

URGENT ACTION

THOUSANDS IN NEED OF URGENT PROTECTION

7,000 persons from Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities in Bojayá, Chocó (western Colombia) face live-threatening forced displacement risks as the guerrilla National Liberation Army (Ejército de Liberación Nacional, ELN) and the paramilitary group Gaitanistas Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia) are increasing hostilities in their territory. The communities of Unión Baquiaza, Union Cuití, Carrillo, Playita, Mesopotamia and Egoróquera are at risk. In Chocó several assassinations of community leaders recently occurred, and communities are constantly under threats from armed groups without any preventive action from national authorities.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

President of the Republic of Colombia Mr Iván Duque

Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No.7-26

Bogotá, Colombia

Email: contacto@presidencia.gov.co

Twitter: @IvanDuque

Dear President Duque,

I am writing to express my alarm and concern for the situation of 7,000 people from the indigenous and Afro-descendant communities of Unión Baquiaza, Egoróquera, Union Cuití, Playita, Mesopotamia and Carrillo who are amid hostilities of armed groups operating in Bojayá, Chocó. Their situation is extremely serious and immediate action must be taken before conditions lead to mass killing or forced displacement.

Most of these people were already in confinement for more than a year, trying to escape the consequences of the operations of the National Liberation Army and the Gaitanistas Self-Defence Forces. For the past year, they have been placing anti-personnel mines, recruiting children, murdering social leaders and besieging entire communities. On some occasions communities have denounced the collusion of one of the armed groups with elements of the Colombian army.

The environment of exclusion, neglect and invisibility of this territory, created by the Colombian state, reinforces these communities' vulnerable state without there having been a comprehensive institutional response beyond a merely military response.

I urge you to immediately deploy a comprehensive protection plan for the people at risk in these communities considering their guidance, approval and participation; and to investigate and bring to justice any illegal activity by armed groups affecting the rights of these communities. I also call on you to implement the measures of justice, reparation and guarantees to prevent human rights violations against these communities.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Indigenous and Afro-descendent communities of all Chocó State had been facing serious human rights violations across the years of conflict in Colombia with forced displacement, mass killing, and other human rights violations occurred at the hands of guerilla, paramilitary groups and the army.

In 2002, a mass killing known as "*Bojayá Massacre*" marked the beginning of a violent chapter in the history in Colombia, with thousands of victims amid clashes between the FARC and paramilitary groups. The inaction from the state at the time was considered as critical to enable the conditions for the human rights violations faced by people living in armed conflict zones. In 2002, the Ombudsman's Office issued various alerts demonstrating the lack of protection for Afro-descendent and Indigenous communities in the municipality, and the inadequate state response, leaving communities in a vulnerable position.

In a 2017 report, Amnesty International warned that the environment of exclusion, neglect and invisibility of this territory created by the Colombian state, reinforces the communities' state of vulnerable, as there has not been comprehensive institutional response beyond a military response.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Spanish
You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 30 May 2019
Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Indigenous and Afro-descendant Communities in Bojaya
(They, them, theirs)

ADDITIONAL TARGETS

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. HIS EXCELLENCY MR ANTONIO JOSÉ ARDILA, Embassy of Colombia, 3 Hans Crescent SW1X 0LN, 020 7589 9177 / 020 7589 5037, Fax 020 7581 1829, elondres@cancilleria.gov.co, <http://granbretana.embajada.gov.co>, Salutation: Your Excellency **Please check with your section before sending appeals after the above date.**