



The State has an Obligation to Prevent Further Aggressions against Indigenous Communities of the CRIC and Other Protesters

May 10, 2021

The international NGOs signed to this statement express concern over the armed violence, which took place in Cali yesterday, against the Indigenous communities of the Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca (*Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca*, CRIC) who are participating in national protests. On repeated occasions, armed men from pick-up trucks fired at Indigenous persons, and state security agencies did not act to stop these episodes or arrest the culprits. Since the demonstrations started, 47 people¹—who were peacefully protesting—have been killed by either members of the security forces, or by armed men who shoot from vehicles or fire weapons in front of members of state security agencies.

Last night, the CRIC headquarters in Bogotá was vandalized and destroyed. We are alerting of possible violent acts that may occur against the CRIC headquarters and other social organizations in Popayán, as well as the headquarters of other organizations throughout the country. We are also warning of the potential aggressive acts against members of these organizations. As such, we note that state authorities have an obligation to protect the life and physical integrity of the members, property, and facilities of these organizations. Indigenous and other protestors deciding to participate in the National Strike and exercise the right to protest does not turn them into enemies of the state, nor do they lose their right to be protected from criminal actions.

Democracy in Colombia is not sustainable if armed groups, acting with total impunity and in a systematic manner, are able to attack people who express their disagreement with the government. These episodes, which expose before the public the possible complicity of security forces in attacks against protestors, as well as explicit attacks by members of the security forces recorded in countless videos, blur the rule of law and the legitimacy of the government and other authorities. The Colombian state has a commitment to protect the rights of all citizens, in accordance with international human rights treaties, the Colombian Constitution, and the law.

¹ <https://twitter.com/TemblorosOng/status/1391494719641997312?s=19>