

Demand in Colombia to investigate false positives among Indigenous peoples

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During the hearing the victims demanded further investigation of crimes against humanity against indigenous communities. | Photo: UN Colombia

Bogota, July 19 (RHC)-- In Colombia, Indigenous leaders say that 50 extrajudicial executions were committed against their peoples and not the three recognized by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. Representatives of indigenous communities of the Colombian Caribbean denounced before the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP) that between 2002 and 2005 battalions of the National Army carried out extrajudicial executions of young people who were later presented as guerrillas killed in combat, known as false positives.

During a hearing of the JEP on false positives in the Caribbean coast, held in the city of Valledupar, department of Cesar (north), the commissioner of Human Rights of the Wiwa people, Pedro Loperena, assured that the La Popa battalion and two others, whose theater of operations was located in Cesar and Guajira, committed that number of extrajudicial executions against his people and not only the three that the JEP recognizes.

Based on this record, he demanded that progress be made in the investigations of the remaining cases until the truth of what happened is known. Loperena thanked the JEP for recovering cases that had been hidden for years in the Attorney General's Office and had been shelved by the military justice system.

For his part, the governing council of the Kankuamo people, Jaime Luis Arias, emphasized that his territory has been the target of systematic violence committed by the actors of the armed conflict or in the name of economic and political interests.

He added that this violence placed his community on the verge of physical and cultural extermination, and remarked that all this occurred in the face of inaction by the Colombian State, which he accused of acting against the people.

The hearing in Valledupar was convened for 12 military personnel and one civilian who were part of the battalion between 2002 and 2005 to publicly acknowledge their involvement and responsibility in the commission of 127 murders and disappearances of innocent young people to present them as guerrilla casualties in combat.

It is expected that they will acknowledge their participation in the facts and offer truth to the victims present at the hearing. Also charged in this case were Colonels Publio Hernán Mejía and Juan Carlos Figueroa, commanders of the La Popa battalion between 2002 and 2004, and 2004 and 2005, respectively.

These officers did not accept the charges of responsibility and involvement in these crimes against humanity, for which they could face an adversarial process before the JEP and prison sentences of 20 years.

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