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Colombia: Amnesty International condemns killings of Indigenous Awá People in Nariño and calls for their protection

Amnesty International today condemned the killing of 27 Awá People in the department of Nariño, in the south of the country, and expressed serious concern at reports that members of the Awá in the department have subsequently begun to flee their homes.

According to the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (ONIC), on 11 February the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) guerrilla group killed 10 Awá in the department. This followed the killing of 17 Awá on 4 February, also in Nariño, and also reportedly carried out by the FARC. There are also reports that an unknown number of Awá have been abducted.

If verified, these killings represent yet another tragic example of the numerous serious violations of international humanitarian law and human rights abuses committed against Indigenous communities by all the parties to Colombia's long-running armed conflict, including guerrilla groups, paramilitaries and the security forces. The deliberate killing of civilians is a war crime.

Amnesty International calls on the Colombian authorities to initiate an immediate and thorough investigation into the killings, and to bring those responsible to justice, as well as guarantee the safety of the humanitarian commission which is seeking to travel to the area to verify the facts.

The organization calls on the guerrilla to prohibit the deliberate killing of civilians and to free all Awá and other civilians they hold captive.

All the warring parties must respect the right to life of Indigenous People, as well as that of other civilian communities, and ensure that they are not dragged into the conflict.

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