

**\*\*PRESS RELEASE – For immediate release\*\***

## **Indigenous Controlled Mining Under Fire in Colombia Following Death of Human Rights Defender**

*Leading indigenous human rights defender has been killed by unknown gun men.*

At 8pm Tuesday 7 April, Fernando Salazar Calvo was gunned down brutally outside his home. He was a prominent human rights defender and community member of the Resguardo Indígena Cañamomo Lomaprieta (Caldas) in Colombia.

A long time member of the Resguardo's Ancestral Miners' Association (ASOMICARS), 52-year-old Fernando Salazar was a key spokesperson for implementing the Traditional Authorities' rules and regulations for ancestral mining taking place within Resguardo Territory.

While the facts are not yet clear on why Salazar was killed, several members of ASOMICARS and the Cabildo, the highest authority of the Resguardo, have received death threats in the past in response to their exercise of their authority within the Resguardo. In addition, a November 2014 Risk [Report](#) issued by Colombia's Early Warning System (SAT) determined that the Resguardo and surrounding areas are affected by the activities of illegal armed groups. In these circumstances, these leaders fear they may be targets for illegal armed groups and individuals with interests in the rich gold resources embedded in Resguardo territory.

The Cabildo is calling urgently for a speedy and exhaustive investigation into Fernando Salazar Calvo's murder.

"We don't want a shoddily run, local investigation of the case," says Hector Jaime Vinasco, Coordinator of Mining Issues for the Resguardo Indígena Cañamomo Lomaprieta, and former Governor of the Resguardo. "We've had too many awful, local investigations. We need pressure for a top-level investigation, now."

"What is under attack are our rights to self-determination and autonomy," says Vinasco, "Our rights to regulate our own ancestral mining, under our own jurisdiction."

This is not the first time that community leaders from the Resguardo have been killed. Previous incidents include the 2003 La Herradura [massacre](#), when the then governor and three other leaders were killed. These and other incidents have led the Constitutional Court and the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights to issue precautionary [measures](#) for the communities and their leaders. Despite these measures and the ongoing serious security threat facing Resguardo members (as confirmed in a risk assessment carried out by the ombudsman's office in 2014), it is disturbing that the Resguardo's latest concerns about security were dismissed as mere "rumours" in a recent letter from the local prosecutor's office in Caldas.

The full text of the Cabildo's declaration following the incident is below.

Indeed, located high in a mountainous area known as Colombia's Gold Belt, the Resguardo Indígena Cañamomo Lomaprieta has been home to ancestral gold miners since well before the establishment of the Colombian State. Exercising its Special Jurisdiction recognised under Colombia's Constitution, the Cabildo of the Resguardo Indígena Cañamomo Lomaprieta has established a series of rules and regulations for mining within its territory. These include implementing environmental and labour management plans, prohibiting the use of harmful substances such as mercury and cyanide, and prohibiting foreign miners and investors. The Cabildo has declared the Resguardo a no-go zone for large-scale mining, and has also developed its own community protocols around consultation and consent. These measures are particularly important in light of the small amount of Territory the Resguardo has for its steadily growing population (it has a land base of some 4862 hectares, equivalent to some 37.6 km<sup>2</sup>, home to 22,823 Embera Chami community members).

While the Cabildo has managed to stave off incursions by outside miners with interest in its territories, the entire Resguardo is criss-crossed with concessions issued without the Cabildo's consultation or consent. The State has also issued a Special Interest Mining Reserve that overlaps with Resguardo Territory, and that could go out for company bidding shortly. As well, it is now regularly reported by the media that illegal armed actors are increasingly turning to mining as a means to launder their money and to fuel their activities.

The Cabildo calls for a national-level investigation of the murder of human rights defender Fernando Salazar Calvo, and the punishment of both the perpetrators of and co-conspirators involved in this heinous crime.

===ENDS===

### **Press Enquiries:**

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### **Links:**

La Herradura massacre

<http://www.rcnradio.com/noticias/estado-pide-perdon-por-masacre-de-lideres-indigenas-en-caldas-70943> (Spanish only)

<http://www.reiniciar.org/node/264> (Spanish only)

Inter-American Commission: Precautionary Measures 2002

<http://www.cidh.org/medidas/2002.eng.htm>

Constitutional Court

<http://www.corteconstitucional.gov.co/relatoria/autos/2009/A004-09.htm>

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# URGENT SOS

## URGENT

At 8:00 pm tonight, Fernando Salazar Calvo was gunned down. Holding national citizenship document with number 15.915.537 of Riosucio, Caldas; born the 30<sup>th</sup> of October, 1962, 52 years old; President of the Mining Association of La Union, and Spokesperson of the Mining Association of the Resguardo Indígena Cañamomo Lomaprieta, Riosucio y Supia, Caldas (ASOMICARS)

From the Resguardo Indígena de Cañamomo Lomaprieta, we demand that all competent entities act at full capacity to capture the perpetrators; to investigate; clarify; judge and condemn the actors who carried out and those who planned this violent act, another to add to the long list of deaths of Indigenous leaders, and defenders of the collective rights of our community.

### **We demand**

That the Ministry of Interior make a public declaration about the facts, and implement the necessary and pertinent procedures in the framework of Auto 004 of 2009, and the precautionary measures MC 265-02, to protect our community that is threatened by this violent act.

That the President of the Republic orders an in-depth investigation that is accurate and timely, to be able to locate the actors who committed and who planned this violent act.

That all social organizations and friends please demand that the State clarify these facts, that are part of the systematic genocide that we the leaders of the Indigenous movement in Caldas have suffered over the years, as a means to destabilize our autonomous processes for exercising our Authority and jurisdiction over our ancestral territories.

That the *Defensoría del Pueblo* (Ombudsperson) of the Department of

Caldas, activate, under the framework of the Risk Report, all the mechanisms of protection for our indigenous community, and all the leaders, governors, *cabildantes* and leaders of the different organised processes, as we have repeatedly denounced to *fiscalía* (state prosecutor) and other agencies, the threats of which we have been victims, and yet these have been underestimated the organs of State control.

### **Indigenous Authorities of the Resguardo Cañamomo Lomaprieta**