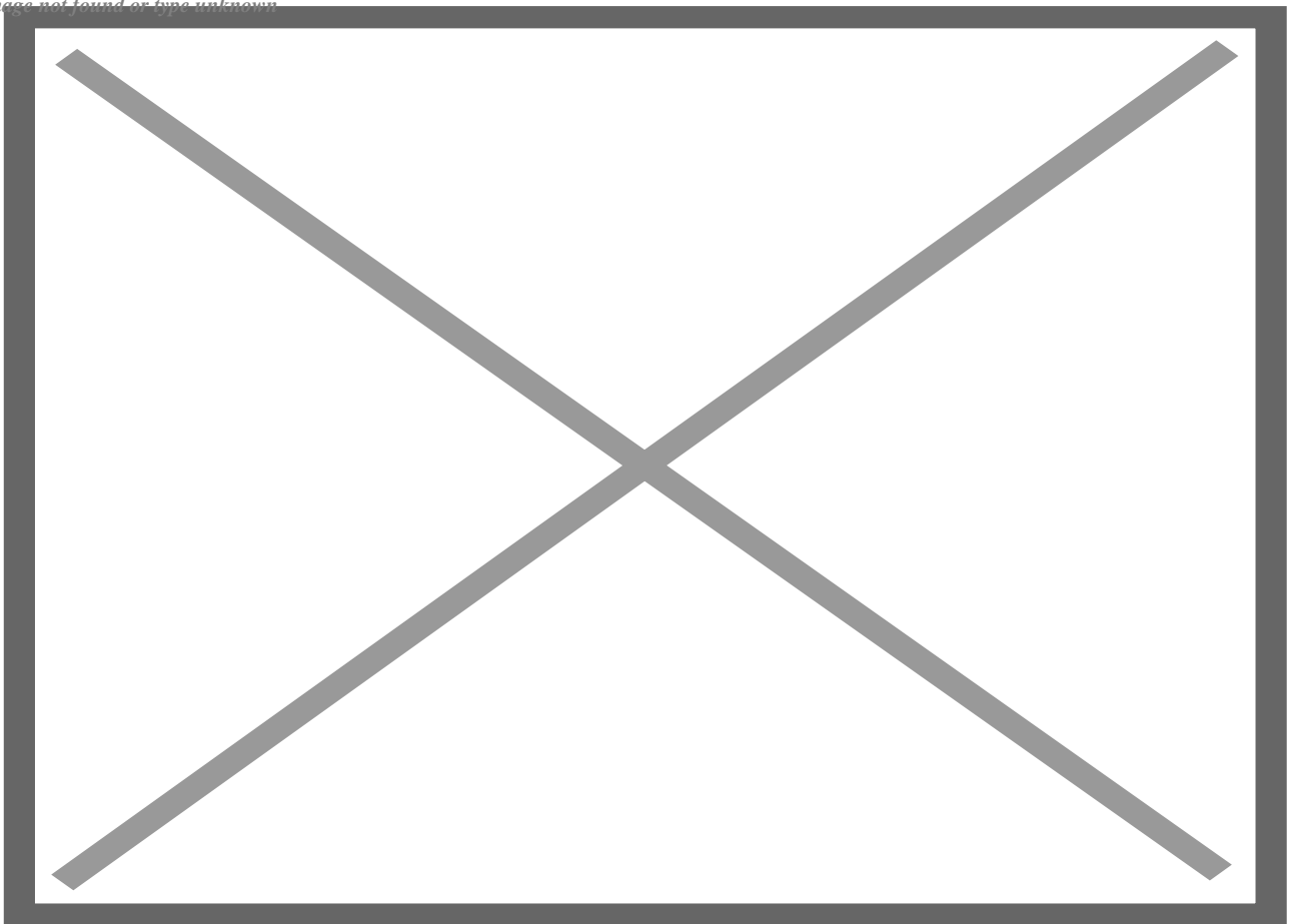


Murder of human rights defenders in Colombia increases by 42 percent

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Bogota, June 3 (RHC)-- In Bogota, the Colombian capital, the "We Are Defenders" organization released a report showing that 197 social leaders and human rights defenders were killed in 2022.

"We are especially concerned about the 42 percent increase in murders in 2022 compared to 2021... In addition, there were 840 attacks of different types, which show the diversity of violent acts that social leaders face," the Somos Defensores Coordinator Lourdes Castro said.

The report shows that President Ivan Duque's administration (2018-2022) left a legacy that "could not be worse" due to the growth and expansion of illegal armed organizations that have modified the "variable geometry" of violent conflicts in Colombian territory.

"The year 2022 was the cruelest for social leaders due to the number of murders," said Hernando Toro, prosecutor in charge of the Special Investigation Unit (UEI).

Despite the serious situation that still prevails, President Gustavo Petro has shown willingness to face violence through policies such as the emergency plan for the protection of human rights defenders, social leadership and peace signatories, Castro pointed out.

These policies, however, have not been transferred to the control and research institutions. The Prosecutor's Office, the Attorney General's Office and other public institutions are not advancing quickly enough in the investigation of the murders, the Somos Defensores affirms.

The implementation of better policies "requires a joint evaluation between the different public institutions involved," it added.

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