

Peruvian Human Rights Organization Says Peru Among Most Dangerous Places for Indigenous Activism



Lima, November 19 (teleSUR-RHC)-- Peru is set to host the upcoming COP20, the 20th Climate Change Conference of the United Nations. However, reports are emerging regarding the dangers that Peruvian indigenous people face as they defend their ancestral territories.

On Tuesday, the National Human Rights Coordination called Peru one of the most dangerous places for indigenous environmental activists. According to the Peruvian Ombudsman, under the current administration, 46 people have been murdered during social protests and most of them are connected to indigenous environmental issues.

Rocio Silva Santisteban, Executive Director of the National Human Rights Coordination, explains: "There is a situation of very high vulnerability because it is not only that you have to defend yourself from the state, but also from corporations and a series of informal entrepreneurs that cut trees and exploit mines illegally in those areas. Therefore, indigenous leaders face a massive infringement of their rights."

However, Minister of Culture Diana Alvarez, responsible for overseeing indigenous issues, did not seem ready to respond to the allegations. When asked about the high number of murders of indigenous environmental activists, she answered: "I don't have the figures. It is true that we live in a country that hasn't been completely secure, but we are working on that. That is why I will talk with (Environment) Minister Manuel Pulgar Vidal."

Silva Santisteban claims responsibility on the government, saying some ministries have significant power to make a difference while others are weak. She underlined: "We cannot wait for public officers to (take the initiative). There has to be a political will, systematical, organized, well thought out and structured from the highest ranks of the Peruvian state. I'm referring to the minister of energy and mining and the minister of economics and finance."

With the upcoming United Nations Climate Change Conference taking place in Peru in two weeks, particular attention is being paid to the dire situation of indigenous people in Peru. There will also be a simultaneous conference called People's Summit organized by various social movements, NGOs, labor unions, churches, and indigenous, women's and youth groups.



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