

May 3rd, 2023

COLOMBIA

Effective actions urgently needed to preserve indigenous lives at imminent risk in Cauca and Chocó

Indigenous Peoples Rights International (IPRI), the international organization leading the Global Initiative to Address and Prevent Criminalization, Violence and Impunity against Indigenous Peoples, urgently calls on the Colombian State and national and international human rights bodies to heed the requests made by indigenous organizations and authorities and to adopt effective and immediate measures to protect indigenous peoples at imminent risk in the departments of Cauca and Chocó.

According to information received by IPRI and made public by indigenous organizations in the country, during the last few months there have been murders, attacks and threats against indigenous guards, ancestral authorities, spiritual leaders and community members in the department of El Cauca at the hands of armed groups. In April alone, José Reyes Chocue, a member of the Indigenous Guard of the San Lorenzo de Caldono reservation (April 16, 2023) and the Ancestral Wise Man José Isaías Quiguanás (April 18, 2023) were murdered.

The Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca (CRIC) has also denounced that several ancestral authorities of the ten zones attached to the CRIC have received death threats. The most recent case is that of Adelmo Isoto, former Senior Councilor of the CRIC and current ancestral authority of the territory of the Tumburao indigenous reservation in the Chotando zone, who has received threatening pamphlets and whose house was subsequently entered by armed men. The ancestral authority of the Polindara indigenous people has also reported different intimidation tactics.

On the other hand, in the Department of Chocó, municipality of Istmina, forty (40) families from the community of Negría are at imminent risk of forced displacement due to clashes between armed groups and their incursions into their territories. This situation occurs in spite of the Peace Agreements and the progress made at the dialogue tables between the National Government and the National Liberation Army (ELN) to seek humanitarian relief in Bajo Calima and the San Juan River.

The dispossession of territories and forced displacement place indigenous peoples at risk of physical, cultural and spiritual disappearance, and prevent them from developing their own ways of life and relationship with the environment,

leaving them in poverty, uncertainty and the impossibility of practicing their culture. The extermination of authorities and knowledgeable people seeks to disarticulate the social fabric in order to facilitate the dispossession of land and resources and the forced recruitment of people.

In solidarity with the affected indigenous peoples and their organizations, IPRI calls upon:

- To relevant government entities, including the Ombudsman's Office, to adopt immediate and effective measures, in agreement with the affected indigenous peoples, to protect their lives, and integrity and prevent forced displacement.
- To national and international human rights bodies, including OHCHR, IACHR and MAPP-OAS, to monitor the situation and promote measures in defense of the lives and human rights of the indigenous peoples of Cauca and Chocó.
- To the Colombian State, to increase its efforts to fully implement the ethnic chapter of the Peace Accords.

IPRI will remain attentive to the denounced situations and encourage indigenous organizations to express solidarity with our indigenous brothers and sisters in Colombia.

For more information:

ONIC press release: <https://bit.ly/3oQ3gDj>

CRIC press release: <https://bit.ly/3LhUhlI>

ACASEDAN press release:

<https://twitter.com/ACADESAN/status/1649852680876052480?s=20>