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We denounce and reject the stigmatization and persecution of the Indigenous Guards in Ecuador by the Ecuadorian government and other social and economic actors

The undersigned organizations express our deep concern about the stigmatization and persecution that have once again been carried out against the Indigenous Guards in Ecuador in the context of the national strike, labelling them as terrorists, subversives, and as actors under the command of organized crime groups.

Since the end of September, when the strike called by CONAIE began, several national media outlets, such as *El Universo*, *Expreso*, and *La Hora*, published articles and interviews with people close to the government, explicitly accusing Indigenous Guards of being terrorist groups, subversives, or shock troops whose objective is to destabilize the State. These accusations have been used against Indigenous leaders and human rights defenders who support the legitimate processes of the Guards; they often reference classified police intelligence reports and alleged investigations that the Prosecutor's Office is supposedly conducting against these Indigenous Guards and individuals. This is part of a clear process targeting, persecuting, and criminalizing Indigenous Guards. These state actions, among others, are an attempt to deny essential collective rights of Indigenous Peoples, such as self-government and territorial authority for the preservation of their cultures and ways of life and organization.

Among the press publications, the editorial in *Diario Expreso* from **September 29, 2025**, stands out. Entitled “Indigenous Guards: ancestral resistance or subversive risk,”^[1] it was disseminated in the publication “NotiDefensa”, of the Ministry of Defence. In the publication, the Indigenous Guards are labelled as an “organized shock force” and, citing the police, they are identified, and

it is explained how they are distributed throughout the country; in addition, it arbitrarily refers to people and activities of the Guards to justify these accusations in the logic of criminal persecution.

Similarly, during the week of **October 2, 2025**, a video began circulating ^[2] on WhatsApp, echoing and amplifying the claims made in the article published in *Expreso*, and identifying specific individuals who had received this “subversive” training: Indigenous leaders and human rights defenders who support these Indigenous Guard processes. This video was also shared on Instagram ^[3], claiming that the Indigenous Guards “are veritable paramilitary groups at the territorial level.” It was also shared on Facebook under the title “Subversives in Training, a Danger to Ecuador.”^[4]

It is important to remember that Indigenous Guards, made up of men and women under the logic of collective authority and the defence of their territories, operate under their own principles such as respect, solidarity and reciprocity expressed through the worldview (cosmovision) of each Indigenous nationality; and constitute legitimate ways for peoples and nationalities to protect and defend their territories and the essential links within them.

Undoubtedly, these actions are part of a strategy by the current Ecuadorian government and some media outlets to attack, persecute, and silence the unique forms of organization and resistance of Indigenous Peoples who protect their lives, territories, and culture. This reinforces the government's intentions to promote and deepen an extractivist, mining, and oil agenda, especially in the Ecuadorian Amazon, to comply with agreements signed with the International Monetary Fund. The Ecuadorian government has demonstrated that it will use all means of repression and control at its disposal, as evidenced during the recent national strike, and by promoting laws and constitutional amendments that seriously endanger collective rights and the Rights of Nature.

While this persecution and stigmatization is not new, it deepens false and reprehensible accusations made by the Ecuadorian state during previous national mobilizations—2019 and 2022—endangering not only traditional Indigenous forms of organization, which are recognized and protected nationally and internationally (the Constitutional Court expressly recognized their legitimacy in 2022[5]) but also the lives, integrity, and personal freedom of those who lead and are part of these Guards and those who support these processes. In general, these state actions jeopardize the physical and cultural survival of ancient peoples and of nature itself.

Therefore, the undersigned organizations categorically reject these actions and demand respect for the Indigenous Guards in Ecuador, for the forms of organization specific to each community or nationality, and for the protection of human rights defenders and organizations who accompany these processes. In light of this, we make the following **urgent appeals**:

1. The Ecuadorian State must immediately cease the discourse, actions of stigmatization and criminalization against the Indigenous Guards and against the people and organizations that provide technical support, respecting the constitutional and international rights of the Indigenous Peoples and nationalities.
2. We call upon the media to respect the rights of Indigenous Peoples, fulfil their ethical responsibility, and not disseminate unverified and stigmatizing information that threatens the forms of Indigenous organization, such as the Indigenous Guards, putting at risk the

lives and freedom of guards, leaders, and defenders who accompany these legitimate processes.

3. We call upon international and regional human rights systems, States, and European and multilateral institutions to publicly urge the National Government of Ecuador to respect the processes of self-organization and Indigenous self-determination, according to the constitutional and international framework, specifically by refraining from stigmatizing, persecuting, and criminalizing the legitimate work of the Indigenous Guards and those who accompany them; and to guarantee their physical, spiritual, and cultural integrity.
4. We call upon international and regional human rights systems, States, and European and multilateral institutions to maintain active and sustained observation of the dismantling of the plurinational and intercultural state of rights, the right of association, and the Rights of Nature; all of this driven by the current National Government of Ecuador through various strategies and in combination with institutional actions.

***Defending life, territories, human rights, and freedom of expression and
association is not a crime, it's a right!***

[1] Expreso, September 29, 2025,
<https://www.expreso.ec/actualidad/guardias-indigenas-resistencia-ancestral-o-riesgo-subversivo-258844.html>

[2] Video circulating on social media,
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1XIT6xAjm2hBJ6PvaLDQeq95zP02nbhXE/view?usp=sharing>

[3] Instagram, <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DPXNSCdjLFE/>

[4] Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/reel/819250287207258>

[5] The Constitutional Court in ruling No. 273-19-JP/22, of January 27, 2022, established in its paragraph 138: “regarding the creation of an indigenous guard, HE finds that this also shapes part of their uses and traditions and It responds to the power that indigenous communities and peoples have to generate and exercise the authority inside of this ancestral territory, in accordance with what is prescribed in article 57, paragraph 9 of the Constitution.”