

## **URGENT ACTION**

**A recent confrontation between illegal armed groups followed by a detonation of an explosive device have led to the displacement and evacuation of Indigenous communities in Northern Cauca.**

To the Colombian State, the media and public opinion: In light of the incidents on 8 and 9 December 2017, we, the undersigning organisations, express our most profound concern regarding the recent violations of the fundamental rights of the Nasa Indigenous People in Northern Cauca.

### **Background**

In several newsletters this year, the *Tejido de Defensa de la Vida y los Derechos Humanos* (Network for the Defence of Life and Human Rights) of the Association of Indigenous Chapters of Northern Cauca – ACIN warned of the presence of more than 10 different illegal armed groups in their territory since the Peace Accord between the national government and the FARC was signed.

During the recent *Minga Indígena*<sup>1</sup>, the Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca – CRIC and the ACIN denounced the seriousness of this situation and the risks that were linked to it.

However, until now, the Colombian State has not started taking the necessary measures to guarantee control over and dismantling of these armed groups in the region.

### **Events**

On 8 December, there was an armed confrontation between two illegal armed groups that were identified as presumably belonging to the EPL and a group of FARC dissidents. The events are currently still being investigated by the ACIN and its Indigenous Guards (*Kiwe Thegnas*).

During the armed confrontation, at least six persons that were not members of the community were killed. The *Kiwe Thegnas* are going around the territory to determine the total number of victims that were killed, injured or otherwise affected.

Since that day, 253 families have been displaced from their territories and had to move to three permanent assembly points (*sitios de asamblea permanente*).<sup>2</sup> Forty-eight families were displaced from the Vereda de Aguablanca, eighty-two from Robles, sixty from La Cabaña and sixty-three from Olivares.

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<sup>1</sup> For the indigenous people, "Minga" means to circulate, making every physical and spiritual force meet in the Minga. Minga means to construct unity from the vision of the people. In this case it was a coming together of Indigenous People to denounce the grave dangers the community faced.

<sup>2</sup> These points are areas of emergency refuge inside the indigenous territory.

According to the ACIN, state institutions have stated that the zone is militarised and that new combats are expected, given that the armed groups are still transiting through the zone.

## **Enquiries**

On 9 December at 20:00, an explosive device was detonated in Buitrera, Resguardo of Huellas, in the municipality of Caloto, which – according to information that has yet to be confirmed - hit two members of the Army.

## **Requests to o the Colombian State**

- Initiate, in coordination with the indigenous authorities, the dismantlement of all illegal armed groups whose presence and activities violate the rights of the Nasa people, including the existing illegal armed groups as well as those that have emerged in the context of the implementation of the Peace Accord.
- Monitor the development of the events through the roundtable that was created in the framework of the agreements signed between the CRIC and the national government during the Minga Indígena of 2017.
- Convene the high-level authority of the Ethnic Chapter to analyse the situation and define strategic and preventive measures.
- Guarantee an extraordinary emergency attention mechanism that operates during the festive period at the end of 2017.
- Immediately launch investigations into the violations of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights against the indigenous population.

## **Requests to the International Community**

- Support any protection measures that are defined by the indigenous authorities, as well as the work that is currently carried out by the Kiwe Thegnas and the *Tejido de Defensa de la Vida y los Derechos Humanos* (Network for the Defence of Life and Human Rights).
- Guarantee an extraordinary verification and emergency response mechanism that would be put in place for the festive period at the end of 2017.

Signed:

Pensamiento y Acción Social – PAS (Social Thought and Action)  
Protection International – PI  
PeaceWatchSwitzerland – PWS  
Corporación Colectivo Ansur (Collective Corporation Ansur)