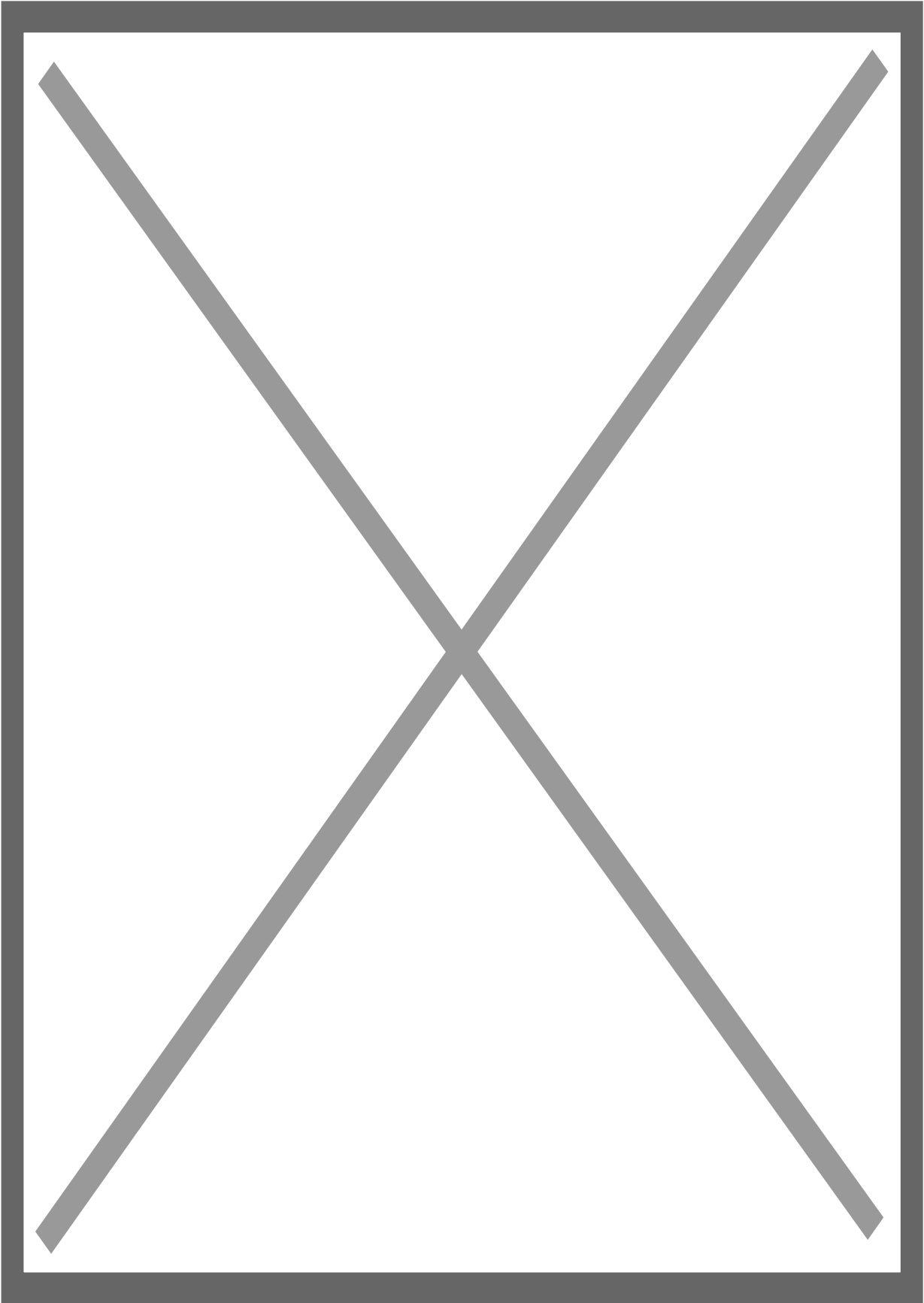


*Indigenous movement in Ecuador
to hold vigil in support of
Leonidas Iza*

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The leader of the indigenist movement is being charged with the alleged crime of paralyzing a public service, for which he could face up to three years in prison. | Photo: @CONAIE_Ecuador

Quito, July 3 (RHC)-- The Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE) said it will hold a sit-in in support of its leader, Leonidas Iza, who will be tried next Monday, July 4 at the Latacunga Judicial Complex.

"Vigil of support and solidarity with Leonidas Iza, president of Conaie, unjustly accused by the Government that seeks to criminalize social protest," the organization said on its Twitter account.

Iza is accused by the Government for the alleged crime of paralyzing a public service, for which, according to the Organic Integral Penal Code (COIP), in case Leonidas Iza is cupable he could be sentenced to one to three years in prison.

Article 346 of the COIP states that whoever impedes or paralyzes the normal provision of a public service, or resists its reestablishment in a violent manner, "or takes by force a public building or facility, will be punished with imprisonment of one to three years."

Previously, the police had arrested Iza in the area of Pastocalle, Cotopaxi. Later, after several illegal movements, Judge Paola Bedón ordered his immediate release on June 15, but not before declaring that his arrest responded to due process.

In the context of his detention, Conaie described his arrest as illegal, while Iza saw his support grow in rural and jungle areas. Likewise, in urban areas, mainly in Quito, Ecuador's capital, several people supported him.

The indigenous organization called to be alert at the hearing and several social organizations have expressed their fear of criminalization of social protest.

Bedón accepted the request of the Attorney General's Office to issue alternative measures to preventive imprisonment for the indigenous leader. This is how the indigenous leader responds to the process in freedom.

The defense of the leader called to appear among the witnesses of the process the head of State, Guillermo Lasso, and the Minister of the Interior, Patricio Carrillo. Carrillo has already sent a sworn report.

According to the indigenist's lawyer, Carlos Poveda, Lasso will surely not attend the hearing, arguing that he did not attend the call of the National Assembly or the dialogues to sign the peace agreement, so he has no expectations, but he said that he should send a sworn report as did the member of his Cabinet.

For Poveda, it is striking that in addition to the Prosecutor's Office, Procuraduría and the state-owned company Pretoecuador will go as accusers. Regarding the company, Judge Bedón accepted the bias of the accusation.

Although the crime of presumption of paralyzation does not refer to any oil well or the obstruction to take out the tankers, one of the charges was to close the E35 road. "They did not add any other, they did not say that they are responsible for lack of fuel, the Prosecutor's Office never said that, it is called principle of congruence."

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