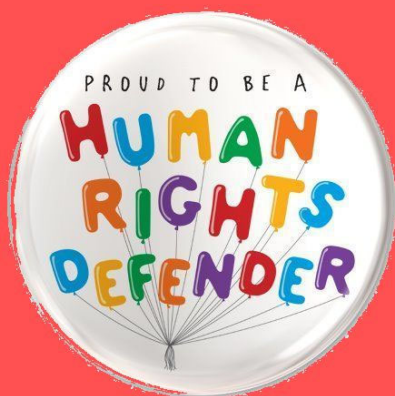


This time with the human rights defender Angel from Mexico!

WHO DEFENDS

THE HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS?

Third series - Fifth version



Course material for 15/16 year old high school students



COLOPHON

"Who defends human rights defenders?" is meant for 15/16 year old high school students.
Download free from <http://www.amnestynijmegen.nl/index.php/educatie/lesmateriaal>

Author: Harry de Ridder

Third series - Version 5: Now with human rights defender Angel from Mexico!



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Layout and editing: Harry de Ridder

Version 1: This time with human rights defender Placide from Congo!

Version 2: This time with human rights defender Lydia from Kenya!

Version 3: This time with human rights defender Zafar from Pakistan!

Version 4: This time with human rights defender Mariam from Georgia!

Second series - Version 1: This time with human rights defender Kiruba from India!

Second series - Version 2: This time with human rights defender Midhat from Sudan!

Second series - Version 3: This time with human rights defender Dinah from Kenya!

Second series - Version 4: This time with human rights defender Mary from Venezuela!

Second series - Version 5: This time with human rights defender Mary from Zimbabwe!

Second series - Version 6: This time with human rights defender William from Uganda!

Second series - Version 7: This time with human rights defender Nataliia from Russia!

Second series - Version 8: This time with human rights defender Guliaim from Kyrgyzstan!

Third series - Version 1: This time with human rights defender Prisca from Congo DR!

Third series - Version 2: This time with human rights defender Carmen from Venezuela!

Third series - Version 3: This time with human rights defender Jodesz from The Philippines!

Third series - Version 4: This time with human rights defender Mamikon from Armenia!

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WORKSHEETS



**Who defends the
human rights defenders?**

Human rights

All countries of the world have agreed that everyone in the world whether you are a man or a woman, young or old, poor or rich and no matter what skin color, has the same rights. This agreement was made in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* on the 10th of December 1948 (UDHR). The rights named in the UDHR are called human rights.



The logo of the UDHR

In this short YouTube-movie some of these human rights are mentioned:



Human Rights - Ministry of Foreign Affairs



Assignment

1. What human rights do you recognize in the movie?
2. What other human rights that were not mentioned in the movie do you know?



You probably already know that not everyone respects human rights. In that case, we speak of human rights violations. Some violations are easy to prevent, others are more difficult to find a solution for.

A human rights violation that can easily be prevented, is torture. If the government of a country prohibits torture and enforces the law, torture can be banned.



Assignment

3. Give another example of a human rights violation that can easily be prevented.
4. Give an example of a human rights violation that cannot be prevented easily.



Prohibition on torture

Freedom of expression

One of the most important human rights is freedom of expression. If you cannot express your opinion, you cannot oppose human rights violations either.

Martin Luther King was publicly opposing discrimination of people with a dark skin color. His only 'weapon' was freedom of expression. Partly because of his famous speech 'I have a dream' (in front of about a million people) he realized equality of law for everyone in his country.



In some countries you have to be careful in the way that you act or about the things that you say. That is especially true for people with the following professions:

- Artist
- Journalist
- Moviemaker
- Union leader



Protest of a union in Belgium



A piece of art of Chinese artist Yue Minjun

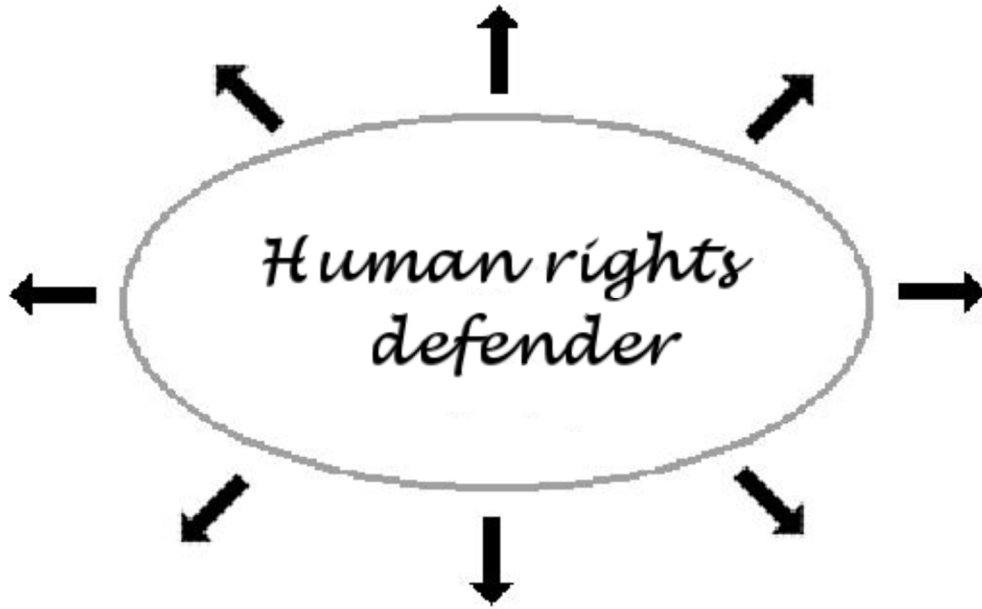


5. Explain for each of the four professions mentioned above why these people should be extra careful according to you.
6. What do these professions all have in common?
7. Name a profession -not mentioned above- that could also be in the category of extra vulnerable professions.
8. Write your own text for a protest against a current wrong on the protest sign of Yue Minjun.

Human rights defenders



9. Write down as many words as you can that come to your mind when you think about 'human rights defender'. Does a person like that have any special characteristics according to you? If so, which ones?



A human rights defender is not superman. What is a human rights defender according to you?



10. Try to think of your own definition of 'human rights defender' together with your neighbour.

A 'human rights defender' is someone who

Extra vulnerable

Human rights defenders stand up for human rights, individually or in an organisation, without using violence. Unfortunately they cannot always do that in freedom. Protection of civilians is most needed in times of armed conflict or war. A human rights defender who exposes violations committed by political leaders or armed militias are often accused of partisanship and get threatened.

Since 9-11 a lot of countries adopted rules to oppose terrorism. This often means that the work of human rights defenders is criminalized.

Amnesty asks special attention for female human rights defenders, who often work under more difficult conditions than men and are extra vulnerable because of that. They are often not taken seriously by their surrounding society because of prevailing about women.

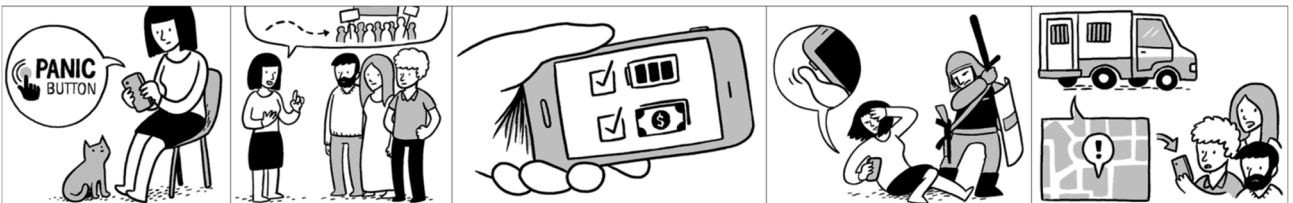


Some governments see the work of human rights organisations of women as not important and unlawful.

Female human rights defenders are more at risk to be threatened because of their gender and are more likely to become victim of sexual harassment and rape.

Amnesty launched a special application in 2014 that human rights defenders can use to call out for help, if they are at risk of being kidnapped, attacked or tortured. The Panic Button-app is a silent alarm and can be activated in case of emergency.

By pressing the button, fellow-activists are alarmed if a colleague is in danger. This will fasten the process of providing help. In the first hours of the arrest, the human rights defender's network can act fast to get their colleague released. For example they can overwhelm the police station with phone calls, organise a protest or warn lawyers and organisations like Amnesty.



11. What is meant by 'criminalizing human rights defenders'?
12. In what way the Panic Button-app works, is explained by the above pictures. What is missing, is English explanation. Write the five steps down together with you neighbour.

Assignment

Who defends human rights defenders?

Human rights defenders stand up for the rights of others. This often puts them in danger. They also need protection.



Assignment

13. Who should protect human rights defenders according to you? Explain.

Different international organisations stand up for the rights of human rights defenders. The two most important ones are the United Nations and the European Union.

United Nations

In 1999 the UN adopted the *Declaration on Human Rights Defenders**. The official name of the declaration* already shows that everyone has an obligation to protection human rights defenders.

Article 12 of the declaration pays special attention to the obligations of States:



Article 12

1. Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to participate in peaceful activities against violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms.
2. **The State shall take all necessary measures** to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present Declaration.
3. In this connection, everyone is entitled, individually and in association with others, to be protected effectively **under national law** in reacting against or opposing, through peaceful means, activities and acts, including those by omission, attributable to States that result in violations of human rights and funda-

* Officially: *Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms*



European Union

In 2004 the EU adopted the *Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders*. Embassies of member States and EU-missions must provide protection to human rights defenders by visiting, observing processes and where needed undertake action against governments. They must also help guarantee that human rights defenders have free access to (foreign) financial donations.



Assignment

14. The UN Declaration and the EU Guidelines (it already explains in the name) have one important disadvantage. What could that be? What could the UN and the EU do to further strengthen the protection of human rights defenders?

Next to States, private organisations can offer help to human rights defenders. We name a few, but there are more!

Amnesty International

One of the main tasks of *Amnesty International* is the protection of human rights defenders. Amnesty realizes that by protests, publicity, arranging visits and contacts, education and training, lobbying and sometimes financial support.



For example by supporting protests and by writing letters, you can participate yourself in the protection of human rights defenders.

#Idefund



#Idefund is an initiative of the delegation of the EU in the UN.

The goal of *#Idefund* is to show solidarity to human rights defenders and to improve their commitment and work for human rights for people all over the world. Maybe you have seen this on social media, like Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/idefund>). You can support the initiative yourself by social media.

Justice and Peace



This Dutch organisation stands up for the protection and training of human rights defenders. *Justice and Peace* created several projects that support the work of human rights defenders.



Justice and Peace Netherlands

- *The Hague Training Course* provides training on digital security mechanisms and policy influencing.
- *Connet2Protect* connects human rights defenders with members of the parliament, lawyers and journalists.
- *Temporary Relocation* temporarily relocates human rights defenders from Africa and Asia in those continents.
- *Shelter City* is a European project. You can read more about that on the next page.



15. Next to legal rules - for example by referring to antiterrorist regulations - the movie mentions another way to obstruct the work of human rights defenders. What is that?
16. Which four ways of threatening a human rights defender are named in the movie?

Shelter City Nijmegen

The movie of Justice and Peace showed that human rights defenders can be put to silence, arrested and tortured and sometimes even disappear. If their situation allows it, they can benefit a lot from temporary shelter. Based on an initiative of the European Parliament, Shelter Cities have been created in all of Europe.

How does Shelter City work?

Shelter City started by recruiting cities in Europe. Shelter Cities in the Netherlands (or soon to be) are: Amsterdam, Den Haag, Groningen, Maastricht, Middelburg, Nijmegen en Utrecht. After The Hague and Middelburg, Nijmegen was the third Shelter City of the Netherlands.

The next step is the selection of human rights defenders. They are chosen by a national selection committee, composed of representatives of Justice and Peace, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, de Faculty of Law of the University of Amsterdam, Hivos en Free Press Unlimited.



Every Shelter City provides a human rights defender a safe environment for three months. In that period, the human rights defenders can recharge so that he or she can return with new found energy.

The human rights defenders will go back to their own country, empowered by a larger network and with more knowledge to better do their work. If desired, the human rights defenders can participate in education or training. Meetings with politicians in The Hague and Brussels will also be arranged.

An interaction should be created between the human rights defenders and civilians of the Shelter Cities. He or she will be part of events in the city (like Music Meeting and the Four Day Marches in Nijmegen). In their turn, the human rights defenders can participate in debate or have a speech on human rights in his or her country.

The human rights defender 'from Nijmegen'



Angel is an indigenous human rights activist of Mayan descent. He works for the U Kúuchil K ch'i'ibalo'on Center in Mexico that works to raise awareness and defend human rights and the environment of Maya people. In particular, he works for children and youth, giving workshops and initiating art.

Because of his work, he has been censored, harassed and threatened for years.

In Nijmegen, Angel wants to unwind, expand his network and learn to strengthen his physical and digital security. He also enjoys going to schools and giving lectures about his work and his people.



Assignment

17. Shelter City does not just have advantages. What disadvantage(s) of the Shelter City project could you think of?
18. Imagine you would be in Angel's position. What practical matters could come up for a human rights defenders in Nijmegen?

Human rights in Mexico

The human rights situation in this Central American country is not so good. Never have so many journalists and human rights and environmental activists been killed as now. Also, more than one hundred thousand people have "disappeared" in the last forty years.

The military, the National Guard, and the Defense Ministry are accused by many of arbitrary arrests, disappearances, torture and killings.

Andrés Manuel López Obrador, president of Mexico since 2018, calls people who protest the violence in their country "conservatives" and "opponents."

There is also a lot of gender-based violence in Mexico. Two or three women are murdered every day, and the police usually fail to investigate these murders.



Assignment

19. What do we mean by "arbitrary arrests" and "gender-based violence"?
20. And why do we write "disappeared" in quotation marks?
21. What are the most important differences in the work of a human rights defender in Europe and of one in Mexico? Explain your answer.

Indigenous peoples

Indigenous peoples make up about 20% of Mexico's population, divided among more than 60 different nations. The best known indigenous peoples are Maya and Aztec. Tourists from around the world love coming to Mexico to learn about their culture, monuments, markets, crafts and dances.

At the same time, the indigenous peoples are seen as second-class citizens. Most politicians are of Spanish origin and speak only Spanish. They do not care about the welfare of the indigenous peoples. The better jobs are not available to anyone of indigenous origin. They are among the poorest groups in their country and education for children of indigenous families is poor.

Improvements have been made in recent years, but still people of indigenous descent are discriminated against on all sides.



An indigenous peasant family



Assignment

22. The population of Mexico is 20% indigenous peoples. And the other 80%, where did they originally come from? And by what historical event is that due?

The Maya Train

The Maya train is President López' hobbyhorse. The train will have a 1,500-kilometer route, connecting five provinces and 41 cities in southeastern Mexico. According to him, the train will bring much more prosperity thanks to tourism. And he promises that the train will provide more than a hundred thousand new jobs. 'The Maya train promises to be as big as the works of the pharaohs in ancient Egypt,' the president said.



The Maya do not share his enthusiasm. The project will cost 8 billion euros that they say could be better spent on other things that the indigenous people need more.

The criticism comes not only from the Maya and other indigenous peoples. Scientists, biologists and environmentalists are also highly critical. According to them, more than 10 million trees must be cut down for the Maya train.

Environmental and human rights activist Angel says:

"There's agro-industry, which has devastated a large part of the jungle and has terribly contaminated the water and soil, with the use of agrochemicals that are present in the water, even in mother's breast milk and in the urine of children, according to the latest studies that have been carried out."



Opdracht

23. Not all Mayans are against the Maya train project. Why might they be in favor?
24. Explain why Angel is being threatened for his efforts against the train.

Extra course material

As a preparation for the meeting with human rights defender Angel we came up with some questions you can ask him. Of course you can think of some question on your own that you want to ask. What would you like to know?

- * Against what human rights violations is he fighting?
- * Why do these violations take place and what can he do about it?
- * What successes has he achieved in her work?
- * He is threatened for opposing violations. How does that affect his work? Is he not scared?
- * What does the future of Mexico look like?



Text in picture: Are there any question?

Notes

INSTRUCTIONS



Who defends the human rights defenders?

Introduction

The course material 'Who defends the human rights defenders?' is developed by the Education group of Amnesty Nijmegen in cooperation with Shelter City Nijmegen.

Shelter City is a national initiative of Justice & Peace in cooperation with Dutch cities and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to protect human rights defenders as initiated by a motion of the European Parliament. Human rights defenders that risk their own lives by fighting for human rights, will be provided temporary shelter in European cities.

Shelter City Nijmegen is realised by a cooperation between different organisations from Nijmegen, under which Amnesty Nijmegen, Radboud University, the municipality of Nijmegen and Bureau Wijland. Qader Shafiq of Bureau Wijland coordinates the project, q.shafiq@bureauwijland.nl.

Since 2015, two human rights defenders have been coming to Nijmegen every year. The fifth of the third series is Angel* from Mexico.

* For his safety we can not disclose his name.

Structure

The course material 'Who defends the human rights defenders?' takes two lessons of 50 minutes.

Lesson 1: worksheets 1-5

Lesson 2: worksheets 6-10

The course material can be used by the teacher independently as well as by guest teachers from Amnesty Nijmegen. For guest lessons you can contact the head of the Education group: Harry de Ridder, amnestynijmegen@gmail.com.

As a follow-up, you can ask Angel himself to tell his story as long as he still is in Nijmegen. For that you can also contact Harry de Ridder, amnestynijmegen@gmail.com.

As preparation for a possible meeting we have prepared some question and ask the students to prepare some questions as well before the meeting.

Preparation of the meeting: worksheets 11-12

Different versions

With the arrival of each human rights defender, we will release a new version of the teaching package 'Who defends human rights defenders?'. Each version will be connected to the individual story and backgrounds of the human rights defenders that come to Nijmegen. The first one and a half part of the material will not change, only the last half on the human rights defender will be adapted every time. As soon as we know the identity of the following human rights defender, we will publish the next version of the course material.

General notions Lesson 1 and the first half of lesson 2 (worksheets 1-8)

Human rights defender Second half of lesson 2 (worksheets 8-12)

Goals

- The student will be introduced to human rights and human rights violations.
 - The student knows that the human right 'Freedom of expression' is connected to opposing human rights violations.
 - The students know that people with certain professions have to more careful than others.
 - The students can explain their own definition of a human rights defender.
 - The student knows that human rights defenders are extra vulnerable and know why female human rights defenders are at even greater risk than their male colleagues.
 - The student can tell who stands up for the rights of human rights defenders and can name some international and private organisations that protect their rights.
 - The student knows about Shelter City.
 - The student knows about the selection procedure of human rights defenders that come to one of the Shelter Cities of the Netherlands.
 - The student knows human rights defender Angel and his background.
 - The student can name some human rights violations in Mexico and explain why these violations mostly occur there.
-
- The student will meet and converse with human rights defender Angel.

Movie material

In the course material 'Who defends the human rights defenders?' two short movies are showed:

YouTube-movies:

* Human rights of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2.22 min.) (in Dutch)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5eRCogmiGfA>

* Justice and Peace Netherlands (3.02 min.)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IK1jAIJ0AcM>

MP4-movies:

* Human rights of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2.22 min.) (in Dutch)
<https://www.amnestynijmegen.nl/download/Mensenrechten-BuZa.mp4>

* Justice and Peace Netherlands (3.02 min.)
<https://www.amnestynijmegen.nl/download/justice-and-peace-netherlands.mp4>

Translations of the Dutch movie

Movie: *Human rights of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs*

Everyone is equal and has the same rights... or is that not true?

Everyone has the right to peace and freedom... or is that not true?

Everyone has the right to freedom of expression... or is that not true?

Everyone has the right to believe what they want... or is that not true?

Everyone has the right to life with who they want... or is that not true?

Justice - Equality - Solidarity - Humanity

In a humane society everyone enjoys equal rights. For that reason there is a foreign policy on human rights.

Human rights - For everyone - Always - And everywhere

Human rights

The lesson starts with discussing what human rights and human rights violations are.



1. Everyone is equal, everyone has equal rights, everyone has the right to develop in a good standard of living, everyone has the right to live in freedom and safety, everyone has the right to sufficient food and water, there is a prohibition on the use of child soldiers, nobody can be arbitrarily arrested without the family of the person knowing where they are (prohibition on disappearances), everyone has the right to life, everyone has the right to freedom of expression, torture is prohibited, everyone has the right to believe, everyone has the right to live together with whom he or she want, everyone has equal rights.
2. -
3. For example: prohibition on slavery, prohibition on the use of child soldiers.
4. Some economical, social and cultural rights are less easy to realize, think of: the right to labour. Every society copes with unemployed people.

Freedom of expression

In this part of the course material we further discuss the human right 'Freedom of expression', a condition to be able to oppose human rights violations (of others).



5. Artist: if you show art that exposes the government or makes fun of it, you risk being arrested.
Journalist: he can expose corruption or other wrongs which the risk of being arrested.
Moviemaker: similar to the journalist, but not with words but with images. A moviemaker can make fun of the government as well.
Union leader: he or she stands up for the rights of workers and stands up against the wishes of employers
6. They do not just stand up for their own opinion, but also for the rights of others.
7. A writer, blogger, cartoon artist, comedian.
8. -

Human rights defenders

We are discussing a self-made definition of human rights defenders and their characteristics.



9. After the students' opinion. A human rights defender is not superman, but someone who is not afraid to stand up for the rights of others. It takes some courage, or at least someone who is willing to take on his own fear.
10. For example: A human rights defender is someone who stands up for the rights of others (in a situation where he operates himself and where human rights are violated; someone from Amnesty who stands up for human rights in a safe environment are not called human rights defenders). A human rights defender can only be called a human rights defender if he or she does not use violence

Extra vulnerable

Human rights defenders are at great risk, especially women. Amnesty's application can help with that.



11. The work of human rights defenders is criminalized to silence them.
12. Step 1: Take the time to install the Panic Button-application in a calm situation.
Step 2: Think of the people who should be informed when action needs to be undertaken.
Step 3: Check that your phone is on, sufficiently charged and with sufficient credits (for a prepaid or contracted phone).
Step 4: Press the button of the application in case of emergency.
Step 5: Your network will be notified by text and indicate your location so that people from your network can help you fast.

Who defends the human rights defenders?

People who stand up for the rights of others are also in danger and need protection themselves.



13. According to the declaration basically everyone: individuals, groups, organisations and official institutions.
14. Both are not treaties with legal force, but declarations with no more than official promises. If the UN and the EU would contain that protection in a treaty, we could take on violators with the law or treaty in place.
15. Defamation (violate someone's honour or good name on purpose) with the goal of degrading the human rights defenders and taking away their credibility.
16. 1) physically (physical intimidation or direct threats).
2) online (digital surveillance and online threats).
3) family (physical intimidation or direct threats of family members).
4) mobile phone (surveillance of mobile phones and threats by text).

Shelter City Nijmegen / The human rights defender 'from Nijmegen'

In this part of the course material we further discuss the how and why of the Shelter City project and the human rights defender who came to Nijmegen..



17. It could be: the human rights defenders do not want to go back to their own country or the situation in their country has become so badly in those three months that they cannot go back. It could also be personal: for example when a person got into a relationship in the city where he or she temporarily lived.
18. Think of things like: a place to live, a place to work or take a course, the use of a computer, telephone, public transport card, a budget to their expenses, but also: people around them to accompany and help them.

Human rights in Mexico

The human rights situation in this Central American country is not very good. Arbitrary arrests, torture, disappearances and murders are commonplace.



19. Arbitrary arrest is arrest without a valid, legal reason. And by gender-based violence, we mean violence because of your gender. Usually it involves women facing violence from the opposite sex. For example, many women are murdered by their own partner (femicide).
20. We put disappeared in quotation marks because people don't just disappear, they are picked up by a government organization. Then they deny being responsible for the disappearance of somebody.
21. In Europe, governments stand up for the rights of people and of human rights defenders, while the Mexican government is the cause of many human rights violations. In Mexico, not only do you not get any help from the government, but standing up for human rights can even be dangerous for you.

Indigenous peoples

The indigenous peoples in Mexico are seen as second-class citizens and are discriminated against in all areas.



22. Most Mexicans are descended from the Spanish rulers starting in 1492 (Columbus and "explorers" after him) who invaded Mexico.

The Maya Train

President López calls the Mayan train a pharaonic icon that will bring prosperity to poor southeastern Mexico. Critics mostly see the negative environmental aspects of the project.



23. The southeastern part of Mexico is poor, and the many Maya who live there hope to find a job with the Maya train or tourism.
24. The Mayan train will cost billions of dollars, and in corrupt Mexico, many will profit from it. Angel, with his opposition to the train, is jeopardizing their income.

Literature

Human rights in Mexico

- <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/americas/north-america/mexico/> (Eng)
- <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2023/country-chapters/mexico>

Inheemse volken

- <https://www.iwgia.org/en/mexico.html>
- <https://minorityrights.org/minorities/indigenous-peoples-4/>

Mayatrein

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tren_Maya
- The Fight of the Maya Against the Mayan Train in Mexico
<https://www.latinorebels.com/2023/03/31/mayantrainindigenous/>

Web links

- <https://justiceandpeace.nl/en/initiatives/shelter-city/>
- <https://www.bureauwijland.nl> (Dutch)
- <https://www.amnestynijmegen.nl> (Dutch)



Who defends the human rights defenders?

Course material for 15/16 year old high school students developed by the Education group of Amnesty Nijmegen and Shelter City Nijmegen



**RIGHTS
DEFENDERS**
PROMOTE. PROTECT. DEFEND.

