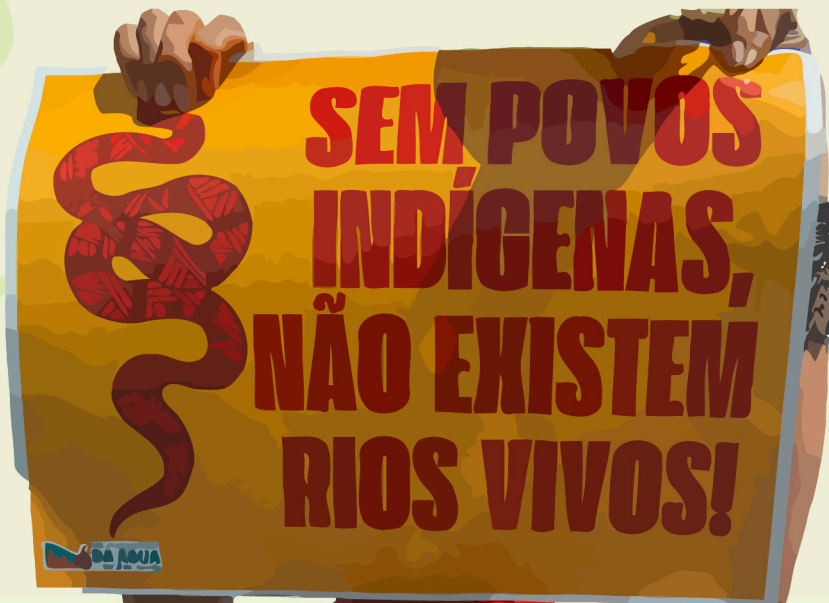


AMAZON UNDER SIEGE:

How Crime and Militarization Threaten
Indigenous Peoples



AMAZON WATCH

Amazon Under Siege:

How Crime and Militarization Threaten Indigenous Peoples

Amazon Watch

Protecting the Amazon and our climate in solidarity with Indigenous Peoples
amazonwatch.org

Co-published with the Coordinadora de Organizaciones Indígenas de la Cuenca Amazónica (COICA), Asociación Interétnica para el Desarrollo de la Selva Peruana (AIDSESP), la Organización Regional Aidesep Ucayali (ORAU), Gobierno Territorial Autónomo de la Nación Wampis, Federación Nativa de Comunidades Kakataibo (FENACOKA), Confederación de nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador (CONAIE), Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas Amazónicas del Ecuador (CONFENIAE), Federación de Organizaciones Indígenas del Napo (FOIN), Asociación de Comunidades Nativas para el Desarrollo Integral de Yurúa Yono Sharakoiai (ACONADIYSH), Organização dos Povos Indígenas do Rio Juruá (OPIRJ), Associação Ashaninka do Rio Amônia (APIWTXA), Associação Indígena Pariri, Resguardo Siona Santa Cruz de Piñuña Blanco.

Main office

520 3rd Street, Suite 108, Oakland, CA 94607
Traditional lands of the Ohlone, Muwekma, and Chochoyeno
Tel: +1.510.281.9020 Fax: +1.510.281.9021
amazon@amazonwatch.org

Washington, DC Office

1101 15th St NW, 11th Floor, Washington, DC 20005
Traditional lands of the Nacotchtank (Anacostan) and Piscataway
Tel: +1.202.480.9617

Lead researchers:

Sofia Jarrín Hidalgo and Raphael Hoetmer

Research:

The report is based on the research conducted by: Bikut Toribio Sanchium Y., Geraldine Santos, Leandro Barbosa, Vladimir Pinto, Ricardo Perez, Carlos Fernandez, Tatiana Pardo, and Christian Porier.

This report draws in part on the research of Amazon Underworld.



Editing: Verónica Ferrari, Andrew Miller and: Paul Paz y Miño

Design of the report: Daniel Ochoa Rivero

Cover photo: Anderson Barbosa / Amazon Watch and Amazon Watch

Back cover photo: Agencia Andina

Map preparation: Andrea Hernández Galvis

DISCLAIMER: While various individuals and organizations have contributed to the research for this report, final responsibility for its editing rests with the lead authors. The authors believe that the information presented in this report comes from reliable and credible sources and that the data analysis is factual; however, they do not guarantee the accuracy, completeness, or correctness of any data or analysis. The authors disclaim any liability arising from the use of this document and its content. The interviews conducted with representatives of the Border Commands as part of this research were not carried out by Amazon Watch.

© Amazon Watch All rights reserved.

Amazon Under Siege:

How Crime and Militarization Threaten Indigenous Peoples



ÍNDICE

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	6
LISTA DE MAPAS Y FIGURAS	8
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	9
1. INTRODUCTION	10
2. REGIONAL OVERVIEW OF ILLICIT ECONOMIES AND CRIMINAL GOVERNANCE IN THE AMAZON	12
2.1. The Amazon as a Strategic Hub for Organized Crime	12
2.2. Criminal Governance, Territorial Control, and Adaptation	13
2.3. Territorial Disputes, Criminal Adaptation, and Violence	13
3. TERRITORIAL SCENARIOS OF CRIMINAL GOVERNANCE AND INDIGENOUS RESISTANCE	16
3.1. Brazil: Munduruku Indigenous Territory	16
3.2. Colombia: Indigenous Peoples in Putumayo	17
3.3. Ecuador: Kichwa Nationality of the Napo	18
3.4. Peru: The Kakataibo People	19
3.5. Peru: The Wampís Nation	20
3.6. Brazil-Peru: The Yurua-Jurúa-Alto Tamaya Border	20
3.7. Venezuela: Indigenous Lands of the Pemón, Kariña, Akawayo, Piaroa, and Warekena Peoples	22
4. IMPACTS ON INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' WAYS OF LIFE, SELF-DETERMINATION, AND COLLECTIVE RIGHTS	26
4.1. Indigenous Peoples' Perspectives on the Impacts	26
4.2. Impacts on the Right to Territory, Land, and Self-Determination	27
4.2.1. Impacts on the Recognition, Protection, and Effective Control of Territory	27
4.2.2. Impacts of Forced Displacement, Confinement, and Mobility Restrictions	29
4.2.3. Impacts on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Isolation and Initial Contact	29
4.3. Violence, Social Control, and the Weakening of Indigenous Governance	30
4.3.1. Lethal Violence Against Indigenous Leaders	31
4.3.2. Impacts of Threats, Harassment, and Displacement of Indigenous Leaders	32

4.3.3. Impacts on Indigenous Governance: Co-optation, Fragmentation, and Instrumentalization	33
4.4. Impacts on Health, Food, Water, and Means of Life	33
4.5. Differentiated Forms of Violence Against Indigenous Women, Children, and Adolescents in Contexts of Criminal Governance.....	34
4.5.1. Children and Adolescents: Recruitment, Exploitation, and Generational Control.....	35
4.5.2. Indigenous Women: Sexual Violence, Trafficking, and Exploitation of Indigenous Women	36
4.6. Violations of the Right to a Healthy Environment, the Rights of Nature, and Climate Impacts ...	37
4.7. Impacts on Cultural Identity, Spirituality, and Intergenerational Transmission	38
4.8. Violations of the Right to Free, Prior, and Informed Consent and Indigenous Participation	39
4.9. Cumulative Impacts on the Future and Self-Determination of Indigenous Peoples	41
5. THE ROLE OF THE STATE IN GOVERNANCE, SECURITY, AND RIGHTS IN THE AMAZON	43
5.1. State Strategies to Combat Illicit Economies	43
5.2. Gaps between International Obligations, Territorial Control, and Indigenous Institutional Framework.....	45
5.3. Failure of Due Diligence and Structural Impunity.....	46
5.4. Limitaciones de los mecanismos de protección estatal	47
5.5. Corrupción, captura institucional e infraestructura criminal	47
5.6. Militarization and Security Responses	49
6. INDIGENOUS RESPONSES FOR TERRITORIAL PROTECTION AND SELF-GOVERNANCE.....	51
6.1. Indigenous Self-Governance and Territorial Governance	52
6.2. Community Actions and Systems for Territorial Protection and Control	53
6.3. Political and Legal Advocacy and Human Rights Mechanisms	54
6.4. Territorial Economies and the Material Foundations of Autonomy	54
6.5. Inter-community Alliances and Indigenous Cooperation for Territorial Defense	56
6.6. Spirituality	56
7. CONCLUSIONS.....	58
8. RECOMMENDATIONS.....	59
9. ANNEXES.....	61
ENDNOTES.....	63



LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACONADIYSH	Association of Native Communities for the Integral Development of Yurúa Yono Sharakoiai
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
AIDSESEP	Interethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Amazon
AMO	Orinoco Mining Arc
APA	Environmental Protection Area
APIB	Articulation of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil
APIWTXA	Asháninka Association of the Amônia River
ACTO	Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization
CCA	Class A Command
CCPI	Amazon International Police Cooperation Center
IACHR	Inter-American Commission on Human Rights
CJNG	Jalisco New Generation Cartel
COICA	Coordinator of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin
CONAIE	Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador
CONFENIAE	Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon
CV	Comando Vermelho (Red Command)
DEVIDA	National Commission for Development and a Drug-Free Life
ELN	National Liberation Army
FARC	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia

FENACOKA	Native Federation of Cacataibo Communities
FCDS	Foundation for Conservation and Sustainable Development
FOIN	Federation of Indigenous Organizations of Napo
FPIC	Free, Prior and Informed Consent
GTANW	Autonomous Territorial Government of the Wampís Nation
ISA	Socioenvironmental Institute
MAAP	Monitoring of the Andean Amazon Project
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OEEO	Ecuadorian Observatory on Organized Crime
ILO	International Labour Organization
UN	United Nations
PCC	Primeiro Comando da Capital (First Capital Command)
ORAU	AIDSESEP Ucayali Regional Organization
OTCA	Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization
PIACI	Indigenous Peoples in Voluntary Isolation or Initial Contact
REPAM	Pan-Amazonian Ecclesial Network
SPA	Science Panel for the Amazon
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNTOC	United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime

LISTA DE MAPAS Y FIGURAS

MAP 1: Presence of armed organizations and organized crime in the Amazon.

MAP 2: Illicit economies and indigenous territories in the Amazon

FIGURA 1: homicide rate in the amazon

FIGURA 2: Amazon versus national homicide rate

FIGURA 3: Impacts on Indigenous Peoples

FIGURA 4: Patterns of Human Rights Violations and Impacts in the context of illicit economies and organized crime

FIGURA 5: Indigenous responses to the threats of illicit economies, criminal governance and militarized state responses



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Amazon is undergoing a profound transformation in its systems of territorial governance, driven by the rapid expansion and convergence of illicit economies such as illegal mining, drug trafficking, and logging. For Indigenous Peoples, these dynamics represent not simply a transformation, but a set of processes of territorial dispossession and violence that merely threaten their ways of life and autonomy.

What were once isolated activities have evolved into complex territorial systems that enable criminal networks to control strategic resources, cross-border corridors, and local populations, while integrating into global markets and financial systems. Across the Amazon, illicit economies are increasingly interconnected and embedded within broader economic structures, reinforcing their scale and resilience.

A comparative analysis of Indigenous territories in Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela shows that these economies intertwine legal and illegal activities, armed violence, and institutional capture within global supply chains. In many parts of the Amazon, these dynamics have created forms of criminal governance that weaken or displace both state and community institutions, imposing systems of social and economic control over local populations. The impacts on Indigenous Peoples are structural, multidimensional, and existential.

They include displacement, confinement, violence against leaders, environmental degradation, health impacts, and the erosion of territorial self-governance. These impacts are not uniform: women, girls, boys, and adolescents face heightened risks of sexual violence, trafficking, forced labor, and recruitment, often used as tools of social control and territorial domination by criminal actors. Transborder Indigenous Peoples and Peoples in Voluntary Isolation or Initial Contact (PIACI) face particularly severe risks that threaten their physical and cultural survival.

The expansion of illicit economies is enabled by limited and uneven state presence, gaps in the implementation of international obligations, and entrenched patterns of corruption and impunity. At the same time, the transnational nature of these dynamics, operating through cross-border corridors, magnifies their impact—especially in border regions—transforming the Amazon into a strategic geopolitical node where economic, criminal, and extractive interests converge.

In this context, Indigenous Peoples are not only affected communities but also central actors in defending territorial rights and building pathways toward peace. Through systems of territorial monitoring, environmental protection, community guards, and their own governance frameworks, they have developed effective strategies to protect ecosystems and sustain their ways of life. Yet these efforts continue to receive insufficient recognition, support, and coordination from states and the international community, leaving Indigenous Peoples exposed to escalating risks.

Addressing insecurity in the Amazon requires moving beyond narrow law enforcement approaches. A comprehensive response must integrate human rights, strengthened territorial governance, support for Indigenous economies, environmental justice, and international cooperation. Protecting Indigenous territories is not only a matter of rights – it is essential for ecological stability, social cohesion, and lasting peace in the Amazon.



Charip, the Indigenous guard of the Wampis People. Credits: Mullu.

1. INTRODUCTION

Across large areas of the Amazon, systems of authority and territorial governance are not defined by a single institutional framework. Instead, they are shaped by overlapping – and often competing – systems of power, including state institutions, illicit economies, and Indigenous governance structures rooted in ancestral practices.

Within the context of highly profitable global markets for gold, cocaine, and other illicit commodities, transnational criminal networks have consolidated their presence across the region.¹ These networks are not only engaged in illegal extraction and trade; they actively organize local economies, regulate access to natural resources, and impose systems of social control over local populations.

The Amazon Basin spans approximately 7.8 million square kilometers and is home to nearly 47 million people, including more than 2.2 million Indigenous people² belonging to 511 distinct peoples. Among them are at least 66 groups living in isolation or initial contact (PIACI).³ Across Amazonian countries – Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela – criminal networks or armed groups are present in at least 67% of municipalities, while 32% of territories are contested by multiple actors.⁴

The expansion of illicit economies in the Amazon cannot be understood solely as a matter of crime or public security. It represents an existential threat to Indigenous Peoples, as well as to Afro-descendant and rural communities across the region. Territorial disputes between criminal organizations – combined with often militarized government responses – undermine fundamental individual and collective rights, including self-determination and self-governance. At the same time, these dynamics are unfolding in some of the most biodiverse areas on the planet, making them a critical threat not only to the Amazon biome, but also to global climate stability.



Illegal gold mining, drug trafficking, fuel and mercury smuggling, illegal logging, arms trafficking, wildlife trafficking, and human trafficking increasingly operate as interconnected systems. These activities share routes, infrastructure, and financial networks, reshaping territorial power dynamics across the region. As a result, Indigenous ways of life – grounded in autonomy, territorial stewardship, and collective governance – are increasingly in tension with emerging territorial orders imposed by criminal networks.

Government responses have often relied on militarized and security-focused approaches that fail to address the structural drivers of these dynamics. In some cases, these responses have even enabled or legitimized the expansion of illicit economies into Indigenous territories.⁵ The consequences are clear: escalating rights violations, increased violence, and growing risks for Indigenous leaders and environmental defenders.

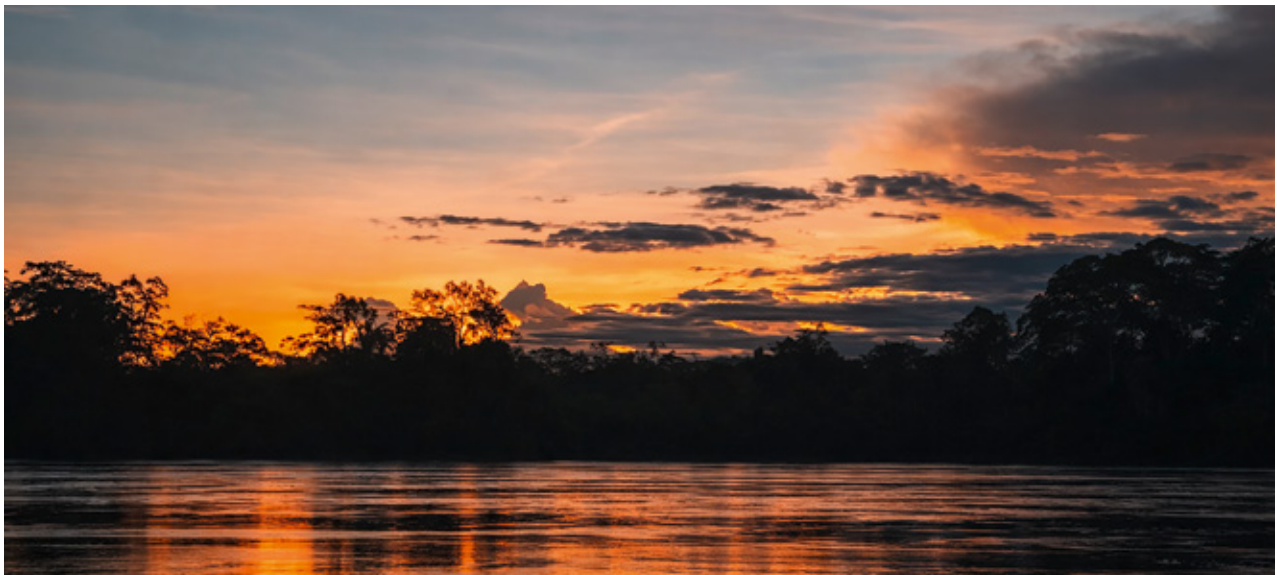
Against this backdrop, this report examines how illicit economies are reshaping territorial governance in the Amazon and the impacts of these transformations on Indigenous Peoples. It analyzes seven territorial case studies across Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela, selected for their relevance, data availability, and representation of broader regional dynamics.

These cases reveal a consistent pattern: the expansion of illicit economies, the weakening of state institutions, and the emergence of new forms of territorial dispossession. At the same time, they highlight the strategies Indigenous Peoples are developing to defend their territories, strengthen their governance systems, and sustain their ways of life.

Amazon Watch produced this report in collaboration with Amazonian Indigenous organizations and independent researchers, with contributions from the Amazon Underworld journalism alliance as part of a broader inter-institutional effort. The research draws on a combination of literature review, analysis of datasets and official records, investigative journalism, and semi-structured interviews with rightsholders connected to the selected territories.

The findings were further validated and enriched through dialogue with representatives of Indigenous Peoples from Ecuador, Colombia, Peru, and Brazil during the *Regional Meeting on Indigenous Autonomy in the Face of Illicit Economies, Violence, and Emerging Threats to Defenders*, co-organized with the AIDSESEP Ucayali Regional Organization (ORAU). Held in Pucallpa, Peru, in February 2026, the meeting provided a space for Indigenous representatives to share their experiences and deep territorial knowledge, strengthening and informing the report's conclusions and recommendations.

Credits: Amazon Watch





Illicit gold mining in Munduruku territory. Credits: Amazon Watch

2. REGIONAL OVERVIEW OF ILLICIT ECONOMIES AND CRIMINAL GOVERNANCE IN THE AMAZON

2.1. The Amazon as a Strategic Hub for Organized Crime

Over the past two decades, the Amazon has become a strategic hub for transnational organized crime and illicit economies.⁶ Its vast expanse, extensive network of navigable rivers, porous borders, and abundance of high-value natural resources have created ideal conditions for the expansion of illicit networks operating at regional and global scales.⁷

River systems function as key logistical corridors, enabling the movement of illicit goods, chemical inputs, and machinery across borders toward North America, Europe, Brazil (particularly in the case of cocaine), and Asia.⁸ These routes are complemented by clandestine airstrips, forest trails, and informal ports that connect extractive enclaves to storage and distribution hubs. Together, these dynamics are sustained by corruption networks that facilitate the integration of illicit economies into formal infrastructure and seemingly legal supply chains.

Across the Amazon, activities such as illicit gold mining, drug trafficking, illegal logging, wildlife trafficking, fuel smuggling, and human trafficking increasingly operate as interconnected systems. These economies share routes, infrastructure, financing, and armed protection mechanisms,⁹ allowing criminal organizations to diversify income streams, reduce risks, and adapt rapidly to market fluctuations and government pressure.



The phenomenon known as *narcogarimpo*¹⁰, or narco-mining, illustrates this convergence. Gold functions as a vehicle for money laundering, a medium of exchange, and a store of value¹¹, while drug trafficking networks provide security, financing, and logistical support. Both economies rely on the same corridors and operational structures, forming an integrated illicit system in which flows of drugs, natural resources, and capital are deeply intertwined.¹²

2.2. Criminal Governance, Territorial Control, and Adaptation

Fueled by the substantial profits generated by global markets for gold, cocaine, and other resources, criminal organizations have expanded and consolidated their presence across the Amazon.¹³ In this context, it is useful to distinguish between three levels of influence: **criminal presence**, **territorial control**, and **criminal governance**. Criminal presence refers to the operation of illicit economies within a territory. Territorial control involves the ability of armed actors to dominate routes, resources, and production sites. Criminal governance represents a more advanced stage, in which these actors regulate economic activity, impose social norms, control territory, and reshape everyday life.

Organizations such as the Comandos de la Frontera (CDF), the National Liberation Army (ELN) in Colombia, the Comando Vermelho (CV) in Brazil, and Los Lobos and Los Choneros in Ecuador exemplify this form of governance. In many cases, these groups coexist with state institutions, capturing or partially replacing their functions.

In the tri-border region between Peru, Ecuador, and Colombia, armed groups exercise territorial control through mechanisms such as identification systems, population registries, extortion, forced taxation, compulsory labor, and forms of parallel justice.¹⁴ This control is enforced through river and land checkpoints, restrictions on movement, and the imposition of “invisible borders,” often backed by violent punishment.

These practices not only secure revenue and control strategic corridors but also establish systems of parallel governance that restrict freedoms and undermine Indigenous and community governance structures.¹⁵ In border areas, criminal networks exploit weak institutional presence and river connectivity to consolidate transnational operations that facilitate both illicit activities and evasion of government enforcement.

In Indigenous territories, these dynamics directly undermine self-determination and self-governance. Criminal networks restrict access to shared resources, co-opt or threaten leadership, obstruct land titling processes, and impose conditions of fear and dependency. Criminal governance therefore represents not only a security challenge, but a form of territorial power that directly competes with both state authority and Indigenous governance systems, disrupting the continuity of Indigenous ways of life.

2.3. Territorial Disputes, Criminal Adaptation, and Violence

In the territories analyzed, illicit and formal economies do not operate separately; rather, they coexist and intersect in multiple ways. Extractive activities – such as mining and oil production – often take place in areas controlled by armed actors, while illegal activities may also operate within formally granted concessions, as seen in Napo (Ecuador).¹⁶ In some cases, criminal actors act in alignment with business interests, as documented in Putumayo (Colombia), where community leaders have faced threats for opposing extractive projects.

These economies also rely on inputs, machinery, and technology sourced through legal supply chains. Gold plays a central role: due to its high value and limited traceability, it is widely used to launder drug trafficking revenues, enabling criminal networks to diversify investments and stabilize profits. Once refined – often through formal companies – it enters global markets.

Their high adaptability also drives the expansion of these economies in response to government intervention. Several dynamics can be observed:

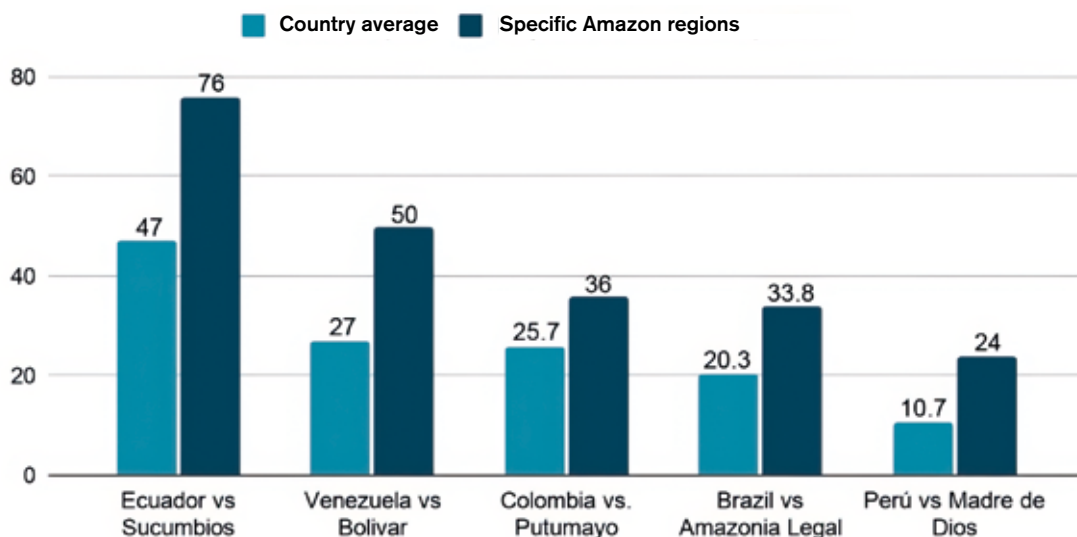
- the **balloon effect**, in which activities shift geographically in response to enforcement;
- the **mercury effect**, where operations fragment into smaller units to evade detection;
- and the **membrane effect**¹⁷, which concentrates activities in border areas characterized by weak government coordination and legal asymmetries.¹⁸

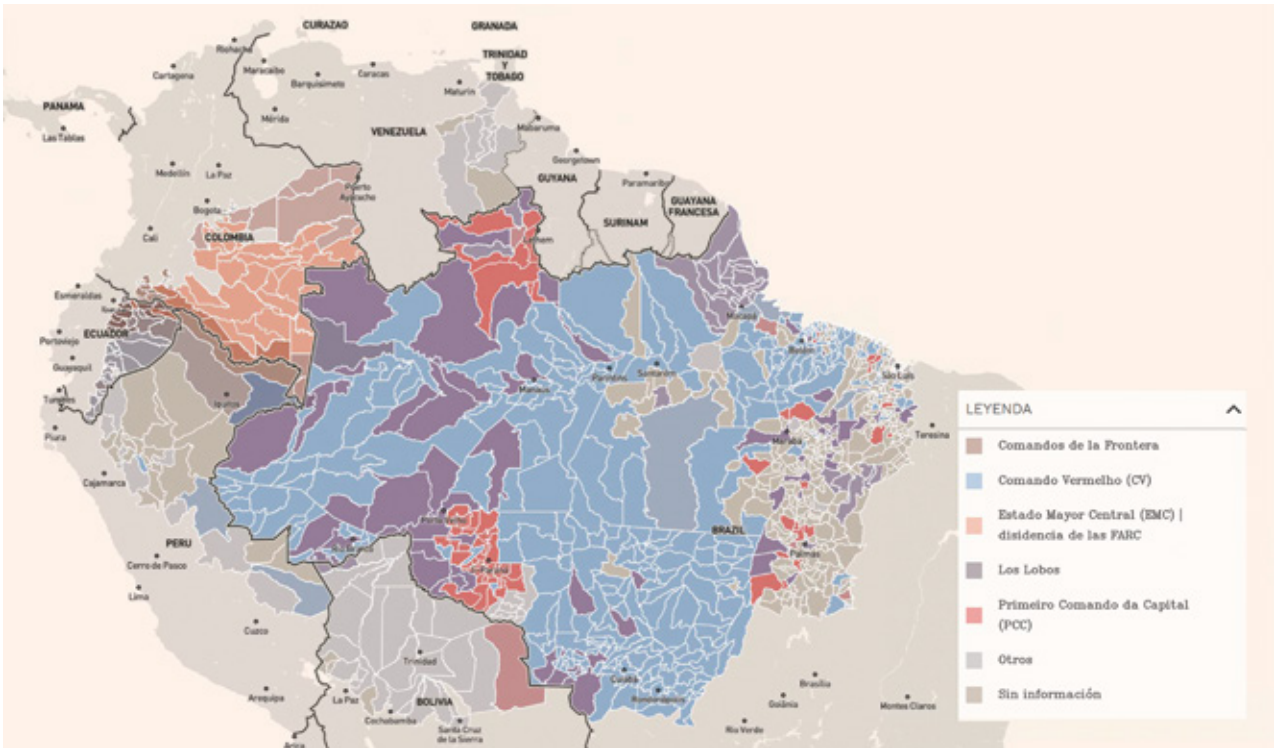
These patterns help explain the resilience of organized crime in the Amazon: when one operation is disrupted, others quickly emerge elsewhere.¹⁹

At the same time, these networks are not unified. They are fragmented and characterized by shifting alliances and internal disputes, which contribute to escalating violence. Because territorial control is essential for accessing both illicit and formal economies, competition among groups intensifies.

As a result, many Amazonian regions experience homicide rates that exceed national averages, in some cases rivaling or surpassing those found in armed conflict settings.²⁰ The situation is particularly acute in Ecuador, where the homicide rate surpassed 50.91 per 100,000 inhabitants in 2025. Violence in Amazonian provinces has increased sharply since 2020, with dramatic rises in areas such as Orellana, Zamora Chinchipe, Sucumbíos, and Napo.²¹

FIGURE 1: Amazon versus national homicide rate²²





Map 1: Presence of armed organizations and organized crime in the Amazon. Prepared by Amazon Underworld. Updated at: www.amazonunderworld.org



Members of the Border Commands. Credits: Tom Lafay



3. TERRITORIAL SCENARIOS OF CRIMINAL GOVERNANCE AND INDIGENOUS RESISTANCE

To assess the impacts of expanding illicit economies and criminal governance, this report analyzes seven territorial scenarios across Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela. The authors selected these cases based on three criteria: (i) the ability to reliably document and verify territorial dynamics; (ii) their significance as cross-border hubs or high-value extractive enclaves where illicit economies, logistical infrastructure, and criminal control converge; and (iii) the presence of Indigenous governance, surveillance, and territorial defense responses, which enable a comparative assessment of protection gaps and state obligations.

3.1. Brazil: Munduruku Indigenous Territory

The Munduruku people inhabit the Tapajós River basin in southwestern Pará, Brazil. With a population of approximately 9,282 people across around 150 villages²³, they occupy a territory of 2.4 million hectares, including Amazon rainforest, river systems, and protected areas such as the Tapajós Environmental Protection Area. Over the past decade, this territory has become one of the primary hotspots of illicit gold mining on Indigenous lands in Brazil.²⁴

Illicit mining in the Tapajós has evolved from small-scale artisanal practices into highly mechanized and well-financed operations linked to national and transnational criminal networks, including the Primeiro



Credits: Amazon Watch



Comando da Capital (PCC) and the Comando Vermelho (CV).²⁵ These groups finance mining activities, control logistics chains, and facilitate the entry of illegally extracted gold into formal markets through intermediaries and front companies.²⁶

Brazil's gold exports are primarily destined for Canada, Switzerland, and the United States. Major global companies in the technology and automotive sectors – including Apple, Tesla, Samsung, Microsoft, Intel, Sony, Volkswagen, Ford, and General Motors – have faced allegations of sourcing gold linked to illegal mining in the Amazon, often through international refining networks.²⁷

The scale of this illicit economy was highlighted during a federal operation concluded on January 31, 2024, which dismantled mining infrastructure, destroyed heavy equipment, and caused estimated losses of USD \$22.5 million to illegal mining networks.²⁸ However, these activities persist because of both the adaptability of criminal networks and the challenges of maintaining effective state control in remote territories.

3.2. Colombia: Indigenous Peoples in Putumayo

Putumayo, an Amazonian department bordering Ecuador and Peru, has a population of approximately 348,000 people, around 20% of whom identify as Indigenous.²⁹ The region includes 53 legally recognized Indigenous territories³⁰ belonging to peoples such as the Siona, Inga, Kichwa, Nasa, Cofán, and Murui, who inhabit tropical rainforest ecosystems, transboundary river basins, and protected areas



Indigenous guard in Putumayo. Credits: Amazon Watch



such as La Paya National Natural Park. At the same time, Putumayo hosts oil operations and the largest copper mining project currently under exploration in the Amazon, Copper Giant Resources.³¹

Putumayo's strategic location has made it a key hub for illicit economies, particularly cocaine production and trafficking. Together with Caquetá, it accounts for more than 56,000 hectares of coca cultivation³², with sustained growth since 2020. Several municipalities rank among the highest in the country for coca production.

Following the 2016 Peace Agreement, the reconfiguration of armed groups triggered renewed disputes over territorial control. Armed actors – including Comandos de la Frontera (CDF), the Carolina Ramírez Front, and the Raúl Reyes Front – have consolidated control across large areas, establishing corridors linked to international trafficking networks through Ecuador and Brazil.³³ Violence remains pervasive, taking the form of massacres, forced displacement, confinement, and targeted killings of community leaders.³⁴

3.3. Ecuador: Kichwa Nationality of the Napo

The Kichwa people of Napo inhabit Ecuador's central Amazon, in predominantly rural territories connected to the Napo and Tena river basins and ecologically linked to Llanganates National Park.³⁵

Illicit gold mining in the region has rapidly evolved from artisanal activity to highly mechanized operations involving heavy machinery, suction systems, and floating platforms capable of removing large volumes of sediment. Government interventions – such as Operation Manatí in 2022 – have seized dozens of machines in single deployments, illustrating the industrial scale of these activities.³⁶

In response, Kichwa communities have pursued legal action, filed complaints, and mobilized protests to halt mining expansion and address its impacts.

Amazonian rivers serve as logistical corridors not only for mining operations – transporting fuel, machinery, and mercury – but also for drug trafficking, timber extraction, and other illicit activities. This convergence



Assembly in Napo in Ecuador. Credits: FOIN



reflects the growing integration of criminal economies.³⁷ The presence of Ecuadorian groups such as Los Lobos and Los Choneros, along with cross-border actors like Comandos de la Frontera, highlights the transnational nature of these dynamics.

3.4. Peru: The Kakataibo People

The Kakataibo people inhabit lowland Amazonian forests between Ucayali and Huánuco, primarily along the Aguaytia River basin, a highly biodiverse ecosystem that connects strategic river corridors in the Peruvian Amazon. While many communities hold formal land titles, others lack legal recognition or face territorial encroachment by actors linked to illicit economies. A portion of the Kakataibo population lives in isolation, leading to the creation of the Northern and Southern Kakataibo Indigenous Reserve in 2021, which overlap with three regions of Peru: Ucayali, Huánuco, and Loreto.³⁸

In recent decades, Kakataibo territory has come under increasing pressure from drug trafficking, illegal logging, land grabbing, and illegal gold mining. Located between key coca-producing regions, the area accounts for a significant share of Peru’s coca cultivation, estimated at 92,784 hectares in 2023.³⁹ Law enforcement operations between 2020 and 2024 resulted in the destruction of at least 14 clandestine airstrips and 13 cocaine laboratories, underscoring the scale of illicit activity.⁴⁰

Criminal networks operating in the region maintain links with transnational actors, including Brazilian groups such as the Comando Vermelho, reinforcing cross-border drug trafficking dynamics.⁴¹



Kakataibo indigenous guard. Credits: ORAU.





Assemblee of the Wampis People. Credits: Amazon Watch

3.5. Peru: The Wampís Nation

The Wampís Nation inhabits its ancestral territory, *Iña Wampisti Nunke*, covering approximately 1.3 million hectares of tropical forest in the Santiago and Morona river basins in the Peruvian Amazon. This territory is one of the most ecologically intact forest landscapes in the region, with nearly 82% of its forest cover intact, and plays a key climatic role by capturing around 57 million tons of CO₂ per year. The Peruvian Wampís are the same people as those known as the Shuar in Ecuador.

The Wampis are known for establishing Peru's first Autonomous Territorial Government covering an entire Indigenous territory. However, they face increasing pressure from illicit mining, logging, and activities associated with drug trafficking. These activities use Amazonian rivers as logistics corridors to transport machinery, fuel, and mercury – essential supplies for illegal extractive operations.⁴²

Various community reports have pointed to the presence of mining networks operating in border corridors between Peru and Ecuador, involving miners from different regions and logistics networks linked to Peruvian groups such as the Trujillanos and the Huanuqueños, as well as Ecuadorian logistical such as Los Lobos and Los Choneros, which facilitate the transport of supplies and the sale of gold.

In response, the Wampís have strengthened territorial monitoring systems, including the Charip Guard, as part of broader efforts to defend their territory and consolidate their autonomous governance model.

3.6. Brazil-Peru: The Yurua-Jurúa-Alto Tamaya Border

This transboundary region of the Yurua (Juruá) and Alto Tamaya river basins spans nearly 3 million hectares and is among the most biodiverse areas in the world, with 17 endangered species and five



major river basins. Located between Ucayali (Peru) and Acre (Brazil), it is characterized by dense forests, complex river systems, and high levels of isolation, with no overland road connections, and transportation depends on rivers and small aircraft.

More than 14 Indigenous peoples – including groups in isolation – inhabit the region⁴³, relying on forest-based livelihoods. However, limited access to basic services and increasing external pressures have heightened their vulnerability.

The region faces growing threats from logging concessions, infrastructure projects such as Highway UC-105 (Nueva Italia–Puerto Breu) – which crosses Indigenous territories and conservation areas, affecting more than 35 communities in Peru and Brazil – and the expansion of illicit economies including drug trafficking, coca cultivation, and illegal logging. These activities utilize river routes, unauthorized roads, and clandestine trails, creating a parallel territorial control system that increases violence, community vulnerability, and environmental impacts.⁴⁴

In response to this situation, Indigenous and traditional communities – representing 35 territories and 8 conservation areas – established the “Yurúa-Juruá-Alto Tamaya Cross-Border Commission” in 2021, coordinating efforts with social and academic organizations to defend their territories. Among its main initiatives is the formation of a cross-border Indigenous guard, aimed at strengthening territorial monitoring and protection through coordination between Peru and Brazil.



Meeting of the Cross-Border Commission



3.7. Venezuela: Indigenous Lands of the Pemón, Kariña, Akawayo, Piaroa, and Warekena Peoples

In southern Venezuela, particularly in Bolívar and Amazonas states, Indigenous peoples such as the Pemón, Kariña, Akawayo, Piaroa, and Warekena inhabit territories rich in gold, coltan, and other strategic minerals. Within the Orinoco Mining Arc (AMO)⁴⁵ – which spans over 111,000 km² across Bolívar, Amazonas, and Delta Amacuro states² – these territories have become major epicenters of illicit economies, characterized by extreme violence, armed control, and widespread human rights violations.

Mining activities have expanded beyond officially designated areas into regions where extraction is legally prohibited (such as Amazonas state), as well as into Indigenous territories in Delta Amacuro, reflecting weak state control and the consolidation of illegal extractive enclaves.

Armed actors – including the ELN, Segunda Marquetalia, and FARC dissident groups – operate in these areas, reinforcing the transnational nature of these dynamics. Extracted minerals enter international markets through smuggling networks linking Venezuela to neighboring countries.⁴⁶

These dynamics are also shaped by a growing global demand for critical minerals, driven by energy transitions and technological industries. As a result, Amazonian territories are increasingly embedded in global geopolitical competition, intensifying pressures on regions with weak governance and deepening the entanglement between illicit economies and global markets.⁴⁷

Mining operation in the Mining Arc. Credits: Bram Ebus

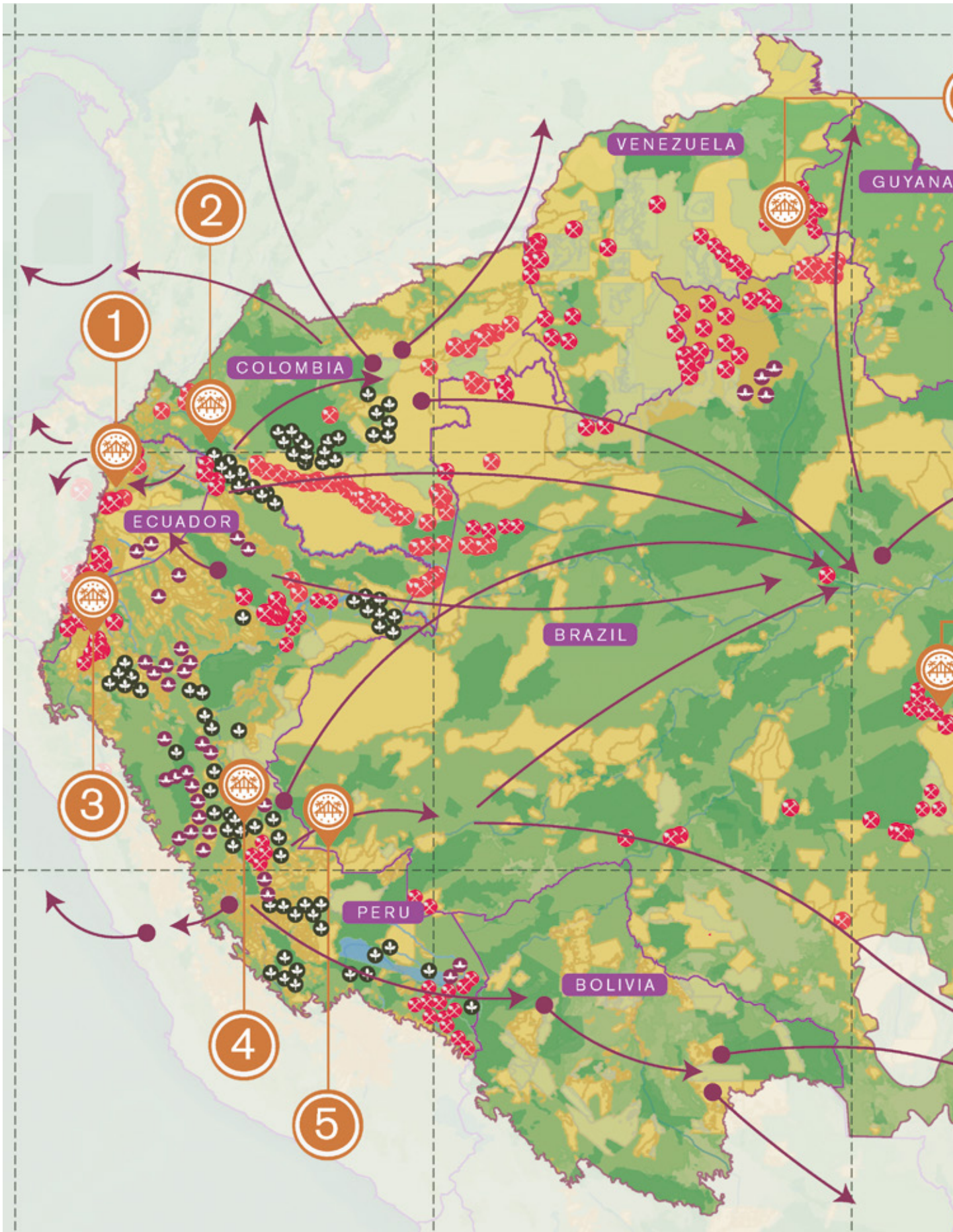


While each case reflects specific dynamics, common patterns emerge across the region: the convergence of illicit economies, the capture of infrastructure, violence against Indigenous defenders, the weakening of territorial governance, and the emergence of community-led responses aimed at maintaining territorial control and the continuity of Indigenous ways of life.

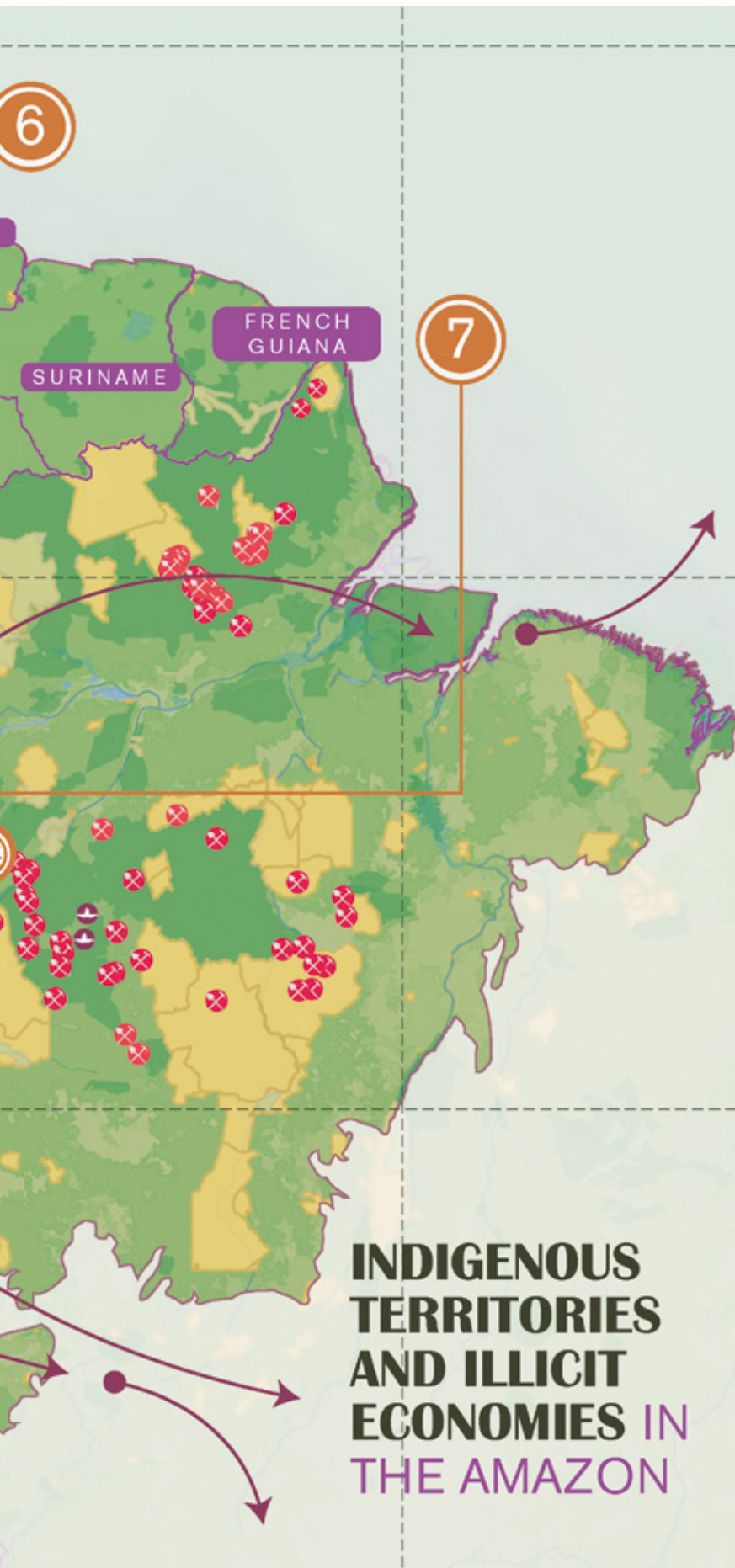
Figure 2: The territories included in the study

Country	Peoples	Region / Territory	Primary natural environment	Predominant illicit economies	Identified criminal actors
Brazil	Munduruku	State of Pará, – Tapajós River Basin	Tapajós APA, Tapajós and Teles Pires Rivers	Illegal gold mining, land grabbing	CV, PCC, CCA, illegal gold miners
Brazil-Peru	Apolima, Arara, Asháninka, Huni Kuin/Kaxinawá, Katukina, Kuntanawa, Puyanawa, Yaminahua/Jaminawa, Yanesha, Ashéninka, Amahuaca, Chitonahua, Sharanawa, Nawa, and Nukini	Acre - Ucayali	Tropical rainforests, Yuruá, Amonia, Tamaya, and Sheshea rivers	Drug trafficking, illegal logging, illegal roads	Local criminal networks, linked to CV and Comandos de la Frontera
Colombia	Siona, Kichwa, Murui, Nasa, Inga, Awá	Amazonian Putumayo	Amazon region, La Paya National Park, Putumayo and Caquetá rivers	Drug trafficking, illegal mining, human trafficking	FARC dissidents (Comandos de la Frontera, Carolina Ramírez)
Ecuador	Kichwa of the Napo	Napo Province	Tropical rainforests, Napo and Anzu rivers	Illegal gold mining, drug trafficking, money laundering	Los Lobos, Los Choneros, Colombian groups (Comandos de la Frontera)
Peru	Kakataibo	Ucayali – Huánuco (Aguaytía – Pichis-Palcazú)	Upper jungle, Northern and Southern Kakataibo Indigenous Reserves	Drug trafficking, illegal logging, illegal mining	Drug trafficking networks, Comando Vermelho, illegal logging mafias
Peru	Wampís Nation	Amazonas – Loreto	Santiago and Marañón Rivers, Cordillera del Cóndor	Illegal gold mining, illegal logging, drug trafficking	Cross-border mining networks, Los Trujillanos, Los Lobos, Los Choneros, logistics networks
Venezuela	Pemón, Kariña, Akawayo, Piaroa, and Warekena	Bolívar, Amazonas, and Delta Amacuro	Amazon region, Yuruán and Cuyuní rivers, forest reserves	Illegal gold mining, modern slavery, human trafficking	ELN, Segunda Marquetalia, FARC dissidents, and mining “systems”

Source: Amazon Watch



Map developed by: Andrea Hernández Galvis



TERRITORIES

- 1 Napo, Ecuador: Kichwa
- 2 Putumayo, Colombia: Siona, Inga, Kichwa, Nasa, Cofán, Awa, Murui and other peoples
- 3 Amazonas and Loreto, Peru: Wampis People
- 4 Ucayali and Huánuco, Peru: Kakataibo
- 5 Ucayali, Peru and Acre, Brazil: Apolima, Arara, Asháninka, Huni Kuin/Kaxinawá, Katukína
- 6 Bolívar, Venezuela: Pemón, Ye'kwana, Sanema and Eñepa
- 7 Pará and Amazonas, Brazil: Munduruku

MAP LEGEND

-  Pan-Amazon region
-  Protected areas
-  Indigenous territories
-  Illegal mining
-  Coca crops
-  Clandestine airstrips
-  Logistical corridors and trade routes

This map was developed using data from Amazon Watch, RAISG, ProPurus, FCDS, Amazon Mining Watch and recent UNODC reports. We recognize that extractive and illicit activities—particularly illegal mining—are highly dynamic, adapting to law enforcement actions, market pressures, and shifting patterns of territorial control. It is also important to note that coca cultivation exists both for traditional uses and sustainable markets, as well as for the global cocaine trade. This visualization captures general patterns but cannot fully represent the fluid and evolving nature of these economies. This study does not include Guyana, Suriname, French Guiana, or Bolivia.

4. IMPACTS ON INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' WAYS OF LIFE, SELF-DETERMINATION, AND COLLECTIVE RIGHTS

The expansion of organized crime and illicit economies across the Amazon is generating profound and cumulative impacts on the human and collective rights of Indigenous Peoples. Based on documented cases in Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela, this report identifies consistent patterns of violations that unfold across multiple, interconnected dimensions.

4.1. Indigenous Peoples' Perspectives on the Impacts

At the *Regional Meeting on Autonomy in the Face of Illicit Economies, Violence, and Emerging Threats to Human Rights Defenders* – co-organized with the AIDSESEP Ucayali Regional Organization (ORAU) – Indigenous leaders emphasized the need to move beyond a narrow focus on individual crimes or violations. Instead, they called for a comprehensive understanding of the systemic impacts of illicit economies and criminal governance.⁴⁸

This dialogue resulted in the *Pucallpa Declaration* (annexed to this report), which outlines key demands and proposals from Indigenous organizations.

As one Indigenous leader from Colombia explained:

"For us, everything is interconnected. If the health of our elders is affected, our entire existence as a People is affected."

For Indigenous Peoples, territory is not merely a physical space – it is the foundation of collective rights, including self-determination, governance, and cultural continuity. As such, disruptions to territorial integrity directly undermine the full spectrum of Indigenous rights.

These impacts must therefore be understood not as isolated effects, but as interconnected processes that simultaneously weaken governance, disrupt ways of life, and erode the material and spiritual conditions necessary for survival. While international human rights frameworks often categorize impacts separately, in practice they manifest holistically – affecting social, cultural, political, economic, and spiritual dimensions at once.

FIGURE 3: Impacts on Indigenous Peoples



4.2. Impacts on the Right to Territory, Land, and Self-Determination

The right of Indigenous Peoples to their lands, territories, and resources is a cornerstone of international human rights law, recognized in instruments such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and ILO Convention 169. However, across the Amazon, this right is systematically undermined by the expansion of illicit economies, overlapping extractive concessions, and weak government enforcement of territorial protections.

4.2.1 Impacts on the Recognition, Protection, and Effective Control of Territory

Across the cases analyzed, two patterns emerge: territories that remain legally unrecognized, and those where formal recognition exists but is routinely violated by armed actors, criminal networks, and extractive activities – both legal and illegal.

In both scenarios, Indigenous Peoples' effective control over their territories is weakened, limiting their ability to govern, regulate access, and protect resources. Even where communities have developed strong organizational capacities, defending territory often comes at high cost, including threats and violence.

In Colombia, in the department of Putumayo – where there are at least 53 legally established Indigenous reserves – approximately 90 Indigenous councils are still in the process of obtaining legal recognition of their territory. The expansion of illicit economies and the presence of armed actors restrict access, weaken governance structures, and promote illicit crop cultivation.⁴⁹

In Peru, the Kakataibo communities face land invasions, illegal land transfers by local authorities to logging companies and other actors,⁵⁰ and the expansion of illicit infrastructure such as clandestine airstrips and laboratories.⁵¹ As a result, only four of the nine Kakataibo communities have completed their land titling processes and established boundaries with the newly created “settlements.” While their representative organization, FENACOKA, has promoted conflict resolution forums with government support, these advances remain limited to those four communities. In the remaining cases, titling processes have stalled due to ongoing threats that prevent technical teams from safely accessing the territory.

In the Wampís Nation, illegal mining directly threatens the consolidation of its Autonomous Territorial Government, undermining its *Plan de Vida* and collective land-use decisions.⁵² The presence of external actors and criminal networks – combined with limited government support – has led to incursions aimed at establishing illegal mining operations. These pressures are further intensified by overlapping mining, oil, and forestry concessions granted without recognition of the Wampís territorial government, fragmenting the territory and constraining effective self-governance. In response, the Wampís have strengthened their Autonomous Territorial Government (GTANW),⁵³ yet the Peruvian government continues to recognize land rights only at the community level, limiting full territorial autonomy.

In Venezuela, particularly in Bolívar, Amazonas, and Delta Amacuro states, one of the most severe impacts concerns the right to territory. Since the creation of the Orinoco Mining Arc in 2016, the expansion of gold mining has transformed vast areas into extractive enclaves dominated by armed groups and illegal networks. As a result, Indigenous Peoples face increasing restrictions on access to and use of their traditional territories, undermining their ability to manage resources and sustain their ways of life.



Indigenous Guard in Ucayali. Credits: Guisell Muro / ORAU.



In Brazil, while the demarcation of Indigenous lands provides an important legal safeguard, the case of the Mundurucu highlights its limitations. In the Upper Tapajós, illicit mining persists despite government interventions, accompanied by threats against Indigenous authorities and territorial monitors. In the Middle Tapajós, the lack of formal demarcation of territories such as Sawré Muybu and Sawré Bap'im (230,000 hectares) leaves communities highly vulnerable. Together, these dynamics show how state inaction and the expansion of illicit economies restrict self-determination and territorial control.

In the Upper Juruá/Yurúa and Upper Tamaya region along the Peru-Brazil border, a vast area identified as Indigenous territory remains unrecognized and unprotected by the Peruvian state. This region – home to ancestral routes and sacred sites, particularly for the Ashéninka/Asháninka and Yaminahua peoples – is increasingly threatened by logging concessions granted to private actors. More broadly, over 30% of Indigenous communities in Peru lack secure land titles or face overlapping concessions, making these gaps a key driver of conflict and vulnerability.⁵⁴

4.2.2. Impacts of Forced Displacement, Confinement, and Mobility Restrictions

Forced displacement and confinement are not only humanitarian crises – they are deliberate mechanisms of territorial control that restrict mobility, fragment community life, and undermine Indigenous self-governance.

In Colombia, forced displacement continues to severely affect Indigenous Peoples in territories impacted by illicit economies and armed groups.⁵⁵ Across Amazonian regions, groups such as Comandos de la Frontera, the Raúl Reyes Front, and the Carolina Ramírez Front impose curfews, mobility restrictions, and other forms of social control, particularly in cross-border areas. These dynamics are further intensified by repressive state responses – such as increased military operations and border closures – which restrict movement, disrupt cultural practices and access to sacred sites, and disregard the transboundary nature of Indigenous territories.

In Putumayo, more than 4,000 Indigenous people were affected by confinement and forced displacement in 2024 alone.⁵⁶ A stark example is the Siona people: in September 2023, 636 individuals – including 421 children and adolescents – were confined during clashes between armed groups, cutting off access to food, healthcare, and cultural practices.

In Peru and Ecuador, while large-scale displacement has been less visible among the Kakataibo and Kichwa peoples of Napo, illicit economies have driven more gradual forms of displacement. The occupation of territories by illegal actors, combined with internal conflicts, has restricted access to ancestral lands and limited essential activities such as fishing, hunting, and farming. As a result, some communities are experiencing a slow loss of population as families are forced to leave their territories.

4.2.3 Impacts on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Isolation and Initial Contact

Illicit economies and organized crime have become one of the most serious threats to Indigenous Peoples in Isolation and Initial Contact (PIACI). According to Survival International, nearly half of the 196 such peoples – 187 of whom live in the Amazon – are at risk of extinction within the next decade due to pressures from illicit economies and extractive activities.⁵⁷



Intrusions into their territories can have irreversible consequences, including violence, the spread of disease, and the disruption of their ways of life, potentially leading to their physical and cultural destruction.⁵⁸ At the same time, these territories are increasingly targeted by criminal actors precisely because restricted access creates opportunities for illicit activities with limited oversight. Today, more than 30% of PIACI territories in the Amazon face direct threats from criminal networks.⁵⁹

The case of the Kakataibo people illustrates these dynamics. Despite the establishment in 2021 of the Northern and Southern Kakataibo Indigenous Reserve,⁶⁰ illicit economies continue to expand in surrounding areas and even within the reserve itself, where coca cultivation and clandestine airstrips have been documented. This highlights the limits of formal territorial protections in the face of organized crime. In February 2026, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights granted precautionary measures in favor of the Kakataibo people, calling on the Peruvian state to take urgent action to safeguard their lives and their territorial and environmental rights.⁶¹

Similarly, in Alto Tamaya and Yurúa, Indigenous reserves inhabited by peoples in isolation face growing threats from road construction and the expansion of illegal activities such as logging, drug trafficking, and land invasions. These pressures are facilitating the entry of outsiders into territories that should remain strictly protected, weakening existing safeguards and placing these peoples' survival at grave risk.



Illegal airstrip in the Kakataibo Reserve, which is intended to protect the Indigenous People in Isolation. Credits: ORAU

4.3. Violence, Social Control, and the Weakening of Indigenous Governance

The expansion of illicit economies across the Amazon is driving a severe escalation of violence that disproportionately targets Indigenous Peoples – particularly community leaders, territorial authorities, and environmental defenders. This violence is not incidental; it functions as a deliberate strategy of territorial domination and social control by armed and criminal actors. As a result, the Amazon has become one of the most dangerous regions in the world for defending land, rights, and nature.





Activities in the Arco Minero in Venezuela. Credits: Bram Ebus

4.3.1. Lethal Violence Against Indigenous Leaders

The scale of violence against Indigenous and environmental defenders demands urgent international attention. Since 2012, at least 2,157 defenders have been killed globally, with nearly 80% of these murders occurring in Latin America and approximately one-third affecting Indigenous Peoples.⁶² In the Amazon alone, at least 296 defenders were killed between 2014 and 2022.⁶³

Colombia remains the most dangerous country for environmental defense (79 murders in 2023 and 48 in 2024), while Brazil is the third most dangerous country, and in Peru there is a growing trend of violence against Indigenous leaders in territories affected by illicit economies.⁶⁴ In Putumayo, 34 human rights defenders were killed between 2022 and 2025.⁶⁵ High-profile cases, such as the murder of Nasa Indigenous leader Phanor Guazaquillo, highlight the vulnerability and danger faced by Indigenous Peoples as they resist the territorial control imposed by armed groups.

In Peru, the situation has worsened dramatically: of 35 Indigenous leaders killed over the past 15 years, 25 were murdered after 2020. These killings – particularly among the Kakataibo people – are directly linked to resistance against drug trafficking and illicit economies.⁶⁶ Among the victims are Arbildo Meléndez Grández (2020), Santiago Vega Chota (2020), Herasmo García Grau and Yensey Ríos Bonsano (2021), and Mariano Isacama Feliciano (2024). According to a ProPurus report, “the circumstances surrounding these murders point to reprisals for their work in defending their territory.”⁶⁷



Most of the cases remain unpunished, despite the existence of prior threats and formal requests for protection that have proven ineffective.⁶⁸

One of the most dramatic murders of defenders in Peru took place in the border area of Ucayali and Acre. Four Ashéninka leaders from the Saweto Indigenous Community – Edwin Chota, Jorge Ríos, Leoncio Quintisima, and Francisco Pinedo – were murdered in September 2014 while traveling to the village of Apiwtxa in Brazil to coordinate surveillance and monitoring activities along the border. For more than a decade, they had fought tirelessly to secure legal recognition of their territory in Peru, while consistently denouncing the incursions of illegal loggers and drug traffickers.⁶⁹ Eleven years after their murder, although both the perpetrators and those who ordered the crime have been sentenced to 28 years in prison, justice remains unfulfilled: the ruling has yet to be enforced, and those convicted continue to evade capture.

In Venezuela, international organizations have documented grave human rights violations linked to the control of mining enclaves, including extrajudicial executions, enforced disappearances, and torture. In Bolívar state – the epicenter of mining activity – at least 832 violent deaths were recorded between 2014 and 2022, including 237 alleged executions attributed to state agents, alongside 96 disappearances and over a hundred documented cases of torture and arbitrary detention.⁷⁰

4.3.2. Impacts of Threats, Harassment, and Displacement of Indigenous Leaders

Across the Amazon, threats, harassment, and the forced displacement of Indigenous leaders are not isolated incidents but systematic strategies linked to illicit economies. These practices are designed to weaken leadership, fracture collective organization, and undermine Indigenous self-governance. They include death threats, intimidation, orders to cease territorial defense, and restrictions on leaders' ability to remain in their communities.

In Putumayo, reports in late 2023 revealed a “blacklist” targeting at least 15 prominent territorial defenders. More recently, armed groups have issued collective threats during dialogue processes with the government, warning of violent retaliation if negotiations collapse – fueling a sustained climate of fear.⁷¹

In Peru, seven Kakataibo leaders have received state protection measures following repeated threats, delivered through direct messages and violent imagery.⁷² In the Yurúa border region (Peru–Brazil), isolation, the expansion of illicit economies, and limited state presence have created an acute risk environment, with at least 14 threats documented in 2024.⁷³

Authorities of the Autonomous Territorial Government of the Wampís Nation face ongoing threats⁷⁴ and stigmatization campaigns linked to their efforts to combat illegal mining and logging. These pressures often intensify following enforcement actions, such as intercepting illegal timber shipments or confronting mining activities in Amazonian rivers.⁷⁵

In Brazil, the Munduruku territory illustrates a sustained pattern of violence tied to illegal mining. Since 2021, women leaders – including Alessandra Korap⁷⁶ – have reported death threats, armed attacks, and acts of destruction, including the burning of homes such as the house of leader Maria Leusa Kaba⁷⁷ and the headquarters of the Wakoborún Women's Association.⁷⁸

These dynamics have forced many Indigenous leaders into temporary or permanent displacement as a means of survival. The consequences are profound: weakened governance structures, disrupted community life, and the erosion of cultural knowledge systems. As Indigenous authorities are pushed out, armed actors increasingly fill the vacuum, consolidating their control over territories and communities.

4.3.3. Impacts on Indigenous Governance: Co-optation, Fragmentation, and Instrumentalization

Across the cases analyzed, illicit economies are not only undermining the social fabric of Indigenous communities but are actively reshaping their systems of governance. They interfere in structures of authority, decision-making processes, and Indigenous mechanisms of justice and territorial regulation. Economic pressures linked to illicit activities often deepen internal divisions, particularly where such economies represent one of the few available sources of income.⁷⁹

Armed groups further erode governance by coercing or recruiting Indigenous leaders, influencing leadership selection processes, and promoting parallel structures that undermine legitimate representation.

In territories under their control or influence, Indigenous systems of territorial governance and customary justice are increasingly constrained – both by limited state recognition and by direct interference from armed actors. These actors may restrict, delegitimize, or co-opt Indigenous mechanisms to advance their own interests.

A stark example is the case of alias “Cirugía,” captured in February 2023 and transferred to an Indigenous council in Puerto Caicedo, from where he continued to operate within criminal networks. This case underscores the structural limitations faced by Indigenous justice systems in contexts of armed coercion and the urgent need for stronger safeguards to ensure their autonomy.

4.4. Impacts on Health, Food, Water, and Means of Life

Across Amazonian Indigenous territories, the deterioration of the rights to health and food is closely linked to the expansion of illicit economies, environmental degradation, and weak state presence. These dynamics simultaneously affect water quality, food systems, and access to health services, generating cumulative impacts on the physical, nutritional, and mental well-being of communities.

A central driver is river contamination caused by illicit gold mining, particularly through the use of mercury. Studies across the Amazon show contamination levels in water, fish, and Indigenous populations that exceed safe thresholds, with documented impacts on the nervous system, early childhood development, and cardiovascular and immune health.⁸⁰

Indigenous Peoples such as the Munduruku,⁸¹ the Kichwa of the Napo,⁸² and communities along the Putumayo River face widespread contamination and associated health risks. Similar patterns are reported in the Napo⁸³ and Nanay⁸⁴ rivers in Peru, as well as in Venezuela’s Mining Arc, where mining expansion has contributed to the resurgence of diseases such as malaria, linked to deforestation and degraded environmental conditions.⁸⁵

Beyond contamination, these pressures are undermining traditional food systems. The Wampis report that pollution in the Santiago and Marañón rivers has reduced the availability of safe fish, while illegal logging has depleted wildlife and forest resources. As a result, communities are facing reduced caloric intake and rising nutrition-related health problems.

Judicial recognition has begun to reflect the severity of the crisis. In Ruling T-106 of 2025, Colombia’s Constitutional Court found that mercury contamination in the Caquetá and Apaporis rivers violated the rights of 30 Indigenous Peoples, with exposure levels reaching up to 17 times safe limits.⁸⁶ Meanwhile,



Health impacts in Napo. Credits: Amazon Watch / Yeimy Araque Contreras

the continued expansion of dredging and cross-border mining activities – particularly in Putumayo – signals a worsening trend.⁸⁷

Three factors drive these impacts: toxic contamination from extractive activities, accelerated deforestation, and armed territorial control. Together, they erode the foundations of health and food security, restrict access to healthcare and markets, and push communities toward unsafe livelihoods.

The lack of comprehensive government responses – such as intercultural healthcare, access to safe water, effective mercury control, and protection of Indigenous food systems – transforms these pressures into cumulative harms. Ultimately, this undermines the ability of Indigenous Peoples to sustain their livelihoods, exercise their rights, and continue their life projects within their territories.

4.5. Differentiated Forms of Violence Against Indigenous Women, Children, and Adolescents in Contexts of Criminal Governance

The expansion of criminal governance and illicit economies across the Amazon has generated deeply gendered and age-specific forms of violence. Control over the bodies and lives of Indigenous women, girls, boys, and adolescents has become a central mechanism of territorial domination. These dynamics manifest through recruitment, sexual exploitation, forced labor, and coercion – systematically reinforcing the power of armed and criminal actors.



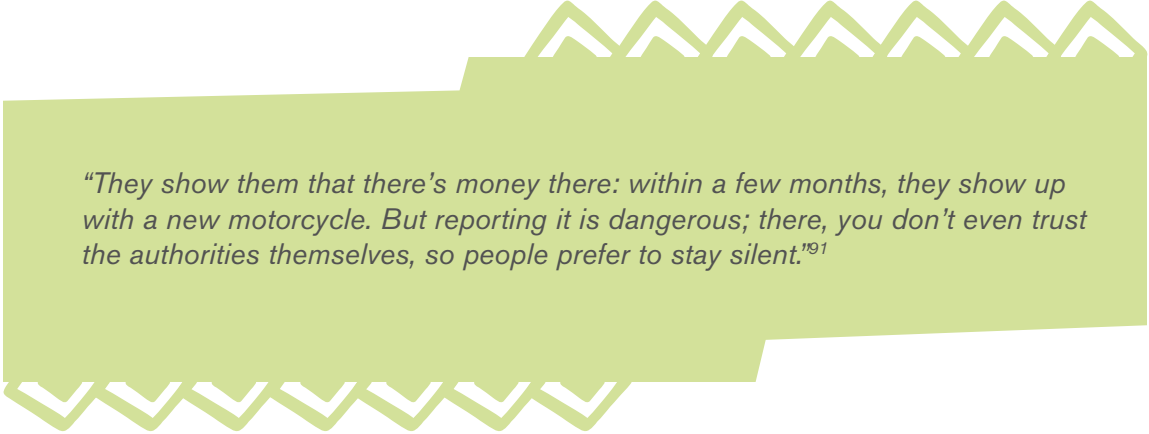
4.5.1. Children and Adolescents: Recruitment, Exploitation, and Generational Control

The recruitment and exploitation of children and adolescents have become core strategies for sustaining armed groups and illicit economies. Across the Amazon, minors are drawn into mining, drug trafficking, and territorial control activities – often through coercion, deception, or the absence of viable economic alternatives.

Reports by Human Rights Watch and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights document the systematic involvement of minors in mining activities and under the control of armed groups in the Orinoco Mining Arc. Children and adolescents are recruited as mine laborers or for surveillance, transport, and territorial control – often through coercion or due to the absence of viable economic alternatives. These practices expose them to violence, labor exploitation, forced substance use, and school dropout, perpetuating cycles of rights violations linked to illicit economies.⁸⁸

In Colombia, this pattern has intensified across Amazonian territories marked by disputes between armed groups. The department of Putumayo registers a high number of cases reported by the Ombudsman's Office⁸⁹ and civil society organizations, although there is consensus that the actual number is significantly underreported.⁹⁰

Indigenous leaders in Putumayo warn that armed groups combine coercion with economic incentives to recruit youth, creating powerful social pressures in contexts of poverty and state absence. As one leader explains:



"They show them that there's money there: within a few months, they show up with a new motorcycle. But reporting it is dangerous; there, you don't even trust the authorities themselves, so people prefer to stay silent."⁹¹

In Ecuador, violence against children and adolescents has escalated sharply. Between 2014 and April 2025, the Ministry of Education recorded 8,378 cases of sexual violence in educational settings.⁹² At the same time, recruitment and exploitation of minors by criminal networks have increased, operating under a “policy of silence” imposed by armed actors that suppresses reporting. In Amazonian provinces – particularly Sucumbíos, Orellana, and Napo – these dynamics are closely tied to illicit economies and cross-border criminal activity, where both recruitment and sexual exploitation of adolescents have been documented

Furthermore, the GTANW has reported that miners are using Wampís children as young as 4 to 10 years old as “human shields,” taking them to mining sites to deter the destruction of illegal machinery.⁹³ This practice places children at extreme risk and exposes them to criminal activities, with severe consequences for their safety and development.⁹⁴

In the Yurúa-Jurúa-Alto Tamaya region, adolescents are increasingly drawn into coca cultivation and drug trafficking networks. During school holidays, many work harvesting coca leaves under highly exploitative conditions and for minimal pay. A 2022 cross-border assessment also identified rising alcohol and drug use among youth as a growing concern.⁹⁵

Indigenous children and adolescents are therefore at heightened risk in contexts shaped by illicit economies and criminal governance. These dynamics not only threaten their physical integrity but also undermine generational continuity, weaken care systems, and jeopardize the long-term survival of their communities.

4.5.2. Indigenous Women: Sexual Violence, Trafficking, and Exploitation of Indigenous Women

Indigenous women face distinct and intensified forms of violence in contexts shaped by illicit economies, where their bodies are instrumentalized as mechanisms of territorial control. These abuses are not isolated incidents but are rooted in structural gender inequalities and historical patterns of dispossession, now exacerbated by the expansion of criminal governance.

In Venezuela's Bolívar state – one of the main hubs of illegal mining – widespread patterns of sexual exploitation, forced labor, and human trafficking have been documented.⁹⁶ It is estimated that at least 1,300 children and adolescents are involved in mining activities,⁹⁷ while 74% of victims of trafficking and slavery are women, many of whom are lured through deception and, in some cases, sold for small amounts of gold (between 5 and 10 grams) by armed groups controlling the area.⁹⁸



March of Amazonian Women for International Women's Day against extractivism. Credits: Mujeres Amazónicas

In Peru, testimonies highlight recruitment and trafficking networks linked to illicit economies, alongside persistent sexual violence against Indigenous girls and adolescents. In Condorcanqui, hundreds of cases of sexual violence remain under investigation, reflecting a context of entrenched impunity. While not exclusively driven by drug trafficking and illegal mining, these economies reinforce conditions that enable exploitation, including the recruitment of women and young people in bars and informal economies associated with these activities.

In Brazil, within the Munduruku territory, women in illegal mining (*garimpo*) contexts face extreme precarity – marked by exhausting labor, lack of basic services, and environments shaped by violence, debt, and economic dependence.⁹⁹ Many are recruited under false promises and become trapped in cycles of labor and sexual exploitation, often paid in gold under exploitative conditions that deepen their vulnerability.

The situation is particularly alarming in Yanomami territory, where the expansion of illegal mining has triggered a humanitarian crisis and profound social breakdown. According to Sumaúma's report, practices such as "sex for gold" have become normalized, alongside rising rates of alcoholism and disease, reflecting a context of systematic violence and serious violations of Indigenous women's human rights.¹⁰⁰

Across the Amazon, extractive and illicit economies are consistently linked to increased sexual violence, trafficking, and exploitation of Indigenous women, particularly in remote areas with limited state presence and accountability.



Mining in Munduruku territory. Credits: Amazonia Real / Marizilda Cruppe (2018 and 2024) – and long-term degradation / Amazon Watch

4.6. Violations of the Right to a Healthy Environment, the Rights of Nature, and Climate Impacts

The expansion of illicit economies in the Amazon – particularly illegal gold mining, drug trafficking, and illegal logging – is driving severe environmental degradation that directly violates the rights of Indigenous Peoples and undermines the ecological integrity of the biome. These activities disrupt river systems, accelerate deforestation, and generate persistent contamination, weakening the Amazon's capacity to sustain biodiversity, regulate water cycles, and store carbon.

At the regional level, the scale of forest loss is alarming. Between 1985 and 2023, more than 88 million hectares of Amazon forest were destroyed – equivalent to 12.5% of its total coverage – largely due to extractive activities, agricultural expansion, and illicit economies.¹⁰¹

Illicit gold mining is a major driver of this destruction, leaving extensive deforestation – more than 2 million hectares, only between 2018 and 2024 – and long-term degradation



through sedimentation and the alteration of river systems.¹⁰² In Brazil, the Munduruku Indigenous Territory in the Tapajós basin has become a key epicenter of illegal mining, with large-scale forest loss and expanding mining fronts.¹⁰³ In Ecuador, mining in the province of Napo has caused the loss of at least 855 hectares of forest between 2015 and 2021, including areas without legal concessions.¹⁰⁴

In Peru, Indigenous territories such as those of the Kakataibo face overlapping pressures from coca cultivation and deforestation, with more than 1,000 hectares of illicit crops and significant losses of forest cover,¹⁰⁵ especially in the community of Unipacuyacu, which has lost 36.03% of its forest cover.¹⁰⁶ Along the Peru–Brazil border, critical headwaters – including the Amônia, Sheshea, Tamaya, Dorado, and Shatanya rivers – are under increasing threat from logging concessions, putting vital water sources for Indigenous communities at risk.¹⁰⁷

In Venezuela, mining expansion has driven sustained deforestation and widespread contamination of soils and water bodies, despite formal restrictions on mercury use.¹⁰⁸ Between 2001 and 2020, the country lost approximately 2,900 square kilometers of Amazon rainforest.¹⁰⁹ Studies identify at least 2,800 km² of forest loss, with a heavy concentration in Bolívar state, where mining expansion has intensified over the past two decades.¹¹⁰

These cumulative impacts are pushing the Amazon toward a critical ecological tipping point. Scientists warn that continued deforestation and degradation could trigger an irreversible transition of the rainforest into a savanna-like ecosystem, with profound consequences for global climate stability and biodiversity.¹¹¹

Illicit economies are especially destructive because they operate in some of the most biodiverse and carbon-rich areas of the Amazon, accelerating ecosystem collapse while undermining Indigenous territorial governance and climate resilience.

4.7. Impacts on Cultural Identity, Spirituality, and Intergenerational Transmission

The expansion of illicit economies and territorial violence is profoundly disrupting the cultural, spiritual, and social foundations of Indigenous Peoples in the Amazon. Land occupation, illegal mining, deforestation, and river pollution are not only degrading ecosystems – they are also severing the relationships that sustain Indigenous ways of life, including spiritual practices, collective knowledge, and cultural identity.

In many territories, the presence and control of armed actors restrict access to sacred sites and prevent the practice of ceremonies, healing rituals, and other forms of spirituality. Curfews, threats, and territorial restrictions limit mobility and disrupt the conditions necessary for maintaining spiritual and cultural life. Violence has also directly targeted Indigenous authorities and spiritual leaders, as seen in cases such as the killing of leader Pablo Pandura during the Alto Remanso massacre. As one Indigenous leader explains, “the relationships of balance and harmony among the elements of the territory that sustain and protect life are being broken.”

Forced displacement, confinement, and restricted movement further deepen these impacts. By interrupting daily interactions with the territory, these dynamics hinder the transmission of knowledge, cultural practices, and collective memory between generations. The loss of territory is therefore not only material – it represents a profound rupture in the social and spiritual fabric of communities. At the same time, the expansion of illicit economies and the presence of armed actors fragment community structures, weaken Indigenous authorities, and disrupt intergenerational learning processes – particularly as youth are recruited into illegal activities or exposed to violence.

In Colombia, although the Constitutional Court ordered protective measures more than 17 years ago for over 34 Indigenous peoples – such as the Siona, Inga, Murui, Kofán, and Coreguaje – specifically highlighting the danger to their cultural survival as Indigenous Peoples due to the armed conflict,¹¹² these measures have not been effectively implemented. As a result, ongoing armed control continues to undermine the cultural and spiritual practices essential for the transmission of knowledge and the survival of these peoples.

These are not isolated cultural impacts but structural violations that threaten the very continuity of Indigenous Peoples. By eroding territory, knowledge systems, governance structures, and community bonds, these dynamics place at risk their ability to exist and reproduce their ways of life according to their own worldviews.



Mining in Mundurucu territory. Credits: Amazonia Real / Marizilda Cruppe (2018 and 2024) – and long-term degradation / Amazon Watch

4.8. Violations of the Right to Free, Prior, and Informed Consent and Indigenous Participation

The expansion of illicit economies, extractive projects, and security policies across the Amazon has led to systematic violations of Indigenous Peoples' rights to participation and to free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC), as recognized in International Labour Organization Convention 169. These violations reflect structural barriers that undermine Indigenous self-determination and exclude communities from decisions affecting their territories, resources, and ways of life.





Coca plantations in Putumayo. Credits: Bram Ebus

The overlapping of concessions, the imposition of security measures without consultation, and the presence of armed actors have significantly weakened safeguards for FPIC. In many cases, consultation processes are absent, delayed, or conducted after key decisions have already been made, without ensuring conditions of good faith, adequate information, or freedom from coercion – falling short of international standards.

In Colombia, extractive projects have proceeded without prior consultation, particularly in Putumayo, where oil operations were carried out before Indigenous communities were formally recognized, indicating a lack of mechanisms to identify them.¹¹³ At the same time, the presence of armed groups has directly undermined participation by restricting protests or coercing communities into supporting agendas aligned with their interests, including in contexts linked to peace negotiations,¹¹⁴ thereby compromising the free nature of participation and consultation, as well as the communities' capacity for autonomy.



In Peru, the Wampís Nation has challenged the granting of oil Lot 64 without prior consultation, while in Kakataibo territory, the overlapping of concessions with community territory and the implementation of security policies without Indigenous participation have led to tensions and criticism to consultation processes conducted after extractive rights were granted.

In Ecuador, the expansion of mining concessions in Napo has advanced without adequate consultation with Kichwa communities, in violation of constitutional guarantees. 256 concessions – including mining, free-use areas, and artisanal mining zones – covering more than 32,277 hectares, overlap with Indigenous territories and critical water sources,¹¹⁵ while public decisions – such as the proposed construction of a mega-prison in Archidona – have been announced without Indigenous participation, prompting strong social opposition.¹¹⁶

In Brazil, the expansion of illegal mining on Indigenous lands has further eroded consultation mechanisms. Although the 1988 Constitution requires prior consultation, legislative initiatives such as Bill No. 191/2020 – introduced during the Bolsonaro administration – sought to enable mining in Indigenous territories, raising serious concerns about the weakening of FPIC protections. In March 2023, the government of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva requested that the bill be withdrawn from consideration.¹¹⁷

In the Yurúa and Alto Tamaya region, on the border between Brazil and Peru, infrastructure projects – particularly road construction – have been promoted without respecting the right to free, prior, and informed consultation.¹¹⁸ Furthermore, forest concessions have been granted to private individuals for logging in areas that overlap with ancestral Indigenous territories, without consulting the affected Indigenous peoples, thereby violating their collective rights.

While security and territorial control operations implemented by the state do not incorporate mechanisms for Indigenous participation, at the same time, Indigenous-led territorial protection mechanisms – such as Kakataibo guards and Wampís *Charip* – remain unrecognized within national security frameworks, limiting their role in decision-making and territorial governance.

4.9. Cumulative Impacts on the Future and Self-Determination of Indigenous Peoples

Taken together, the documented impacts demonstrate that the expansion of illicit economies and criminal governance in the Amazon is not only generating isolated rights violations but also driving systematic processes that threaten the physical, cultural, spiritual, and political survival of Indigenous Peoples.

Although the risks are particularly acute for smaller communities and Indigenous Peoples in Isolation and Initial Contact (PIACs), the cumulative effects extend across the region. Illicit economies and criminal governance – alongside often inadequate or exclusionary state responses – are simultaneously eroding territories, governance systems, health, cultural practices, and intergenerational knowledge transmission.

These overlapping pressures create high-risk scenarios that directly undermine Indigenous Peoples' right to self-determination and their ability to sustain their ways of life. This assessment is consistent with findings by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights,¹¹⁹ which recognizes organized crime as a structural threat to human rights. Its impacts disproportionately affect Indigenous Peoples, Afro-descendant communities, women, children and adolescents, human rights defenders, and journalists, while simultaneously eroding the rule of law, restricting access to justice, and undermining community livelihoods and territorial integrity.

Figure 4: Patterns of Human Rights Violations and Impacts in the context of illicit economies and organized crime*

Rights violations / Indigenous Peoples	Munduruku	Yurua	Putumayo	Napo	Wampís	Kakataibo	Bolivar	Tendencia
Territorial rights	Orange	Orange	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Red	Structural impact, with greater intensity in specific contexts
Displacement and confinement			Red	Yellow		Yellow	Orange	High impact in certain cases
Threats to Peoples in Condition of Isolation or Initial Contact		Orange				Red		Extreme vulnerability, posing critical risks to their physical and cultural survival
Lethal violence	Orange	Orange	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Red	Systematic lethal violence against Indigenous leadership
Threats and intimidation	Orange	Orange	Red	Orange	Orange	Red	Red	Structural impact with varying intensity
Cooptation and fragmentation of indigenous governance	Yellow		Orange	Orange	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Structural impact at different levels
Health and Food sovereignty	Orange		Orange	Red	Orange	Orange	Red	Structural impact, often severe in specific contexts
Forced recruitment and exploitation			Red	Orange	Orange	Yellow	Red	Structural impact with varying intensity
Sexual and reproductive rights	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Orange	Yellow	Orange	Red	Structural impact with differentiated impacts
Environment and climate	Red	Yellow	Orange	Red	Orange	Orange	Red	Structural impact, particularly intense in certain territories
Spirituality and cultural identity	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Orange	Yellow	Orange	Red	Structural impact with varying intensity
Prior, informed and free consent, and participation	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Red	A transversal pattern of violation across all contexts

*Assesment based on available evidence and interviews conducted in the analyzed territories.

Legend:

- White:** not documented
- Yellow:** low-level impact
- Orange:** consolidated and potentially increasing impact
- Red:** critical impact threatening the survival of Indigenous Peoples



5. THE ROLE OF THE STATE IN GOVERNANCE, SECURITY, AND RIGHTS IN THE AMAZON

In the face of the systemic and existential impacts driven by organized crime in the Amazon, states bear a heightened responsibility toward Indigenous Peoples. This obligation arises from their unique and enduring relationship with their territories, as well as the structural vulnerabilities shaped by historical processes of colonization, exploitation, violence, and discrimination.

States are therefore required to adopt strengthened, rights-based measures to ensure the full realization of Indigenous Peoples' collective rights. This includes effective prevention, protection, investigation, sanction, and reparation for human rights violations, while fully respecting Indigenous autonomy and self-determination.

This chapter examines the extent to which states are meeting these obligations, as well as the key gaps, challenges, and barriers that continue to hinder their effective implementation.

5.1. State Strategies to Combat Illicit Economies

In recent years, Amazonian countries have intensified their efforts to combat organized crime and illicit economies through high-impact operations, diversification of strategies, and increased regional cooperation. These responses reflect a growing recognition of the transnational and multidimensional nature of the challenges facing the Amazon.

Large-scale operations have been carried out across the region. In Brazil, interventions in Indigenous territories such as those of the Munduruku,¹²⁰ Kayapo, Yanomami¹²¹ peoples have dismantled illegal mining infrastructure, disrupted logistics routes, and temporarily reduced extractive activity. Similar efforts in Ecuador (Operation Manati)¹²² and Peru (Operation Mercurio)¹²³ have focused on visible enforcement actions, leading to seizures and arrests. However, these interventions have largely failed to address the structural drivers sustaining illicit economies.

At the national level, some progress has been made in strengthening interagency coordination, particularly in Brazil and Colombia, where security, environmental, and social approaches are increasingly integrated, with positive results in reducing deforestation.¹²⁴ Initiatives such as Brazil's *Guardiões do Bioma* have combined territorial control, environmental monitoring, and financial investigations targeting criminal networks.

Environmental prosecutors in several countries have also enhanced their technical and investigative capacities, contributing to progress in complex cases.¹²⁵ However, significant structural limitations persist, such as a shortage of resources – particularly in Peru and Ecuador – difficulties in operating in remote areas, weaknesses in evidence gathering, and limited capacity to investigate the financial structures of organized crime.¹²⁶ In the Peruvian case, moreover, recent legal reforms have restricted the mandate and scope of the Environmental Prosecutor's Office.¹²⁷

Regional cooperation has also advanced. Multinational operations – such as the 2025 joint initiative involving Peru, Brazil, Colombia, and Ecuador – demonstrate increased coordination in tackling cross-border criminal networks.¹²⁸ Platforms like the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization have played



View of Peru from Puerto Leguizamo (Colombia). Credits: Amazon Watch

a growing role in promoting information exchange, institutional strengthening, and joint responses.¹²⁹ Initiatives such as the Amazon International Police Cooperation Center (CCPI) in Manaus further reflect efforts to improve coordination in border areas.¹³⁰

Despite these advances, significant structural limitations persist. Many interventions remain short-term and reactive, focusing on visible targets while leaving the financial and organizational structures of criminal networks largely intact. Limited resources, logistical challenges in remote areas, weak evidence-gathering capacities, and legal constraints – particularly in countries such as Peru and Ecuador – continue to hinder effective enforcement.

At the same time, coordination challenges between states – especially in border regions – undermine operational effectiveness. Diplomatic tensions and the absence of clear protocols allow illicit economies to operate with greater adaptability and coordination than state responses. The practical ability to coordinate actions in border territories where armed actors operate is hampered by tensions between states. An example of this can be seen on the border between Ecuador and Colombia, where diplomatic friction has arisen over security operations and possible cross-border incursions, while tensions between Peru and Colombia have centered on Santa Rosa Island. The absence of clear protocols, joint verification mechanisms, and channels of trust gives illicit economies an advantage, as they operate with a higher level of coordination than the states themselves.

As a result, Indigenous communities remain highly exposed to violence, environmental harm, and reprisals. The persistence of illicit economies is driven not only by their high profitability but also by



gaps in territorial governance and state presence. Rather than intensifying operational responses, the central challenge is to move toward sustainable territorial governance that integrates state control, regional cooperation, financial action, and effective community participation. To achieve this, there are five fundamental challenges to address, which we will discuss below.

5.2. Gaps between International Obligations, Territorial Control, and Indigenous Institutional Framework

International frameworks – such as ILO Convention 169, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the Escazú Agreement – establish clear standards regarding territorial rights, participation, and access to information and justice. However, across large areas of the Amazon, implementation remains limited. State responses continue to prioritize coercive control or the promotion of extractive activities, without adequately strengthening rights protections or institutional presence on the ground.

This gap is evident in multiple contexts. The Wampís people have repeatedly denounced the state's failure to halt illegal mining; in Kakataibo territory, the expansion of drug trafficking has been accompanied by threats and killings of Indigenous leaders; and in the Yurúa border region (Peru–Brazil), communities have warned of the rapid spread of illicit economies in the absence of effective state presence.¹³¹

In Colombia's Putumayo region, Indigenous communities alerted authorities following the 2016 Peace Agreement about the reorganization of armed groups. The lack of a timely and effective response enabled the consolidation of new criminal structures linked to illegal mining – in the Caquetá, Putumayo, and San Miguel river basins – and drug trafficking, exposing communities to escalating violence and widespread violations of human, territorial, environmental, and cultural rights.

In Venezuela, gold mining has expanded within a context of state-promoted extractivism and weak regulatory capacity, facilitating the growth of illicit economies and violent territorial control by armed actors.¹³² Similarly, in territories such as Munduruku (Brazil) and regions like Napo and Putumayo, the persistence of illegal mining and armed presence reflects the disconnect between regulatory frameworks and effective territorial control.

A critical dimension of this gap lies in the limited recognition of Indigenous institutional systems. While legal frameworks increasingly acknowledge Indigenous rights, they often fail to recognize or effectively integrate Indigenous governance structures, territorial authorities, and systems of control. With some partial advances in Colombia, a persistent disconnect remains between formal legal recognition and Indigenous practices, knowledge systems, and worldviews.

In response, Indigenous Peoples have strengthened their own autonomous governance and territorial protection mechanisms – such as those of the Wampís Nation in Peru¹³³ or within the Munduruku territory in Brazil¹³⁴ – demonstrating both resilience and the limitations of state protection. These experiences highlight that formal recognition alone is insufficient to guarantee effective self-governance or territorial control.

This persistent gap is rooted in historical patterns of marginalization and unequal territorial control. In many contexts, state action has been more consistent in enabling or tolerating extractive activities than in ensuring security, justice, and the protection of Indigenous rights.

Addressing this challenge requires a fundamental reconfiguration of state – Indigenous relations. Recognizing and strengthening Indigenous governance systems is not only a legal obligation but





Bolívar (Venezuela). Credits: Bram Ebus.

also a strategic necessity for effective territorial governance, as these systems function as legitimate mechanisms of protection against illicit economies.

Encouragingly, some efforts are emerging to bridge this gap. Initiatives supported by entities such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime aim to strengthen information exchange between Indigenous monitoring systems and state institutions. Brazil has developed more structured coordination mechanisms, including inter-institutional platforms involving the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples, while Colombia is advancing participatory frameworks – though these remain constrained by security conditions. In Peru and Ecuador, coordination remains more limited and often reactive, typically emerging only after sustained advocacy by affected communities.

5.3. Failure of Due Diligence and Structural Impunity

The failure of states to fulfill their duty of due diligence – particularly in prevention, investigation, and punishment – remains one of the most persistent patterns across the territories analyzed. In many cases, authorities have received early warnings and formal complaints about threats linked to organized crime, yet these have not translated into effective preventive or protective measures, exposing Indigenous leaders and communities to escalating risks.

The situation of the Kakataibo people illustrates this failure. For years, the expansion of drug trafficking and the establishment of clandestine airstrips were documented, yet timely action was not taken,



resulting in the killing of multiple Indigenous leaders.¹³⁵ Similarly, in Colombia's Putumayo region, homicides, threats, and forced displacement targeting Indigenous authorities occur with low prosecution rates, despite repeated alerts issued by state mechanisms such as the Ombudsman's Early Warning System.¹³⁶

These patterns reflect entrenched structural impunity, driven by limited state capacity to investigate and sanction crimes, as well as by geographic, cultural, and security barriers that restrict access to justice. The remoteness of judicial services, the absence of intercultural approaches, and weak coordination with Indigenous justice systems further exacerbate these gaps.

Addressing this crisis requires more than strengthening protection measures. It demands comprehensive reforms to ensure effective access to justice, including the recognition and coordination of Indigenous jurisdictions and the removal of structural barriers that sustain impunity. Without these changes, the failure to exercise due diligence will continue to enable violence, undermine accountability, and facilitate the expansion of illicit economies in Indigenous territories.

5.4. Limitations of State Protection Mechanisms

State protection mechanisms for Indigenous leaders and human rights defenders show significant structural limitations across the territories analyzed. Designed primarily around individual measures – such as bodyguards or personal security schemes – these mechanisms are insufficient to address collective and territorially rooted threats driven by criminal control.

This gap is evident in multiple contexts. In Kakataibo territory, despite early warnings and protection measures, several Indigenous leaders have been murdered amid the expansion of drug trafficking, underscoring the ineffectiveness of individual approaches. In Colombia's Putumayo region, Indigenous authorities continue to face threats, displacement, and killings in areas under strong armed group presence, while state protection remains inconsistent and reactive. Similar dynamics are observed in the Munduruku territory in Brazil and in Napo, Ecuador, where the scale of illegal mining and illicit economies exceeds the response capacity of state systems.

In response, many Indigenous Peoples have strengthened their own systems of territorial protection, including community guards, patrols, and environmental monitoring networks. These mechanisms – deeply rooted in cultural and spiritual practices – play a critical role in preventing invasions, monitoring illicit activities, and safeguarding communities.

However, these systems often lack formal legal recognition and operate under constant threat, including violence from criminal actors and, in some cases, criminalization by state authorities. This highlights the urgent need to move beyond individual protection schemes toward collective, territorially grounded approaches that recognize Indigenous governance systems as central to security and protection.

5.5. Corruption, Institutional Capture, and Criminal Infrastructure

The expansion of organized crime in the Amazon is closely tied to corruption, institutional capture, and permissive regulatory frameworks that weaken state oversight. Criminal networks have infiltrated public institutions through fraudulent permits, manipulation of land titling processes, information leaks, and, in some cases, direct involvement of state officials.



At the same time, infrastructure plays a critical enabling role. Roads, river corridors, and clandestine airstrips – particularly in border areas between Peru, Brazil, and Colombia – facilitate the movement of illicit goods, supplies, and armed actors. In many cases, these routes overlap with formal development projects, creating “dual-use” dynamics that accelerate territorial invasion and exploitation, as seen in projects such as Highway UC-105 and the Iquitos-Putumayo corridor.¹³⁷

These dynamics are reinforced by national policy and regulatory decisions. In Brazil, gold laundering schemes have been enabled by weak oversight and permissive frameworks, particularly during the administration of Jair Bolsonaro, when policies favored mining expansion, including in Indigenous territories.¹³⁸ In Venezuela, the state’s promotion of the Orinoco Mining Arc as an economic diversification strategy, in a context of weak regulation, has facilitated the presence of armed actors exercising territorial control.¹³⁹

In Peru, protracted mining formalization regimes, regulatory gaps, and permissive administrative decisions have effectively served as incentives for the expansion of illegal mining.¹⁴⁰ Likewise, recent reforms – known as “anti-forestry laws” – have relaxed controls on land use, facilitating deforestation and weakening the state’s capacity to prevent and punish crimes affecting the environment, while the so-called “pro-crime laws” hinder the investigation of organized crime.¹⁴¹

These structural conditions translate into concrete patterns of collusion. Indigenous authorities, such as those of the Wampis Autonomous Territorial Government, have reported the involvement of police in illegal mining and logging activities, even going so far as to arrest some of them.¹⁴² In Kakataibo territories, overlapping interests between criminal actors, economic actors, and state omissions have driven dispossession and deforestation.¹⁴³

Recent cases also highlight the direct involvement of former members of security forces in criminal networks, such as the arrest of a former major in the Peruvian National Police linked to an illegal mining camp with high-caliber weapons in Condorcanqui.¹⁴⁴ In Putumayo, Indigenous communities report high levels of distrust in local institutions, given that armed groups have managed to co-opt sectors, particularly

Credits: Agencia Andina.



within the security forces. Incidents such as the capture of Colonel Elkin Alfonso Argote in an official vehicle alongside alias “Gargola”,¹⁴⁵ leader of one of the armed groups – reinforce this perception.

Taken together, these patterns show that the expansion of organized crime in the Amazon is not only the result of state absence, but also of specific forms of state action and omission. Regulatory gaps, infrastructure development, and tolerance of illicit practices contribute – directly or indirectly – to the consolidation of criminal governance, undermining institutional legitimacy and Indigenous territorial rights.

5.6. Militarization and Security Responses

Recent evidence suggests that the most effective responses to illicit economies in the Amazon are those that combine law enforcement with regional cooperation and the active participation of Indigenous Peoples. Integrated approaches – linking territorial control with the dismantling of criminal networks – have shown tangible results. In Brazil’s Roraima state, for example, coordinated actions with Indigenous organizations led to a 94% reduction in illegal mining over two years, alongside the seizure of infrastructure and financial assets.¹⁴⁶

However, there has been a growing shift toward militarized and securitized approaches, often framed under narratives such as the “war on narco-terrorism.” International human rights bodies have raised concerns that equating organized crime with terrorism risks justifying disproportionate use of force and weakening human rights safeguards.¹⁴⁷ While such operations may produce short-term visibility, their long-term effectiveness remains limited: illicit economies adapt, relocate, and persist, while underlying drivers remain unaddressed.¹⁴⁸

In practice, militarization has significantly increased risks for civilian populations. Cases such as the Alto Remanso operation in Colombia’s Putumayo region – where a 2022 military intervention resulted in the deaths of civilians – illustrate these dangers.¹⁴⁹ Similarly, operations linked to the “war on drugs” have led to reports of injuries, destruction of civilian property, and the killing of an Indigenous Awá teenager during a crop eradication campaign in Villagarzon in 2020.¹⁵⁰

The situation in Ecuador is particularly concerning. In 2026, the United Nations Committee on Enforced Disappearances expressed alarm over at least 51 cases of enforced disappearance between 2024 and 2025, allegedly involving security forces in a context of intensified militarization and repeated states of emergency.¹⁵¹ Additional reports point to torture, arbitrary detention, and possible extrajudicial executions linked to security operations within the “internal armed conflict.”¹⁵²

At the same time, increased international security cooperation – such as partnerships between Ecuador and the United States – has raised further concerns. In March 2026, a bombing in San Martín (Sucumbíos), targeting a suspected armed actor, actually struck a cattle ranch affecting nearby rural communities.¹⁵³ Human rights organizations reported cases of torture, property destruction, and arbitrary detention in the aftermath, highlighting serious shortcomings in civilian protection.¹⁵⁴ In this context, President Daniel Noboa has publicly questioned these allegations, dismissing them as “ideological bias” and framing the state’s actions as necessary to address high levels of violence.¹⁵⁵

The region now faces a critical choice: to deepen multidimensional, rights-based security approaches grounded in territorial governance and participation, or to revert to predominantly militarized strategies that have historically proven costly and ineffective. Experiences such as Plan Colombia and the “war on drugs” in Mexico demonstrate the risks of the latter, including increased violence, human rights violations, and limited impact on illicit economies.

In this context, it is essential to reaffirm that any security strategy must be grounded in a collective rights approach and developed with the full, effective participation of Indigenous Peoples. Their consultation and leadership are not only legal obligations but also essential conditions for sustainable territorial governance and lasting security.



Cross-border guard at the Brazil–Peru border. Credits: Alexandre Cruz-Noronha

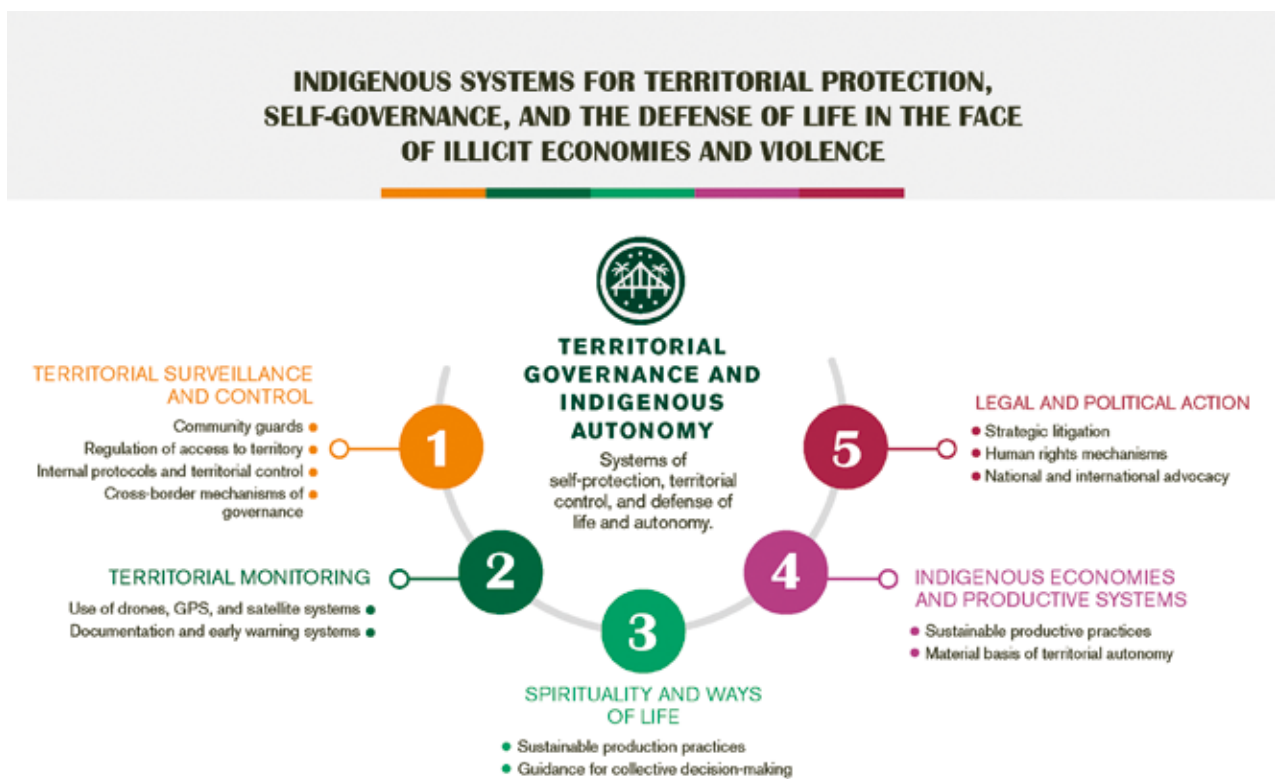


6. INDIGENOUS RESPONSES FOR TERRITORIAL PROTECTION AND SELF-GOVERNANCE

Across Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela, Indigenous Peoples are not only disproportionately affected by the expansion of illicit economies, armed conflict, and organized crime – they are also actively developing territorial responses to protect life, land, and systems of governance.

These responses are rooted in self-governance and autonomy, combining ancestral authority, customary law, territorial management systems, community-based control mechanisms, and regional organizational networks. In contexts where state presence is weak, fragmented, or primarily coercive, these systems play essential roles in social regulation, conflict prevention, territorial monitoring, and collective defense against armed actors and illicit economies.

FIGURE 4: Indigenous responses to the threats of illicit economies, criminal governance and militarized state responses



6.1. Indigenous Self-Governance and Territorial Governance

In the territories analyzed, Indigenous governance systems function as the first line of defense against the expansion of illicit economies. These systems include traditional authorities, community assemblies, collective decision-making processes, and normative frameworks that regulate access to, use of, and control over territory.

In contexts of limited state presence, these structures go beyond internal governance: they enable conflict resolution, establish rules for engagement with external actors, and coordinate collective responses to emerging threats.

In the territory of the Wampís people in Peru, strengthened self-governance has enabled the development of territorial control mechanisms to confront illegal mining and logging. These include regulating access to the territory, community surveillance, and coordinated responses to incursions. Crucially, this process is guided by a shared collective vision (*plan de vida*), which defines long-term priorities for territorial protection and community well-being. While these governance systems are grounded in international Indigenous rights standards, they still lack full legal recognition at the national level.¹⁵⁶

Similarly, in the Munduruku Indigenous Territory in Brazil, communities have advanced territorial self-demarcation processes and established Indigenous monitoring systems to resist illegal gold mining, reinforcing their own norms for territorial protection.

In the Yurúa region, along the Peru-Brazil border, Indigenous communities have assumed direct territorial control functions in response to state inaction. Actions such as the occupation of a border surveillance post reflect both the urgency of the threats – drug trafficking, illegal logging, and other illicit economies – and the capacity of Indigenous organizations to mobilize collectively.¹⁵⁷ Decision-making processes are carried out through community assemblies and coordinated by representative Indigenous organizations, ensuring legitimacy and collective ownership.

These experiences demonstrate that Indigenous self-governance systems are not only cultural or administrative structures – they are central to territorial security and resilience in the face of organized crime. However, their effectiveness remains constrained by limited legal recognition, weak coordination with state institutions, and ongoing risks of criminalization and retaliation by armed actors.



Indigenous guard in Munduruku territory. Credits: Amazon Watch



6.2. Community Actions and Systems for Territorial Protection and Control

Across the territories analyzed, Indigenous Peoples have developed increasingly robust systems of surveillance, monitoring, and territorial control in response to the expansion of illicit economies and the presence of armed actors. These systems combine community-based structures – such as Indigenous Guards – with growing use of technical tools, including satellite monitoring, mobile technologies, early warning systems, and systematic evidence collection.

In contexts of weak or absent state presence, these mechanisms often constitute the primary – if not the only – form of territorial governance and protection. They regulate access, document environmental and social impacts, and coordinate collective responses to incursions by external actors.

In the Kichwa communities of Napo (Ecuador), Indigenous organizations have established monitoring networks that document the impacts of illegal mining, generate early warnings – including on public health – and strengthen local response capacities. Similarly, in the Munduruku Indigenous Territory (Brazil), communities combine territorial patrols with systematic data collection to track the expansion of illegal mining, demonstrating increasing technical capacity to monitor and expose illicit activities.

In Peru, these systems play a strategic role. The Kakataibo people have strengthened surveillance and response mechanisms in response to drug trafficking in the Aguaytia and Pichis-Palcazú basins, while the Wampis Nation has consolidated territorial control through structures such as the *Charip* Guard, which conducts patrols and direct interventions against illegal activities.¹⁵⁸ Initiatives involving coordinated operations between state forces and Indigenous self-defense groups have also been documented in the case of Ucayali in Peru, by the Shipibo, Kakataibo, and Ashaninka peoples. However, these remain sporadic actions, and often only occur after significant advocacy by the affected communities.

Where coordination with state institutions exists, results can be significant. In Brazil, initiatives such as the Casa do Governo program in Yanomami territory illustrate the potential of integrating Indigenous monitoring systems with inter-institutional operations. Evidence from across the Amazon also shows that community-led satellite monitoring can significantly reduce deforestation when supported by institutional responses.¹⁵⁹

Taken together, these systems are not only persistent but increasingly sophisticated and strategic, constituting a central component of security in Amazonian Indigenous territories. In the case of Peru, these processes are coordinated with the Early Warning System managed by AIDSESEP. However, their effectiveness remains limited by a lack of legal recognition, weak coordination with the state, and the risks of criminalization, reinforcing the need to move toward collective protection approaches that strengthen the role of Indigenous peoples in preventing illicit economies.

6.3. Political and Legal Advocacy and Human Rights Mechanisms

In addition to territorial strategies, Indigenous Peoples resort to legal and political mechanisms to defend their territories and demand the fulfillment of their rights. In several of the cases analyzed, Indigenous organizations have initiated legal actions, filed complaints with national and international human rights bodies, and engaged in advocacy efforts aimed at raising awareness of violations, combined with pressure and mobilization campaigns, to halt illicit or extractive activities and demand effective protective measures.

In Ecuador, Indigenous organizations and social collectives have filed lawsuits against extractive projects in Napo, securing court rulings that recognize rights violations and order the suspension of mining activities.¹⁶⁰ However, the implementation of these rulings has been limited, leading organizations to supplement them with mobilization, community monitoring, and international advocacy.

Similarly, in Brazil, the Munduruku people have coordinated legal and territorial strategies to defend their territory, including self-demarcation processes and complaints filed with national authorities and international bodies in response to the advance of illegal mining. These actions reflect the combined use of legal tools and territorial control mechanisms in the face of an inadequate state response.

In the case of the Kakataibo people in Peru, Indigenous organizations have resorted to political advocacy and complaints to national and international bodies to highlight violence against territorial defenders and demand protective measures. This situation led to the adoption of precautionary measures by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, which recognize the serious and urgent risk faced by Kakataibo leaders and order the Peruvian state to adopt measures to protect their lives and physical integrity.¹⁶¹

Similarly, in the Colombian department of Putumayo, Indigenous Peoples have turned to legal actions and constitutional mechanisms – such as *tutela* – to demand the protection of their territorial, environmental, and right-to-life rights in the face of armed groups and illicit economies. Likewise, judicial bodies have recognized the situation of risk and the need to adopt collective protection measures, although their implementation faces obstacles in contexts of persistent violence and territorial control by armed groups.¹⁶²

From the border between Peru and Brazil, the Juruá/Yurúa/Alto Tamaya Cross-Border Commission has promoted advocacy efforts in defense of territorial rights and socio-biodiversity, presenting proposals to both governments. It also played a key role in the litigation that halted a road project on the Brazilian side of the border due to its severe socio-environmental impacts.¹⁶³ At the international level, during COP30 in Belém do Pará, the Commission signed a letter of intent with ACTO to strengthen Indigenous governance, information exchange, and territorial protection.¹⁶⁴

These cases demonstrate that the legal and political actions of Indigenous Peoples constitute a fundamental component of territorial defense in the Amazon. However, their effectiveness depends largely on the state's capacity to ensure compliance with judicial decisions and international measures, guarantee the protection of those who advocate for them, and fully recognize Indigenous territorial rights and autonomy.

6.4. Territorial Economies and the Material Foundations of Autonomy

Territorial protection does not depend solely on security or governance mechanisms, but also on the strengthening of Indigenous economies. Community-based production systems, such as traditional agriculture, agroforestry systems, community fishing, and other forms of local production, constitute the material basis that enables the maintenance of territorial autonomy and reduces dependence on illicit economies. A Colombian leader notes:

“These activities have been replacing our own economies, making us dependent on them. And with that, we are also losing our capacity for self-governance.”

In several Amazonian territories, the expansion of illicit economies is linked to contexts of structural poverty, lack of access to markets, and the absence of public policies that strengthen community economies. This dynamic is also observed in territories of the Kakataibo people, where the expansion of drug trafficking has overlapped with incomplete land titling processes, placing pressure on community economies and the continuity of Indigenous ways of life.



Cocoa production in Napo. Credits: Amazon Watch / Yeimy Araque Contreras

In Putumayo, the Inga people of Villagarzón have been promoting proposals for their own economies that allow them to strengthen their autonomy and the exercise of ancestral governance; their approach includes consolidation in the local market with Indigenous products from the region – particularly Amazonian fruits – for processing and use in a variety of production chains. However, state support remains scarce.

In Condorcanqui, the Wampís have promoted economic activities within the framework of the Autonomous Territorial Government and their vision of “Tarima Pujut,”¹⁶⁵ while Awajún women resist the advance of illegal mining by preserving their ceramic tradition, which sustains their cultural identity and generates income in the face of territorial degradation. Despite mercury contamination and the lack of state support, they continue to organize and denounce the impacts of this activity on their communities and livelihoods.¹⁶⁶

For this reason, Indigenous organizations have argued that strengthening sustainable territorial economies is a central condition for the protection of the territory and the continuity of their ways of life.

6.5. Inter-community Alliances and Indigenous Cooperation for Territorial Defense

In the territories analyzed, Indigenous Peoples have strengthened forms of inter-community and inter-ethnic cooperation as a strategy to counter the expansion of illicit economies and armed actors. These alliances enable the pooling of resources, the sharing of information, the coordination of surveillance



efforts, and the expansion of the territorial reach of community responses, especially in contexts where threats extend beyond the boundaries of a single territory.

In Peru, the Indigenous guards of the Kakataibo, Shipibo-Konibo, and Asháninka peoples have developed mutual support mechanisms to counter drug trafficking, illegal logging, and territorial occupation. This includes training in patrolling, GPS use, evidence collection, and early warning systems, as well as joint patrols, information sharing, and support in the face of threats. They have also strengthened their political advocacy through alliances with organizations such as ORAU and AIDSESEP.

The alliance between the Yanomami, Munduruku, and Kayapó peoples emerged in response to the advance of illegal mining, coordinating actions to highlight the invasion of their territories, mercury contamination, and its social and health impacts. Through Indigenous organizations and alliances with civil society, they launched campaigns, reports, and complaints at the national and international levels.¹⁶⁷

Within the territory, they strengthened Indigenous monitoring and surveillance through patrols, the use of drones, georeferencing, and early warning systems. These actions, along with mobilizations and political advocacy, helped pressure the Brazilian government and generate more visible interventions in affected areas, especially in Yanomami territory.

In cross-border contexts, these dynamics take on special relevance. In the Yurúa area (Peru-Brazil border), Indigenous organizations have promoted coordination spaces to address illicit economies such as drug trafficking, illegal logging, and mining. Within this framework, the Juruá/Yurúa/Alto Tamaya Cross-Border Commission emerged – a network led by Indigenous peoples from both countries aimed at defending socio-biodiversity in this Amazonian region.

Formalized in 2021, the Commission consolidates an alliance based on an integrated vision of the territory and collective action. It has organized binational meetings, conducted socio-environmental assessments, and launched advocacy initiatives with both governments, focused on territorial protection, organizational strengthening, and the defense of rights. Its actions are based on consensus decisions and are represented by Indigenous organizations such as OPIRJ and Apiwtxa (Brazil), and ORAU and Aconadiysh (Peru). Together, they have acted against the highway plans and pushed for the restoration of the Hito 38 border checkpoint – in the face of state neglect – to reactivate border control and create a Cross-Border Indigenous Guard.¹⁶⁸

6.6. Spirituality

In the face of the expansion of illicit economies and violence, spirituality is a fundamental response strategy for self-protection, care, conflict resolution, and territorial defense. These practices include ceremonies, strict diets, and rituals of alliance with the spirits of plants, animals, waterfalls, and others. They seek physical protection and protection against “spiritual harm,” while also strengthening physical, mental, and spiritual health in contexts where family, leadership, and personal spheres are deeply affected. Many of these ceremonies also aim to analyze threat scenarios and envision response strategies.

In Putumayo, the Siona perform ceremonies with the ancestral yagé plant and gather in Spiritual Thinking Mingas, which allow them to analyze territorial contexts, risks, and necessary actions, as well as engage in protective exercises against the constant threats they face due to the armed presence in their territory. Similarly, the Inga in Villagarzón have been strengthening territorial protection processes through spiritual spaces, thereby fostering complementarity between the spiritual practices of the elders and the physical actions they carry out with the *Wasikamas* (Indigenous guards).

From this perspective, the defense of the territory is inseparable from its spiritual dimension, since the territory is not conceived solely as a physical space or economic resource, but as a living being. These responses strengthen community cohesion, guide decision-making, and sustain ways of life in the face of high-pressure and violent contexts, reaffirming the autonomy and cultural continuity of Indigenous Peoples.



Spiritual ceremony. Credits: Amazon Watch.



7. CONCLUSIONS

- 1. Expansion, Convergence, and Territorial Control by Organized Crime in the Amazon** - Illicit activities such as illegal mining, drug trafficking, logging, and others function as interconnected systems that share routes, infrastructure, financing, and armed protection to supply global markets. Criminal networks have consolidated territorial control over vast areas, exercising de facto forms of governance that regulate economies, control corridors, and impose coercive mechanisms on local populations, especially in Indigenous territories.
- 2. Structural and existential impacts on Indigenous Peoples, their rights, territories, and ways of life** - Indigenous Peoples face cumulative impacts on their rights, territories, and ways of life. The expansion of these economies generates violence against leaders, pollution, health impacts, food insecurity, and the weakening of self-governance, putting their survival at risk.
- 3. There are differentiated impacts on Indigenous children and women, as well as on Peoples in Isolation or Initial Contact and Transboundary Indigenous Peoples** - There are aggravated impacts on Indigenous women, children, and adolescents, as well as on peoples in isolation or initial contact and transboundary peoples, whose contexts increase their vulnerability and the risk to their physical and cultural survival.
- 4. The predominant state responses of militarization and securitization have been counterproductive** - Strategies focused solely on militarization and short-term operations have failed to dismantle the economic and logistical structures that sustain illicit economies. On the contrary, repressive approaches have generated further pressures and impacts on Indigenous Peoples and their rights. In this context, the limitations of state action cannot be understood solely as institutional weaknesses; rather, they reflect a broader environment in which weak institutional frameworks and regulatory gaps facilitate systemic corruption and the co-optation of spaces of power by organized crime, enabling the persistence and consolidation of these economies in the territories.
- 5. Indigenous Peoples are developing their own territorial responses with a view to strengthening self-governance** - In the face of state neglect, complicity, and misguided policies, Indigenous Peoples have developed their own responses to protect themselves from these impacts. Community surveillance systems, territorial self-governance, environmental monitoring, and territorial defense networks constitute fundamental mechanisms for the protection of Amazonian territories, including cross-border coordination.
- 6. Indigenous governance as a central pillar of the solution, which must be supported, recognized, and legitimized within institutional spaces** - The protection of Indigenous territories in the face of the expansion of illicit economies faces serious practical limitations that go beyond the formal recognition of rights. In different contexts, conditions of violence, pressure from illegal actors, and institutional weaknesses hinder the effective exercise of self-governance and territorial control by Indigenous Peoples. While Indigenous governance is essential for creating alternatives to illicit economies and containing criminal governance, it requires recognition, support, funding, and coordination with State protection mechanisms.
- 7. Transnational dimension of the problem and limits of national responses** - The Amazon has become a strategic space for transnational criminal networks that operate with high mobility and adaptability, linked to global markets and cross-border dynamics. In this context, exclusively national responses are insufficient, highlighting the need to strengthen regional and international cooperation to effectively address these illicit economies.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Effective and binding participation of Indigenous Peoples** - States and the international community must ensure the effective participation of Indigenous Peoples in security policies and decisions affecting their territories, respecting the right to consultation and to free, prior, and informed consent, in accordance with the provisions of ILO Convention 169 and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Likewise, it is essential to strengthen Indigenous governments and coordination with the state so that responses to organized crime protect their territories, rights, and ways of life, without causing negative impacts.
- 2. Recognition and strengthening of Indigenous territorial governance and local economies** - Amazonian states must fully recognize Indigenous territories, their authorities, and self-governance systems in accordance with international standards, and strengthen their territorial protection mechanisms – such as Indigenous guards and monitoring systems – through appropriate regulatory frameworks, funding, and guarantees for their autonomy. Likewise, they must promote intercultural coordination with Indigenous justice systems and territorial planning, respecting their autonomy and incorporating cross-border approaches where appropriate. Finally, it is essential to prioritize the titling of territories and the strengthening of Indigenous economies before implementing eradication or alternative development initiatives.
- 3. Ensure collective protection and territorial security** - Protection strategies in Indigenous contexts must move beyond an individual approach and adopt a collective perspective on risk, strengthening community mechanisms for surveillance, monitoring, and territorial defense. This involves implementing territorial protection policies that include early warning systems, participatory environmental monitoring, and support for community structures, as well as prioritizing the titling and regularization of territories as a preventive measure. Finally, measures to protect the territories of Peoples in solation and Initial Contact should be strengthened, in coordination with the peoples and communities living within their territorial boundaries.
- 4. Ensure the protection of Indigenous women, girls, boys, and youth** - Responses to organized crime in the Amazon must incorporate an approach that recognizes the differentiated impacts on Indigenous women, girls, boys, and adolescents, who face sexual violence, trafficking, and recruitment as forms of territorial control. In this context, States must implement comprehensive prevention and protection strategies, including programs for women defenders, victim support services, the prevention of youth recruitment, and measures that safeguard community ways of life.
- 5. Security with an intercultural approach and complementarity between state systems and Indigenous self-protection, rather than militarization approaches** - It is recommended that states adopt responses to organized crime that, even when they contemplate the use of force as a necessary component of law enforcement, are governed by human rights standards and respect for the collective rights of Indigenous Peoples, ensuring consultation, coordination, and joint planning. Likewise, militarized approaches should be avoided, and priority should be given to comprehensive strategies with an intercultural approach that strengthen territorial governance, ensuring that any law enforcement action is lawful, necessary, and proportionate and minimizes negative impacts.
- 6. Regional cooperation and protection of transboundary Indigenous territories** - It is recommended to strengthen regional cooperation among Amazonian states to address the

transnational nature of organized crime, through permanent coordination mechanisms in border areas, information exchange, and joint monitoring, such as within the framework of ACTO and the Andean Community (CAN). These actions must include the participation of Indigenous authorities and respect their right to cross-border cooperation, in accordance with Article 36 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

- 7. Supply chain control and multilateral cooperation** - Addressing the convergence of organized crime and illegal extractive economies requires strengthening state due diligence, combating corruption, and improving supply chain control through traceability systems for resources such as gold and timber, as well as strengthening coordination among environmental prosecutors' offices, financial intelligence units, and agencies specializing in organized crime. At the international level, it is essential to integrate frameworks for human rights, environmental protection, and the fight against organized crime, systematically incorporating the impacts on Indigenous territories and ensuring the participation of their organizations in these processes, such as in the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC).



Kakataibo Indigenous Guard.



9. ANNEXES

International Meeting of Defenders: Indigenous Autonomies Facing Illicit Economies

Pucallpa Declaration

In Defense of Life, Territories, and the Right to Self-Determination of Indigenous Peoples

We, representatives of various organizations and Indigenous Self-Governments from Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru, gathered at the International Meeting of Defenders held in the city of Pucallpa on February 23 and 24, declare the following before our states and the international community:

We denounce that the expansion of illicit economies, organized crime, territorial dispossession, and the imposition of extractive projects seriously violate our rights, generate violence against our authorities, and weaken our self-governance structures. They impact the cultural life of our peoples, their spirituality, and their traditional ways of life. These economies are facilitated by infrastructure projects and illegal roads built without consultation with the affected peoples.

We have assessed the grave threats posed by illicit economies in our territories and conclude that self-determination, the exercise of self-government, and effective territorial control by Indigenous Peoples are the best ways to contain and reverse the environmental and humanitarian crisis facing the Amazon due to the advance of drug trafficking, mining, illegal logging, and other activities that deplete our forests.

These conditions are expressions of rights recognized in ILO Convention 169 and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, but they are not adequately implemented by all our states.

We reaffirm our decision to strengthen territorial governance, our Indigenous guards, our knowledge systems, our own justice systems, and our community-based self-protection practices. Protection must be collective, territorial, and community-centered, recognizing our authorities and without subordination.

We maintain that the response to illicit economies is the strengthening of our own Indigenous, regenerative, and sustainable economies, based on our ancestral knowledge and ways of life. We demand full legal security for our territories, fair markets for our production, and direct funding for our initiatives.

There is no autonomy without the full participation of Indigenous women. We commit to guaranteeing their leadership, eradicating all forms of violence, and strengthening their economic and political independence.

- Therefore, we demand that states and international institutions:
- They must address this emergency with genuine commitment, curbing the growing influence and corruption of illegal economies over their own executive, legislative, military, and police institutions.
- Effective respect for self-determination. All countries must recognize the territorial integrity and legal status of Indigenous peoples and their representative institutions within their states' systems of government.
- The effective participation of Indigenous peoples in the design, implementation, and evaluation of all policies regarding security, the control of illegal economies, and the promotion of projects in our territories at the national and international levels.



- The implementation of mechanisms to protect defenders with sufficient budget and operational capacity; the investigation of violations of the lives and rights of defenders; and the identification of the causes of violence to end impunity. Legal recognition must be given to our own security and justice systems. Peru and other countries that have not yet signed the Escazú Agreement must also sign it.

We call on the international community and our allies to respect our agendas, strengthen our capacities for self-governance, and support our initiatives without imposing external approaches or development projects that are alien to our interests. This includes advancing environmental policies and climate agreements that respect our self-determination.

Defending our territory is defending life.

Indigenous territorial autonomy is the best solution to the environmental and social crisis in the Amazon.

Self-determination is a prerequisite for justice and intercultural democracy.

Issued in Pucallpa, on the 24th day of February 2026.



Community visit during the Pucallpa meeting. Credits: Amazon Watch



ENDNOTES

- 1 Carrión M., Fernando. 2017. El crimen organizado en América Latina: manifestaciones, facilitadores y reacciones. Quito: FLACSO Ecuador
- 2 Science Panel for the Amazon (SPA) (2025). Informe de Evaluación de la Amazonía 2025. https://esp-ar25.sp-amazon.org/260213_SPA%20AR2025%20Full%20Report_ESP.pdf
- 3 Coordinadora de las Organizaciones Indígenas de la Cuenca Amazónica (COICA), Revista Somos COICA, agosto de 2021, <https://coicamazonia.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/RevistaSomosCoica.pdf>.
- 4 Amazon Underworld. Amazonía bajo ataque: un mapeo de la delincuencia en la selva tropical más grande del mundo. 2025. <https://amazonunderworld.org/es/amazonia-bajo-ataque-un-mapeo-de-la-delincuencia-en-la-selva-tropical-mas-grande-del-mundo/>.
- 5 Elizabeth Salazar y Geraldine Santos, Los promotores del despojo en la Amazonía peruana: Deforestación, narcotráfico e intereses empresariales se superponen en las tierras ancestrales de los últimos indígenas kakataibo (Amazon Watch, 2024), <https://informe-kakataibo.amazonwatch.org/>.
- 6 The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) defines transnational organized crime as: “the involvement of structured groups in criminal activities that take place in more than one State or whose effects extend to multiple jurisdictions.” United Nations (2004), United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols. <https://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/UNTOC/Publications/TOC%20Convention/TOCebook-s.pdf>.
- 7 Amazon Watch, InfoAmazonia, Amazon Underworld, and Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (GI-TOC), Amazon Underworld. Criminal Economies in the World’s Largest Rainforest (2023), <https://amazonwatch.org/news/2023/1121-amazon-underworld>.
- 8 Science Panel for the Amazon (SPA) (2025). Amazon Assessment Report 2025. https://esp-ar25.sp-amazon.org/260213_SPA%20AR2025%20Full%20Report_ESP.pdf
- 9 Fundação FHC & InSight Crime (2025). Latin America Connection: Overview of Organized Crime and Illicit Markets in the Amazon Biome. <https://fundacaofhc.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/conexion-america-latina-panorama-del-crimen-organizado-y-mercados-ilicitos-en-el-bioma-amazonico.pdf>
- 10 The term “narcogarimpo” was officially introduced by the Brazilian Federal Police in 2021, during Operation Narcos Gold. However, the link between drug trafficking and illegal mining had already been documented since the 1990s.
- 11 Risk Assessment Framework for Organized Crime and Corruption Exposure in Mineral Supply Chains (2025).
- 12 Foundation for Conservation and Sustainable Development (2024). Toward the Resilience of Drug Trafficking and Illegal Mining Logistics Chains? The Role of Five Road Projects in the Peruvian Amazon. FCDS Peru. https://fcds.org.pe/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/INFORME_VIAS_FRONTERAS_061224.pdf
- 13 Amazon Watch et al., Amazon Underworld. Criminal Economies in the Amazon.
- 14 Amazon Watch and Amazon Underworld (2025). In the Shadows of the State: Organized Crime, Illegal Economies, and Violence Against Indigenous Peoples in the Amazon. <https://amazonwatch.org/assets/files/2025-en-las-sombras-del-estado.pdf>
- 15 Castro, A., Hurtado, J., Arroyo, M. B., Caicedo, J., Chitiva, M. J., Lopes, P., Abbud, B., & Pérez, A. (2025). The Amazon Under Siege: Drug Trafficking Dominates 72% of the Borders Between Peru, Colombia, Brazil, and Ecuador. Ojo Público.
- 16 EcoCiencia Foundation, MAAP #184: Expansion of Mining Activity in the Province of Napo, Ecuador,

2024. <https://ecociencia.org/maap-184-avance-de-la-actividad-minera-en-la-provincia-de-napo-ecuador/>
- 17 Intercambios Asociación Civil, Latin America: Debates on Drugs, n.d. <https://www.intercambios.org.ar/assets/files/America-Latinadebatesobredrogas.pdf>
- 18 Durán-Martínez, A. (2019). Organized crime and criminal governance in Latin America. *Journal of International Studies*, 51(192), 9-33. <https://www.scielo.cl/pdf/rei/v51n192/0719-3769-rei-51-192-00009.pdf>
- 19 Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime. (2025). Environmental crimes in the Amazon: Current trends and rising threats. GI-TOC. <https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/Environmental-crimes-in-the-Amazon-Current-trends-and-rising-threats-GI-TOC-November-2025.pdf>
- 20 According to widely used criteria, such as those of the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), an armed conflict is defined by the existence of at least 25 annual combat-related deaths between organized actors, one of which must be the state. However, these criteria are limited in capturing the complexity of violence in the Amazon. Although some regions exhibit levels of violence comparable to war zones in terms of homicides, they are not classified as such because the violence is attributed to illicit economies and criminal networks rather than formal political conflicts. This distinction is not only analytically restrictive but also contributes to rendering invisible forms of armed control, criminal governance, and territorial disputes that have equivalent—or even more persistent—effects on local populations. See: Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset, Uppsala University, <https://ucdp.uu.se/>.
- 21 Ecuadorian Observatory on Organized Crime (OECO). Report on the Characterization of Organized Crime in Ecuador. PADF, 2026. <https://oeco.padf.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/Informe-de-caracterizacion-del-Crimen-organizado-Version-Web-sin-creditos.pdf>
- 22 Note: The figures presented in this report are drawn from various official sources, international organizations, and civil society records. Given the methodological differences between countries—
- including variations in recording systems, underreporting, and classifications of violence—the data should be interpreted as approximations that allow for the identification of regional trends, rather than as strictly comparable figures across countries. Sources: Ecuadorian Observatory on Organized Crime (OECO) (2026). *Report on the Characterization of Organized Crime in Ecuador*; Infobae (July 26, 2025). “Homicides Decline in Brazil, but Rapes and Cybercrimes Increase.” <https://www.infobae.com/america/america-latina/2025/07/26/en-brasil-disminuyen-los-homicidios-pero-aumentan-las-violaciones-y-los-delitos-ciberneticos/>; Vargas Rueda, Sebastián. “Citing homicide figures in Colombia for 2025, María Fernanda Cabal lashed out at Petro’s ‘government of life’: ‘Massacres and kidnappings every day.’” *Infobae* (February 27, 2026). <https://www.infobae.com/colombia/2026/02/27/based-on-homicide-figures-in-colombia-during-2025-maria-fernanda-cabal-lashed-out-against-petro-s-government-of-life-massacres-and-kidnappings-every-day/>; Venezuelan Observatory on Violence (2024). *Bolívar was the fourth most violent state in the country in 2024*; Peruvian Ministry of the Interior (2025). *Evolution of the homicide rate and public safety indicators 2022–2025*.
- 23 “Federal government intensifies fight against illegal mining in the Munduruku Indigenous Territory.” Agência Gov (EBC) (2024). <https://agenciagov.ebc.com.br/noticias/202412/governo-federal-intensifica-combate-ao-garimpo-ilegal-na-terra-indigena-munduruku>.
- 24 Mongabay Brasil (2024). “Federal government begins removing illegal miners from Munduruku lands.” <https://brasil.mongabay.com/2024/11/governo-federal-comeca-retirar-garimpeiros-ilegais-das-terras-munduruku/>.
- 25 Intersecção (2025). Forest in Dust: Connections Between Drug Trafficking and Illegal Mining in the Amazon. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/67066f2ebf7a0922d6d337d3/t/6926152567d22e37d3c5d36b/1764103461187/20251124_ES_Intersecc%CC%A7a%CC%83o-FlorestaEmPo%CC%81_v5-compressed.pdf
- 26 Federal Public Prosecutor’s Office (MPF). Letter from the Munduruku people against illegal mining on their territory (2020). <https://www.mpf.mp.br/pa/sala-de-imprensa/documentos/2020/carta-munduruku.pdf>

- 27 Amazon Watch (2022). Complicity in Destruction IV: Blood Gold. <https://amazonwatch.org/assets/files/2022-complicity-in-destruction-v-blood-gold.pdf>
- 28 Government of Brazil, National Indigenous Peoples Foundation (FUNAI) (2025). Federal government completes first phase of eviction from the Munduruku Indigenous Territory, resulting in a loss of R\$ 112.3 million for the mining industry. <https://www.gov.br/funai/pt-br/assuntos/noticias/2025/governo-federal-conclui-primeira-fase-da-desintrusao-na-ti-munduruku-com-prejuizo-de-r-112-3-milhoes-ao-garimpo>
- 29 National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE). Sociodemographic Profile of the Department of Putumayo. Bogotá: DANE, n.d. https://sitios.dane.gov.co/cnpv/app/views/informacion/perfiles/86_infografia.pdf.
- 30 Rural Agricultural Planning Unit (UPRA). Regional document: Putumayo (Bogotá: UPRA, n.d.). https://upra.gov.co/Kit_Territorial/2-%20Información%20por%20Departamentos/PUTUMAYO/2-%20Documento%20Regional%20UPRA%20Putumayo.pdf.
- 31 Copper Giant. (n.d.). Copper Giant. <https://www.copperglass.com/>
- 32 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) - Integrated Illicit Crop Monitoring System (SIMCI), Monitoring of Territories with Coca Cultivation 2023 (Bogotá: UNODC-SIMCI, 2025).
- 33 Who are the Border Commands, a splinter group of the FARC, and where are they located? El Espectador, Colombia+20 / Peace and Memory section, n.d. <https://www.elespectador.com/colombia-20/paz-y-memoria/quienes-son-y-donde-están-ubicados-comandos-de-frontera-disidencia-de-farc-paz-total/>.
- 34 Amazon Watch and Amazon Underworld. In the Shadows of the State.
- 35 Ministry of Environment, Water, and Ecological Transition. "Llanganates National Park." <https://www.ambiente.gob.ec/16764/>
- 36 Telemazonas. "Machinery seized in Napo causes millions in losses at the Federal Compound." <https://www.telemazonas.com/actualidad/reportajes-24horas/maquinaria-incautada-napo-genera-millonarias-perdidas-recinto-ferial-109419/>
- 37 <https://www.radioselva.com.ec/2025/12/14/napo-vuelve-a-ser-corredor-del-narcotrafico-incautan-mas-de-300-mil-gramos-de-cocaina-en-carretera-amazonica/> and <https://www.vistazo.com/actualidad/nacional/incautan-mas-de-media-tonelada-de-marihuana-en-napo-los-paquetes-estaban-ocultos-dentro-de-brazos-de-una-retroexcavadora-KK7729927>.
- 38 Supreme Decree No. 015-2021-MC
- 39 National Commission for Development and Life without Drugs (DEVIDA) & United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) (2014). Area under coca bush cultivation monitored in 2023. <https://cdn.www.gob.pe/uploads/document/file/6447242/5639121-superficie-cultivada-con-arbusto-de-hoja-de-coca-monitoreada-en-2023.pdf>
- 40 Anti-Drug Directorate of the Peruvian National Police (DIRANDRO). <https://dirandro.policia.gob.pe/>.
- 41 InfoAmazonia (August 17, 2023). "Brazilian Drug Gang Takes Root in Peruvian Amazon," <https://infoamazonia.org/en/2023/08/17/brazilian-drug-gang-takes-root-in-peruvian-amazon/>
- 42 Goretí, M. and Tuesta, P. (January 16, 2025). The Charip and the Wampís People's Struggle Against Illegal Mining on the Peru-Ecuador Border. Convoca. <https://convoca.pe/investigacion/los-charip-y-la-lucha-del-pueblo-Wampís-contra-la-mineria-ilegal-en-la-frontera-entre>
- 43 Apolima, Arara, Asháninka, Huni Kuin/Kaxinawá, Katukina, Kuntanawa, Puyanawa, Yaminahua/Jaminawa, Yanasha, Ashéninka, Amahuaca, Chitonahua, Sharanawa, Nawa, and Nukini peoples.
- 44 Aideseo Ucayali Regional Organization (ORAU) and ProPurus Association (2025). The Situation of Indigenous Defenders 2024.
- 45 2016 Mining Arc Decree.
- 46 Amazon Underworld (November 6, 2025). "Invasion, Violence, and Looting in Southern Venezuela: The Price of Global Defense and 'Clean Technology'" <https://amazonunderworld.org/es/invasion-violencia-y-saqueo-en-el-sur-de-venezuela-el-precio-de-la-defensa-global-y-la-tecnologia-limpia/>
- 47 Amazon Underworld (2025). "The Blue Gold Rush." <https://amazonunderworld.org/la-fiebre-del-oro-azul/>

- 48 A regional event held in February 2026 in the Peruvian Amazon, which brought together more than 60 Indigenous leaders from Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru to analyze the expansion of criminal networks, their links to extractive economies, and the impacts on Indigenous territorial autonomy. See: “When Criminal Networks Invade the Amazon, Indigenous Autonomy Resists.” <https://amazonwatch.org/news/2026/0304-when-criminal-networks-invade-the-amazon-Indigenous-autonomy-resists>
- 49 Amazon Watch and Amazon Underworld (2025). *In the Shadows of the State: Organized Crime and Illicit Economies in Indigenous Territories of the Amazon*. <https://amazonwatch.org/assets/files/2025-en-las-sombras-del-estado.pdf>
- 50 Mongabay Latam (2024). “The Illegal Roads Exposing the Kakataibo People to Drug Trafficking Violence.” <https://es.mongabay.com/2024/11/las-pistas-ilegales-que-exponen-al-pueblo-kakataibo-a-la-violencia-del-narcotrafico/>
- 51 <https://amazonwatch.org/news/2024/1219-the-kakataibos-fight-for-survival-against-corruption-and-amazon-crime>
- 52 Caretas (2024). “Illegal Mining Threatens the Ancestral Territory of the Wampis” <https://caretas.pe/medio-ambiente/mineria-ilegal-atenta-contr-el-territorio-ancestral-de-los-wampis/>.
- 53 Inforegión (2023). “Wampis Nation Rejects Abuses by Mining and Logging Companies.” <https://inforegion.pe/nacion-wampis-rechaza-impactos-y-abusos-de-empresas-mineras-y-madereras-2/> and, Bedia Prado, Javier (2025). “Peruvian Amazon: Wampis peoples threatened by state-owned oil company and informal mining.” <https://avispa.org/es/amazonia-peruana-pueblo-wampis-amenazado-por-petrolera-estatal-y-mineria-informal/>.
- 54 Aideseo Ucayali Regional Organization (ORAU) and ProPurus Association (2025). *Situation of Indigenous Defenders 2024*.
- 55 During the first half of 2024, civil society organizations reported the displacement of thousands of Indigenous people, including approximately 8,000 from the Emberá people, 1,200 Kogui, 371 Nasa, and 258 Awá, which highlights the sustained pressure on collective territories. CODHES (Consultancy for Human Rights and Displacement) (2024). *Humanitarian Situation in Colombia: January–June 2024*. CODHES Report No. 115. SISDHES.
- 56 OCHA (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs). *Colombia: Putumayo Departmental Briefing January–December 2024*.
- 57 Survival International (2025). *Uncontacted Indigenous Peoples: at the Edge of Survival* <https://www.survivalinternational.org/documents/UIPR>.
- 58 Yvette Sierra Praeli (2019). “Indigenous Peoples in Isolation: First Regional Report Offers an Overview of Seven South American Countries.” <https://es.mongabay.com/2019/11/piaci-indigenas-en-aislamiento-informe-regional-sudamerica/>
- 59 Survival International (2025). *Uncontacted Indigenous Peoples: at the Edge of Survival*. <https://www.survivalinternational.org/documents/UIPR>.
- 60 Mongabay Latam (November 11, 2024). “Illegal roads that expose the Kakataibo people to drug trafficking violence,” <https://es.mongabay.com/2024/11/las-pistas-ilegales-que-exponen-al-pueblo-kakataibo-a-la-violencia-del-narcotrafico/>
- 61 Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) (2026). “IACHR grants precautionary measures in favor of Indigenous peoples in Peru due to risks associated with illegal economies and violence.” Press release. <https://www.oas.org/es/CIDH/jsForm/?File=/es/cidh/prensa/comunicados/2026/034.asp>.
- 62 Global Witness database. <https://globalwitness.org/es/campaigns/land-and-environmental-defenders/datos-sobre-ataques-contr-personas-defensoras-desde-2012/>
- 63 Science Panel for the Amazon (SPA) (2025). *Amazon Assessment Report 2025*.
- 64 Global Witness (2025). *Defenders of the Earth: Global killings of land and environmental defenders in 2024*. https://gw.hacdn.io/media/documents/Defenders_Annual_Report_2025_online_EN.pdf
- 65 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Colombia (March 2026). *Thematic Report, Situation of Human Rights Defenders in Colombia (2022–2025)*.
- 66 Amazon Watch (2025). *Kakataibo: Indigenous Peoples Threatened by Drug Trafficking and*

- Impunity in the Peruvian Amazon. <https://informe-kakataibo.amazonwatch.org/en/>
- 67 Native Federation of Cacataibo Communities (FENACOKA) (June 21, 2024). "Statement on the Disappearance of Kakataibo Indigenous Leader Mariano Mucama Isacama Felciano," Facebook post. https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=782458390747418&id=100069497919723
- 68 ORAU and ProPurus (2015). Situation of Human Rights Defenders in Ucayali 2024.
- 69 Peruvian Judiciary (2024). "Saweto Case: 28-year and 3-month prison sentence upheld against loggers for the murder of four Indigenous leaders" <https://www.gob.pe/institucion/csjucayali/noticias/1233988-caso-saweto-ratifican-condena-de-28-anos-y-3-meses-de-prision-contra-madereros-por-asesinato-de-cuatro-lideres-indigenas>
- 70 Human Rights Council, Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, UN Doc. A/HRC/51/CRP.2 (September 20, 2022), para. 24.
- 71 Amazon Watch, In the Shadow of the State.
- 72 According to figures from FENACOKA. The prefecture is a decentralized body of the General Directorate of Internal Government (DGIN) of the Ministry of the Interior; it performs functions that contribute to internal order, public order, governance, and social peace.
- 73 https://larepublica.pe/sociedad/2025/10/29/yurua-la-comunidad-indigena-que-defiende-el-bosque-de-las-garras-del-narcotrafico-amazonia-hnews-2561918?utm_source=chatgpt.com
- 74 GTANW (November 25, 2020). Wampis from Santiago confiscate illegally harvested timber and await the arrival of authorities to prevent clashes. <https://nacionWampis.com/Wampis-del-santiago-confiscan-madera-extraida-ilegalmente-y-esperan-presencia-de-autoridades-para-evitar-enfrentamientos/>
- 75 Mendoza, L. (August 8, 2024). An Indigenous Nation's Efforts at Self-Defense Against Illegal Mining. Sacred Amazonian Watersheds. <https://cuencasagradas.org/esfuerzos-de-una-nacion-indigena-por-la-autodefensa-frente-a-la-mineria/>
- 76 Sumaúma (2023). "The Munduruku Who Are Beginning to Settle the World." <https://sumauma.com/es/a-munduruku-que-comeca-a-aldear-o-mundo/>.
- 77 Amazon Watch (2021). "Illegal gold miners attack and burn a Munduruku village in the Brazilian Amazon." <https://amazonwatch.org/es/news/2021/0526-illegal-gold-miners-attack-and-burn-munduruku-village-in-the-brazilian-amazon>.
- 78 UN Women (2021). "Attack on the Munduruku Women's Association in Brazil." <https://lac.unwomen.org/es/noticias-y-eventos/articulos/2021/04/press-release---ataque-asociacion-de-mujeres-munduruku-brasil>.
- 79 For example: Swissinfo (2024). Gold divides the Indigenous people of the Munduruku Land in the Amazon. <https://www.swissinfo.ch/>
- 80 Mongabay Latam (2025). "Mercury Pollution: The Serious Effects of Illegal Mining in Latin America." <https://es.mongabay.com/2025/07/contaminacion-mercurio-graves-efectos-mineria-ilegal-america-latina/>
- 81 In Brazil, studies in the territories of the Munduruku people in the Tapajós basin show elevated mercury levels in the Indigenous population and in fish regularly consumed by the communities; in the Sawré Muybu Indigenous Territory, 57.9% of those tested had levels above what is considered safe. Pan-Amazonian Ecclesial Network (REPAM Brazil), Indigenous Missionary Council (CIMI) & Pro-Indian Commission of São Paulo. (2021). The Gold Rush: Illegal Mining, Indigenous Peoples, and Protected Areas in the Brazilian Amazon. <https://emdefesadosterritorios.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Livro-O-cerco-do-ouro-150dpi.pdf>
- 82 In Ecuador, studies conducted on tributaries of the Napo River have identified concentrations of heavy metals—including cadmium, aluminum, iron, copper, zinc, nickel, and lead—up to 500 times higher than regulatory limits, resulting from sedimentation and discharges associated with mining activity. Federation of Indigenous Organizations of Napo (FOIN). Letter to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Dr. Albert K. Barume. New York, April 21, 2025.
- 83 RPP (2024). "Loreto: Mass Fish Deaths Reported Due to Alleged Pollution of the Napo River." <https://rpp.pe/peru/loreto/loreto-denuncian-muerte-masiva-de-peces-por-presunta-contaminacion-del-rio-napo-noticia-1526804>

- 84 La República (2025). "Illegal mining takes hold in the Nanay and pollutes its communities." <https://larepublica.pe/sociedad/2025/10/25/mineria-ilegal-se-impone-en-el-nanay-y-contamina-a-sus-comunidades-ntpe-2277432>; and REPAM (2025). "Peru: Study Reveals High Mercury Levels in the Nanay and Pintuyacu Rivers in the Peruvian Amazon." <https://www.repam.net/es/peru-estudio-revela-los-altos-niveles-de-mercurio-en-la-poblacion-de-los-rios-nanay-y-pintuyacu-en-la-amazonia-peruana/>
- 85 Correo del Caroní (2022). Malaria, the epidemic that mining spread throughout Venezuela in a decade. <https://especiales.correodelcaroni.com/malaria-la-epidemia-que-la-mineria-extendio-a-toda-venezuela-en-una-decada/>
- 86 Paredes Tamayo, Iván (May 5, 2025). Colombia: The Constitutional Court ordered the protection of 30 Amazonian communities suffering from mercury contamination. Mongabay Latam. <https://es.mongabay.com/2025/05/colombia-corte-constitucional-ordeno-proteccion-pueblos-amazonicos-contaminacion-mercurio/>
- 87 MAAP (Monitoring of the Andean Amazon Project). Illegal Mining in the Colombian Amazon. Amazon Conservation / MAAP. <https://www.maaprogram.org/es/mineria-ilegal-amazonia-colombiana/>
- 88 Human Rights Watch (February 4, 2020). "Venezuela: Violent Abuses at Illegal Gold Mines." <https://www.hrw.org/es/news/2020/02/04/venezuela-violentos-abusos-en-minas-de-oro-ilegales>. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Venezuela: Report on the Human Rights Situation in the Orinoco Mining Arc." 2020, <https://www.ohchr.org/es/2020/07/venezuela-un-releases-report-criminal-control-mining-area-and-wider-justice-issues>
- 89 The Ombudsman's Office documented 558 cases of recruitment of children and adolescents in 2025, of which 48% involved Indigenous people. Ombudsman's Office of Colombia. "Recruitment in Colombia during the first half of 2025." Bogotá: Ombudsman's Office, 2025. <https://www.defensoria.gov.co/-/reclutamiento-en-colombia-durante-el-primer-semestre-de-2025>
- 90 Human Rights Watch (December 5, 2025). "Colombia: Armed Groups Subjugate Communities in Putumayo." <https://www.hrw.org/es/news/2025/12/05/colombia-los-grupos-armados-someten-a-las-comunidades-en-putumayo>
- 91 Protected testimony, interview conducted by journalist Jeanneth Valdivieso in February 2025.
- 92 Human Rights Watch. World Report 2026: Ecuador. <https://www.hrw.org/es/world-report/2026/country-chapters/ecuador>
- 93 Inforegión (February 17, 2025). Illegal Mining on the Santiago River: Wampís Children Reportedly Used as "Human Shields." https://inforegion.pe/mineria-ilegal-en-el-rio-santiago-denuncian-uso-de-ninos-Wampís-como-escudos-humanos/?fbclid=IwY2xjawlgkBXleHRuA2FibQIxMAABHXUGX1d3qRKRJgeQGOjOPW-NNysINTPnDRuyiTuf9YtJU1xjXEn57CRE1Rg_aem_akaM264lv0ANolqNvAvMJg
- 94 GTANW (February 16, 2025). Urgent! Illegal miners use Wampís children as human shields on the Santiago River. <https://nacionWampís.com/urgente-mineros-ilegales-usan-ninos-Wampís-como-escudos-humanos-en-el-rio-santiago/>
- 95 Cross-Border Assessment, 2022. Available at: https://www.ctperubrasil.org/s/Jurua_Diagnostic_spanish-1.pdf
- 96 United Nations Human Rights Council (2020). Human Rights Council Resolution 45/20: Human rights situation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. <https://docs.un.org/es/A/HRC/RES/45/20>
- 97 Human Rights Center - Andrés Bello Catholic University (2024). Forms of modern slavery and their impact on the enjoyment of human rights. <https://ln5.sync.com/dl/6773cd510/encrypn-uwixiq2-wg3ffvzq-ddv8f5gr/view/doc/8469221460014>
- 98 EFE (2023). University reports increase in labor and sexual exploitation in Venezuela's mining region. <https://www.swissinfo.ch/spa/universidad-denuncia-aumento-de-explotaci%C3%B3n-laboral-sexual-en-zona-minera-de-venezuela/48874614>
- 99 BBC News Brazil (2023). "Gold mining in the Amazon exposes women to exploitation, violence, and degrading conditions." <https://www.bbc.com/portuguese/articles/c3degjdzgx0o>
- 100 Ibid.
- 101 RAISG (2023). The Amazon suffered a loss of forest nearly as large as the size of Colombia, reveals MapBiomass analysis. Amazonian

- Network for Georeferenced Socio-Environmental Information. <https://www.raisg.org/en/radar/la-amazonia-sufrio-una-perdida-de-bosques-casi-tan-grande-como-el-tamano-de-colombia-revela-analisis-de-mapbiomas/>
- 102 Mongabay (2025). Mining has destroyed Amazonian forests equivalent to the size of El Salvador. <https://es.mongabay.com/2025/05/mineria-acabo-bosques-amazonicos-equivalente-extension-el-salvador/>
- 103 Socio-Environmental Institute (ISA) (2022). Illegal gold mining in the Mundurucu Indigenous Territory. Socio-Environmental Institute. https://acervo.socioambiental.org/sites/default/files/documents/c3d00074_0.pdf
- 104 MAAP (March 2024). “Illegal Mining in Napo: New Impact Analysis.” Monitoring of the Andean Amazon Project (MAAP). <https://www.maaprogram.org/es/mineria-napo-ecuador-2>.
- 105 Transparencia Venezuela, Correo del Caroní, and Runrunes (2022). An Environmental Scandal Called Arco Minero. <https://alianza.shorthandstories.com/trapiche-ambiental-llamado-arco-minero/index.html>
- 106 Global Forest Watch (2024). Global Forest Watch. World Resources Institute. <https://www.globalforestwatch.org/>
- 107 Item 5 of the Declaration. Declaration of the 10th Binational Meeting of the Juruá-Yurúa-Alto Tamaya Cross-Border Commission—March
- 108 Transparencia Venezuela, Correo del Caroní, and Runrunes (2022).
- 109 Ibid.
- 110 Provita. Land cover and land use in the Venezuelan Amazon 2000–2020. https://www.provita.org.ve/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Provita_Cobertura-y-uso-de-la-tierra-en-la-Amazonia-venezolana-2000-2020.pdf
- 111 Hoetmer, Raphael, and Jarrín Hidalgo, Sofia (2025). “The fight against climate change is also a fight against organized crime.” <https://www.openglobalrights.org/the-fight-against-climate-change-is-also-a-fight-against-organized-crime/>
- 112 Constitutional Court 2009. Order 004/09, Presiding Judge Manuel José Cepeda Espinosa.
- 113 One example is that of the Quillacinga, Curiquinga, and Piñuña oil fields, located in the municipality of Puerto Asís, Putumayo. In this case, the Colombia Energy Consortium proceeded with oil exploration and exploitation activities without conducting prior consultation processes, after the Ministry of the Interior certified that there were no Indigenous communities in the area of influence. Subsequently, in 2018, the Constitutional Court recognized the presence of four Awá communities, as well as Nasa and Inga communities, in the area, highlighting institutional failures in identifying affected communities and effectively guaranteeing their rights to participation. In response to these situations, Indigenous communities and local organizations have repeatedly filed petitions and complaints with environmental authorities in municipalities such as Mocoa, Puerto Asís, Orito, and Villagarzón to demand respect for their rights in the face of hydrocarbon sector projects.
- 114 Human Rights Watch (December 5, 2025). “Colombia: Armed Groups Subjugate Communities in Putumayo.” <https://www.hrw.org/es/news/2025/12/05/colombia-los-grupos-armados-someten-a-las-comunidades-en-putumayo>
- 115 An audit by the Office of the Comptroller General determined that, between 2015 and 2017, several concessions were granted under repealed regulations and without complying with technical or environmental standards. MAAP (March 2024). “Illegal Mining in Napo: New Impact Analysis.” Monitoring of the Andean Amazon Project (MAAP). <https://www.maaprogram.org/es/mineria-napo-ecuador-2>.
- 116 Infobae (December 2024). Ecuadorian government rules out building prison in Archidona after twelve days of protests. <https://www.infobae.com/america/america-latina/2024/12/17/gobierno-de-ecuador-descarta-construir-la-carcel-en-archidona-tras-doce-dias-de-protestas/>
- 117 APIB (Articulation of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil) (February 24, 2026). “10 Risks of the STF’s Decision on Mining Regulations on Indigenous Lands.” <https://apiboficial.org/2026/02/24/10-riscos-da-decisao-do-stf-sobre-a-regulamentacao-da-mineracao-em-terras-indigenas/>
- 118 Sierra Praeli, Yvette (2025). “Indigenous peoples of Peru and Brazil unite to protest against highway construction, logging concessions, and illegal activities.” <https://es.mongabay.com/2025/07/>

pueblos-indigenas-peru-brasil-rechazan-construccion-carretera-concesiones-forestales-actividades-ilegales/

gustavo-galvao-fiscal-de-tabatinga-los-delitos-ambientales-en-la-triple-frontera-entre-brasil-peru-y-colombia-no-están-siendo-castigados.html.

- 119 Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) (February 28, 2026). IACHR Presents Resolution on Organized Crime and Human Rights in the Americas, Press Release No. 037/26.
- 120 Government of Brazil (2024). The federal government intensifies the fight against illegal mining in the Munduruku Indigenous territory. <https://www.gov.br/secom/es/ultimas-noticias/2024/12/el-gobierno-federal-intensifica-la-lucha-contra-la-mineria-ilegal-en-el-territorio-indigena-munduruku>
- 121 Government of Brazil (2025). The Government marks its first anniversary with a historic reduction in illegal mining in the Yanomami Indigenous territory. <https://www.gov.br/secom/es/ultimas-noticias/2025/03/la-casa-de-gobierno-cumple-1-ano-con-una-reduccion-historica-de-la-mineria-ilegal-en-el-territorio-indigena-yanomami>
- 122 Mongabay Latam (2023). Advocates question military operation against illegal mining in Ecuador. <https://es.mongabay.com/2023/05/defensores-cuestionan-operativo-militar-contra-mineria-ilegal-ecuador/>
- 123 Reaño, Guillermo (2019). "Illegal Mining in Madre de Dios: Operation Mercury 2019, the Dance of the Missing." <https://www.actualidadambiental.pe/mineria-ilegal-en-madre-de-dios-operacion-mercurio-2019-el-baile-de-los-que-faltan/>
- 124 BBC News (2024). "Brazil and Colombia Drastically Reduce Deforestation Rates." <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/articles/c6pjynrm764o>
- 125 El Comercio (2025). "Operation carried out in nine provinces of Ecuador, with actions reaching the Border Commands." <https://www.elcomercio.com/actualidad/seguridad/operativo-comandos-frontera-nueve-provincias/>
- 126 Convoca.pe, "Illegal Mining: MEF Cuts Funding for the Prosecutor's Office to Combat Illegal Activity," November 18, 2025, <https://convoca.pe/agenda-propia/mineria-ilegal-mef-deja-sin-presupuesto-la-fiscalia-para-enfrentar-actividad-ilicita>; and: El País, "Gustavo Galvão, Tabatinga prosecutor: 'Environmental crimes in the triple border region are not being punished,'" September 27, 2024, <https://elpais.com/america-futura/2024-09-27/>
- 127 Ojo Público, "Prosecutor Álvaro Rodas: 'Congressional laws weaken the fight against organized crime,'" May 25, 2025, <https://ojo-publico.com/entrevistas/rodas-leyes-del-congreso-debilitan-lucha-contra-crimen-organizado>.
- 128 Infobae (2025). "Multinational operation in the Amazon against illegal mining: 94 arrested and \$64 million in assets seized." <https://www.infobae.com/peru/2025/07/10/operativo-multinacional-en-la-amazonia-contra-la-mineria-ilegal-94-detenidos-y-usd-64-millones-en-bienes-incautados/>
- 129 Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO). Amazonian countries strengthen cooperation on public security and establish an agenda for the protection of the biome and its populations. <https://otca.org/paises-amazonicos-fortalecen-cooperacion-en-seguridad-publica-y-establecen-una-agenda-para-la-proteccion-del-bioma-y-sus-poblaciones/>
- 130 Swissinfo. Brazil inaugurates a police cooperation center for Amazonian countries. In this context, the main challenge is to consolidate more sustainable and effective governance that integrates regional cooperation, state presence, financial oversight, and the active participation of communities, especially Indigenous peoples.
- 131 La República (November 2, 2025). "Ucayali: Indigenous Guard Established to Combat Organized Crime and Drug Trafficking." <https://larepublica.pe/sociedad/2025/11/02/ucayali-instalan-la-guardia-indigena-para-enfrentar-al-crimen-organizado-narcotrafico-hnews-52006>
- 132 International Crisis Group, Gold and Grief in Venezuela's Violent South (2019), which documents that the creation of the Orinoco Mining Arc in 2016 constituted a state policy aimed at promoting gold mining in a context characterized by weak regulation and coexistence with armed groups; Likewise, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Gold Flows from Venezuela: Supporting Due Diligence (2021), which notes that this public policy opened up vast areas of the country's south to gold mining, contributing to the expansion of mining activity—including informal and illicit channels—in settings where state control is limited.

- 133 Ojo Público. Indigenous guards increase in the Amazon in the face of criminal encroachment. <https://ojo-publico.com/5683/guardias-indigenas-umentan-la-amazonia-ante-el-avance-criminal>
- 134 Open Democracy. The Munduruku struggle highlights the perversity of the system in Brazil. <https://www.opendemocracy.net/es/lucha-munduruku-evidencia-perversidad-sistema-brasil/>
- 135 Distintas Latitudes. The Peruvian Kakataibo people's defense against drug trafficking. <https://distintaslatitudes.net/destacado/la-defensa-de-los-kakataibos-peruanos-contra-el-narcotrafico>
- 136 Ombudsman's Office (Colombia). Early Warning System. <https://alertastempranas.defensoria.gov.co/>
- 137 Sierra Praeli, Yvette (2025). "Indigenous Peoples of Peru and Brazil Unite to Protest Against Highway Construction, Forest Concessions, and Illegal Activities." <https://es.mongabay.com/2025/07/pueblos-indigenas-peru-brasil-rechazan-construccion-carretera-concesiones-forestales-actividades-ilegales/>. Apiwtxa, The illegal road "Nueva Italia - Puerto Breu" A threat to the Indigenous Peoples of the Yurua, Upper Tamaya, and Upper Jurua in the Amazon Rainforest. <https://www.ctperubrasil.org/s/Illegal-Road-Nueva-I-Ucayali-Peru.pdf>. At recent meetings in Leticia and Cruceiro do Sul, both roads were once again denounced for the danger they pose in facilitating the expansion of illicit economies and deforestation.
- 138 Human Rights Watch, Rainforest Mafias: How Violence and Impunity Fuel Deforestation in Brazil's Amazon (2019); Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Gold Flows from Venezuela: Supporting Due Diligence (2021), for a regional analysis of gold laundering; and RAISG, reports on illegal mining in the Amazon (2020–2023), which document the use of formal mechanisms to launder gold, against a backdrop of weakened environmental oversight during the administration of Jair Bolsonaro.
- 139 International Crisis Group, Venezuela's Mining Arc: A Legal Veneer for Armed Groups' Plunder, June 8, 2019, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/latin-america-caribbean/venezuela/venezuelas-mining-arc-legal-veneer-armed-groups-plunder>.
- 140 See Human Rights Watch (2025). "Congress in Cahoots: How Peru's Legislature Is Allowing Organized Crime to Thrive," which documents how regulatory weaknesses and legislative decisions have facilitated the expansion of illegal mining and other criminal economies in the Amazon; as well as World Report 2024: Peru, which notes that groups linked to illegal mining, logging, and drug trafficking continue to threaten Indigenous communities and environmental defenders amid a limited state response.
- 141 Peruvian Society for Environmental Law (SPDA) (2024). Legal opinion analyzing initiatives seeking to repeal Law 31973, the Law Amending the Forestry and Wildlife Law (Law 29763), and: Human Rights Watch, "Congress in Cahoots: How Peru's Legislature is Allowing Organized Crime to Thrive," July 8, 2025, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2025/07/08/congress-cahoots/how-perus-legislature-is-allowing-organized-crime-to-thrive>
- 142 RPP. "Wampis: Police and Civilians Detained for Alleged Links to Illegal Mining Were Handed Over to a High-Level Commission." <https://rpp.pe/peru/amazonas/Wampis-policias-y-civiles-detenido-por-presuntos-vinculos-con-la-mineria-ilegal-fueron-entregados-a-comision-de-alto-nivel-noticia-1549944>; Ojo Público. "Retired police and military officers protect criminal organizations" (live broadcast). <https://ojo-publico.com>
- 143 La República (December 9, 2024). "The Promoters of Land Grabbing in the Peruvian Amazon." <https://larepublica.pe/politica/2024/12/09/los-promotores-del-despojo-en-la-amazonia-peruana-deforestacion-comunidades-nativas-estado-peruano-357840>
- 144 Ojo Público, "Former PNP Major Arrested with Arsenal of Weapons at Illegal Mining Camp," <https://ojo-publico.com/sala-del-poder/crimen-organizado/exmayor-pnp-detenido-arsenal-armas-campamento-minero-ilegal>
- 145 El Tiempo (June 28, 2019). Links to the colonel who accompanied "Gargola" in an official vehicle. <https://www.eltiempo.com/justicia/conflicto-y-narcotrafico/vinculos-del-coronel-que-acompanaba-a-gargola-cuando-fue-capturado-382188>
- 146 Data compiled from reports on operations against illegal mining in Roraima and cooperation with Indigenous organizations, see: Government of Brazil (January 16, 2026). "ICMBio contributes to a 98.77% drop in illegal mining in the Yanomami Indigenous Territory." <https://www.google.com/>

- url?q=https://www.gov.br/icmbio/pt-br/assuntos/noticias/ultimas-noticias/icmbio-contribui-para-queda-de-98-77-do-garimpo-ilegal-na-terra-indigena-yanomami&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1775256954527763&usg=AOvVaw0BdnnVhL7WqIKv1J0xguwC
- 147 Human Rights Watch, World Report 2024 (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2024), <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024>
 - 148 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), World Drug Report 2023 (Vienna: UNODC, 2023); Reporter Brasil (December 2025). "Illegal mining begins to shift from the Amazon to the Cerrado, Brazilian ministry says." <https://reporterbrasil.org.br/2025/12/mineria-ilegal-comienza-a-desplazarse-de-la-amazonia-hacia-el-cerrado-senala-ministerio-brasileo/> and Periodismo de Investigación (February 4, 2026). "Napo: Illegal miners leave, environmental damage remains." <https://periodismodeinvestigacion.com/2026/02/04/napo-mineros-ilegales-salen-el-dano-ambiental-se-queda/>
 - 149 La Nación. "Prison for 24 military personnel involved in the Alto Remanso massacre." <https://www.lanacion.com.co/carcel-para-24-militares-involucrados-en-la-masacre-de-alto-remanso/>; El Tiempo. "Unknown details emerge against 24 military personnel three years after the controversial operation in Alto Remanso." <https://www.eltiempo.com/justicia/delitos/los-detalles-desconocidos-contras-24-militares-luego-de-tres-anos-de-la-polemica-operacion-en-alto-remanso-3440263>; Vorágine, "The Army operation stained with the blood of civilians." <https://voragine.co/historias/cronica/el-operativo-del-ejercito-manchado-con-sangre-de-civiles/>
 - 150 Inter-Church Commission for Justice and Peace (July 20, 2020). Awá Indigenous Child Murdered in Villagarzón. <https://www.justiciaypazcolombia.com/asesinado-nino-indigena-awa-en-villagarzon/>
 - 151 United Nations (2026). Ecuador: UN experts alarmed by enforced disappearances and abuses in the context of the internal armed conflict. <https://news.un.org/es/story/2026/03/1541281>
 - 152 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Ecuador: Observations on the use of force and human rights, 2024–2025; Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), statements and observations on Ecuador, 2024–2025.
 - 153 The New York Times. United States and Ecuador following a drug raid on a farm. 2026. <https://www.nytimes.com/es/2026/03/24/espanol/america-latina/estados-unidos-ecuador-ataque-narco-finca.htmcampesinasl>
 - 154 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). Ecuador: Office met with the Alliance of Human Rights Organizations and with farmers who denounce torture in the context of a military operation. <https://acnudh.org/ecuador-oficina-se-reunio-con-alianza-de-organizaciones-por-los-derechos-humanos-y-con-campesinos-que-denuncian-tortura-en-marco-de-operacion-militar/>
 - 155 Infobae (2026). Noboa sees an ideological bias at the UN for warning of enforced disappearances in Ecuador. <https://www.infobae.com/america/agencias/2026/04/01/noboa-ve-en-onu-inclinacion-ideologica-por-advertir-desapariciones-forzadas-en-ecuador/>
 - 156 Autonomous Territorial Government of the Wampís Nation (2021) Wampís Pact for Perpetual Nature. <https://nacionwampis.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Pacto-Wampis-Naturaleza-Perpetua.pdf>
 - 157 La República (November 2, 2025). "Ucayali: Indigenous Guard Established to Combat Organized Crime." <https://larepublica.pe/sociedad/2025/11/02/ucayali-instalan-la-guardia-indigena-para-enfrentar-al-crimen-organizado-narcotrafico-hnews-52006>
 - 158 RPP (2024). "Police officers and civilians detained by the Wampís for alleged ties to illegal mining were handed over to the High-Level Commission." <https://rpp.pe/peru/amazonas/wampis-policias-y-civiles-detenido-por-presuntos-vinculos-con-la-mineria-ilegal-fueron-entregados-a-comision-de-alto-nivel-noticia-1549944>.
 - 159 Government of Brazil (March 7, 2025). "The Government Marks One Year of a Historic Reduction in Illegal Mining in the Yanomami Indigenous Territory." <https://www.gov.br/secom/es/ultimas-noticias/2025/03/la-casa-de-gobierno-cumple-1-ano-con-una-reduccion-historica-de-la-mineria-ilegal-en-el-territorio-indigena-yanomami>
 - 160 "NAPO: Judge orders suspension of mining activity in the province's watersheds," Amazon Network CORAPE, January 19, 2022, <https://radio.corape.org.ec/noticia/item/napo-juez-de-garantias->

constitucionales-de-tena-ordena-suspender-actividad-minera-en-cuencas-hidricas-de-esta-provincia

- 161 Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), Interim Measures No. 452-21, The Kakataibo Indigenous People in a Situation of Isolation and Initial Contact and Their Leaders, 2021, https://www.oas.org/es/cidh/decisiones/mc/2021/res_52-21_mc_452-21_pe_es.pdf
- 162 There are several rulings, such as SU 123/ regarding the Awá people, T630/16 and T730/16 regarding the Nasa people, SU 383/03 regarding OPIAC, and SU 545/23 regarding forced evictions, among others. All of these cases concerned the right to free, prior, and informed consultation and reached the Constitutional Court; in the case of T300/17, the Court recognized that a post-consultation process would be conducted.
- 163 The Swiss (June 19, 2023). "Court blocks construction of a highway in the Amazon between Brazil and Peru." <https://www.swissinfo.ch/spa/la-justicia-bloquea-la-construcci%C3%B3n-de-una-carretera-en-la-amazon%C3%ADa-entre-brasil-y-per%C3%BA/48603604>
- 164 Juruá / Yurúa / Alto Tamaya Cross-Border Commission. "OTCA and Indigenous Organizations Sign Letter of Intent to Strengthen Protection of the Amazonian Border" <https://www.ctperubrasil.org/actualizaciones/otca-e-organizaes-indgenas-firmam-carta-de-intenes-para-fortalecer-a-proteo-da-fronteira-amaznica-7lb3k>
- 165 See: <https://nacionwampis.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Informe-Estrategia-Climatica-GTANW.pdf>
- 166 Valeria Vicente Vásquez, "The Awajún potters resisting illegal mining in the Peruvian Amazon," El País, September 27, 2025, <https://elpais.com/america-futura/2025-09-27/las-ceramistas-awajun-que-resisten-a-la-mineria-ilegal-en-la-amazonia-peruana.html>
- 167 See: <https://eldiario.com/2023/06/11/documental-lucha-indigenas-mineria-ilegal-amazonia/>
- 168 Esteban Salazar Herrada, "Crisis on the Peru-Brazil border: Yurúa communities denounce incursion by Comando Vermelho into Peruvian territory," Infobae, November 2, 2025, <https://www.infobae.com/peru/2025/11/02/muerte-en-la-frontera-peru-brasil-comunidades-de-yurua-denuncian-incursion-del-comando-vermelho-en-territorio-peruano/>



AMAZON CRIME

The Amazon Crime campaign exposes how transnational criminal networks drive deforestation, violence, and corruption across the Amazon through illicit economies such as illegal mining, logging, and drug trafficking. It advances a rights-based strategy that centers Indigenous territorial governance as a crucial element of any response against these criminal systems, while supporting concrete, community-led responses on the ground—including protection, monitoring, solar connectivity, and territorial governance initiatives. These efforts, however, require sustained support and protection from governments and the international community. The campaign therefore links territorial defense strategies directly to advocacy efforts, elevating frontline solutions to confront environmental crime and defend the Amazon.



CONFEDERACIÓN DE
NACIONALIDADES INDÍGENAS
DEL ECUADOR



COMISSÃO
TRANSFRONTEIRIÇA

