

**INTERNATIONAL OMBUDSMAN INSTITUTE DEPLORES
ATTACKS AGAINST OMBUDSMAN FROM FOUR COUNTRIES
IN THE LATIN AMERICAN REGION**

The International Ombudsman Institute (IOI) expresses its great concern regarding the negative statements and damaging remarks made by certain governments and parliaments against colleagues in the Latin American Region, namely the Ombudsman of Bolivia, Nadia Cruz Tarifa; the Ombudsman of Costa Rica, Catalina Crespo Sancho; the Ombudsman of Peru, Walter Gutiérrez Camacho; and the Ombudsman of Guatemala, Jordán Rodas Andrade.

As the only global organization for the cooperation of 205 Ombudsman institutions from Africa, Asia, Australasia and the Pacific, the Caribbean and Latin America, Europe, and North America, the IOI is committed to promoting the Ombudsman concept and strengthening Ombudsman institutions around the world.

The IOI therefore speaks out in support of its four colleagues in Latin America and reiterates its solidarity and commitment to upholding the important role Ombudsman institutions play in the protection and promotion of human rights and the fight against maladministration.

It is deeply worrying that in times of crisis, such as the one we are facing now due to the COVID-19 pandemic, attempts are being made to silence and restrict institutions such as the Ombudsman, who speak out on behalf of the people; in particular the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups and especially in these Latin American countries.

The case of our colleague Jordán Rodas Andrade, the Ombudsman of Guatemala, merits special attention and mention. Mr Rodas Andrade, who is currently also the President of the Federation of Ibero-American Ombudsman (FIO), has been summoned to appear in Parliament, to explain why his office hoisted a rainbow-flag in celebration of LGBTIQ+ pride. Actions like these have serious impacts on an institution. They represent a major setback for the consolidation of democracy in the country concerned and must not be ignored.

Strong and independent Ombudsman institutions are a core element of every democracy and form an integral part of any state to ensure good governance and justice, as well as the protection and promotion of human rights. Weakening the Ombudsman not only restricts citizen's rights, but also impacts the state's compliance with international human rights obligations.

Considering the recent developments in the Latin American Region, the IOI shares the concerns of partner organizations such as the Federation of Ibero-American Ombudsman (FIO), the Network for NHRIs in the American Continent (RIDNHCA) and the Association of Ombudsman in Argentina (ADPRA).

In reference to Article 24 of the Principles on the Protection and Promotion of the Ombudsman Institution (The Venice Principles), which underline that “*states shall refrain from taking any action aiming at or resulting in the suppression of the Ombudsman institution or in any hurdles to its effective functioning, and shall effectively protect it from any such threats*”, the IOI expresses its full support for institutions that guarantee and promote the observance of human rights in general and its colleagues in Latin America in particular.

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