

# URGENT ACTION

## CONTINUED PARAMILITARY PRESENCE IN CHOCÓ

**Residents of Puerto Lleras, Jiguamiandó collective territory in the department of Chocó, report threats and raids from paramilitaries near the Humanitarian Zone of Pueblo Nuevo, putting all the inhabitants at risk.**

On 15 April the human rights NGO Interchurch Justice and Peace Commission (Comisión Intereclesial de Justicia y Paz, CIJP) reported that an unidentified number of paramilitaries from the group Gaitanista Self Defence Forces of Colombia (Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia, AGC) entered the hamlet of Puerto Lleras, Jiguamiandó collective territory in the department of Chocó, in north-western Colombia. According to the NGO, these individuals rounded up the community and told them that they were going to take control over the zones previously occupied by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, FARC), and that they would not allow the National Liberation Army (Ejército de Liberación Nacional, ELN) into the territory.

The CIJP reported that the paramilitaries offered 800,000 Colombian pesos (approximately 280 USD) to anyone who wanted to join them, and ordered the community to farm coca crops on their territory. They also announced that they were waiting for a further 100 men who were coming to join them from Pavarandó, heading for the hamlet of Pueblo Nuevo, which is a Humanitarian Zone. According to the CIJP there has been no concrete action on the part of the military stationed around these zones, on the contrary, the paramilitary groups have been able to move freely in and out of the territory.

Despite the fact that the Humanitarian Zones of the Uradá Jiguamiandó reservation, Pueblo Nuevo and Nueva Esperanza have been granted protectionary measures by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the Constitutional Court of Colombia, they report that raids from paramilitary groups persist and have worsened since the beginning of March. In addition, Jiguamiandó community leaders reported threats against them in March this year, among them Manuel Denis Blandón, Melkin Romaña, Romualdo Salcedo, Félix Álvarado, Erasmo and Benjamín Sierra and the Indigenous leader Argemiro Bailarín.

### **Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:**

- Calling for a comprehensive response from the state to the reports from the communities of the Jiguamiandó collective territory, ensuring that the boundaries of the Humanitarian zones are respected, guaranteeing the safety of their residents and demanding that the presence of the authorities be strengthened;
- Insisting that Humanitarian Zones must be respected and ensuring the safety of the leaders, in compliance with the provisions established in relation to victims in the Peace Agreement with the FARC, ensuring that acts of violence are not repeated in their communities and respecting their human rights;
- Urging the authorities to take immediate action to break up paramilitary groups, in accordance with the commitments made by the government and recommendations from international bodies.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 30 MAY 2017 TO:**

#### President

Juan Manuel Santos  
President of Colombia  
Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No.7-26  
Bogotá, Colombia  
Email: [contacto@presidencia.gov.co](mailto:contacto@presidencia.gov.co)  
**Salutation: Dear President**

#### Director of the National Protection Unit

Diego Fernando Mora  
Calle 63 N. 14-97  
Bogotá D. C., Colombia  
Email: [correspondencia@unp.gov.co](mailto:correspondencia@unp.gov.co)  
**Salutation: Dear Director**

#### Ombudsman

Carlos Alfonso Negret  
Carrera 9 Núm. 16-21  
Bogotá D.C., Colombia  
Email: [asuntosdefensor@defensoria.gov.co](mailto:asuntosdefensor@defensoria.gov.co)  
**Salutation: Dear Ombudsman**

**Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.** HIS EXCELLENCY MR NESTOR OSORIO, Embassy of Colombia, 3 Hans Crescent SW1X 0LN, 020 7589 9177 / 020 7589 5037, Fax 020 7581 1829, [egranbretana@cancilleria.gov.co](mailto:egranbretana@cancilleria.gov.co), [www.colombianembassy.co.uk](http://www.colombianembassy.co.uk), Salutation: Your Excellency

**Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.** This is the first update of UA 62/17. Further information: [www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr23/5908/2017/en/](http://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr23/5908/2017/en/)

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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission (Comisión Intereclesial de Justicia y Paz, CIJP) works together with Indigenous and Afro-descendent communities living in the Curvaradó and Jiguamiandó river basins in the process to reclaim their territory. In these zones, paramilitaries have occupied the land of some Indigenous and Afro-descendent communities since 2005.

In recent years, many of the people who fled their land after being violently displaced by the paramilitary and security forces at the end of the 1990s have returned to the Curvaradó and Jiguamiandó river basin communities. The communities have attempted to defend their right to the land and to stop the expansion of illegal African palm plantations and other economic activity in their territory. As a result, many members of the communities have been threatened or murdered. Despite repeated orders from the Constitutional Court, the land has not been returned to the communities.

In April 2006 the first of many different “Humanitarian Zones” was established. These are clearly marked zones whose inhabitants request that the parties to the conflict respect their decision not to participate in the conflict. They represent a means of protection, and also send the message to the parties to the conflict that their rights as civilians should be respected. The Humanitarian Zones of the Urada Jiguamiandó reservation, Pueblo Nuevo and Nueva Esperanza are located in the Jiguamiandó river basin and the residents have demanded the right of the civilian population not to be involved in the conflict.

Since 2015 there have been reports of paramilitary groups in the zone, stirring up fear among the inhabitants and threatening the leaders of the communities. In his most recent risk report, the Ombudsman pointed out in particular the situation of ethnic-territorial leaders, Indigenous authorities, and community rights movements, particularly in the rural zones of the municipalities of Alto, Medio y Bajo Baudó, Litoral de San Juan, Nuquí and Juradó. Since 5 March 2017 the murders of two community leaders, the expansion and strengthening of the ELN into zones previously controlled by the FARC, and an increase in the number of Gaitanista Self Defence Forces of Colombia (Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia, AGC) troops have been recorded. In an interview with local media on 17 April, the Ombudsman warned that the conflict in Chocó has worsened recently, leaving in its wake over 2,000 people affected, one abduction every day, and that 20 of the 30 municipalities in the department are at risk due to the struggle for territorial control between armed parties.

Further information on UA: 62/17 AI Index: AMR 23/6082/2017 Issue Date: 18 April 2017