

URGENT ACTION

WOUNAAN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY IN DANGER

Presence and clashes between paramilitary groups, the National Liberation Army and state security forces continue to violate the rights of Indigenous communities in Chocó, in the Pacific region of Colombia.

On Monday 17 July, at around 9am, an armed confrontation was reported between the Colombian Naval Infantry (Infantería de Marina de Colombia) and an illegal armed group, a few metres from the **Wounaan Indigenous community of San José and Taparalito** of the San Juan River, in the department of Chocó. Out of fear of facing further violence, this community, made up of 900 Wounaan Indigenous people, have found themselves in a situation of forced confinement. Community members reported the events to the relevant authorities and requested protection measures and emergency humanitarian aid.

In addition to these clashes, the planting of anti-personnel mines in land near Indigenous communities in the department has been reported. On 11 July, Sebastián Carpio Mecheche, an 18-year-old member of the JUUN DUUR community, a Wounaan Katio de Quiparadó reservation in the municipality of Riosucio, Chocó, was seriously wounded in his right leg due to the explosion of an anti-personnel mine. According to reports from human rights organizations, the planting of mines is a tactic used by the National Liberation Army (Ejército Nacional de Liberación, ELN) in order to stop the advance of paramilitary groups in the area.

The Wounaan Authorities' Community Council (WOUNDEKO) have also reported the forced recruitment of Indigenous children, in addition to further occurrences of forced displacement and fear among the Indigenous communities living in Chocó. The Council has warned of the severity of the situation faced by the displaced Indigenous communities, primarily in the municipalities of Riosucio, Quibdó (the capital of Chocó) and Buenaventura (Cauca Valley).

1) TAKE ACTION

Write a letter, send an email, call, fax or tweet:

- Requesting an immediate humanitarian agreement between the Colombian government and the ELN, as part of the current peace process, with a view to bringing an end to the hostility and achieving a mutual ceasefire;
- Demanding a comprehensive answer from the state on how to implement plans for the prevention and protection of displaced Indigenous communities, in compliance with Constitutional Court Resolution 004/2009;
- Calling for the implementation of the victims' clause in the Peace Agreement with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, FARC), guaranteeing the non-repetition of violence towards these communities in accordance with human rights standards.

Contact these two officials by 31 August, 2017:

President

Juan Manuel Santos
 Presidente de la República
 Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No.7-26 Bogotá, Colombia
 Email: contacto@presidencia.gov.co
Salutation: Dear Mr. President

Ambassador Juan Carlos Pinzón

Embassy of Colombia
 1724 Massachusetts Ave NW, Washington DC 20036
 T: 202.387.8338
 Email: embassyofcolombia@colombiaemb.org
Salutation: Dear Ambassador / Estimado Embajador

2) LET US KNOW YOU TOOK ACTION

[Click here](#) to let us know if you took action on this case! *This is Urgent Action 178.17*

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INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The name *Wounaan* means 'people, persons or a people'. The Wounaan speak a language known as 'wounaan meu', which belongs to the Chocoan language family (comprising Indigenous languages from western Colombia and southwestern Panama. The Colombian National Administrative Department of Statistics (Departamento Nacional de Estadística, DANE) recorded in its 2005 census 9,066 people who identify as belonging to the Wounaan community, of whom 50.3% were male (4,563 people) and 49.7% were female (4,503 people). The community is primarily based in the department of Chocó, where they make up 84.1% of the population, followed by 15.3% (1,390 people) in Valle del Cauca and 0.3% (27 people) in Bogotá, therefore 99.8% of the population are based in these two departments and the capital. The Wounaan make up 0.7% of the total number of Indigenous people in Colombia.

The Wounaan community live facing constant threats and violence from paramilitary armed groups. In 2009, the Constitutional Court of Colombia issued Resolution 004, urging the Colombian government to take measures, with an ethnic perspective, to design and develop a public policy on enforced displacement, aiming to protecting life, freedom and cultural diversity, among other rights.

Amnesty International has already publicly denounced the increase in the number of killings of Indigenous leaders in Colombia, highlighting the shortcomings in the implementation of the peace process. "The situation of extreme risk which Indigenous communities in Colombia face is alarming. These crimes highlight one of the main challenges in the implementation of the peace process: the protection of the communities living in the areas which have been most affected by the armed conflict and the need to guarantee that these deplorable acts do not go unpunished", said Erika Guevara-Rosas, Americas Director at Amnesty International (for further information, see: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/04/colombia-ola-de-asesinatos-de-indigenas-resalta-fallas-de-implementacion-del-proceso-de-paz/>).

Name: Wounaan Indigenous community of San José and Taparalito
Gender m/f: All