

URGENT ACTION

CIVILIANS AT RISK AS FIGHTING ESCALATES

In recent weeks several civilians have been injured and thousands have been forcibly displaced as the armed conflict between the security forces and the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC) escalates in Cauca Department, Southern Colombia.

Over more than a week, fighting between the security forces and the FARC in the municipalities of Toribío, Jambaló, Caldono, Silva, Caloto, Miranda, Suárez, Morales and Argelia in Cauca Department have put the civilian population, including Indigenous, peasant farmer and Afro descendant communities, on the front line.

In Toribío, which has a large Indigenous population, at least 14 civilians, including medical personnel, have been injured, 400 have been forcibly displaced and over 80 homes have been damaged, according to the Office of the Human Rights Ombudsman. The injuries are believed to have been caused by FARC explosives. In Argelia, another explosion attributed to the FARC led to the death of a boy and injured several other people, including a girl, while some 1,500 civilians have been forced to flee their homes and 74 homes, a school and two community halls, have been severely damaged, according to the International Committee of the Red Cross. The Human Rights Ombudsman has warned of a humanitarian crisis in the area.

The Association of Indigenous Cabildos of Northern Cauca (Asociación Cabildeo Indígenas del Norte de Cauca, ACIN) has called for an end to fighting between the security forces and the FARC and called on them to leave the Indigenous territories. The Defence Minister has claimed the FARC has infiltrated the Indigenous movement. This has threatened to expose the civilian population in the area, especially Indigenous Peoples, to further attack in what is an already tense environment. ACIN, together with several human rights organizations and trade unions in Cauca Department, were also recently threatened and accused of being "defenders of the guerrilla".

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Reminding the authorities of their obligation to protect civilians in line with international humanitarian law (IHL), including the right of civilians not to be drawn into the hostilities, thereby respecting the principle of distinction.
- Condemning human rights abuses and violations of IHL committed by the security forces and guerrilla groups.
- Calling on the authorities to order a full and impartial investigation into the threats against ACIN, CSPP, MOVICE, CUT and SINTRAUNICOL; and asking that they publish the results and bring those responsible to justice.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 28 AUGUST 2012 TO:

President

Señor Juan Manuel Santos
Presidente de la República,
Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No.7-26,
Bogotá, Colombia
Fax: +57 1 596 0631

**Salutation: Dear President Santos/
Excmo. Sr. Presidente Santos**

Defence Minister

Señor Juan Carlos Pinzón
Ministerio de Defensa
Carrera 54, no.26-29
Bogotá, Colombia
Fax: +57 1 266 1003

**Salutation: Dear Minister Pinzón/
Sr. Ministro Pinzón**

Minister of Foreign Affairs

María Ángela Holguín
Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores
Palacio San Carlos
Calle 10 No. 5-51
Bogotá
Colombia
Fax: +57 1 381 4742 (wait for tone after
voice recording)

**Salutation: Estimada Señora Ministra/
Dear Minister**

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

All the warring parties in Colombia's long-running armed conflict have repeatedly failed to respect the civilian population's right not to be dragged into the conflict and have been responsible for serious human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law. Amnesty International has repeatedly called on both sides in the conflict – guerrilla groups and the security forces – to put an immediate and unconditional end to human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law.

The security forces and paramilitary groups have also frequently labelled human rights organizations, trade unions, and Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities as guerrilla collaborators or supporters, and have gone on to threaten, or kill them. Guerrilla groups have also threatened or killed human rights defenders and trade unionists, Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities they consider to be siding with their enemies.

On the evening of 9 July Martha Giraldo, a member of the Valle del Cauca Branch of the National Movement of Victims of State Crimes (Movimiento Nacional de Víctimas de Crímenes de Estado, MOVICE) and Walter Agredo, a member of the Valle del Cauca Branch of the Political Prisoners Solidarity Committee (Comité de Solidaridad con los Presos Políticos, CSPP) received the same text message, which included death threats against a number of organizations, including the ACIN, CSPP, MOVICE, the Trade Union Congress (Central Unitaria de Trabajadores, CUT) and the Colombian University Workers and Employees Trade Union (Sindicato de Trabajadores y Empleados Universitarios de Colombia, SINTRAUNICOL).

Name: civilian population of Cauca department; Walter Agredo, Martha Giraldo; members of ACIN, CSPP, MOVICE, CUT, SINTRAUNICOL
Gender m/f: both; male, female; both

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