

Communiqué from ODHACO and its members Regarding the Recent Events in Catatumbo and the Humanitarian Crisis¹ in Colombia

The International Office for Human Rights in Colombia (ODHACO) and its members express their deep concern over the recent events in the Catatumbo region. Located in the northeast of Colombia, in the department of Norte de Santander, near the border with Venezuela, Catatumbo has long been affected by armed conflict. However, in recent weeks, the region has seen an alarming surge in violence, with multiple clashes between illegal armed groups, displacing thousands of people and creating a serious humanitarian crisis.

Recent weeks have seen intense fighting between FARC-EP dissidents, the National Liberation Army (ELN), and other armed groups, leading to the forced abandonment of homes, the closure of key roads, and the collapse of health and education infrastructures in several communities. Despite the state's efforts to ensure security, civilians remain the most affected, particularly women and children, who have been forced to flee to other regions in search of safety and basic assistance.

Moreover, regions like Guaviare² are showing early signs of what could be a new escalation of violence, with clashes between armed groups and a troubling rise in violence in rural communities. This poses a serious risk of a broader humanitarian crisis that could affect thousands more Colombians.

In this context, ODHACO urges the strengthening of protection measures for communities, ensuring their safety and access to humanitarian aid. It is crucial that the State maintains its commitment to the peace agreements signed with the FARC-EP in 2016 and continues to advance the dialogues and negotiation tables within the framework of the Total Peace Policy. These efforts are essential to prevent further violence against the civilian population.

We also call on the international community to continue supporting the peace process and dialogue in Colombia. International cooperation is crucial not only to facilitate the implementation of peace agreements but also to mitigate the humanitarian crisis facing the people of Catatumbo and other violence-affected regions. Furthermore, this support is vital to consolidating Colombian society's will to build peace through dialogue between the State and armed groups.

ODHACO, a network of European organizations working to promote and defend human rights in Colombia, is dedicated to supporting the peace process and fostering a stable, lasting peace. Its mission is to promote respect for fundamental human rights, particularly in contexts of armed conflict, displacement, and systematic violence. Since its inception, ODHACO has been a leading voice in denouncing human rights violations and supporting victims in their pursuit of justice and reparation.

We reaffirm our commitment to peace in Colombia and express our solidarity with all communities once again caught in the cycle of violence and suffering. Achieving a just and lasting peace requires committed action from both the Colombian government and the international community.

¹ <https://elpais.com/america-colombia/2025-01-21/la-crisis-humanitaria-en-el-catatumbo-ya-deja-60-muertos-mas-de-18000-desplazados-y-46000-ninos-sin-clases-segun-la-onu.html>

² <https://www.elspectador.com/judicial/violencia-en-colombia-crisis-por-enfrentamientos-de-las-disidencias-en-el-guaviare-noticias-hoy/>

Endorsed by:

