

The Indigenous Jurisdiction

In search
of harmony and balance,
in the hands of our elders,
we defend.

This is in danger;
ordinary branches
do not recognize oral traditions.
Laws divinely ordained
by Mother Nature and our gods;
the sun, the moon, water.

If someone commits an offence
we judge
according to our customs.

We don't have a written description
of the totality of our powers;
our territorial rights;
our right to survival;
to continue living
according to our ways.

We say 'no'
to illegal mining,
this is part of the mandate.
The indigenous guard supports.
Sworn in by our elders,
they control our space
make sure armed actors do not enter,
the guerrilla or the army
- their presence is damaging.

We have our own jurisdiction.
We have our own branches
of power.

Composed by Juliana Mensah from the interview transcript of woman human rights defender from Colombia working on indigenous rights from the research project 'Navigating Risk, Managing Security, and Receiving Support', which focuses on the experiences of human rights defenders at risk in Colombia, Mexico, Egypt, Kenya, and Indonesia (securityofdefendersproject.org)