

URGENT ACTION

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN CHOCÓ IN DANGER

Clashes between paramilitary groups, the National Liberation Army and state security forces continue to violate the rights of the Wounaan and Embera Indigenous peoples in Chocó, western Colombia, generating an imminent humanitarian and security crisis.

On 20 August at 1:45pm, an armed confrontation between troops of the Colombian armed forces and the National Liberation Army (Ejército De Liberación Nacional, ELN) was reported 700 metres from the Wounaan territory of Puerto Olave, on the San Juan River. Security forces also recently informed the community about the presence of land mines in surrounding territories. Indigenous organizations told Amnesty International that this latest confrontation and the alleged presence of land mines has caused them to fear for their safety.

At around 10am on 22 August, another armed confrontation was reported between the ELN and the Gaitanistas Self-Defenses of Colombia (Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia, AGC) inside the communities of JUUN DUR (a Wounaan Indigenous reserve) and QUIPARALITO (an Embera Indigenous reserve) on the banks of the Truandó River in Riosucio, northern Chocó. Ana María Mepaquito, a 22-year-old Indigenous woman and mother of three young children, died as a result of the crossfire. The members of these Indigenous communities report that they cannot leave their land for fear of being detained at the checkpoints on the river manned by both the paramilitary groups and the Colombian National Army, in addition to the antipersonnel mines surrounding their territories.

In addition to being confined within their territories, the people of JUUN DUR and QUIPARALITO cannot go hunting, which is their main food source and transportation of food reaching the communities is limited, which has led to a serious humanitarian situation. The Indigenous round table of Chocó has also stated that the neighbouring communities of Peñas Blancas, Jagual, Marcial and Pichindé are at imminent risk of forced displacement due to clashes between armed groups. Finally, Amnesty International continues to receive reports about increasing forced recruitment among Indigenous girls and boys in the area.

To date the Colombian government has not taken the necessary measures to enable humanitarian aid to arrive, and there is still a lack of comprehensive State presence in the territory. More than 100 Embera people from the municipality of Riosucio, Chocó have mobilized in solidarity to Bogotá to protest in front of the presidential palace, demanding that the government take urgent measures to guarantee their life, dignity and protection.

1) TAKE ACTION

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

- Requesting the authorities ensure urgent humanitarian relief to the confined communities of JUUN DUR and QUIPARALITO and provide protection to the neighbouring communities of Peñas Blancas, Jagual, Marcial and Pichindé;
- Demanding a comprehensive State presence in the Truandó and San Juan river basins guaranteeing protection, security and free mobility of indigenous peoples in the area.

Contact these two officials by 12 October, 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/ Estimado Señor Presidente

Ambassador Camilo Reyes

Embassy of Colombia
 1724 Massachusetts Ave NW, Washington DC 20036
 Phone: 202.387.8338
 Email: embassyofcolombia@colombiaemb.org

Salutation: Dear Ambassador

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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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 16 August, Amnesty International released a public statement on the situation in Chocó, expressing concern at the grave humanitarian situation in the department (see: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr23/6946/2017/en/>). In the first half of 2017, Indigenous communities in Chocó complained that there have been at least two paramilitary incursions in their territories. The first took place on 6 March and caused the massive displacement of families and the confinement of nearby communities in Peña Azul (for more information, see: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/AMR23/5826/2017/en/>). The second took place on 18 April in the collective territory of Jiguamiandó, near the Pueblo Nuevo Humanitarian Zone (for more information, see: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/AMR23/6082/2017/en/>).

Crimes against international law and human rights violations persist in the department of Chocó, including the selective killing of members of Afro-Colombian communities and Indigenous peoples, forced collective displacements, the confinement of communities and forced recruitment of boys and girls.

Indigenous peoples in Chocó live facing constant threats and violence from paramilitary armed groups, so 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 and Embera Indigenous communities of Juun Dur, Quiparalito, and Puerto Olave
Gender m/f: All

Further information on UA: 178/17 Index: AMR 23/7032/2017 Issue Date: 31 August 2017