizational protection issues; the second implies having more effective needs assessment on digital risks and the design of tailor-made security policy that protect data; the third is to generate databases and verifiable evidence, which can potentially count as evidence, through the systematic registration of complaints and cases of violence against HRDs.

Within the second group there are elements such as rest and respite fellowships, whose purpose is to enable human rights defenders to take some time out and recharge their batteries in a safe environment while at the same time enhancing their skills so that they can work more effectively when they return home. There are also protection grants, which pay for provisions to

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improve the security and protection of human rights defenders and their organizations including aspects such as improving communications conditions, paying for medical fees for HRDs who have been providing or providing family assistance for imprisoned HRDs and their families (Frontline Defenders, 2018).

HRDs' work is almost always a calling, it demands a solid critical spirit that allows to place the needs of people above personal convictions; unfortunately, this is often confused with "lukewarmness" or weakness by those who put ideologies before life and freedom. But it is quite common that, motivated by their determination and commitment, those activists - especially the younger ones – who seek for a career in the area of human rights defense, assign an almost altruistic sense to their work, believing that it demands inherently the sacrifice of their own well-being. It is necessary to remember that in the end, well-being is central to not only carrying out our activism effectively but also to our ability to think as “objectively” as possible, analyze and strategize.

A brief recommendation: Peace Journalism + Integrated Security

The idea of integrating Integrated Security with Peace Journalism derives from three very specific questions that emerged after working with HRDs in situations of risk:

- How to help stop the escalation of violence that roughly hits some societies, showing fatal consequences in certain groups in particular such as HRDs?
- How to complement what is above by looking for the impact of any action to be sustainable over time and not going to waste?
- How to do both at the same time?

After the review and analysis of the implications of a sustained exposure to violence and how it is reproduced in specific cases, I came to the conclusion that in order to answer the three previous questions I had to review three ideas. The first has to do with the need for intervention

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in situations of direct violence (peacekeeping); the second is related to the idea of breaking cycles of violence (peacebuilding); and finally the third, which is linked to the notion of time as something diachronic. In that sense, the first idea led me to the need of having broader security approaches, which provide HRDs with simple methodologies that allow the development of better customized security protocols. Thus, I took Integrated Security, which based on the triad of risk-danger-security, adopts a more holistic vision by integrating both psychosocial security (self-care) and digital security as critical elements. The second idea led me to choose Peace Journalism since it is a potent approach to addressing violence in the cultural sphere, which, as the analysis of the normalization of violence in Mexico and Colombia shows, operates clearly actively through media and information. Finally, the third idea led me to review and reflect on what Galtung calls "the quest of diachronic", and the possibility of establishing relationships outside of a merely synchronized conception of time.

The challenge of integrating Integrated Security and Peace Journalism lies primarily in the fact that neither can just accommodate the other. Both must be able to merge so that none predominates before the other. Perhaps the most didactic way to explain this is to think of a journalists working in a context of violence. The possibility of investigating cases and reporting information is subject to exercising their freedom of expression and their individual well-being and that of their organizations too, if they belong to one. In turn, the journalist who uses that freedom and well-being to report the news in a sensationalist way, does not realize that ultimately, is contributing to the reproduction of the violence that ends up harming him or her.

Here what I present is only a survey of the principles that constitute both approaches and three possible integration criteria (practice-oriented thinking, flexibility, respect for institutions). The first is the result of a thorough review of both approaches, which surely feeds on what is

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presented throughout this investigation. The second does not represent anything other than the motivations that have led me to be interested in this topic and in the field of peace building and conflict transformation in general.

Principles	
Integrated Security	Peace Journalism
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It is multidimensional and interrelated (operates on three levels: physical, psychosocial, digital) 2. It is synchronic and action-oriented (Prepare, Explore, Strategize, Act) 3. Its characteristics derive from the international human rights regime 4. It is goal driven (seeks the protections of HRDs) 5. Adopts a human security paradigm (human as subjects instead of States) 6. It is multi-level (regional, national, international) 7. It is multi-actor (many stakeholders playing different roles) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Also adopts a human security paradigm (who reports decides what to report and how) 2. Promotes peace education by emphasizing (a) the narrative structure, (b) the explanation of the causes of the violence and (c) the representation of the experience of the victims 3. Normalizes conflict, de-normalizes (creates opportunities for society at large to consider and value nonviolent responses to conflict) 4. Humanizes journalistic ethics by conceiving it from a triangular relation: relationship (journalists and their sources); process (how to investigate and what to report and how); Result (stories from all sides) 5. Promotes a future-oriented thinking
Criteria for integration	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice-oriented thinking, which means making a constant effort to retain real organic connections to popular struggles and movements, and to find forms that enable continued work going beyond simple institutional reproduction. It also means moving from propositional thought – description, analysis, explanation – in which we are told how the world is and why it is that way, simply as a statement to which we are invited to assent, to placing human practice in the center as something which involves experience, interpretation, contestation and struggle. • Flexibility, meaning to balance both the individual with the collective spheres by protecting the exercise of individual freedom as a fundamental right as well as recognizing the potential that associativity entails. 	

- **Respect for institutions**, which means that the work for the respect of human rights prioritizes nonviolent action, embraces the conventions established by international law and uses and exhaust the institutional channels available in each State.

Conclusion

Clearly aggressions against HRDs can reach fatal consequences, however, this does not mean those actions classified as "low risk aggressions" should be underestimated. On the contrary, these aggressions should be considered a "red flag" that tells us when an intervention is necessary, either to offer protection or to just raise awareness. Because as we have seen on this paper, it is sustained violence what ultimately wears down HRDs. These "low risk aggressions" are what constitute the germ of the normalization of violence afterwards; ideas such as "It's part of the job, there's nothing I can do..." or "It's difficult at first, but you end up getting used to it ..." internalize in the minds of HRDs, leading them to adopt a "martyr" towards their work, which in the end, will not allow them to manage the risk their work entails in a rational and planned manner.

From the organizations that work advocating for HRDs well-being, it is necessary to place greater emphasis on how violence is reproduced culturally, especially through the media. It is clear that accessing high decision levels (media owners, content managers, executives, etc.) in this area is complicated, and working with those who directly investigate and report information on human rights abuses is more feasible. It is in this type of work that a breach in the cycles of violence that are deeply rooted can be found. Offering alternatives on how to report information in a more creative and equitable way is vital. It is also important to start working to evaluate the

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impact of this work to determine if there is really an impact, and if so, what are the aspects that should be strengthened to make it sustainable.

Finally, this paper shows us that violence against HRDs has created two needs that demand a response: the first is to stop the levels of violence in some contexts through direct interventions; the second is to work to train those who are in the position to disclose information, in order to prevent violence from reproducing. Since both needs are interrelated, both require responses that are executed simultaneously. Ultimately, it is about dealing with violence in more than one sphere and at various levels, involving different stakeholders. Just as a juggler does when he holds several balls in the air, they all go down and all go up at different times, but none are dropped.

Resources

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