

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# The situation of environmental defenders in Chile in 2025

Prepared by Escazú Ahora NGO  
April 16, 2026

## Methodology

Escazú Ahora Chile is an independent organization, politically and economically autonomous, working since 2020 to monitor and promote Human Rights in Environmental Matters for individuals and communities, with particular attention to the full implementation of the rights enshrined in the Escazú Agreement.

**Learn more at:** <https://www.escazuahorachile.cl/>

## Data Collection

The preparation of each of our reports begins with the documentation of attacks against environmental defenders in Chile over a calendar year. Sources of information include direct communications with defenders through our contact platforms, periodic monitoring of media outlets and environmental defense networks, and the dissemination of an annual survey to collect cases that have not been previously documented.

All collected information is organized into methodological records to facilitate systematization. Each data point is carefully verified through documentary sources and, when possible, direct contact with the individuals involved.

For the purposes of this report, the most relevant definitions are:

- **Environmental defender:** An environmental human rights defender is any person who, individually or collectively, in a personal or professional capacity, and through peaceful means, strives to protect and promote respect for the environment. These are individuals seeking to protect the life and personal integrity of those affected by pollution, environmental degradation, and the excessive and/or illegal extraction of natural resources (Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, 2024).
- **Aggression:** An act of attacking someone with the intent to kill, injure, or harm. This concept is generally defined as conduct that results in personal harm (Salas-Menotti, 2008). It refers to a concrete act of aggression against a defender, which may be singular or repeated, and can be documented and identified in time and space.
- **Case:** A set of aggressive events targeting an environmental defender or environmental organization.

## Main Findings

### Annual Overview

The year 2025 recorded the highest number of attacks since we began documenting the situation of environmental defenders in 2023. Between January 1 and December 31, 2025, we documented 72 attacks against 67 defenders. This represents a 148.2% increase in the number of affected individuals (27 in 2024) and a 53.2% increase in recorded attacks (47 in 2024).

During the year, most attacks were concentrated in the first half, particularly in March, April, and May, with May recording the highest number (19 attacks). This spike is linked to a report published by El Mercurio on May 16, which exposed the work of 20 organizations and 15 individuals.

### Gender

In 2025, women accounted for 55.2% of recorded cases, while men represented 44.8%, reversing the 2024 trend (51.9% men, 48.1% women). Compared to the previous year, cases affecting men doubled, while those affecting women tripled.

Both physical violence and defamation were the most frequent types of attacks, though with different gender distributions. In cases of physical violence, nearly two-thirds of victims were women. In contrast, defamation affected men and women almost equally.

### Age

In percentage terms, individuals aged 31 to 60 represented 76.1% of total recorded attacks in 2025. The 41–50 age group had the highest representation, accounting for 28.4% of cases. Middle-aged groups have consistently represented the largest share across all three years of documentation.

### Geographical Distribution

For the first time, a concentration of cases is observed in the Metropolitan Region (29.9%), followed by the Araucanía Region (22.4%), Los Ríos (14.9%), and Valparaíso (9%).

There is also a correlation between territory and the prevalence of cases involving individuals belonging to Indigenous peoples. Among Mapuche defenders, cases are concentrated in Araucanía (73.3%), Los Ríos (80%), and the Metropolitan Region (15%). In the case of Diaguita and Kawésqar peoples, although less frequent, cases align with their historical territories (Copiapó/Coquimbo and Magallanes, respectively).

## Indigenous Peoples

For the purposes of our documentation, 44.8% of attacked individuals self-identified as belonging to Indigenous peoples. Of these, 40.3% identified as Mapuche, 3% as Diaguita, and 1.5% as Kawésqar. The data shows that Mapuche individuals face the highest number of attacks, concentrated in regions where they predominantly reside.

## Types of Documented Attacks

Physical attacks represented 33.3% of the total, consistent with 2024 patterns. These include arbitrary detentions, arson attacks against property, physical assaults, and raids.

Defamation increased significantly, representing 36.1% of total attacks compared to 4.2% in 2024. According to testimonies, media outlets play a key role in spreading narratives against environmentalism.

Digital violence also increased, rising from 6 to 8 cases. Verbal aggression remained stable with a slight increase, while judicial harassment decreased from 7 to 4 cases.

## Economic Sectors Associated with Attacks

This category refers to the sectors identified by defenders as potential perpetrators. It does not establish causality but reflects reported perceptions. Actors may be state (from any branch of government) or non-state (private individuals, companies, or criminal groups).

In 2025, 87.5% of attacks were attributed to non-state actors (compared to 100% in 2024).

While in 2024 cases were concentrated in sectors such as forestry (38.8%), energy, and environmental sanitation, in 2025 mass media were linked to 25% of attacks, followed by private individuals (20.8%) and state agents (12.5%).

The category of private individuals is new and includes identified and unidentified persons, anonymous social media profiles, public figures, and neighbors.

## Access to Justice

The analysis considered whether victims took action following an attack. In 2025, 31.5% reported taking no legal action, and in 21.9% of cases there was insufficient information.

Among cases with available data, there was an increase in formal actions, particularly complaints filed with the Public Prosecutor's Office, rising from 8.51% in 2024 to 16.4% in 2025.

Of the cases where legal action was taken, 82.9% remain ongoing, some for over a year. This may be due to investigative delays, judicial system backlog, lack of evidence, and other factors.

## Recommendations

The third annual report on the situation of environmental defenders in Chile sets out a series of recommendations aimed at strengthening their protection against the risks and situations of violence they face. Based on the analysis of the current context and considering the development of international standards, gaps are identified in the recognition of their work, as well as in mechanisms for prevention, protection, access to justice, and reparation. In this context, it is necessary to move towards a comprehensive approach that addresses both the structural causes of violence and the creation of an enabling environment for environmental defense.

In particular, it is recommended that the Chilean State fully and effectively implements the Escazú Agreement, strengthens the existing legal framework, and guarantees the timely investigation and sanction of attacks. Likewise, it is recommended to ensure access to specialized legal representation, establish appropriate protection measures according to the level of risk, and develop psychosocial support programs for affected individuals. At the international level, it is recommended to strengthen monitoring mechanisms and cooperation, in order to contribute to compliance with human rights and environmental governance commitments.

Recommendations are also directed at civil society, highlighting the importance of making visible and recognizing the role of environmental defenders. It is proposed to promote the reporting of violations, strengthen support networks, and encourage their participation in public policies. Finally, it is recommended that the media adopts a human rights-based approach, strengthens information verification, ensures a plurality of sources, and avoids stigmatizing narratives, thereby contributing to a safer, more democratic, and inclusive environment.

## Conclusion

**The situation of human rights and environmental defenders in Chile is alarming and requires urgent attention.**

The report highlights that violence against defenders has increased in its recording and has diversified, especially during 2025. In addition to physical attacks, other forms of violence have emerged, such as defamation and hate speech, often originating from actors with power, which generates a climate of hostility and stigmatization. These forms of violence impact not only at the individual level, but also in family and community environments, affecting multiple dimensions of life.

In light of this scenario, the need arises to implement comprehensive and coordinated responses that include psychological support, effective access to justice, and effective protection measures. Likewise, the responsibility of the State to comply with its international obligations is underscored, particularly within the framework of the Escazú Agreement, and to move forward in the approval of a law that guarantees a safe and enabling environment for those who defend the environment in Chile.