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<http://www.rsf.org/colombia-cauca-s-indigenous-community-10-07-2012,43002.html>

Americas - Colombia

In the firing line

## Cauca's indigenous community radios appeal for help

10 July 2012

As fighting between guerrillas and the army intensifies once again in the Cauca department in south-western Colombia, indigenous communities and their communications infrastructure are more than ever at risk and under threat of censorship.

Community radio stations affiliated to the Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca ([CRIC](#)) that serve as a voice for the Nasa, Misak, Yanacona, Totoró and Kokonuco peoples, and some peasant groups, are essential for preventing the isolation of the people that maintain them.

Two such stations, *Voces de Nuestra Tierra* in Jambaló and *Nasa Estéreo* in Toribío, are today no longer able to broadcast. The first had its transmitter destroyed on the night of July 3 and the second stopped broadcasting after a fierce gun battle between troops and guerrillas took place on its perimeter.

Angelino Fuequia, a member of the Association of Indigenous Councils of Northern Cauca (ACIN), told Reporters Without Borders that, after the transmitters were blown up, power from local electricity substations was cut off. The communities affected are now looking for generators.

"With the loss of the stations' radio signal we are coordinating information by telephone and using CRIC communications to rebroadcast via *Radio Payumat*," said **Vicente Otero**, communications coordinator at the CRIC, referring to the community station in Santander de Quilichao.

However, Otero was concerned about the vulnerability of the transmitter now being used. "The *Radio Payumat* transmission tower stands on Munchique hill, which is strategic because of its altitude and the proximity of the warring parties," he said. "An indigenous colleague who was guarding the tower had to leave the area."

In the past two years, 14 people who worked for the network, mostly in North Cauca, had to flee their homes and workplaces because of threats. Since January this year, 18 people from these communities have been killed in the fighting and ACIN has recorded nearly 120 serious cases of human rights infringements.

[Branded](#) by troops and paramilitaries as guerrillas or allies of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), indigenous communities are also subjected to similar persecution by the guerrillas, who regard them as "having sold out to the government" or as "traitors to the revolution". The peoples themselves want all warring parties to leave their land, which should also be returned to them.

Reporters Without Borders and the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC), met CRIC officials during a joint visit in 2010. Our organization suggest the following:

- International and public aid, to which it will contribute according to its own resources, to help rebuild community media outlets affected by the fighting.
- Protection of zones of communication and gathering places to be used by the communities.

- A ceasefire and protection of civilians from the fighting.

Reporters Without Borders will make itself available to host on its own site and to publicize any content submitted by the stations forced off air that is of major interest and has been censored or otherwise not circulated.

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