

Colombia Investigates Malnutrition Deaths of 51 Indigenous Kids



Bogota, July 29 (RHC)-- Colombia's Health Ministry has opened an investigation over the alleged death of 51 Indigenous children due to malnutrition since the beginning of 2016 in the town of Bojaya, in the Choco province. The move comes one day after Senator Sofia Gaviria denounced the humanitarian situation in the Indigenous community in a plenary session.

She said that 51 children and 11 adults died from preventable diseases such as malaria, diarrhea, vomiting, among others, due to serious malnutrition. Gaviria said: "There are no health centers on the reservations and in the main town, where there are a few, Indigenous patients are not attended to quickly, and the staff does not speak their language."

The Colombian Health Ministry said it will investigate her "serious" allegations, saying it had "only" recorded seven deaths of minors due to malnutrition this year.

According to a 2014 report by Colombia's ombudsman, 36 percent of the children in Choco did not have a healthy size for their age and their weight. The report found that child mortality was higher than the average rate in the rest of the country.

Apart from malnutrition, children also suffered from physical and sexual violence, abandonment and neglect, while the context of the armed conflict made them vulnerable to illegal recruitment, forced displacements, torture and homicides.

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