

via email: asuntosdefensor@defensoria.gov.co Carlos Alfonso Negret Mosquera National Ombudsperson of Colombia/ Defensor del Pueblo	via email: servicioalciudadano@mininterior.gov.co Sra. Ministra Alicia Arango Olmos Minister of the Interior of Colombia
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June 19, 2020

Dear Ombudsperson Negret and Minister Arango,

We are deeply concerned about the **imminent threat of violence to the people living in and surrounding Ituango municipality**, Antioquia Department, because of the recent insurgence of the armed paramilitaries Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia (AGC).

The human rights association *Proceso Social de Garantías para la Labor de las y los Defensores de Derechos Humanos de Antioquia* (Social Process of Guarantees for the Work of the Human Rights Defenders of Antioquia) has warned authorities in Colombia about this grave threat. A few weeks ago, the AGC began implementing their strategy *Operación Mil* (Operation One-Thousand), surrounding Ituango municipality with one-thousand armed forces in order to take complete control of the urban and rural areas. The AGC has been mobilizing paramilitary units from the departments of Chocó and Córdoba to implement this plan. It is feared that they are also engaging in forced child recruitment to supplement their forces.


The threats of violence are real. On June 6, armed persons committed a massacre of several persons in the Quebrada del Medio rural zone of Ituango. The victims include: **Camilo Sucerquia Durango**, the 15-year-old son of an ex-FARC combatant; **Carlos Barrera**, age 17; **William Pérez**, a truck driver; and at least two unnamed persons. General Juan Carlos Ramírez, commander of the Seventh Division of the Army, announced that he was deploying troops to "find the whereabouts of those responsible for this reprehensible act."

It is worth noting that this massacre occurred just one day after members of the Social Process of Guarantees for the Work of Human Rights Defenders held a meeting with the *Mesa Territorial de Garantías* (Territorial Roundtable of Guarantees) with high level government officials, such as the Vice-Minister of the Interior. The human rights defenders left the meeting disappointed in what they described as responses from the officials that were "ambiguous" and reflected "institutional negligence, bureaucratic incompetence, [and] dangerous inaction."

We strongly urge that you

- immediately consult with the Social Process of Guarantees for the Work of the Human Rights Defenders of Antioquia to implement a plan to protect communities living in Ituango
- carry out a transparent and thorough investigation into the massacre of June 6, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice
- work to fully implement the Peace Accords of 2016 to prevent the repetition of acts of violence against vulnerable populations, such as the residents of Ituango

Sincerely,


Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordinator


Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: Excmo. Sr. Presidente Iván Duque Márquez, President of the Republic of Colombia ~ via email
Francisco Barbosa Delgado, Attorney General of Colombia ~ via email
Francisco Santos Calderón, Ambassador of Colombia to the US ~ via email
Kristin Farrell, Human Rights Officer, US Embassy in Colombia ~ via email
Mariel Chatman, Vulnerable Populations Specialist, US Embassy in Colombia ~ via email
Christine Russell, Desk Officer for Colombia, US State Dept ~ via email
Antonia Urrejola, Rapporteur for Colombia, Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Persons, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email, US mail
CONPAZ: Red Comunidades Construyendo Paz en Colombia ~ via email
US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Beatty, Fudge, Gibbs, Gonzalez, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Ryan ~ via email

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