

Female EHRDs arrested during peaceful protests against mining project

Ecuador

October 2015 – 8 July 2016

The Women's Front for the Defence of Mother Earth (*Frente de Mujeres Defensoras de la Pachamama*) was created in 2008, in Cuenca, Azuay Province, Ecuador, to promote human rights with a particular focus on environmental and gender issues in rural areas. The organisation is particularly invested in the struggle against the Río Blanco and Loma Larga mining projects, which they claim have profound negative impacts on the local environment and culture.

In October 2015, Elsa Urgiles Lazo, Herlinda Gutama, Rosa Misacango Chuñir, Georgina Gutama Muevecel, Lina Solano Ortiz, María Angeles Chuñir Gutama, Rosa Nancy Gutama Gutama and María Mercedes Gutama Tibillín, took part in a peaceful demonstration against a mining project. During the protest police officers assaulted and arbitrarily detained these eight female EHRDs.

In July 2016, the General Coordination of the Ombudsman in Azuay - Zone 6 ruled against the eight women human rights defenders.

Instead of condemning the attack, the decision of the Ombudsman praised the police for guaranteeing the security of participants, and for having protected public and private property. Furthermore, the Ombudsman characterised the attack against and detention of the eight EHRDs as a necessary, reasonable and proportional use of force; and encouraged security forces to continue to act in this way in the future.