

Costa Rican indigenous leader killed while defending land



San Jose, February 26 (RHC)-- Costa Rica's Indigenous leader Jerhy Rivera was shot dead on Monday night while the Mano de Tigre community inhabitants tried to defend themselves from hitmen in San Antonio de Terraba, in the Puntarenas province.

The events happened inside an area in which the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ((IACHR) issued protective measures in favor of the Indigenous population, for they have been constantly threatened by white landlords ("finqueros") who seek to appropriate their territory.

Costa Rica's President Carlos Alvarado, who said he deeply regretted what had happened, reported that the alleged culprit of the murder had already been arrested. His statements, however, did not convince social activists.

"This crime against the Indigenous rights defender Jerhy Rivera splashes with blood the hypocrisy of the Costa Rican State, which claims to protect human rights but its policies leave all Indigenous peoples abandoned and forgotten," the Federation of Ecologists (Fecon) said.???????

Rivera's assassination occurred almost a year after the attack on another Indigenous leader, Sergio Rojas, who was also killed by hitmen in Puntarenas, even though he had protective measures.???????

"On February 24, landowners' hitmen murdered the indigenous leader Jerhy Rivera in San Antonio de Terraba, Puntarenas, Costa Rica. The public force's inaction turns Public Security Minister Michael Soto and President Carlos Alvarado into accomplices."

"Although Costa Rican legislation recognizes these lands as part of the Indigenous territories, governments do not apply the law. They protect the interests of racist groups," the Fecon explained. Human rights defenders also denounced that the Costa Rican corporate media had made reports with negative dyes of the land recoveries carried out by the Indigenous peoples.

They emphasized that talking about "land conflict" is a just way of hiding the fact that companies have been invading Indigenous territories.??????? "We condemn the perverse spirit of reports and journalistic approaches they have used to encourage violence against land recuperators," local outlet Surcos reported.???????

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