



Letter to the President of Costa Rica

Your Excellency,

The whole world is watching the escalation of violence against the indigenous people who are citizen of your country and that you are supposed to protect.

The whole world is disheartened by what is happening first to the BRIBRI community of Salitre who have already paid a hard price for simply being part of an indigenous peoples trying to live peacefully on their ancestral lands, and we see the same happening to the BRÓRÁN of Térraba.

We are asking you whether you intend to take more effective steps to stop the violence against them and protect your citizens, because as you shall know they are part of the Costa Rica whole community with the same rights as any other citizen (indigenous and non-indigenous).

Furthermore, the Bribri and Brörán are the beneficiaries of the Precautionary Measures of the IACHR, but this does not seem to you to be an issue of importance by your government agencies as under these measures, we are aware that violence has continued even since the assassination of Sergio Rojas on 18 March 2019, including the shooting of Mainor Ortiz Delgado of 9 February.

The assault to the Brörán of last night was not a surprise. The Government was given early alerts of armed groups amassing and approaching the Térraba territory. As we understand it to date, the police did not escort the Brörán out of the violence, but let them retreat surrounded by an armed mob throwing rocks, and wielding machetes and sticks. A second police patrol drove right by the Brörán as they were surrounded by the armed mob. It appears that those who were supposed to protect the Brörán did little to stop this violence –such as detaining armed individuals.

The Fund is concerned that the message sent by last night's events is that armed groups can force indigenous peoples off their lands and the police will not deter them from doing so, but rather assist by negotiating the departure of the indigenous peoples themselves. What is to stop these groups from doing this again?

As Head of your country you bear the responsibility for what is happening and the first question which comes to mind is, "What are you doing to stop this rising of violence in the Bribri and Brörán territories and what instructions are you giving your agencies to take stronger measures against those who are responsible –including detentions and punishments so that there is no impunity?"

The world is watching and waiting for your strong response to what is happening to your citizens of the indigenous communities.

Dr Franca Sciuto

Chair of the Rainforest Fund

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Franca Sciuto".