

via email: contacto@presidencia.gov.co Excmo. Sr. Presidente Juan Manuel Santos President of the Republic of Colombia	via email: despacho.fiscal@fiscalia.gov.co Sr. Fiscal General Néstor Humberto Martínez Neira Attorney General of Colombia
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February 13, 2018

Dear President Santos and Attorney General Martínez:

We are deeply concerned for the safety of the community living on the **Wounaan Indigenous reservation of Chagpien Tordó** in the municipality of Litoral de San Juan in Chocó Department. They are caught in armed battles between the Colombia National Army and the National Liberation Army (ELN) rebel group.

We have received information that on January 30, the Titan Force Squad of the Colombian National Army carried out operations against the ELN in Chocó and bombed areas near the reservation. The bombing caused serious injuries to a 16-year old girl, who was transported to a hospital Buenaventura, Valle del Cauca Department. Reports indicate that additional people may have been injured or killed. Reports we received previously revealed that many members of the Chagpien Tordó Indigenous reservation had been forcibly displaced on two occasions in 2017, also due to confrontations between the army, ELN, and paramilitary groups.


As you are well aware, indigenous peoples and Afro-descendant communities are subjected to displacements, and violations of the right to life, to physical integrity, to freedom of movement, to land, and to cultural identity. It is most regrettable that communities are reporting violations by the government security forces as well as links between those security forces and paramilitary groups. The most recent attack on civilians is a flagrant violation of the norms of international humanitarian law, such as the principle that parties to armed conflict must distinguish between the civilian population and combatants. It is imperative that you use the power of your office to ensure the creation of a stable and lasting peace that respects individual and collective human rights.

In view of the facts presented above, we strongly urge you to

- ensure that urgent humanitarian aid and attention is provided to the forcibly displaced and confined communities in Chocó
- comply with your international obligations to prevent the displacement of indigenous peoples and Afro-descendant communities from their territories, and guarantee their rights as victims of the armed conflict

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,


Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Co-Coordinator

and


Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: Camilo Reyes, Ambassador of Colombia to the US ~ via fax: 202.232.8643 and email
 Rebecca Daley, Human Rights Officer, US Embassy in Colombia ~ via email
 Ryan Reid and Christine Russell, Desk Officers for Colombia, US State Dept ~ via email
 Francisco José Eguiguren Praeli, Rapporteur for Colombia, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email
 Antonia Urrejola, Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email
 US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Beatty, Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

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The following people hereby urge you to take action on this matter as indicated in this letter: