

via email: contacto@presidencia.gov.co  
**Excmo. Sr. Presidente Juan Manuel Santos**  
President of the Republic of Colombia

via email: servicioalciudadano@mininterior.gov.co  
**Estimado Sr. Ministro Guillermo Rivera**  
Minister of the Interior of Colombia

June 14, 2018

Dear Sirs:

We are very disturbed by the armed attack on May 17 on the binational indigenous Yukpa people living in Cúcuta, Norte de Santander Department. Late at night an unidentified armed group, presumably paramilitaries, attacked a hostel located in the Cúcuta neighborhood of Nuevo Escobal, where more than 300 indigenous Yukpa people from Venezuela were living. Community leaders have reported the disappearance of two community members; a third member has suffered injuries as the result of the attack. Colombian authorities initially remained silent and did not activate the necessary contingency plans for their support in Cúcuta.

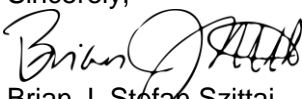
Jesuit Refugee Service has reported that 106 indigenous people, including 56 children, were forced to move to the Santander Park in Cúcuta in search of refuge and assistance from the local authorities. Some were subsequently displaced to the Venezuelan border. The Yukpa people have long occupied both sides of the Colombian-Venezuelan border. However, the political and humanitarian crisis in Venezuela has caused a significant displacement of the Yukpa from Venezuelan territory into Colombia. Since December 2017 a large number of Yukpa have settled in the Nuevo Escobal neighborhood, and along the banks of the Táchira River (cf our letter of March 24).

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.

Therefore, we **strongly urge** that you

- immediately activate the Contingency Plan established under Law 1448 of 2011 to provide assistance to the Indigenous Yukpa People forced from their homes by armed attacks in the region;
- provide care and assistance, including their requested relocation within Colombia, in order to guarantee the life, integrity and continued existence of the Indigenous Yukpa People in Colombia;
- immediately launch the ethnic safeguard plan for the binational Indigenous Yukpa People and guarantees of their rights within Colombian territory

Sincerely,

  
Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
Co-Coordinator

  
Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: Paula Gaviria, Presidential Advisor on Human Rights ~ via fax or US mail  
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  
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:**