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COLOMBIA

THOUSANDS IN NEED OF URGENT PROTECTION

7,000 persons from Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities in Bojayá, Chocó (western Colombia) face life-threatening attacks and risk of forced displacement as the guerrilla group 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. People in the communities of Unión Baquiza, Unión Cuití, Carrillo, Playita, Mesopotamia and Egoróquera are at risk.

In Chocó, several assassinations of community leaders recently occurred, and communities are constantly under threat from armed groups without any preventive action from national authorities. The situation is extremely serious and immediate action must be taken before conditions lead to mass killing or forced displacement.

Most of the people at risk were already confined 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, members of the two groups have been placing anti-personnel mines near the communities, 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 the vulnerable state of these communities without there having been a comprehensive institutional response beyond a merely military response.

Please send an email, tweet or letter to the president.

- * Express your concern for the safety of the Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities in Bojayá, Chocó, given the threatening presence of the ELN and the Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia.
- * Urge him to immediately deploy a comprehensive protection plan for the people at risk in these communities (please name one or more of Unión Baquiza, Unión Cuití, Carrillo, Playita, Mesopotamia and Egoróquera) that respects their guidance, approval and participation.
- * Ask him to investigate any illegal activity by armed groups that affects the rights of these communities and bring perpetrators to justice.
- * Call on him to implement measures of justice, reparation and guarantees to prevent human rights violations against these communities.

Write to

President Iván Duque
Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No.7-26
Bogotá, Colombia
Email: contacto@presidencia.gov.co
Twitter: @IvanDuque
Salutation: Dear President Duque

Please copy

His Excellency Federico Eduardo Hoyos Salazar
Ambassador for Colombia
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Phone: 613 230 3760
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The Honourable Chrystia Freeland
Minister of Foreign Affairs
111 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6
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Additional information

The Indigenous and Afro-descendent communities of Chocó department have been facing serious human rights violations through many years of conflict in Colombia. They have experienced forced displacement, mass killing, and other human rights violations at the hands of guerrilla, paramilitary groups and the army.

In 2002, a mass killing amid clashes between the FARC and paramilitary groups known as "Bojayá Massacre" marked the beginning of a violent chapter in the history in Colombia. The inaction from the state at the time enabled the conditions for the human rights violations faced by people living in armed conflict zones. That year, the Ombudsman's Office issued various alerts. They demonstrated the lack of protection for Afro-descendent and Indigenous communities in the municipality, and the inadequate state response, both of which left communities in a vulnerable position.