

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/colombia-air-waves-against-bullets-10-08-2012,43200.html>

---

Americas - Colombia

War zone

## Air waves against bullets – indigenous radios stations in Cauca

10 August 2012

---

Colombia's indigenous peoples will today hold another day of solidarity and collective action, called a Minga, continuing those held in 2004 and 2008. The watchword for today's activities is "Defence of Mother Earth, 520 years of resistance."

Reporters Without Borders has chosen this day to release a report and video of the joint visit that its Colombian correspondent, **Fabiola León Posada**, and the Italian documentary filmmaker **Simone Bruno** made to the department of Cauca at the end of last month.

Video:

Reporters Without Borders previously visited representatives of community radio stations affiliated to the Cauca Indigenous Regional Council (CRIC) in 2010. The reason for this return visit was concern about these radio stations, especially as clashes between government forces and the guerrillas of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) have [gained in intensity again](#) since early July.

The community radio stations play a key role in maintaining social cohesion and the indigenous cultural heritage. They also help overcome the isolation of the different population groups that are caught in the crossfire of Colombia's interminable civil war and are stigmatized by both sides.

Two of these community radio stations – Jambaló-based *Voces de Nuestra Tierra* and Toribío-based *Nasa Estéreo* – recently had to suspend operations. In the case of *Voces de Nuestra*

*Tierra*, it was because its antenna was destroyed. The station's presenters and reporters described the incident to us.

Far from being collateral victims of the civil war, the indigenous population is often targeted. The threat has increased with the 28 July promise by two [paramilitary groups](#), the Black Eagles and the Rastrojos, to carry out a major "social cleansing" in the north of the department.

It was these mercenaries of terror who may have been responsible for community leader and radio presenter **Rodolfo Maya Aricape**'s murder in front of his family on 14 October 2010, a crime that is still unpunished.

Amid an increase in clashes in Cauca directly effecting indigenous community media, Reporters Without Borders continues to call for:

- Assistance by the Colombia state and the international community – to which Reporters Without Borders intends to contribute, within the limits of its resources – for the reconstruction of community media hit by the fighting.
- Protection for the media used by the indigenous communities and for all the other spaces where they meet.
- A ceasefire and protection for the civilian population away from the fighting.

### **Summary of the report**

The Reporters Without Borders report (which can be read in full in Spanish) describes the acts of intimidation, sabotage and bombings that have targeted the community radio milieu and examines the way that the indigenous community networks have consolidated as the armed conflict has gained in intensity.

Formed in 1971, the CRIC brought together entities representing the Nasa, Misak, Yanacona, Totoró and Kokonuco peoples and various peasant groups. Cauca department is nowadays estimated to have an indigenous population of more than 250,000 distributed over a total of 77 communities called "resguardos."

The spread of community radio stations began with the Nasa project, launched in 1980 by Alvaro Ulcué, an indigenous priest who was murdered on 10 November 1984, probably by state agents. The project had four central elements – territorial autonomy, acting as a local government, consolidating identity and doing without the national government. The Nasa project spawned many local initiatives in its wake, especially in the areas of health, environment, spirituality and education (including communication).

It was around that time that the guerrillas carried out a successful offensive in Toribío after a long presence in the area. Despite the 1985 Vitoncó resolution, calling for demilitarization of indigenous territories, the reaction to the guerrilla victory was a never-ending wave of violence that grew in intensity in the 2000s, when the paramilitary United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AUC) established their "Calima," "Farallones" and "Libertad" offshoots in Cauca.

Despite constant danger, forced stoppages, confiscation of equipment and financial difficulties, the community radio stations began over the years to play a strategic role in rallying the population in the resguardos.

As their representatives explained to us during the visit, the radio stations relay and accompany projects concerning community life, cover the local mingas – including those organized by women and young people – and are an indispensable vehicle of collective expression during community assemblies.

Cauca's indigenous radio stations also continue to promote long-standing political demands, which is why they are priority military targets for the parties to the civil war.

The armed clashes in July have put the call for regional autonomy back on the front burner, a call that was reiterated by these communities above all when members of the indigenous guard succeeded in removing the soldiers who had been guarding Cerro Berlín, near Toribío. A total of 22 people were injured in the clash, which took place on 17 July.

The indigenous population is also concerned about the way the event was covered by Colombia's mainstream media. The CRIC addressed an open letter to 17 national radio and TV stations and publications on 26 July describing their coverage as biased against the indigenous communities. The letter is still awaiting an answer, as is the offer of dialogue with

the government.

---

You can download those documents on our website :

- , (JPEG - 218 kb)
-