

IM- DEFENSORAS GRANTED LETELIER-MOFFITT AWARD IN WASHINGTON, DC



Pramila Jayapal, Marusia López, Yéssica Sánchez, Ángela Fuentes, Morena Herrera, Lisa Vaneklasen, Alejandra Burgos, Ana María Hernández, Verónica Vidal, Carla López, Daniela Fonkatz and Axela Romero. (Photo ©Rick Reinhard)

The **Mesoamerican Women Human Rights Defenders Initiative (IM-Defensoras)** received the Letelier-Moffitt Award in Washington, DC on Tuesday October 14 2014. This award, established in 1978 by the Institute for Policy Studies (IPS), was awarded to IM-Defensoras for its work over the past four years in defense of human rights.

See press release.

Scheduled to attend the award ceremony, representatives of all member organizations of the IM-Defensoras' Steering Committee (**UDEFEGUA, Consortia Oaxaca, Colectiva Feminista, FCAM, JASS, AWID** and the **Red de Defensoras de Honduras**) traveled to the capital of the United States and took the opportunity to participate in various events with the aim of raising awareness in North America about the issues facing the region, as well as the gender-specific conditions of risk and vulnerability under which women human rights defenders carry out their work. IM-Defensoras also disseminated information on organizing strategies developed in order to build comprehensive responses to defenders' needs for support: shelter, registration and diagnosis of cases of aggression, international visibility, communication and self-care.

Here we share some of the activities carried out prior to the award ceremony in Washington, as well as the most significant moments of the ceremony and its media coverage.



LEAD UP ACTIVITIES

On Monday October 13, **JASS**, **IM-Defensoras** and **American University** hosted the event “*Addressing Violence against Women Human Rights Defenders*”. *See message from JASS.*

On Tuesday October 14, at the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security a lunch-discussion group was held: “*Security Across Borders*” organized by the **Institute of Women, Peace and Security**, the **Human Rights Institute at Georgetown University**, **JASS** and **IM-Defensoras**.



Claudia Samayoa (UDEFEQUA, Guatemala), Morena Herrera (Colectiva Feminista, El Salvador) and Marusia Cruz (JASS Mesoamérica)



IM-Defensoras stressed the need for universities and academics in the US to study the link between US development, security and migration policy vis-à-vis Mesoamerica and increased violence in the region. It made a call to establish partnerships in the United States to bring to the forefront the real situation faced by women human rights defenders.

THE AWARDS CEREMONY

On the evening of Tuesday October 14 at the **Carnegie Institute** the anticipated ceremony awards took place, which was attended by leading figures such as, among others, the Nobel Peace Prize laureate **Jody Williams** and former Guatemalan Attorney General **Claudia Paz y Paz**.

In what was undoubtedly one of the most exciting moments of the evening, the president of Chile, **Michelle Bachelet**, sent a *video message* congratulating the winning organizations and individuals.



Valerie Miller (JASS), Claudia Paz y Paz, Carla López (FCAM), Jody Williams and Lisa Vaneklasen (JASS)



Prizewinners also included **Juan Mendez**, current UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, for his work and career; and **Robin Reineke**, executive director of the **Colibri Center for Human Rights** in Tucson, Arizona, for her work in documenting missing and/or murdered border migrants and in assisting their families.



Juan Méndez, UN Special Rapporteur on Torture



Robin Reineke, Colibrí Center for Human Rights



Finally, **Marusia Lopez**, accompanied by representatives of the member organizations of the IM-Defensoras Steering Committee, was commissioned to read the acceptance speech, which was dedicated to *“the more than 39 defenders killed in Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador between 2011 and 2014, to all human rights defenders who have been imprisoned or unfairly prosecuted by the government and all those who are assaulted and threatened for their work, but also live in a region marked by machismo and violence against women”*.

Watch the full speech.

These are some of the most relevant press clippings from local and international media regarding the prize:

USA TODAY Program on CNN



Marusia López and Yéssica Sánchez interviewed on USA TODAY

NOTA INFORMATIVA de la Red Nacional de Defensoras de Derechos Humanos en México

Letelier-Moffitt Human Rights Awards 2014. IPS holds its 38th annual awards ceremony honoring Robin Reineke, the Mesoamerican Initiative of Women Human Rights Defenders, and Juan E. Méndez.

WASHINGTON POST: Letelier-Moffitt Human Rights Awards go to border activists, lawyer, Latina organizers

LA JORNADA: “Reconocimiento a defensoras y defensores de derechos humanos”, por Miguel Concha

“Defensoras de derechos exigen la presentación con vida de normalistas”, por Zacarías Cervantes

Reconoce la Comisión de Derechos Humanos del Distrito Federal (CDHDF, México) lucha por libertad y territorio nacional de Iniciativa Mesoamericana

CIMAC: Recibe IM-Defensoras Premio Letelier-Moffitt

In closing, one must note that IM-Defensoras deeply appreciates all the congratulations and recognition that individually and collectively we have received. Undoubtedly, our work would be impossible without the collaborations and complicities that we weave with other people and organizations committed to defending human rights and in this sense, achievements, much like challenges, are always collective. Thanks to Amnistía Internacional, CEJIL, HIVOS, MADRE, Front Line Defenders and all persons and organizations that sent us messages of congratulations.