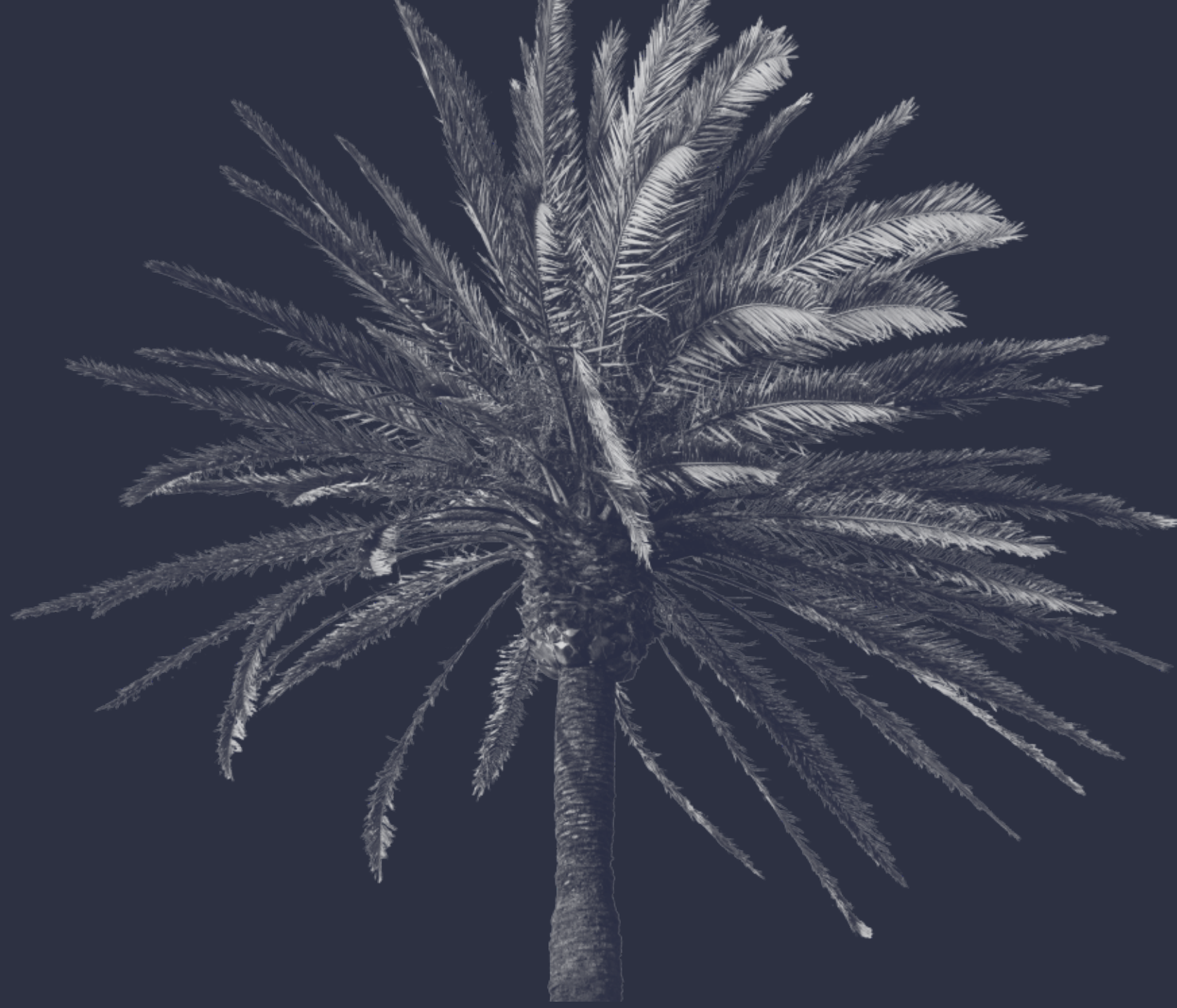


Environmental Human Rights Defenders are facing a crisis

The environment

is a new battleground for human rights. As demand for products like timber, minerals and palm oil continues to rise, governments, companies and criminals are exploiting land with little regard for the people who live on it. Those who take a stand are finding themselves in the firing line of State forces, private security companies and a thriving market for contract killers.



Global Witness documented

164
killings
in **2018**, on average,
over three per week.

Latin-America

51%

Asia

39%

Africa

9%

*Percentage of global killings occurring in that region

Indigenous peoples

are most vulnerable.
Between 2014-2018 almost 900 indigenous
leaders were killed.



Most killings were linked with

Extractives industries 43

Agribusiness 20

Water & dam projects 17

Logging 13

Criminalisation

The wrongful use of criminal law and justice systems by governments and companies to obstruct the work of environmental and land defenders has become an increasingly common threat.



The faces of criminalisation

Arbitrary use
of preventative
pretrial detention

Unreasonably lengthy
legal proceedings

Misuse of anti-terrorism
laws to deter and punish
environmental defense
activities

Unfounded statements
of government officials

Punishments to the receipt
of foreign funding
in the framework of
international cooperation
agreements

Denial of adequate
time and means
for legal defense

Violation of
due process

Politically motivated
application of
criminal law

Baseless accusations,
evidentiary problems and
bogus criminal
lawsuits

Bans on speeches
denouncing human rights
violations and on peaceful
social protests

Stigmatisation

of land, territory and environmental defenders by
the media, businesses and governments is increasing.

Smear campaigns are used to portray
defenders of being 'anti-development', criminals
and even terrorists.

False accusations in social networks and the media
are increasingly common ways to defame defenders.



Other threats faced by defenders

Enforced
disappearance

Violent
attacks

Death
threats

Blackmail

Travel
bans

Attacks
on property

Illegal surveillance
and interception of
communications

Threats and
attacks on
family

Forcible removal
from participatory
spaces

Use of force
in peaceful
protests

Forced
displacement
and eviction

Destruction
and theft of
information

Women defenders

10%
of global
killings

Women face gender-specific threats and tend to be at a distinct disadvantage. Exclusion from the labour market and exclusion from land ownership and leadership positions increase their vulnerabilities. The double role of caregivers and defenders places increased burdens with a huge physical and psychological impact.



Differentiated risks and threats

Threats and
attacks to their
children

Physical abuse

Sexual violence
(incl. abuse and
harrasment)

Domestic violence

Smear campaigns

Economic and social
violence

Social rejection
for not conforming
to gender stereotypes

Systematic discredit

