

Murder of social leader in Putumayo, Colombia denounced

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Social leaders become the front line of the struggles for the rights of the Colombian people, and often pay for that courageous stance with their lives. | Photo: Cadal

Bogota, July 21 (RHC)-- The Institute of Studies for Development and Peace (Indepaz) of Colombia, denounced Wednesday the murder of social leader José Edilson Vargas Monroy, whose violent death brings to 103 the number of leaders murdered so far in 2022 and 1,330 since the signing of the Peace Agreement at the end of 2016.

Vargas Monroy was secretary of the Community Action Board (JAC) in the Villanueva village, on the border between the municipalities of Puerto Asís and Puerto Caicedo, Putumayo department (southwest).

According to a statement issued by the Human Rights Network, unknown armed men came to his home and shot him dead. The crime was attributed to a criminal structure calling itself Comandos de Frontera.

So far, no authorities have made any statement on the incident.

The members of the Human Rights Network informed in their communiqué that the victim was affiliated to the Association of Peasant Workers of Alto Mecaya (Atcam)-Fensuagro affiliate, and participated as a representative of the Alto Mecaya Nucleus.

They also demanded that the authorities clarify the case and act to provide "guarantees of prevention, protection and non-repetition," as stipulated in the Peace Agreement.

Finally, they urged the illegal armed groups to recognize the right to life and not to attack civilians in the midst of their territorial disputes in the Middle and Lower Putumayo.

Indepaz confirmed hours ago that an attempt was made against another social leader, Hoover Jesús Rengifo, in the urban area of the municipality of Balboa, department of Cauca (west).

According to this organization, this community leader presides over the JAC in the San Alfonso village and was sent to a hospital in the city of Popayán due to the seriousness of his injuries and his delicate state of health.

The coordinator of the Indepaz Human Rights Observatory, Leonardo González, announced that illegal armed groups are present in that municipality and called on the Colombian government to be present in the territory not only with the public forces.

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