

A decorative graphic on the left side of the page consists of several overlapping, semi-circular shapes in green, orange, blue, and yellow.

## NANCY SÁNCHEZ MÉNDEZ (she/her)

### COLOMBIAN PEACE-BUILDER AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS DEFENDER

Nancy (57) is a journalist and human rights defender focused on peace-building, conflict resolution, women's rights and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). She is the founder and project manager of *Tejedoras de Vida del Putumayo*, an organization which works for the political, economic and social empowerment of women through strategies and trainings around international human rights law, equal political participation, environmental issues and the assistance of victims of SGBV.<sup>1</sup> With more than 25 years of experience, she has dedicated her life to protect human rights and human rights defenders, making visible the situation of humanitarian crisis and conflict in Putumayo through international advocacy and assisting in legal cases of human rights violations. Through her organization, she supports more than 50 women-led organizations, as well as Indigenous and peasant communities in the region of Putumayo where most of Nancy's work is located.

After the signing of the peace agreement between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) in 2016, the country has entered a post-conflict period that has meant the reconfiguration of the armed actors in the territory, as well as the dynamics of the legal apparatus, institutions and civil society. Despite the efforts made by both state and non-governmental organizations, the human rights situation remains critical, as violence and discrimination persists, particularly affecting indigenous, peasant and Afro-Colombian communities living in historically excluded regions.<sup>2</sup> Putumayo, a department in the south of Colombia, has been one of the regions most affected by the armed conflict and drug-trafficking due to the large-scale coca cultivation that has become the driving force of the economy since the 1990s.<sup>3</sup> This has led to clashes between armed actors which have caused extrajudicial executions, displacements and constant threats to human rights defenders.<sup>4</sup> In addition, there are still many barriers to equal access to rights for women, the LGBTIQ+ community and young

---

<sup>1</sup> ¿Quiénes somos? Tejedoras de Vida Putumayo [Ejes estratégicos - Alianza de Mujeres Tejedoras de Vida Putumayo \(alianzatejedorasdevida.org\)](http://alianzatejedorasdevida.org)

<sup>2</sup> The State of the World's Human Rights: April 2024 [The State of the World's Human Rights: April 2024 - Amnesty International](https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/2024/04/01/)

<sup>3</sup> No Matarás. Relato histórico del conflicto armado interno en Colombia [Hay futuro si hay verdad | Informe Final Comisión de la Verdad \(comisiondelaverdad.co\)](http://comisiondelaverdad.co)

<sup>4</sup> Colombia Events Report 2023 [World Report 2023: Colombia | Human Rights Watch \(hrw.org\)](https://www.hrw.org/report/2023/04/01/colombia)

people, especially in the areas of sexual and reproductive rights, political participation and violence-free spaces.<sup>5</sup>

Nancy has been targeted with surveillance, infiltration and hacking of her organization's website and mobile phone. She and her team have received intimidating phone calls, persecutions and in some cases her colleagues have been victims of kidnapping and disappearances. The Putumayo region has the highest rate of massacres in the country reporting extrajudicial executions and an environment of constant fear and risk. This has also placed an excessive emotional and mental burden on Nancy and her colleagues.

During her stay in the Netherlands, Nancy would like to focus on her well-being in order to re-charge her mental and physical health. She also wants to take the opportunity to travel around the Netherlands, to go sight-seeing, and visit art museums. Nancy is interested in attending trainings on the topic of human rights and digital security. She also wants to take English lessons. Besides, Nancy would like to connect with organizations who work on women's rights and peace-building in the Global South.

## **SHELTER CITY**

Shelter City is a global movement that creates safe and inspiring spaces for human rights defenders at risk. Through stays of up to three months in a Shelter City, human rights defenders have the chance to rest and re-energize, develop skills, knowledge and resilience in order to continue their work in a more safe and effective way, access tailor-made support, and engage with allies from all over the world.

Shelter City was founded in 2012 by Justice & Peace Netherlands as a concrete and accessible way to support the cause of human rights defenders at risk, with The Hague as the first Shelter City. Today, it is a growing movement of diverse cities, organizations and people working together to support human rights defenders, raise human rights issues, share knowledge, and reclaim civic space. There are currently 13 Shelter Cities in the Netherlands and seven Shelter Cities in Georgia, Tanzania, Benin, Costa Rica, the United Kingdom and France.

---

<sup>5</sup> The State of the World's Human Rights: April 2024 [The State of the World's Human Rights: April 2024 - Amnesty International](#)



**For Partners Only**

### **CONTACT INFORMATION**

Justice & Peace Netherlands

Eli Berghuis | Junior Programme Officer

Riviermarkt 4, 2513 AM Den Haag

T +31 70 7631 419

E [eli.berghuis@justiceandpeace.nl](mailto:eli.berghuis@justiceandpeace.nl)

W [www.justiceandpeace.nl](http://www.justiceandpeace.nl)