

Excmo. Sr. Presidente Gustavo Petro Urrego President of the Republic of Colombia contacto@presidencia.gov.co	Sr. Fiscal Francisco Barbosa Delgado Attorney General of Colombia despacho.fiscal@fiscalia.gov.co
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August 26, 2023

Dear Sirs:

We are deeply concerned for the safety of the Wounaan-Nonán people of the Cabildo Indígena of Puerto Pizarío in Caquetá Department, and specifically for the Indigenous leader **Alexis Chocho Chamapuro** and for **Geiler Lizalda** of the Afro-descendant community of Palestina. Both were disappeared on August 2. The ELN (National Liberation Army) later admitted to kidnapping them.

At 6:30 am on August 2, Alexis Chocho Chamapuro from the Wounaan-Nonán Puerto Pizarío reservation was traveling with another 25 passengers in the community boat that provides transportation service to the Port of Colonias in Calima. Six armed men in another motorboat intercepted them between Puerto Pizarío and Palestina. The armed men were holding a list and some photographs. They also had with them **Geiler Lizalda**, member of the Community Council of Palestina, an Afro-descendant community, whom they had forcibly seized from his home. They proceeded on the Río San Juan toward the town of Istmina.


This forced disappearance occurs at a time when disputes over territorial and social control between the Gaitanista Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AGC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN) ensue. The Wounaan people and Afro-descendant communities in Calima, Bajo Calima, San Juan, Litoral San Juan, Novita, and Baudó are in greater confinement as a result of recent events. In response, these communities, together with other Indigenous reservations and community councils of Bajo San Juan, Bajo Calima and Litoral del San Juan, have been working on strategic proposals to build peace in these territories by inviting all armed actors their existence as non-combatants. Organizations such as the Somos Génesis network and CIJP (Inter-Church Council for Justice and Peace) are actively working with these communities.

It is urgent to de-escalate this armed conflict to avoid further damage to the communities. The ELN entered into a ceasefire with the government one day after the kidnapping. As of August 25, there has been no word from the ELN whether the two men are still alive.

We urge that you:

- investigate the kidnapping and continue searching for **Alexis Chocho Chamapuro** and for **Geiler Lizalda**
- consult with the civilian populations to devise and implement protection measures
- urge that the ELN adhere to the recently agreed-upon cease fire and apply the Directorate of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (Dirección de Derechos Humanos y Derecho Internacional Humanitario)

Sincerely,


 Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Co-Coordinator


 Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

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, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) ~ via email, US mail
 Margarette May Macaulay, Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons of African Descent, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) ~ via email, US mail
 UN: Juliette De Rivero, Representative in Colombia of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights ~ via email
 Comisión Intereclesial de Justicia y Paz (CIJP) ~ via email
 Somos Génesis ~ via email
 US Embassy: Francisco Palmieri (Chargé d'Affaires, ad interim); Sandra Lee (human rights), Mariel Chatman (vulnerable populations) ~ via email
 US State Department: Christine Russell, Desk Officer for Colombia ~ via email
 US Senators from Ohio: Brown & Vance and US Representatives from Ohio: Beatty, Brown, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Miller, Sykes ~ via email

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