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Urgent Call to Protect the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Ecuador

The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues is deeply concerned about the treatment by Ecuador's security forces of the public and peaceful demonstrations convened by the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE) to protest the removal of the diesel subsidies and the rising cost of living. The Government's state of emergency has restricted freedoms of association, assembly, and movement.

On 22 September, peaceful demonstrations, particularly in Imbabura, were met with the use of force by security agencies. At least 13 members of the Indigenous Kichwa Otavalo people were detained on alleged terrorism-related charges. Indigenous organizations report arbitrary detentions, violations of due-process rights, mistreatment in custody, transfers to detention facilities lacking adequate safety guarantees, and persecution of those defending the detainees.

On 24 September, the Telecommunication Regulation and Control Agency (ARCOTEL) ordered a fifteen-day closure of TV MICC, the channel of the Indigenous and Peasant Movement of Cotopaxi, a vital platform for public communication by Indigenous Peoples and for diverse voices and balanced public dialogue.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples affirms Indigenous Peoples' rights to political participation, freedom of expression, and assembly (Articles 5, 16 and 18). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights likewise protects peaceful assembly and association. Criminalizing Indigenous Peoples violates Ecuador's Constitution and international human rights standards. The Government must address the root causes of the conflict and ensure a peaceful solution with the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples.

The Permanent Forum calls on the Government of Ecuador to:

1. *Uphold and guarantee* the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and participation of Indigenous Peoples, including full respect for due process, the exercise of collective rights, and the right to peaceful protest.
2. *Ensure* that all detained persons, and particularly the 13 Kichwa Otavalo, are granted full access to due process, legal representation, family contact, interpretation and adequate medical care, and that any acts of persecution are halted.
3. Promptly and impartially *investigate* all allegations of violence, arbitrary detention and mistreatment by security forces and ensure accountability.
4. *Engage* in constructive and genuine dialogue with Indigenous Peoples and their representatives to address legitimate concerns through peaceful, rights-based, and inclusive solutions.