

URGENT ACTION

PROVIDE HEALTH TO BARI PEOPLE

Since late August, the Comité de Integración Social del Catatumbo (CISCA) and other local civil society organisations have raised the alarm over a serious health outbreak in the Bridikayra settlement of the Bari Indigenous People in Catatumbo (Northeast of Colombia). Dozens are suffering from fever, pain and haemorrhages, and on 26 August a child died after showing these symptoms. Living afar from urban centres and not being provided with health services puts them at further risk. We call on the Colombian health authorities to urgently control this outbreak with measures respecting Bari People's rights to health and informed and prior consent.

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

Guillermo Alfonso Jaramillo
Minister of Health and Social Protection
Carrera 13 No. 32-76
Bogotá DC, Colombia
E-mail: correo@minsalud.gov.co
X: @MinSaludCol

Dear Mr. Minister,

I am writing to express my deep concern about the health situation of the Bari Indigenous People in the Catatumbo region of Norte de Santander, particularly in the settlement of Bridikayra, municipality of Convención. Regional organisations such as the Comité de Integración Social del Catatumbo (CISCA) and national organisations such as Asociación Minga have publicly warned, including to Amnesty International, that since the end of August the Bari have been facing a health outbreak that is endangering the lives of community members, while their access to healthcare remains unguaranteed.

According to these organisations, dozens of people are suffering from fever, pain and haemorrhages, and on 26 August a child died after presenting these symptoms. The Bari settlements are located far from municipal urban centres where health facilities exist, forcing the community to travel long distances to places such as Convención or Ocaña. Without the resources for transport and lodging, these journeys further endanger their health. Being a bi-national (Colombia and Venezuela) Indigenous community, some members of the Bari People don't have a Colombian identification, causing unjustified barriers for their access to health.

This situation occurs in the context of historic neglect by local and national State institutions, which have failed to ensure a civilian presence and to guarantee Catatumbo's population, including the Bari People, access to basic services and the protection of their human rights. On the contrary, the Bari have repeatedly been victims of the armed violence that continues to affect the region.

I urge you to take immediate and effective action to protect the Bari People's rights to life and health. This includes ensuring access to medical services, as well as the prevention, treatment and control of epidemics, through the establishment of adequately equipped medical facilities in Bari settlements, so they do not have to risk their lives travelling for hours to access healthcare. Any measure needs to be adopted with informed and prior consent given by the Bari People.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Located in north-eastern Colombia, in the department of Norte de Santander, the Catatumbo region stretches between the Eastern Andes and the vicinity of Lake Maracaibo in Venezuela. It is rich in natural resources, particularly oil, but marked by extreme poverty, high militarisation, armed violence, and the lack of access to health, food, education, water and housing. These conditions have created a hostile environment for social leadership and human rights defence. The region also lacks infrastructure and connectivity with the rest of Colombia and remains one of the country's main enclaves for coca cultivation and cocaine production and transit.

Amnesty International has monitored violence against human rights defenders in Catatumbo for several years, with a focus on the Catatumbo Social Integration Committee (CISCA). In [2020](#) and [2023](#), Amnesty documented the challenges to defending collective rights to land, territory and the environment in the region, highlighting how extreme poverty and the lack of access to economic and social rights create a tense and hostile environment, especially for social leaders.

Civil society in Catatumbo is made up mainly of peasant rights organisations and the Bari Indigenous People. This Indigenous People live in the Perijá mountains and near the Catatumbo-Bari National Natural Park in the northern part of the region and at both sides of the border between Colombia and Venezuela. The Bari settlements are located in rural areas of several municipalities of Catatumbo (El Carmen, Convención, Teorama, El Tarra and Tibú), but are far from the municipalities' urban centres, where the few civilian State institutions present in Catatumbo are concentrated. Since the end of August, regional organisations such as [CISCA](#) and national ones such as [Asociación Minga](#) have warned of the critical health crisis affecting the Bari, highlighting the context of child malnutrition, poverty and lack of access to public services that this Indigenous People has experienced for years.

The Catatumbo region has endured decades of armed confrontation involving the military forces and various armed groups. Since mid-January 2025, particularly violent clashes have erupted between the National Liberation Army (ELN) and dissident groups of Front 33 of the former Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People's Army (FARC-EP), now part of a group under the name of General Staff of Blocks and Fronts (EMBF). These confrontations have had severe impact on civilians, leaving dozens dead and tens of thousands forcibly displaced. From the outset of this crisis, Amnesty International has called for the protection of the civilian population through an [Urgent Action](#) and a [Public Statement](#), and has also condemned, through a second [Urgent Action](#), stigmatising statements by the President of the Republic, who claimed that Catatumbo's civil society was "permeated" and "subordinated" to armed groups—remarks that place communities at grave risk.

Amnesty International, as well as several Colombian social organisations, have called to the Government to support and implement structural solutions based on a stronger presence of civilian State institutions, such as the [Social Pact for the Territorial Transformation of Catatumbo](#), that should include and be participatively build with the local civil society organisations, including the authorities of the Bari Indigenous People.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Spanish. You may also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 15 October 2025

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Bari People (they/them)

PREVIOUS UA: N/A