

URGENT ACTION

THOUSANDS IN NEED OF URGENT PROTECTION

2,250 Persons from indigenous and Afro-descendant communities in Bojayá, Chocó (western Colombia) are under siege by the guerrilla National Liberation Army (Ejército de Liberación Nacional, ELN) and the paramilitary Gaitanistas Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia) groups that are denying them access to food and basic healthcare services. On 17 November, the ombudsman's office reported that the armed groups threatened social leaders opposing their presence in the zone and were putting landmines around the few areas with phone coverage. We urge Colombian authorities to deploy a comprehensive protection plan to protect Bojaya's communities rights.

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

Mr. President,

I write you with the deepest concern about the situation of forced confinement of 2,250 people, including indigenous and afro-Colombian communities, in the municipality of Bojayá, Chocó.

The Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) and the Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia (AGC) are sustaining hostilities in the region and have even deployed landmines in the few areas with telephone coverage, which is restricting the communities' access to healthcare, food, water and communication.

The governmental action on this situation has so far been focused on military response, which effectively deepen the vulnerability of these communities.

In order to guarantee the protection of the communities, I urge you to immediately deploy a comprehensive plan with the participation and agreement of the communities, that give effective and urgent access to all basic services and guarantees the communities' protection against any attacks from armed groups.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Indigenous and Afro-descendent communities of all Chocó State had been facing serious human rights violations across the years of conflict in Colombia with forced displacement, mass killings, and other human rights violations occurred by the hands of guerrilla, paramilitary groups and the army.

In 2002, The Ombudsman's Office issued various alerts demonstrating the lack of protection for Afro-descendent and Indigenous communities in the municipality of Bojayá, and the inadequate state response, leaving communities in a vulnerable position due to the presence of the then Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC). In May 2, 2002, a mass killing known as "Bojayá Massacre" marked the beginning of a violent history in Colombia with thousands of victims in the midst of clashes between the FARC and paramilitary groups. The inaction from the state at the time was considered as critical to enable the conditions for the human rights violations faced by people living in armed conflict zones.

In 2017, Amnesty International warned that the environment of exclusion, neglect and invisibility of this territory, created by the Colombian state, reinforced these communities' vulnerable state without there having been a comprehensive institutional response beyond a merely military response.

On 24 April 2019, Amnesty International issued an Urgent Action given that 7,000 persons from indigenous and afro descendant communities in Bojayá, Chocó, were facing live-threatening and forced displacement risk, as the guerrilla National Liberation Army (Ejército de Liberación Nacional, ELN) and the paramilitary group Gaitanistas Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia, AGC) were increasing hostilities in their territory.

On 18 October 2019, the Colombian Office of the Ombudsman raised an alert that ELN and AGC armed groups were still operating in Bojayá, placing at least 2,250 people from indigenous and afro-descendant communities under forced confinement and live-threatening risk. This was confirmed on 17 November 2019 by several ethnic-territorial organizations in Chocó and the Diocese of Quibdó, who issued an open letter to President Duque, presenting the human rights violations that the people of Chocó are living, and the risk they are facing to this day. Furthermore, these organizations requested the implementation of the peace agreement, specifically the points relating to the protection of indigenous communities.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Spanish

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 26 December 2019

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/es/documents/amr23/0230/2019/es/>