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Colombia: Positive first steps in finding killers of husband of Indigenous leader

The detention of seven members of the army unit that killed the husband of an Indigenous leader is welcome, but a thorough and independent criminal investigation to identify and prosecute all those responsible, as well as to uncover the real motives behind the killing, is still essential, said Amnesty International today.

According to media reports, seven soldiers, including two junior officers, have been detained by judicial police for their alleged part in the killing of Edwin Legarda in December 2008. He was fatally injured after being shot by the security forces while travelling to the city of Popayán in Cauca Department, in the south of the country, to pick up his wife, Aída Quilcué, leader of the Indigenous organization, Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca (CRIC). She had just returned from a session on Colombia at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva.

“Edwin Legarda’s killing is symptomatic of growing concerns about extrajudicial killings carried out by the security forces and the vulnerability of Indigenous People and their leaders,” said Marcelo Pollack, Americas Deputy Director at Amnesty International.

“Any investigation into Edwin Legarda's killing must ascertain whether the vehicle in which he was travelling in was deliberately targeted and whether Aída Quilcué was in fact the intended target.”

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