

URGENT ACTION

RURAL COMMUNITIES AND ENVIRONMENT AT RISK

On 12 April 2021, President Ivan Duque signed decree 380 allowing the spraying of glyphosate for the eradication of illicit crops to resume. This policy, which was stopped in 2015 due to its detrimental effect on human rights and the environment, could negatively affect the health and other related rights of hundreds of campesino farming communities and have further environmental impacts in the country. We urge the National Narcotics Council to ensure the immediate suspension of aerial spraying with glyphosate.

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

Minister of Justice and Law
Mr Wilson Ruiz Orejuela
President of the National Narcotics Council
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Phone number: +57 1 2368025
Address: Cl. 53 #1327, Bogotá, Colombia
Twitter: @WilsonRuizO

Dear Mr Wilson Ruiz Orejuela:

I am writing to express concern for the health and safety of thousands of people whose rights are on peril if the Colombian government resumes the eradication of illicit crops through aerial spraying glyphosate. Colombia should ensure that efforts to prevent illicit drug cultivation or eradicate illicit crops do not adversely affect the enjoyment of human rights, including of peasant communities whose livelihoods depend on such crops.

It is widely documented that the use of glyphosate has had a serious impact on the environment and the human rights of thousands of people, such as right to life, health, water, to a healthy and safe environment and to an adequate standard of living. The force eradication of illegal crops with glyphosate will exacerbate the situation of conflict in the country, leaving rural communities in an even more vulnerable situation.

We urge you to immediately agree on a suspension of aerial spraying with glyphosate, and to refrain from adopting drug policies that harm people. In this sense, I call on you to develop instead policies that address the underlying socio-economic causes that lead people to cultivate these crops and avoid entrenching poverty and deprivation in these communities. The government must provide peasants farmers who depend on such crops with the necessary support to develop economically viable and sustainable alternatives and to realize their right to work and an adequate standard of living. The programs for voluntary substitution, recognized in the Peace Agreement, have proven to be more sustainable and effective for the protection of communities' human rights.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In 2017, the [ruling T- 236 by the Colombian Constitutional Court](#) concluded that there are elements to affirm, provisionally, that glyphosate is a toxic substance that, depending on the level of exposure, can cause cancer or have other health implications. This ruling also sets the requirements that must be met before using aerial spraying to destroy illicit crops.

In 2019, the Constitutional Court issued [the resolution 387](#) concluding that the government had the obligation to prioritize voluntary substitution over violent forced eradication methods. The Court also established that aerial spraying with glyphosate should be the last option, only if voluntary substitution and manual eradication have failed. The resolution also determined that the Colombian government should frame a decision on the return of aerial spraying within the framework of point 4 ("*Solution to the problem of Illicit Drugs*") of the Peace Accords, signed by the Colombia government and the FARC-EP in 2016.

On 17 December 2020, ten UN independent experts [sent a letter to the President of Colombia](#) asking the government not to resume aerial spraying of illicit crops, as this program would present "enormous risks" for human rights and the environment and would violate the peace agreement, as well as could go against Colombia's obligations under international human rights law.

In 2020, the government failed to significantly implement programmes for voluntary crop substitution, a key component of the Peace Agreement. Instead, the government set a goal of forcibly eradicate coca production on over 130,000 hectares, led by the military. On July 2020, Amnesty International [issued a press release](#) calling on the government to stop ground-spraying operations in coca plantations because they could result in human rights violations in the *campesino* farming communities that depend on coca for their livelihoods. Moreover, Amnesty International argued that beginning a process of forced crop eradication would exacerbate the situation of conflict in the country and leave rural communities and social leaders in an even more dangerous situation.

Despite the health emergency declared due to COVID-19 and government orders for mandatory isolation; as well as multiple requests by several civil society organizations to suspend forced eradication of coca during the sanitary emergency; the authorities carried out these operations in at least [seven departments](#) in the country.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Spanish

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 11 June 2021

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

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Campesino Farming Communities (They, them)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: n/a