

# *United Nations warns about Colombia's endemic violence*

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United Nations, February 28 (RHC)-- Last year, Colombia's continuous human rights violations were marked by record-breaking massacres and murders of social leaders that show that violence is endemic in that Latin American country, a United Nations report warns.

The national homicide rate in Colombia has risen to 25/100,000 people in 2019 and 36 massacres have killed 133 people, the highest figures recorded since 2014, according to the annual report of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Colombia.

The UN reports that more than 100 murders of social leaders and human rights defenders, crimes committed by the military and police, high levels of sexual and gender violence, and an increase in homicides of indigenous people took place last year.

These statistics show that violence in Colombia is endemic, a term that refers to a reality that is typical of an area and an era, according to Alberto Brunori, the U.N.'s human rights chief in the country. Regarding social protests, the report stated that most were peaceful and intended to express disagreement with government policies.

But the report warned that in some cases the police responded disproportionately to isolated violent incidents.

The office also remarked about the attacks on human rights defenders in the country.

In 2019, the office documented 108 killings of female human rights defenders, including 15 women and two members of the LGBTI population. The figures show that in 2019, crimes against these actors increased by nearly 50% compared to 2018.

It becomes essential to address the structural causes that generate violence in the country, especially in rural areas, related to the inaction and lack of protection by the state and civil authorities in the territory, the annual report for 2019 stated.

According to the UN Office of the High Commissioner, the state presence in rural areas continues to be predominantly military, while the establishment of a greater presence of civilian authorities in those parts of the territory has been slow".

Only by working together the Colombian authorities will address the risks faced by communities and organizations in the country. In this effort, it is essential that the State increase protection measures for the people, concluded Brunori.

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