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First UA: 18/24 Index: AMR 28/7775/2024 Ecuador of March 4, 2024

ECUADOR CHILD CLIMATE JUSTICE ACTIVIST INTIMIDATED IN HER HOME

Leonela Moncayo, a 14-year-old climate activist, reported that on February 26, a bomb (an improvised explosive device) went off outside her house. This came just five days after a government official criticized Leonela and eight other young girls for their work against routine gas flaring. Because of their activism, Leonela, her family, and these eight other young activists might be in danger. We're calling on the leaders of Ecuador to look into this incident properly, to stop blaming these young activists, and to make sure they can do their important work safely.

Write to the Attorney General urging her to:

- Conduct a thorough, fair, and unbiased investigation into the attack on Leonela Moncayo and her family. Ensure anyone who might be responsible, whether they directly did it or planned it, faces a fair trial.
- Ensure the authorities in Ecuador stop unfairly criticizing the nine young girls who are speaking out. They need to be safe and supported so they can continue their important work in protecting human rights and fighting climate change. These girls are courageous advocates for our environment.

Write to:

Ms. General Attorney Diana Salazar
Juan León Mera N19-36 y Av. Patria,
Edificio Fiscalía General del Estado Quito
Quito, Ecuador
Email: despacho@fiscalia.gob.ec / mogollonf@fiscalia.gob.ec
X (Twitter): @DianaSalazarM2
Salutation: Dear Attorney General,

And copy:

His Excellency Carlos Alberto Patricio Jativa Naranjo
Ambassador
Embassy of the Republic of Ecuador
99 Bank Street, Suite 230
Ottawa, ON K1P 6B9
Tel: (613) 563-8206
Email: eecucanada@cancilleria.gob.ec

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Leonela Moncayo is a climate activist from the Ecuadorian Amazon. She is the daughter of two recognized human rights defenders, Donald Moncayo and Silvia Zambrano from the strategic litigation

organization "Unión de Afectados por Texaco" (UDAPT). Leonela is part of the group of Amazonian girls that, together with UDAPT, [achieved a historic ruling against the operation of routine gas flaring in the provinces of Sucumbíos and Orellana in Ecuador](#). Routine gas flaring is one of the processes of oil extraction that contributes the most to climate crisis due to the emission of methane, a greenhouse gas (GHG) more powerful than CO₂. Methane is thought to be [responsible for one-third of the net global warming since the industrial revolution](#). Routine gas flaring also has been linked with negative health impacts on [fenceline communities](#), since it emits a variety of harmful gases and components.

On July 29, 2021, the Provincial Court of Justice of Sucumbíos established that the Ecuadorian State ignored the right to a healthy environment, disregarded the right to health of the plaintiffs and failed to comply with its obligations to mitigate climate change. The Court established that the State must gradually eliminate the gas flares, especially those near populated areas, and provide reparations for the affected communities. Since the date of execution of the ruling, only the public apologies, the presentation of a "Substitute Regulation of the Environmental Regulation for Hydrocarbon Operations" and two technical reports on routine gas flaring prepared by the Ministry of Energy and Mines have been complied with. No environmental remediation actions have been initiated, nor have the right to health or any other rights been repaired.

On February 21, 2024, four of the nine plaintiff girls, including Leonela Moncayo, attended a [session in the Biodiversity Commission of the National Assembly](#) that had the aim of auditing the correspondent authorities the compliance of the ruling. In her intervention, the Minister of Energy and Mines, Andrea Arrobo, said that the government has "eliminated 2 flares" and thus "they have already complied with the ruling". She mentioned that "one thing is to insist on eliminating gas flaring and another one is to cause panic", underestimating the dimension of the problem. Also, the minister Andrea Arrobo insinuated the girls were "manipulated".

[The four plaintiff girls, including Leonela Moncayo, raised their voice to refute the minister's declarations](#). They took the microphone and refuted the declaration of the compliance of the ruling, mentioning that according to Ombudsman's Office, the gas flares have increased from 447 to 486. Also, one of the plaintiffs told the authorities "How are you going to say we are being manipulated, we are fighting for our rights?". Finally, Leonela, with tears in her eyes told the minister and parliamentarians that what girls and communities obtained from them in that session was "a pittance, a mockery". UDAPT, Leonela and her parents think the intimidation they suffered on 26 February was a retaliation against Leonela and the other plaintiff girl's protest in the National Assembly, and in general their activism to ensure authorities comply with the ruling.

The Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, Mary Lawlor, [mentions](#) in her last report about the situation of child and youth human rights defenders that child activists often face "demeaning and belittling remarks, questioning their experience, expertise and motivation", something worsened by "political narratives that use the age of child and youth human rights defenders to imply that they are being manipulated, recruited or brainwashed". These narratives of stigmatization, [according to the Interamerican Human Rights Commission](#), can exacerbate hostility and intolerance by different sectors of the population, which can put the lives and integrity of human rights defenders at risk. In 2023, [Amnesty International released an urgent action](#) to urge Ecuadorian state to refrain from using expressions that stigmatize, insult or discredit Pablo Fajardo, an Ecuadorian lawyer and activist who is

part of UDAPT, after the last Minister of Energy and Mines accused him of being an “international criminal”.

[Amnesty International documented throughout 2018](#) a series of attacks and threats perpetrated against women human rights defenders and leaders Patricia Gualinga, Nema Grefa, Salomé Aranda and Margoth Escobar, members of Mujeres Amazónicas (Amazonian Women) collective. In February 2023, Eduardo Mendúa, leader of the A'í Cofán indigenous people, [was shot and killed](#). Mendúa had been outspoken in his opposition to oil exploitation in the area. These examples and the unfortunate situation of Leonela and her family show how Ecuadorian authorities continue to fail to protect human rights defenders, especially land, territory, and environmental defenders, and guarantee them a safe and enabling environment to carry out their work.

Please take action as soon as possible until April 30, 2024! The UA will be duly updated should there be the need for further action.