

ABCColombia and the Corporate Justice Coalition denounce the attempt on the life of Environmental Human Rights Defender Misael Socarrás Ipuana

Thursday, 18 December 2025

Seventy six (76) British and Irish Organisations, **ABC**Colombia, the joint advocacy project of **Christian Aid, CAFOD, SCIAF, Oxfam Colombia and Trócaire**, and the **Corporate Justice Coalition**, a coalition of 70 organisations, highlight their grave concern regarding the attempt made on the life of Misael Socarrás Ipuana, renowned defender of the Wayúu Indigenous Peoples', human, environmental, and territorial rights.

On 12 December 2025, in the urban centre of the municipality of Maicao, La Guajira, Colombia, unidentified individuals on a motorcycle fired shots at the vehicle in which Wayúu leader Misael Socarrás Ipuana was traveling. His life was saved by one of his security personnel placing himself between the attackers and Misael Socarrás Ipuana. The security person was seriously injured. This attempt on the life of Misael Socarrás Ipuana follows a visit by a delegation of the diplomatic community, which included the United Nations and the Irish Embassy, the week before this attack.

Misael Socarrás Ipuana has been denouncing for the last 20 years the environmental consequences and other impacts of the Multinational Glencore's, Carbones del Cerrejón Limited (Cerrejón) coal-mine, the largest open-pit coal mine in Latin America, that displaced some of the Wayúu Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian communities. These impacts have been widely documented and recognised in Colombian Court rulings, including Ruling SU-698 of 2017ⁱ on the Arroyo Bruno, in which Misael Socarrás Ipuana is a plaintiff. The Constitutional Court in this ruling upheld the communities' rights, determining that there were several technical uncertainties that threatened the rights to water, food, and the health of communities. Some of these impacts were raised by the former UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment, David Boyd and seven other UN Special Rapporteurs.

Colombia is the most dangerous place in the world for human rights defenders with 180 human rights defenders killed in the first eleven months of 2025. A recent Early Warning (Alerta Temprana) 2 December 2025 by the Colombian Ombudsman highlighted her grave concerns regarding the situation of extreme insecurity for human rights and environmental defenders in La Guajira and Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta.

For this reason, we call on the British and Irish Governments to take action and to contact their counterparts in Colombia regarding this situation.

Recommendations to the UK and Ireland to call ask the:

The Attorney General's Office

- To make this crime a priority for investigation so that the facts are immediately clarified, those materially and intellectually responsible are identified and brought to justice;
 - that the case is transferred to the Special Investigations Unit (Unidad Especial de Investigación) to ensure it receives special treatment,
 - ensure that there is a free, thorough and rapid investigation with a human rights focus.

The Interior Minister

- To urgently implement the recommendations made by the Colombian Ombudsman in her Early Warning Alert (*Alerta Temprana 020 del 2 de diciembre de 2025*) to prevent and mitigate the risks faced by human rights defenders and defenders of the environment and their territories from La Guajira and the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta

The National Protection Unit

- Request an immediate review, strengthen and make appropriate adjustments to the protection measures, to guarantee the life, integrity, and safety of Luis Misael Socarrás, his family, the members of the indigenous reserve, and other human rights and environmental defenders and organisations that accompany them.

We also call on the United Nations Office of Human Rights in Colombia and the Security Council Mission of Verification in Colombia to activate international observation and monitoring mechanisms, including a presence on the ground and documentation of the case, to prevent further attacks and raise international awareness about the situation of the Wayúu people.

i Derecho a La Salud, al Agua y a La Seguridad Alimentaria De Comunidades Indígenas Sentencia [SU698-17_Cerrejon 28nov2017 decision.pdf](#)

ii UN expert calls for halt to mining at controversial Colombia site, 28 Sept 2020 www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2020/09/un-expert-calls-halt-mining-controversial-colombia-site?LangID=E&NewsID=26306