

URGENT ACTION

SEVEN PEOPLE KILLED IN CAUCA, COLOMBIA

Seven bodies, all male, were found piled on a road of the municipality of Argelia, in the southwest region of Cauca, Colombia. The bodies are being identified by authorities as they were presumably not from the municipality. In the past few weeks, paramilitary groups have been circulating pamphlets threatening to kill certain groups of people.

In the early morning of 3 July, the inhabitants of the rural area of the municipality of Argelia, Cauca in the south-western region of Colombia, found seven bodies on a road connecting the villages of La Belleza and Sinaí. The bodies were reported to have been shot at point blank range with visible signs of torture and other ill-treatment. On 5 July, the authorities were able to identify six of the seven bodies, two of which were registered ex-combatants from the demobilized guerrilla group FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia).

Amnesty International has received reports from the Displaced Afrodescendant Association (AFRODES) that pamphlets from paramilitary groups, identified as the Popular Cleansing Squad (Comando Popular de Limpieza) and the Self Defense Gaitanista Forces (AGC - Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia), have been circulated in the past weeks, in which the two groups warn they will “eliminate” robbers, rapist, and gossipers, and those from outside the municipality were declared “military targets”.

The people of Argelia are scared as this might be a warning of future violent acts. They reported the presence of various armed groups in the area- including ELN (National Liberation Army), FARC (The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia), dissident groups that did not participate in the Peace Agreement, paramilitary groups and criminal gangs believed to be involved in drug trafficking; the municipality of Algeria is identified as a drug trafficking activity corridor.

1) TAKE ACTION

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

- Order a prompt, thorough and impartial investigation into the killing of the seven people found in Argelia, Cauca;
- Dismantle paramilitary groups, in accordance with the government’s express commitments and with recommendations made by international bodies and recommendations from Amnesty International;
- Provide protection to the community, ensuring that acts of violence are not repeated and that their human rights are respected.

Contact these two officials by 17 August, 2018:

President

Señor Juan Manuel Santos Presidente de la República Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No.7-26 Bogotá, Colombia

Contact form: contacto@presidencia.gov.co

Salutation: Dear President Santos

Ambassador Camilo Reyes, Embassy of Colombia

1724 Massachusetts Ave NW, Washington DC 20036

Phone: 202 387 8338 | Fax: 202-232-8643

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 128.18*

Here’s why it is so important to report your actions: we record the actions taken on each case—letters, emails, calls and tweets—and use that information in our advocacy.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Negotiations between the guerrilla group, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia and the Colombian government formally started in October 2012 with the aim of ending more than 50 years of internal armed conflict. The first version of the Peace Agreement was signed by the parties on 26 September 2016 and submitted to a referendum on 2 October 2016. The Agreement was rejected in the referendum which cast doubts over the continuation of the peace talks and raised issues around how to balance the need to reach a peace agreement with Colombia's international obligations with regard to justice and the rights of victims. A new version of the Peace Agreement was signed on 24 November 2016 and in a subsequent vote it was approved by a majority vote by Congress on 1 December 2016.

Amnesty International has stated on a number of occasions that the effective implementation of the Peace Agreement in territories historically affected by violence could contribute to the non-repetition of such crimes. In some departments, including Chocó, Cauca, Antioquia and Norte de Santander, crimes under international law and human rights violations persist, including the murder of members of AfroColombian communities and Indigenous Peoples, collective forced displacements, confinement of communities in certain areas of the country, forced recruitment of children to serve in the armed groups, sexual violence, and the use of anti-personnel mines.

Since the Peace Agreement was signed, the armed conflict has intensified in some areas due to confrontations between the guerrilla forces of the National Liberation Army (ELN), paramilitary groups and state security forces, all attempting to fill the power vacuum left by the FARC.

The municipality of Argelia, Cauca, has been the scene of many violent acts during the armed conflict in Colombia. In 2015, one day after the people of Argelia had clashes with the military – which ended in one person killed and three wounded, a bomb set by the guerrilla group, FARC killed three police agents. Confrontations between the community and security forces have been continuous and are commonly related to coca leaf eradication operations; the municipality has a high density of coca crops.

Since 2015, there have been reports of paramilitary groups in the Cauca department, stirring up fear among the inhabitants and threatening the leaders of the communities. The Ombudsperson has warned of the community's vulnerability on numerous occasions. Despite these warnings, the state response has still not been comprehensive nor timely and the inhabitants feel threatened by the variety of armed groups that now clash for territorial control.

Just a year ago, in the municipality of Bolivar, also in Cauca, six bodies were found in similar circumstances, allegedly related to drug trafficking issues, where bodies were found piled up and with shots at point blank range. Investigations to date have not lead to the perpetrators of the crime being held to account, which is also telling of a high degree of impunity among these types of crimes in the Cauca region.

In the past two months, at least 10 human rights defenders, that purportedly supported the campaign of presidential nominee, Gustavo Petro, have been killed. The paramilitary group, AGC has been circulating a pamphlet threatening to kill supporters of Gustavo Petro, who an overwhelming percentage of the population in Argeria supported in the last presidential election.

Name: unidentified
Gender m/f: all Male