

WE DENOUNCE THE ATTACK AGAINST THE SENIOR COUNCILLOR OF ACONC, ROSANA MEJÍA CAICEDO, AND REQUEST CLARIFICATION OF THE FACTS AND THE PROTECTION OF THE SENIOR COUNCILLOR AND HER FAMILY

Within the framework of the Basque Protection Programme for Human Rights Defenders, Basque public institutions and human rights and solidarity organisations in Colombia denounce the attack suffered by Ms Rosana Mejía Caicedo, Senior Councillor of the Association of Community Councils of Northern Cauca (ACONC) and her family. At 11:00 on Sunday 21 August, shots were fired at the family home where she and her family resided in the village of Santa Rosa in the municipality of Caloto. Fortunately, the bullets went through the windows of the house lodged into the walls and there were no casualties or injured persons.

The Basque Government, the Basque Parliament and Basque human rights and solidarity organisations have a special relationship with ACONC as its current Senior Advisor, Ms. Mejía Caicedo and another leader have participated, with the support of the Basque NGDO Emigradxs Sin Fronteras, in the Basque Protection Programme for Human Rights Defenders led by the Basque Government's Directorate for Human Rights, Victims and Diversity. The Programme is also supported by the Basque Agency for Development Cooperation, Universities, human rights and solidarity organisations and the Basque Parliament, and is managed by the Zehar-Errefuxiatuekin Association. We all maintain a commitment to special monitoring and surveillance of the situation of human rights defenders hosted in the Basque Country. In addition, eLankidetzaz has been supporting the work of ACONC as an integral part of the Interethnic and Intercultural Territorial Council of Northern Cauca (CTIINC) since 2020.

In July 2019 and January 2022, a Basque delegation had the opportunity to verify on the spot the systematic harassment and threats being faced by ACONC members, a situation that has worsened after the attack suffered by Ms. Mejía Caicedo. In response, we reiterate our concern for these events and for the physical and psychological integrity of ACONC members, especially its Senior Advisor, Ms. Mejía Caicedo. We strongly condemn the attack and all the attacks that human rights defenders in the country suffer on a daily basis.

We denounce the attack suffered by Ms. Mejía Caicedo and REQUEST the competent authorities to:

1. Clarify the facts based on unbiased investigations that will lead to the perpetrators and masterminds of this attack.
2. Strengthen and implement real and effective, individual and collective guarantees for the protection of the life and territory of the Afro-descendant, indigenous and peasant peoples of Cauca and the rest of the country.
3. Recognise and promote the Humanitarian Agreements agreed by rural communities, which have the support of broad social and institutional sectors, and provide a safeguard for the civilian population where there are various armed actors in dispute.

Finally, we reiterate our SUPPORT and SOLIDARITY with human rights defenders, indigenous peoples, black people and peasant communities, the main victims of violence and conflict. We recognise their commitment to the construction of a peaceful country with social justice and demand respect for LIFE and PERMANENCE in their ancestral territories.

In Bilbao (Basque Country), 24 August 2022.