

<p>via email: contacto@presidencia.gov.co <b>Excmo. Sr. Presidente Juan Manuel Santos</b> President of the Republic of Colombia</p>	<p>via email: despacho.fiscal@fiscalia.gov.co <b>Sr. Fiscal General Néstor Humberto Martínez Neira</b> Attorney General of Colombia</p>
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March 24, 2018

Dear Sirs:

We are very concerned about the forced eviction of the **Yukpa indigenous people** from Cúcuta, the capital city of Norte de Santander Department. They are being sent back to Venezuela from where they had crossed over to Colombia.

According to the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (ONIC), on March 15, police forces initiated the eviction of these communities in the El Escobal sector of the city and under the Santander International Bridge border crossing, where approximately 500 Yukpa people live. This is the third eviction since the mayor of Cúcuta issued a directive on October 1, 2017, assigned the category of "foreign citizens" and forced back to Venezuela. They are currently living in highly precarious conditions, lacking basic services such as drinking water, food and access to health and education. They keep returning to Colombia because there are no guarantees of food or health care if they stay in Venezuela.

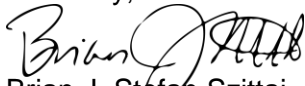
The Yukpa people have historically lived on both sides of the border between Colombia and Venezuela. In Colombia the 2005 census accounted for 4,761 Yukpas, and in Venezuela, the 2011 census accounted for 10,640. As a binational tribe, most Yukpa people do not possess identity papers. It is hard for them to prove their binationality inherent to their ethnic identity. Their notion of ancestral territory is pre-existing to the border. According to ethnographic data, there are multiple forms of exchange between groups and families on both sides, configuring a unit that transcends the countries' borders.

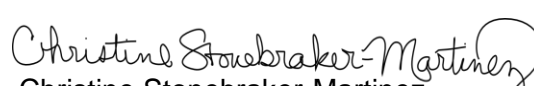
The Colombian constitution recognizes that cross-bordering indigenous peoples are entitled to be treated as citizens. In 2009, the Constitutional Court ordered the formulation and implementation of safeguard plans to respond to the critical situation experienced by 34 indigenous peoples of Colombia, including the Yukpa people, affected by the armed conflict and forced displacement.

In light of these facts, we **strongly urge** that you

- stop the eviction and forced return of Yukpa people to Venezuela
- provide comprehensive assistance with cultural relevance to guarantee the right to life, health, food and shelter of Yukpa communities in Cúcuta and other border cities
- implement the ethnic safeguard plans of the Yukpa indigenous people, in consultation with community-based organizations and Yukpa residents themselves who have crossed to Colombia from Venezuela

Sincerely,

  
Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
Co-Coordinator

  
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

UA 59/18\_Colombia

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