

<p>Excmo. Sr. Presidente Gustavo Petro Urrego President of the Republic of Colombia contacto@presidencia.gov.co</p>	<p>Sr. Fiscal Francisco Barbosa Delgado Attorney General of Colombia despacho.fiscal@fiscalia.gov.co</p>
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October 25, 2022

Dear Sirs:

We are writing with concern for residents of the **Indigenous Wiwa community** in Dibulla municipality, La Guajira Department, who are being threatened by paramilitaries. These threats began just days after Wiwa communities gathered in late September, calling all armed actors in the Caribbean coastal region to unite in a joint proposal for Global Territorial Peace.

The paramilitary organization Autodefensas Conquistadoras de la Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta (Self-Defense Conquistadors of the Sierra Nevada of Santa Marta) began distributing pamphlets in early October, in which they threatened to take measures against the Wiwa inhabitants of the region, whom they describe as "ass-kissers, drinkers, womanizers," among other adjectives. They are restricting the mobility of the residents, warning that anyone who is traveling after 8 p.m. in the territory will be declared a military objective. In other words, they will be targeted for killing.


The Wiwa are one of four Indigenous groups (along with the Arhuaco, Kogui, and Kankuamo) who reside on the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, one of the highest coastal mountain ranges on the planet, with snow-capped peaks rising from the Caribbean Sea to 5,800 meters. Since 1973, the Colombian government has recognized a ring of sacred sites that extend around the base of the mountain range. The ancestral territories of the Indigenous communities are collectively known as the "Black Line." The Indigenous peoples believe that the mountain range is the heart of the world, where every element, object and organism from the highest peak to the stream below, forms an indispensable part of an interconnected body.

Because of their spiritual beliefs that the mountains are sacred, the Wiwa have strongly denounced development and infrastructure projects in the area, including coal and gold mining, oil extraction, a coal port, hydroelectric dam, and a hotel—all of which have been carried out without their consent. Almost all the primary forests inside the Black Line have been wiped out. The Wiwa peoples have put forth legal challenges and, as a result, continue to receive threats.

We urge that you

- conduct a thorough and transparent investigation into the threats against the Wiwa communities of Dibulla, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice
- offer state protection for the Wiwa communities, in strict accordance with their wishes
- uphold the 1991 Constitution of Colombia which guarantees ethnic minorities the right to prior consultation on projects that have an environmental or social impact on collective territories.

Sincerely,


Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordiators


Christine Stonebraker-Martínez

copies: Luis Gilberto Murillo, Ambassador of Colombia to the US ~ via email, US mail
Joel Hernández García, Rapporteur for Colombia, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) ~ via email, US mail
Esmeralda Arosemena de Troitiño, Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (IACHR) ~ via email, US mail
UN: Juliette De Rivero, Representative in Colombia of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights ~ via email
CIPJ: Comisión Intereclesial de Justicia y Paz ~ via email
US Embassy: Francisco Palmieri (Chargé d'Affaires, ad interim); Kristen Farrell (human rights); Mariel Chatman (vulnerable populations) ~ via email
US State Department: Christine Russell, Desk Officer for Colombia ~ via email
US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Beatty, Brown, Gibbs, Gonzalez, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Ryan ~ via email

05 OCT 2022_Justicia y Paz_Colombia

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