

ABCColombia denounces the attempt on the life of Environmental Human Rights Defender Misael Socarrás Ipuana

ABCColombia, the joint advocacy project of Christian Aid, CAFOD, SCIAF, Oxfam Colombia and Trócaire, joins with our Colombian partners José Alvear Restrepo Lawyers' Collective (Cajar), the Center for Research and Popular Education (Cinep), and Censat Agua Viva - Friends of the Earth Colombia in **denouncing and expressing grave concern regarding the attempt made on the life of Misael Socarrás Ipuana, renowned defender of the Wayuu 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 Wayuu 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 over 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, on the Wayuu Indigenous Peoples. These impacts have also been raised by the former UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment, David Boyd and seven other UN Special Rapporteurs. In addition, the impacts have been widely documented and recognised in Colombian Court rulings, including Ruling SU-698 of 2017 on the Arroyo Bruno, in which Misael Socarrás Ipuana is a plaintiff.

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.

Recommendations to the UK and Ireland to call on 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 Human Rights Directorate to ensure it receives special treatment as required for human rights defenders,
 - ensure that there is a free, thorough and rapid investigation with a human rights focus;

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 Wayuu people.