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Ecuador: death threats against human rights defender and community leader Javier Medardo Feijoo Villa

Between 2 October 2023 and 16 October 2023, human rights defender **Javier Medardo Feijoo Villa** received several death threats via phone calls and voice messages towards both him and his family. The unidentified perpetrators claimed that they were keeping the human rights defender under surveillance, and maintained that they had access to his data and aware of all his moves within the community.

[Javier Medardo Feijoo Villa](#) is the president of the Estero Piedras community, located in the coastal area of the Molleturo on Azuay province. This community is also part of the San Felipe de Molleturo Commune, an ancestral territory that has been of great importance to the region, given that it has fought to defend against attempts by transnational mining companies to dispossess the people in the region of their land and water sources. He is also president of the North Zone Road Committee, which represents 15 communities in the region. As a community leader, the human rights defender has sought support from the competent authorities to stop criminal acts and illicit activities, mainly assaults and robberies caused by criminal groups that threaten the area. Javier has played an important role in the [defence](#) of water, nature and the territories belonging to the communities who he represents.

Since 2 October 2023, human rights defender Javier Medardo Feijoo Villa has been the target of several death threats. Over the course of two weeks, he has received calls and voice messages threatening to kill him and his family. The callers claimed to be keeping the human rights defender under surveillance, and maintained that they had access to his data, as well as all his moves. The level of violence articulated in these threats increased over the weeks, causing the human rights defender to stop responding to messages or calls altogether, and provoking him to block the numbers of those who called him. The threats continued up until 16 October 2023. The human rights defender has been filing relevant complaints with the Prosecutor's Office about the recent threats and has requested that the Police Commander of Zone 6 take the necessary measures protect him and his family.

Violence against human rights defenders working on indigenous, land and environmental rights has been on the rise in Ecuador; human rights defenders [Andrés Durazno](#) and [Alba Bermeo](#) were murdered in 2021 and 2022 respectively. Still to this day no one has been charged with their murder.

Front Line Defenders expresses its deep concern at the death threats against Javier Medardo Feijoo Villa and believes it is linked to his peaceful activity in defence of human rights and the rights of his community. Front Line Defenders reiterates its concern regarding the lack of protection of human rights defenders in Ecuador.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities of Ecuador to:

1. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the protection of human rights defender Javier Medardo Feijoo Villa and his family members, ensuring their safety and physical and psychological integrity;

2. Initiate an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the death threats against Javier Medardo Feijoo Villa and his family, in order to guarantee their protection and physical integrity,, publishing the results of this investigation and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
3. Guarantee that all human rights defenders in Ecuador, in carrying out their legitimate activities in defence of human rights, can operate freely without fear of restrictions or reprisals.