

URGENT ACTION

COMMUNITIES IN BOJAYÁ, CHOCÓ (western Colombia) THREATENED BY ARMED GROUPS

Human Rights Defender Leyner Palacios has been vocal about the presence of these illegal armed groups in the territories of the communities of Bojayá. On December 31st, 2019, 300 members of the Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia placed four communities of Bojayá under forced confinement. On January 3rd, 2020, the AGC threatened Leyner Palacios and gave him two hours to leave the territory of Bojayá or they would kill him. We urge the Colombian government to take immediate action to guarantee his protection.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Iván Duque Márquez
President of Colombia
c/ Minister of Interior

Address: Carrera 8 No. 7-26, Bogotá, Colombia
Email: contacto@presidencia.gov.co

Your Excellency Mr. President,

I am writing you to express my serious concern about the situation of forced confinement that the communities of Bojayá are currently living, as well as the death threats that Leyner Palacios, a human rights defender from Bojayá, has received on January 3rd, 2020. Mr. Palacios has advocated against the presence of illegal armed groups in the territory of Bojayá.

On December 31st, 2019, 300 members of the Autodefensas Gaitanistas (AGC) arrived in the community of Pogue and placed this and other communities under forced confinement. Furthermore, on January 3rd, 2020, they threatened Mr. Palacios, urging him to leave Bojayá or he would be killed.

Although I am aware that the Colombian army has taken some steps to address the situation in Bojayá, this action requires further attention. This is why I urge you to take immediate action to ensure collective measures for the communities of Bojaya and to guarantee the safety of Leyner Palacios from threats made by the AGC.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Leyner Palacios is a survivor of the Bojayá massacre perpetrated in 2002. Because of this, he has become an important social leader and was the promoter of the act of recognition of responsibility in which the FARC apologized to the communities of the municipality of Bojayá. For this work he has received several recognitions, the most recent being the "World Prize for Pluralism" of the World Centre for Pluralism of Canada.

Because of his work, he has received several threats from illegal armed groups. In June 2018, Palacios was in a workshop in the Puerto Conto community in the municipality of Bojayá when an unknown man with a suspicious attitude approached the community and asked a boy who Leyner Palacios was. Denied the information, the man left the community.

In Thursday, 18 July, 2018, Leyner Palacios received a phone call in which a man told him to "stop bothering with this tale of peace" and that if he didn't get out, they would kill him. Palacios denounced this fact on July 19, 2018 before the departmental police of Chocó, an entity that would be in charge of processing it before the Attorney General's Office. That same day he went to the Ombudsman's Office where he filled out a form to be sent to the UNP.

In Monday, 6 August, 2018, he again received a phone call in which a man told him "you are going to die".

On the other hand, the Indigenous and Afro-descendent communities of all Chocó State, especially those from Bojayá, had been facing serious human rights violations across the years of conflict in Colombia, including forced displacement, mass killings, among other human rights violations, occurred at the hands of guerrilla, paramilitary groups and the army.

In October 18, 2019, Amnesty International issued an Urgent Action as the Colombian Office of the Ombudsman raised an alert that the Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia (AGC) were still operating in Bojayá, placing at least 2,250 people from indigenous and afro-descendant communities under forced confinement and live-threatening risk.

In December 31, 2019, the Inter-Church Commission for Justice and Peace denounced that 300 members of the AGC arrived at the communities of Pogue, Corazón de Jesús, Loma de Bojayá and Cuia, in Bojayá, and placed them under forced confinement, threatening them to kill them if they denounced this. Some villagers who were able to escape from confinement denounced that the members of the AGC were making gifts to the children, trying to recruit them. Furthermore, in January 3rd, 2020, Leyner Palacios has been threatened to leave the community or he would be killed.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Spanish

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 14 February 2020

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Indigenous and Afro-Descendant communities of Bojayá (they)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr23/1509/2019/en/>