

**Political Subjects:  
a viewpoint from the psychosocial approach<sup>1</sup>**

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This article aims to share the psychosocial accompaniment<sup>2</sup> model that we have developed at *Aluna Acompañamiento Psicosocial A.C.* (Aluna Psychosocial Accompaniment, henceforth, Aluna) to strengthen political subjects, as well as its characteristics its application and some of the challenges that we have faced. Moreover, it presents some significant elements that have been recovered from this experience, and for this, we take on a characterization of the political subjects that we work with as well as an analysis of their situation as a result of the sociopolitical violence that is exercised over these populations as a strategy to silence their resistance, their denouncements, and their voices. The significance of seeing political subjects comprehensively in different settings, which our model proposes, allows for human rights defenders to strengthen their work and have tools that complement those that they have developed for themselves to resignify the experience that they have had in the face of sociopolitical violence from psychosocial accompaniment.

Keywords: psychosocial accompaniment, sociopolitical violence, mental health, human rights defenders, political subjects.

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<sup>2</sup> Translator's Note (TN): The term "accompaniment" is used throughout this document to refer to the pedagogical action that Aluna carries out together with political subjects to strengthen their coping mechanisms when facing impacts suffered due to violence.

The HIJOS<sup>3</sup> learned a great deal from the “Mothers,” among many other things, the prominence, will, and awareness that were put into play from the beginning of their long feat when they conceived the symbolic resources that would identify them and unite them as a group, while they also made their existence and their grievance visible before the other family members of the disappeared, before Argentinian society, and before the international community. In contrast to the circles that the Mothers held every Thursday around the *Pirámide de Mayo* monument—a nodal point of the city where the buildings that condense the nation’s symbolic, political, religious, and economic power are concentrated—[the HIJOS] motto was that if there is no justice, there will be demonstrations of *escrache*.<sup>4</sup>

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## INTRODUCTION

The systematic and structural violence that we see in the neoliberal economic system, undoubtedly has an impact on poverty, social relations, and human dignity, as it alters social fabrics on all every level; however, by incorporating the variables of the effects that present themselves in contexts of war or sociopolitical violence, we add the situations of extreme vulnerability and risk that are experienced by human rights defenders and groups who have given themselves the task of resisting, providing evidence, and denouncing institutional and factual powers.

In this article, we address some of the characteristics of sociopolitical violence, especially of its tactics and strategies, intending to provide an answer to questions such as: Why is political violence geared completely toward putting the lives and political projects of human rights defenders at risk? How are human rights defenders characterized as political subjects in the face of this political violence? And how have we created a model of psychosocial accompaniment at Aluna<sup>6</sup> with an approach that aims to comprehensively strengthen political subjects? The fundamental theoretical referent for reflection in this article is the thinking of Ignacio Martín-Baró.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> HIJOS stands for *Hijos por la Identidad y la Justicia contra el Olvido y el Silencio*, translated to English as “Sons and Daughters for Identity and Justice Against the Forgotten and Silence,” which is the name of organizations formed by the children of those who were disappeared in Argentina and Guatemala.

<sup>4</sup> TN: *Escrache* is a name used specifically in Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Spain to designate a type of demonstration in which activists protest in front of the homes and workplaces of those they wish to publicly condemn and humiliate. It is used with the intent of influencing decision-makers and governments.

<sup>5</sup> *The quoted text was translated for use in this publication.*

<sup>6</sup> Aluna Psychosocial Accompaniment is a Mexican civil association that was formed in 2013 motivated by a concern for the effects of political and economic violence in Mexico. It aims to develop work in mental health and human rights from a psychosocial perspective that offers tools to organizations and communities that are victims of human rights violations so they can face the effects of this violence and establish conditions that allow them to carry out their work. The name Aluna is adopted from the creation myth of the Kogui peoples of Columbia.

<sup>7</sup> A Spanish psychologist and priest from the Jesuit order, he lived in El Salvador during the country’s civil war, which led him to create liberation psychology to support the oppressed. He taught classes at José Simeón Cañas Central American University (UCA) and was assassinated by the Atlacatl Battalion squad of the El Salvador armed forces on November 16, 1989, in the massacre known as the UCA Martyrs, which happened at José Simeón Cañas Central American University.

## WHAT DO POLITICAL SUBJECTS FACE?

Some people and groups have risked their lives for defending human rights and the pursuit of justice, as they provide evidence of the framework of powers through processes of documentation, visibility, and advocacy. At Aluna, we refer to them as the political subjects with whom we define our work of offering psychosocial accompaniment. In this section, we will analyze why the accompaniment's effectiveness needs to conceive them as political subjects who live in a specific context of violence.

Systems like capitalism and the neoliberal economic model create the structural violence and social inequality that is carried out from the economic, political, social, and cultural structures, as through the reduction of social spending, the privatization of services, and greater disparity in the distribution of wealth, the human rights of different populations and sectors are violated to impose the economic interests of a minority.

In the face of a scenario like the one that has been described, human rights defenders have forged very significant fights and resistances throughout all of Latin America and the entire world. These resistances make the effects of globalization visible, they come together in networks and coalitions of transnational impact and they face the neoliberal policies that are experienced regionally. In Mexico, these resistances have been carried out thanks to the mobilization of indigenous communities and peoples for territorial defense, natural assets, and autonomy, to that of union and student organizations as well as the fight for truth and justice of the collectives of families in search of their sons and daughters (victims of enforced disappearance), to the women's movement and the caravans of immigrants, among many others.

Because of this, at Aluna, we center our work on accompanying human rights defenders and organizations; journalists, communities that resist neoliberal projects, and family members of disappeared persons are among those that stand out. As a result of our experience,<sup>8</sup> we have learned that one of the central components of this accompaniment is based on recognizing the work that those we accompany undertake as political subjects of transformation and change. For our organization, describing whom we work with also involves describing our political stance and our awareness of the need to strengthen the anti-hegemonic projects that these systems of power and social oppression dismantle.<sup>9</sup> Because of this, from our

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<sup>8</sup> By the concept of experience, we are referring to resignification, lessons that we have had at Aluna in the process of accompanying political subjects. We revisit the words of Jorge Larrosa when he said: "[...] the first thing that should be done, it seems to me, is to dignify the experience, claim the experience, and this means dignifying and claiming everything that both philosophy and science have traditionally not valued and rejected: subjectivity, uncertainty, provisional nature, the body, brevity, finiteness, life... As a fourth precaution, turning experience into a concept should also be avoided. I believe the academic reader, the researcher reader, both theoretical and practical, wants to reach the idea, the concept, too quickly. They are readers who are always in a rush, who want to own what they read too quickly, who want to use it too quickly" (Jorge Larrosa, 2006:3). *The quoted text was translated for reference in this publication.*

<sup>9</sup> At Aluna, we have focused our work on political subjects that classify their labor into different topics like territorial defense or the pursuit of truth, justice, and reparation, as well as organizations that accompany victims, migrants, and environmental defenders. We have also accompanied cases of human rights defenders and journalists. However, in this article, the specificities of these accompaniments are not addressed, as there are particular implications in these cases of applying our accompaniment model that there is no room for in this article.

perspective, it is important to share why we consider human rights defenders to be political subjects.<sup>10</sup>

From our scope of work in psychosocial accompaniment, we explain that political subjects are the people or groups that become aware of their reality and get involved to denounce and transform it through processes of questioning and liberation before powers that oppress them and violate their human rights.

These political subjects evolve in concrete territories that go from bodily and spiritual territory to the physical territory where they live, as is the case of indigenous communities, for example. The territories are diverse, and the problems they face become apparent in different central themes like freedom of expression, denouncement of the increase in femicides, forced displacement, or the search for persons disappeared by the State. Because of this, often the subjects, while they are victims of structural violence, are also the main targets of sociopolitical violence.

The complexity of defining sociopolitical violence lies in it not presenting itself with homogeneous characteristics, as it has local and state dynamics that determine its intentionality and *modus operandi*, in addition to being exercised with political repression and hidden by informative bias that is constructed in complicity with the “official” news media, through which messages are communicated with States feigning a certain “order” and “control,” to strengthen part of the society’s imaginary, which assures them they are living in a safe country.

In this context, messages of criminalization are produced that show these political subjects as a threat to this apparent order, and they validate and legitimize the use of violence and even the murder of these political subjects, presenting it as “collateral damage.”<sup>11</sup> This criminalization of human rights defenders is intensified in contexts of industrial projects in countries like Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Mexico. In fact, the latter is among the most dangerous countries in the region for human rights defenders, as 3,967 attacks and 228 assassinations have been documented in the last 12 years, which were committed by agents of the State and against human rights defenders (Ramírez, 2018); moreover, in 2017 alone, 12 journalists were murdered, which is why Mexico was placed as the most dangerous country for practicing this profession, and it remains among the 50 with the least freedom of press in the world (Tourliere, 2018).

In this context, we can find people who have become human rights defenders because they were direct victims, but we also find human rights organizations that have decided to accompany other political subjects that lead a search for truth and

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<sup>10</sup> Aluna’s notion of a political subject is sustained by several Latin American theoretical approaches, many of which are inspired by Marxist theory and processes of liberation struggle. For example, the approach of subject and process of hominization against process of oppression and dehumanizing alienation from the pedagogy of the oppressed by Paulo Freire, the notion of the historical subject and the dialectical relationship of the subject and its context from Ignacio Martín-Baró, and the notions of social actor, political subject, and popular subject from Isabel Rauber, to mention a few. For Aluna, political subjects are social collective actors that are constructed in processes of socialization in the praxis of a political struggle for social transformation. They live out and analyze their situation in the social structure, as well as the political and economic mechanisms of oppression, within the political praxis, they broaden their awareness of class and role and sociohistorical contribution, and they have a project and coordinate together to construct projects of political transformation or social liberation.

<sup>11</sup> In Mexico, the term “collateral damage,” started to be heavily used with Felipe Calderón Hinojosa’s six-year presidential term in reference to the death of civilians during the implementation of the State strategy for the “fight against organized crime.” However, this term was highly questioned, as it provided evidence of a system of impunity and corruption, which was sustained in the confusion that hindered the identification of victims and offenders, an argument that was put forth to avoid investigating and sanctioning those responsible for these deaths.

justice despite this not being one of their initial objectives, which is why they have had to incorporate the task of accompanying victims following circumstances that appear in local contexts. This is the case of the organizations that accompany collectives of mothers of victims of enforced disappearance, collectives of families displaced from their communities, and collectives of people in search of immigrant family members, among others.

From our experience, the action and denouncement of political subjects are extremely important, as it shines a public light on what the State wants to hide: its responsibility in this targeted violence, whether by action, omission, or complicity with companies and even criminal groups that act as paramilitary groups. When facing this, one of the consequences is that human rights defenders have a greater risk in carrying out their activities.<sup>12</sup>

These are the circumstances from which we build alternatives and strategies, working together with human rights defenders in situations of risk. They are framed in a setting of mental health and in concordance with the strengthening of their political project; avoiding or not considering them would have negative effects on the accompaniment.

## **LIFE EPISODES AND EXPERIENCES OF POLITICAL SUBJECTS IN THE FACE OF SOCIOPOLITICAL VIOLENCE**

The impacts on every level of sociopolitical violence can be numerous and varied because the strategies are as well; for example, one of the completely intentional strategies of sociopolitical violence is instilling fear,<sup>13</sup> because it is part of political repression and is woven with different invisible methods of political control.

Accordingly, some of the tactics that help configure fear are criminalization, stigmatization, intimidation, and threats to political subjects,<sup>14</sup> which are also carried out by spreading hate messages on social networks or through local news media, whose effect can even result in a type of smearing that calls their honorability into question or links them to organized crime organizations.

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<sup>12</sup> According to the documented figures: "In 2017, Front Line Defenders received information about the assassination of 312 defenders in 28 countries" (2017:6). Moreover: "An analysis of the work done by those killed is instructive: 67% were engaged in the defense of land, environmental and indigenous peoples' rights and nearly always in the context of mega projects, extractive industry, and big business. In many countries, governments and security forces were, at best, unresponsive to threats and attacks faced by HRDs and, at worst, state security forces were themselves responsible for the killings" (2017:6). It is worth specifying: Of the 312 cases, "at least 212 HRDs were killed in the Americas in 2017, with 156 of these killings taking place in Brazil and Colombia alone. 2017 also saw the highest number of killings of environmental defenders and journalists registered in Mexico in recent years, in the midst of a crisis of violence throughout the country." (Front Line Defenders, 2017:12).

<sup>13</sup> "Fear, anguish, anxiety, dread, terror, panic, fright, horror are words that refer to life episodes that are unleashed by the perception of a danger that is certain or imprecise, current or probable in the future, which comes from the inner world of the subject or her/his surrounding world. The objectification of the danger can lead the subject to configure it as a risk of vital threat. The certainty or high probability that this threat will happen transforms insecurity into fear. The perception of the threat as being imminent can transform fear into terror or panic. Panic is spoken of when a dangerous event causes a spontaneous and unorganized reaction in the individual or the community." (Merloo, 1964; in Lira, 1987:1). *The quoted text was translated for use in this publication.*

<sup>14</sup> "Attacks against integrity and reputation are the most recurring forms of aggression against human rights defenders in Mexico. Intimidation and psychological harassment stand out, which are present in 196 cases; calumny, indications of slandering, and slandering campaigns, in 93; and threats, warnings, and ultimatums, in 83. In fourth place, we find restrictions on freedom of expression, which were apparent in 38 cases. Then, illegal detention and arrest follow, covered in the category of physical deprivation of freedom, which is present in 25 cases" (National Network of Women Human Rights Defenders in Mexico, 2017:31). *The quoted text was translated for use in this publication.*

These tactics consist of publicly disqualifying human rights defenders to isolate them and distance them from their support networks, which can include anywhere from their community bonds to their families.

Elizabeth Lira named this the resource of political threat, which configures what is classified as chronic fear:

The existence of an ongoing political threat produces a response of chronic fear. Chronic fear stops being a specific reaction to concrete situations and it practically transforms into an ongoing state of daily life, not only for those who are directly affected by the repression but also for all who might perceive themselves as being threatened. Political threat creates a very difficult type of invisible violence of eluding or avoiding, as the very psychic structures of the subjects are what make them vulnerable (Lira y Castillo, 1991:7).<sup>15</sup>

Impunity<sup>16</sup> is another strategy in this framework of sociopolitical violence, which covers multiple elements, among which there is emphasis on State simulations, which feign that they investigate and take action on the attacks denounced by human rights defenders, while they also prolong the legal periods in which they should be documenting, investigating, and seeking the truth of the acts that have been denounced.

To the above, we can add the lack of resources, infrastructure, and training of those who hold public service positions, the lack of political will and intention to deliver justice, as well as the apathy and the revictimization that is carried out by public institutions, whose mechanisms are designed to reject demands for justice and truth to cause defenders to back away from their political stakes.

The impacts that these tactics have on political subjects can be complex and varied: they range from emotional fatigue to the abandonment of political projects, and they can even go as far as forced displacement of native communities, which disrupts the lives of the subjects in behavioral and cognitive areas.

What is true—and we have verified it in our work—is that human rights defenders also have coping mechanisms, which have allowed them to strengthen themselves in spite of the situation, create new support networks, and strengthen bonds of production and care. In fact, some have even created new forms of implementing their political project. Insofar as we address this complexity, we can recognize that one of the most significant characteristics of political subjects is their capacity to recreate themselves, understood as a way of facing adverse contexts.

Based on the accompaniment of organizations and collectives, we can say that sociopolitical violence has significant impacts on four fields that, based on our model, we have named the psycho-emotional field, the field of internal dynamics and relationships, the field of the political project, and the field of security and protection.

From our experience, we have noticed that developing this process—keeping the four fields in mind, although one, two, or all four might be emphasized in the accompaniment—allows for coping with the effects of sociopolitical violence in a

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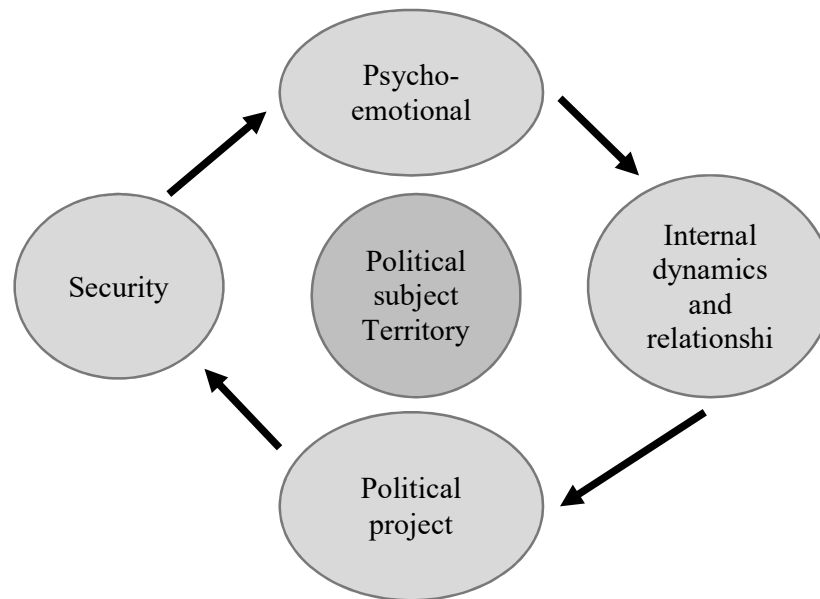
<sup>15</sup> *The quoted text was translated for use in this publication.*

<sup>16</sup> In the words of Andréu-Guzmán: "Limiting the problem or the vision of impunity to a strictly political field could be simplistic. Moreover, it is restrictive to associate impunity with the past. Impunity is neither only a legal problem nor is it from the past. Impunity has, above all, a political dimension; furthermore, it is a problem of society and relationships and a form of exercising power, of constructing a political culture, one of whose elements is historical memory." (1996). *The quoted text was translated for use in this publication.*

better way in the short, medium, and long term, as the person or collective can better develop their security strategies, but they can also put the situation they are experiencing into context and gain clarity about the purpose of the sociopolitical violence and who its executors are, which helps give new meaning to their experience<sup>17</sup> (Diagram 1).

These fields are affected in different ways, but they are always touched upon, and we have observed cases in which one is affected more than another, but also cases in which, for the high level of aggression that they have suffered, they have all been damaged exponentially, necessarily entailing a design of the process of psychosocial accompaniment that attends to all the fields on a deeper level.

DIAGRAM 1  
*Fields of impact of sociopolitical violence*



Source: developed by authors.

Below, we will share how we define or understand each one of these fields:

- a) Psycho-emotional. This refers to the emotions and feelings that are experienced in the coping process of borderline situations.
- b) Organizational dynamics. This refers to the analysis and approach of everything that affects and builds the relationships that exist within a collective or organization (institutional policies, roles, functions, attitudes, structures or ways of acting, communicating, and coordinating).
- c) Security. This refers to the insecurity and vulnerabilities brought about by the risk that facing this sociopolitical violence involves.

<sup>17</sup> By the concept of life episodes, we refer to those situations and events that political subjects have experienced in the context of sociopolitical violence or because of the human rights violations they have been targeted by. About the concept of experience, we can say that experience already involves an initial moment of resignifying the life episode and, in some cases, of the situation's lessons. Accordingly, in this text, we will use these two concepts in an interrelated way to contain the processes of political subjects. In contrast, in the case of lessons and resignification of the work that we have had at Aluna, as we explained earlier, we only refer to the concept of experience.

- d) The political project. This refers to the ethical-political conceptions and orientations that guide the proceedings of an organization or people within a collective. When facing borderline situations due to sociopolitical violence, it is common that the political project is also called into question, whether for the dilemmas or for the changes that arise when facing situations of violence, even channeling their pain in the reconfiguration of their political project.

For the above reasons, our methodology is supported by liberation psychology, specifically by the principles of Ignacio Martín-Baró, who goes into depth on these effects, taking the reference of contexts of war in which he observed that, in terms of mental health, psychic disorders can be developed even when the violence has passed and the person starts to get back to her/his normal life; they are a product of the dehumanization<sup>18</sup> that people experience in the face of these impacts.

From this perspective, it may well be that a psychic disorder is expressed by an abnormal way of reacting to a normal situation, it may also happen that it is expressed by a normal reaction to an abnormal situation. A society in which the use of violence is habitually experienced to solve big and small problems alike is a society in which human relationships are latent at the root (Martín-Baró, 1990:4).<sup>19</sup>

Because of this, we believe it to be indispensable for our model to consider what Martín-Baró called psychological disorder as one of the key components for understanding political subjects, naming it as the very reflection of the disfunction in the framework of social relationships, this means that:

Mental health stops being a terminal problem [the post-traumatic situation] to become a founding problem [the problematic situation]. It is not about the satisfactory functioning of the individual; it is about a basic character of the human relationships that define the possibilities of humanization that are presented to members of every society or group. In more direct terms, mental health contains a dimension of relationships between people and groups more than an individual state, although this dimension is rooted differently in the body of each one of the individuals involved in these relationships, thus producing different manifestations (symptoms) and states (syndromes) [...] Ultimately, we always have to answer the question of why this one and not the other. But we want to emphasize how illuminating it is to change the viewpoint and see health or mental disorders, not from the outside, but from the inside; not as the emanation of an individual

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<sup>18</sup> In the book *Psicología social de la guerra: trauma y terapia* [Social psychology of war: trauma and therapy] (1990), Ignacio Martín-Baró expands on his hypothesis of dehumanization in the analysis of the context of El Salvador, to which he says: "The war has demanded significant modifications to the cognitive schemes and behavioral patterns of a considerable part of the population. In most cases, these modifications have meant an impoverishment of specifically human attributes and values, and consequently, they have given rise to a marked deterioration of social coexistence. In this work, the notion of dehumanization is limited to the phenomenon of the loss or impoverishment of the following human attributes: a) the capacity to think lucidly, and how that involves identifying and overcoming irrational fears, prejudices, and everything that a predominately defensive relationship with the world (in a psychodynamic sense) imposes from within people; b) the will and capacity to communicate with truth and efficacy, and how freedom, honesty, flexibility, tolerance, and respect are involved; c) sensitivity to suffering and a sense of solidarity; d) hope" (1990:5). *The quoted text was translated for use in this publication.*

<sup>19</sup> *The quoted text was translated for use in this publication.*



internal functioning, but as the materialization of a humanizing or dehumanizing character of a person within a framework of social relationships (1993:336 and 338).<sup>20</sup>

If this is clear, the most natural thing to ask ourselves is: How do we create processes together with those we are accompanying in order to strengthen their work in contexts of sociopolitical violence?

## **PSYCHOSOCIAL ACCOMPANIMENT TO STRENGTHEN POLITICAL SUBJECTS**

Using these fields to accompany human rights defenders has allowed us to see this process as acting together, in which the subjects involve themselves from their knowledge and not from a stance of therapy, because this allows us to see the political subject from their integrity, and it is from here where we have verified that the impacts of sociopolitical violence can be seen with an immediate effect, but also in the medium and long term, in correlation to the fields we have mentioned.

Accordingly, our approach to the *psycho-emotional* fields give rise to recognizing the impacts, and this creates processes that promote forms of coping that political subjects have from their life episodes and experiences, which help processes of positive transformation of conflicts to be generated in the field of *internal dynamics and relationships*, and these can be a great help for the internal strengthening of the organization and the redesign of organizational structures; while in the field of *security* we address a set of prevention and protection measures that human right defenders and organizations build in terms of the different levels of risk that they are exposed to because of their actions of demanding or defending human rights.<sup>21</sup> Finally, in the field of the *political project*, we can address strategies that the organization creates and that combat different levels of tension from the changes that should be carried out in the borderline situation, “adjusting or modifying what is necessary in the strategic vision, connections, and strategies, among others” (Aluna, 2017:154).

Recognizing the complexity of the processes allows us to go into greater detail to understand the context, the operational ability of the political actors, and also the importance of the role played by the coping resources that political subjects have created to counteract both violence and the impacts that it produces. Our model creates strengthening conditions in different spheres so that political subjects cannot only respond reactively but so they can also consciously build conditions and strategies in the long term, being emotionally active and having a strategic focus.

From this viewpoint, we see that psychosocial accompaniment provides the possibility for placing political subjects in the center; they build coping mechanisms for themselves, from their realities and conditions, while simultaneously incorporating a dialectic process that analyzes and strengthens the different fields

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<sup>20</sup> The quoted text was translated for use in this publication.

<sup>21</sup> "These measures, protocols, and security plans aim to have a level of control over fear and anguish and also minimize risks of situations of violence or repressive acts. We are referring to prevention when they are early measures that should be implemented to persuade, deter, or avoid danger, decrease risk and/or its impacts. And we are referring to protection with all the measures that are implemented to safeguard life, physical integrity and psychology, freedom, and to create conditions to develop human rights defense work" (Aluna Acompañamiento Psicosocial, 2017:154).

that have been presented as a constant dialogue between the context, the impacts, coping, and areas of strengthening.

In this dialogue, firstly, it is necessary *to build from the life episodes, knowledge, and experience that the political subjects* already have after creating the necessary conditions that consolidate the expression and legitimization of their vision of reality in the accompaniment spaces. Accordingly, from the accompaniment, the life episode is not questioned or judged according to values, and far less do we influence their vision. For example, facing the effects that strategies of criminalization have on human rights defenders, which put their voice, their word, and even their life episode into doubt, our work model uses active and respectful listening so that these individuals might share their experience and all their points of view.

With our model, experiences enrich the process and guarantee that it will have a more complex and broader construction; no one's participation is omitted, they are all listened to and taken up again at different points of the accompaniment, and this listening mechanism legitimizes and contextualizes the pain and contributes to the person giving meaning to the experience.

The next key in our model's work is the *critical analysis of their life episode and the development of the experience in the sociopolitical context*, done by the political subjects to inquire about some unexplored aspects, which opens the possibility of looking at situations from a distance and other perspectives; it also allows for deducing logic about things that do not seem to have an order or meaning, and, finally, for identifying behavioral patterns. All this is part of *recovering the experience of what has been lived* from an analysis that allows for rationalizing emotions and separating or unifying elements from the reality that can be perceived as being disassociated in the impacts of sociopolitical violence.

The context allows us to understand why the attacks happen and what the aggressors' objective is, from there the pain is contextualized. For example, in political subjects of territorial defense, strategies to instill fear may impact the non-continuity of their labor and silence the work they have done; to face this, exercises of developing conceptual maps, geographic actors, relationships, and timelines, among others, have been key in finding alliances and networks of protection and support, which contributes to giving a new meaning to their political project.

On this matter, we see that the process of questioning, analyzing, and going into depth deactivates fear and places it as a resource to design security and alert plans that shape necessary guidelines so the in-depth analysis might even lay grounds for documenting the situations they have lived.

In the two elements we have mentioned—drawing knowledge and its corresponding critical analysis from the life episodes and experiences of political subjects—we find a complementary nature for the political subject's recovery and the resignification of the meaning of their experience, which is seen from a new point of departure.

This does not mean that in the process of accompaniment we only use these elements at the beginning, but that political subjects can incorporate them into the analysis of their actions in an ongoing manner, as the context changes and can produce new elements that strengthen or weaken it, thus putting them at risk again. The intention is for political subjects to not stop analyzing, and that they have the tools that are necessary to act in the face of a changing and mutable reality.

To continue, one of the basic principles of this model is *the transformation of the perspective and the role in the situation*, which, in the accompaniment process, refers to implementing techniques, activities, and work that have the aim of creating transformation and change that allow for seeing the reality in another way; for example, when facing a life episode of horror, identifying what they have done to face this situation is indispensable, the same happens with the frustration that impunity produces, before this, one might ask her/himself: How can the strategies be strengthened? Because transforming the perspective allows for putting the traumatic experience in an active setting.

One of the effects on political subjects who have experienced forced displacement is the feeling of being uprooted, as this unplanned mobility that is also done in conditions of pain and fear creates an imposed rift between political subjects and their birthplaces, a rift that often provides an account of the incision between the self and the home, between the self and the collective identity. The sadness, banishment, and sensations of loss are a constant, as it is real that the people are removed from their native lands or from places where they have taken root significantly and symbolically. For Aluna's accompaniment model, this principle has allowed political subjects to not fall into the risk of paralysis that feeling uprooted can bring about. Reconsidering objectives, new needs, and the creation of new routes has allowed human rights defenders to even create the possibility of safer returns with accompaniment or for them to consolidate their permanent or temporary residence in other places with new and more hopeful conditions.

Incorporating the principles that we name *definition of routes of action and strategic thinking* in the model consists of an in-depth analysis of the action that human rights defenders experience in the situation, both individually and collectively, as well as the generation of awareness of the implications within the projects in the medium and long term. With these principles, we have been able to contribute to building paths and options that allow for constructive and hopeful outputs, in the framework of a medium and long-term vision that visualizes different actions together with more allied actors, groups, and individuals. An example is the accompaniment that we have done with political subjects that is used in territorial defense.

As we pointed out, in Mexico—due to factors of the context that we described at the beginning—we identified a huge sense of frustration, rage, and indignation in the human rights defender groups from the repeated attacks they have suffered, which regularly form part of a series of ongoing and even permanent events, which create impacts like the dread of being attacked at any moment, which turns the fear into an ongoing sensation.

The aforementioned principles allow us to design techniques that make understanding these impacts possible, giving them an important position, talking about them, and acting with them from an extensive process. Building routes of action with all those involved allows for gauging the fear and developing the capacity to create actions to face situations of violence, these routes fulfill short, medium, and long terms and strengthen the political subjects, giving them security tools and practices.

The strategies and principles that have been contemplated in our action model would not be viable without the existence of what we call *the return to reality or practice with new elements*, which allows for political subjects' accompaniment process to contemplate times and spaces so that the implementation of the

strategies or the return to the practice is reevaluated through analysis and process balances to incorporate, remove, or change what might be necessary with the aim of bringing about the strengthening of political subjects and their project.

Undoubtedly, our task is not easy, and sharing some fundamental components of the psychosocial accompaniment that we carry out at Aluna is part of an arduous labor of systematization; our model is the collective construction of all those who collaborate together at this institution along with the ethical and political commitment to giving a voice to our own experience and naming it, and the lessons developed while accompanying human rights defenders.

In this vein, we can say, that while there are no recipes for formulating a psychosocial accompaniment model, this is much less so in contexts of sociopolitical violence. From our perception, at the least, it is necessary to trace routes that have clear points of arrival.

For us, the point of arrival is, in all the cases and with all the variables, strengthening political subjects with psychosocial accompaniment: we know that the points of arrival are different, with implications and complexities that are also different. However, having this point of arrival allows us to continue walking, with all our means, tools, and experience; not getting paralyzed in the face of the pain that results from these psychosocial wounds that, of course, also becomes ours in some way; and this, perhaps, is the most complex part of our labor, as we also get involved and we put our souls at the disposal of strengthening others.

Our organization has learned to create institutional policies of psychosocial care with teamwork, which seems fundamental to us and comes from a political position because, in any accompaniment process, subjectivities and the human condition of those who accompany political subjects are also put into play, which has allowed us to care for our mental health and prevent dehumanization when facing constant human suffering, as Martín-Baró spoke about.

Finally, if we had to summarize the meaning of our work, we would like to refer to the word *escarche*, a colloquial word that is used in Río de la Plata, Argentina and that was adopted by the children of those who were disappeared in the dictatorship. This word refers to *pointing out what is intentionally hidden and making it evident*.

At Aluna, our conscience respects naming what seems hidden in the framework of sociopolitical violence, because we are committed to not leave what is hidden unnamed and to not fail to provide evidence of the important work that human rights defenders do to achieve real processes of social justice.

Revealing what underlies sociopolitical violence, the actors' way of proceeding, and the impacts they create as well as political subjects' ways of coping and empowerment is imperative for contributing to the memory of the resistances of organizations, victims and people . . . and we wish to contribute to it.

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