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| <p><b>Excmo. Sr. Presidente Iván Duque Márquez</b><br/>President of the Republic of Colombia<br/><a href="mailto:contacto@presidencia.gov.co">contacto@presidencia.gov.co</a></p> | <p><b>Sr. Fiscal Francisco Barbosa Delgado</b><br/>Attorney General of Colombia<br/><a href="mailto:despacho.fiscal@fiscalia.gov.co">despacho.fiscal@fiscalia.gov.co</a></p> |
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January 13, 2022

Dear Sirs:

We are deeply concerned that your government is not protecting **villagers in the South of Bolívar**, where paramilitary forces are taking control. We are worried that massive displacement of villagers might result. Large displacement of families occurred there in August 2021 because of the presence of paramilitary forces and the lack of government response.


FEDEAGROMISBOL, the Agrominera [agriculture and mining] Federation of the South of Bolívar, has reported that during the last days of December 2021 the Gaitanista Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AGC paramilitaries, also known as the Clan del Golfo), invaded campesino lands in at least two townships and several villages in the rural area of Montecristo municipality, among which are Mina Mocha, Mina Fácil, Mina Piojo and Mina Mochila. According to FEDEAGROMISBOL and local residents, the Armed Forces of Colombia have a strong presence in the area. Nevertheless, they are allowing the paramilitaries to take control and terrorize the local population.

We wrote to you several months ago about the dangers of allowing the AGC to make a foothold in the Montecristo area of the South of Bolívar. On July 26, 2021, Oswaldo Pérez, the president of the local Community Action Council in Mina Piojo, was assassinated. On September 26, 2021, Erley Osorio Arias, a local leader of FEDEAGROMISBOL, was disappeared by the AGC; his dead body was found on September 30 (cf our letter October 25 2021).

We strongly urge that you

- consult with local leadership in the Montecristo region to devise a plan to protect the local population from further violence and displacement by paramilitary forces
- reevaluate the mission the Colombian Armed Forces in the region
- take decisive actions to dismantle paramilitary groups that are operating in the South of Bolívar

Sincerely,

  
Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
Co-Coordinator

  
Christine Stonebraker-Martínez

copies: Francisco Santos Calderón, Ambassador of Colombia to the US ~ via email, US mail  
Daniel Palacios, Minister of the Interior ~ via email  
Joel Hernández García, Rapporteur for Colombia, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email, US mail  
UN: Juliette De Rivero, Representative in Colombia of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights ~ via email  
US Embassy: Kristen Farrell (human rights) and Mariel Chatman (vulnerable populations) ~ via email  
US State Department: Christine Russell, Desk Officer for Colombia ~ via email  
US Senators Brown & Portman ~ via email  
US Representatives Beatty, Brown, Gibbs, Gonzalez, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Ryan ~ via email

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