

Bolivia creates DIGEPIO for Indigenous communities protection



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La Paz, September 11 (RHC)-- The Bolivian Government announced the creation of the General Directorate for the Protection of Indigenous Nations and Peoples (DIGEPIO) following the enactment of Supreme Decree 4793.

Bolivian Minister of Justice and Institutional Transparency, Iván Lima, said the objective of the DIGEPIO will be to address the needs of populations in vulnerable situations, noting that it will be part of the judicial structure. It will operate within the structure of the Vice-Ministry of Indigenous Justice of the Ministry of Justice and Institutional Transparency.

The Government approved Supreme Decree 4793, which creates the General Directorate for the Protection of Original Indigenous Nations and Peoples, to protect the 36 nations in a high vulnerability situation.

According to the Minister, the joint action of the five ministries will allow for integrated attention to indigenous peoples. "It is a committee of ministers that we are going to work in a coordinated manner to preserve all the rights" of indigenous peoples, Lima said.

"This decree aims to regulate Law 450 of December 4, 2013. It has been almost ten years since this norm regarding protecting indigenous peoples in high vulnerability was regulated."

Lima referred to the Tunitas Guaraní indigenous community in the Santa Cruz department, saying, "We have families that are practically in a situation of servitude, I am not going to say slavery, but servitude because they are not paid, they are working forcibly."

The 2009 Constitution recognizes that a total of 36 indigenous peoples in Bolivia live in the Andes. The 2012 National Census showed that 41 percent of the Bolivian population over the age of 15 is of indigenous origin.

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