

URGENT ACTION

KILLINGS OF LAND CLAIMANT LEADERS

Two land claimant leaders of collective Afro-descendent territories in Curvaradó, Jiguamiandó, Piedeguita and Mancilla in Chocó have been killed by paramilitary groups belonging to the Gaitanistas Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia, AGC). The inhabitants of these humanitarian zones and areas of biodiversity feel threatened.

On 9 December the human rights NGO Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission (Comisión Intereclesial de Justicia y Paz, CIJP) reported the killing of **Hernán Bedoya**, a land claimant leader of the collective territory of Piedeguita Mancilla who had been reporting illegal associations, fraudulent contracts and the presence of paramilitary groups in the region. AGC paramilitaries killed him at around 1.15pm by shooting him 14 times in the village of Playa Roja, in a place known as El Acopio. On 26 November **Mario Castaño Bravo**, a land claimant leader from Curvaradó, was killed on his own farm, in the Florida area in La Larga Tumaradó territory. Unknown individuals entered his home and shot him repeatedly. Mario Castaño Bravo was overseeing the drafting of a collective reparation proposal which included acknowledgment of the communities as legitimate owners of the collective land and limiting company operations without consultation which threaten the life, land and dignity of the inhabitants.

Both leaders had been granted protection measures by the National Protection Unit (Unidad Nacional de Protección, UNP), which only consisted of bulletproof vests and cell phones. This is proof of the ineffectiveness of the protection measures granted by the Colombian government and National Protection Unit.

According to the Justice and Peace Commission, which has been supporting collective processes in this area of the department of Chocó, these killings were an attempt to destabilize the collective land claim processes in the 13 humanitarian zones and biodiversity areas established to safeguard the return and reparation processes for families who were displaced in the 1990s. The inhabitants of this area fear the repetition of this situation. The humanitarian zones and biodiversity areas have been granted protection measures by the Constitutional Court of Colombia and five of their leaders have been granted precautionary measures by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), however they, along with many others, continue to be threatened by the activities of the AGC in the area.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Requesting a comprehensive response from the state to these reports from the humanitarian zones and areas of biodiversity in the river basins of Jiguamiandó y Curvaradó, ensuring respect for the boundaries of the humanitarian zones, guaranteeing the safety of their members and requesting that they increase the presence of state security forces;
- Calling for an immediate and impartial investigation to be carried out into the killings of the two leaders, for the results to be made public and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- Urging the authorities to take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups, in accordance with the government's express commitments and with recommendations made by international bodies.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 22 JANUARY 2018 TO:

President

Juan Manuel Santos
President of Colombia
Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No.7-26
Bogotá, Colombia
Email: contacto@presidencia.gov.co
Twitter: @JuanManSantos

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
Twitter: @DiegoFMoraA,
@UNPColombia

Salutation: Dear Director

And copies to:

Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission
Carrera 37A Núm. 25B-42
Bogotá D. C., Colombia
Fax: +57 1 2687179

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. His Excellency My Nestor Osorio, Embassy of Colombia, 3 Hans Crescent, London SW1X 0LN, Tel 0207 5899777, elondres@cancilleria.gov.uk
Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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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, demanding the right of the civilian population not to be involved in the conflict.

Since 2015 there have been reports of paramilitary groups making incursions into humanitarian zones and areas of biodiversity in the municipality of Riosucio, stirring up fear among the inhabitants and threatening the leaders of the communities. The office of the Ombudsman has repeatedly issued warnings on the vulnerability of the communities in this area and the risk of further collective displacements. Despite these warnings, the state response has still not been comprehensive nor timely and the residents feel threatened by paramilitary groups.