

COLOMBIA

BOMBING NEAR INDIGENOUS TERRITORY IN CHOCÓ

While carrying out operations against the National Liberation Army (ELN), the Colombian security forces bombed near the Wounaan Indigenous reservation of Chagpién Tordó, in the municipality of Litoral de San Juan in Chocó, injuring a minor. Nearby communities are currently forcibly displaced as fear of new operations threaten the population.

On 30 January, the Titan Force Squad of the Colombian National Army carried out operations against the National Liberation Army (Ejército de Liberación Nacional, ELN) in the department of Chocó and bombed areas near the Wounaan Indigenous reservation of Chagpién Tordó. The bombing injured a 16-year-old girl who was transported to the municipality of Buenaventura due the gravity of her injuries. Reports from the Ombudsperson's Office in Chocó suggest that additional people may have been injured or killed, but the official numbers have not been determined yet. Indigenous Peoples of Santa María Pangala and Estrella Pangala are displacing massively from their territories but are confined within nearby roads for fear of continuous confrontations between armed groups and security forces.

Amnesty International received reports that many members of the Chagpién Tordó Indigenous reservation had been forcibly displaced on two occasions in 2017, also due to confrontations between the army, ELN and paramilitary groups. The National Indigenous Organization (Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia, ONIC) denounced both forced displacements. To date, the State has not taken any measures to ensure the right to life, integrity and security of this community.

The most recent attack on civilians is a flagrant violation of the norms of international humanitarian law, such as the principle that parties to armed conflict must distinguish between the civilian population and combatants.

Please send a fax, email or letter without delay. (Postage is \$2.50.)

* Insist that the authorities ensure urgent humanitarian aid and integral attention is provided to the forcibly displaced and confined communities in Chocó.

* Call on them to comply with their international obligations to prevent the displacement of Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendant communities from their territories and guarantee their rights as victims of the armed conflict.

* Remind them that civilians, including Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendant communities and other civilians living in the area, have the right to not be drawn into the armed conflict, and that the State has the obligation to comply with international humanitarian law and its violation could trigger international State responsibility.

Here is the contact information you need:

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Additional information

Amnesty International has been drawing attention to the serious human rights and security situation in the department of Chocó in order to call on Colombia to take action and ensure the effective implementation of the Peace Agreement on the ground and to fulfil its international human rights obligations. The absence of a comprehensive and effective response by all the institutions of the state in territories ravaged by the armed conflict is a direct cause of the current violations of human rights of the Indigenous and Afro-descendant inhabitants of the department. Violations of the right to life, to physical integrity, to freedom of movement, to land and to cultural identity persist. There is still a long way to go to ensure the creation of a stable and lasting peace that respects individual and collective human rights.

The end of the bilateral cease fire between the ELN and the Colombian government at the beginning of January and the suspension of the peace negotiations on 29 January have ignited a new wave of violent action from this illegal armed group and the government has responded with increased military operations against them.

It is regrettable that at this stage in the process, communities are reporting violations by the security forces as well as links between them and paramilitary groups. Communities and national NGOs have reported that since November 2016, paramilitary groups have been present in several areas of the department and that the state's weak response to their movements has resulted in communities in the vicinity reporting an increase in intimidation and threats, which is impacting their freedom of movement.