

## AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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# COLOMBIA: THE CIVILIAN POPULATION OF CATATUMBO MUST BE RESPECTED AND PROTECTED

Amnesty International continues to observe with concern the armed violence that broke out on 16 January 2025 in the Catatumbo region of Colombia. The confrontations between the National Liberation Army (ELN) and the General Staff of Blocks and Fronts (EMBF) are having extremely worrying consequences. Entire communities, including human rights defenders, have been the victims of serious attacks and continue to be at risk of forced displacement, forced confinement and other serious human rights violations. On 21 January, the Ombudsperson's Office reported that it had information on some 32,000 forcibly displaced persons; as of the same date, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights had verified the killing of at least 60 people, including two human rights defenders.

Despite the efforts of the authorities to evacuate people and communities, the risks remain, and further measures are needed to ensure the protection of the population.

Various civil society and human rights organizations, including the Colombian civil society platforms and organizations from Catatumbo such as CISCA, ASCAMCAT, the MCP and ASUNCAT have called on the armed groups to fully respect international humanitarian law and guarantee the lives and physical integrity of the civilian population, ending attacks and threats against social leaders, human rights defenders, signatories of the 2016 Peace Agreement and the civilian population in general.

**"Amnesty International echoes the call of civil society in Catatumbo and demands that international humanitarian law be respected, that the civilian population not be the object of attacks, and that they be protected,"** stated Ana Piquer, Americas director at Amnesty International. **"The organization also calls on the Colombian authorities to continue and intensify measures to protect the lives and physical integrity of the civilian population of Catatumbo, including human rights defenders, their organizations and their communities, as well as the victims of forced displacement and other serious human rights violations."**