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Colombia: Attempted killing of human rights defender Alirio Perdomo of ASOQUIMBO

On 28 March 2023 human rights defender and community leader **Alirio Perdomo** was the target of an attempted assassination by two unknown men on a motorcycle.

[Alirio Perdomo](#) is an artisanal fisherman, one of the leaders of the [Association of People Affected by the El Quimbo Hydroelectric Project \(ASOQUIMBO\)](#) and president of the Association of Calandrero Fishermen of the Magdalena River in the municipality of Hobo, in the department of Huila in Colombia. Alirio Perdomo has been one of the main leaders and spokespersons on the effects suffered by artisanal fishermen in the face of the El Quimbo hydroelectric project. He has participated in community actions and protests - such as the one that took place on 14 March 2023 in Puerto Seco to mark of the International Day for the Struggle Against Dams. He was also preparing to participate in the Debate of Control of the Commission V of the House of Representatives which subject was the non-compliance of company Enel Codensa, El Quimbo project's owner.

On 28 March 2023 at 7 pm, human rights defender Alirio Perdomo was riding his motorcycle towards the town of Hobo, when two men on a motorcycle intercepted him and shot him towards his head. Alirio Perdomo was hit in the ear without posing further risk to his life.

Two hours before this attack, Alirio Perdomo had published a video publicly denouncing the levels of fish mortality in the Betania dam and the effects on artisanal fishermen due to "controlled discharges" from the El Quimbo hydroelectric project.

ASOQUIMBO and artisanal fishermen have led a long struggle since September 2008, when the government of Colombia declared that the use of land in the department of Huila was necessary for the construction and operation of Project of El Quimbo, on the basis of public utility and social interest. For the construction of the hydroelectric power plant in 2015, 8,586 acres of community lands were flooded. ASOQUIMBO argues that the land that was flooded was considered the most productive of the department of Huila. Their struggles for State recognition and compensation for the socio environmental impacts caused to the communities have not been recognised. This includes the provision of irrigated land to communities who lost their land, a new census of those affected by the Project of El Quimbo.

On 2 September 2019, Alirio Perdomo had met with the Personería of the Municipality of Hobo to denounce and bring attention to the authorities the death threats he received. Through his statement to the Personeria he expressed that "the entire association feels threatened and at risk". Equally, Alirio Perdomo and other members of ASOQUIMBO reported to the authorities, previous instances when they faced harassment, threats, extortion, the burning of ranches, canoes and the destruction of small crops, on which the communities heavily depend.

Front Line Defenders expresses its concern at the aggressions and harassment towards Alirio Perdomo and the members of ASOQUIMBO, as they seem to be related to their legitimate activity in defence of human rights. Front Line Defenders reiterates its concern regarding the climate of impunity and lack of protection of human rights defenders in Colombia.

Front Line Defenders urges the Colombian authorities to:

1. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of Alirio Perdomo, his family and the members of ASOQUIMBO;
2. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the attack suffered by Alirio Perdomo and other members of ASOQUIMBO, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
3. Provide the necessary medical treatment for injured human rights defender Alirio Perdomo;
4. Adopt immediate measures to ensure effective protection of Alirio Perdomo and other leaders from ASOQUIMBO at risk;
5. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in **Colombia**, are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions;