



Dear all,

We remain concerned about the ongoing insecurity and violence in Colombia's effects on human rights defenders and rural communities, especially the areas inhabited by Indigenous and Afro-descendant Colombians.

Since our last urgent action, we took actions concerning attacks against four of our partners:

July 16, 2024: [*Intimidation of the San José de Julumito Indigenous Community and Its Legal Representation Should Be Investigated*](#)

July 8, 2024: [*We Condemn the Vile Attack Committed Against the Shipia Wayuu Association and Demand Justice*](#)

July 2, 2024: [*Security for the IEANPE Must Be Guaranteed, and Efforts to Advance the Ethnic Chapter Redoubled*](#)

May 22, 2024: [*Attack Against Maria Eugenia Riascos of CONPAZ Col and the Fellowship of Reconciliation \(FOR\)*](#)

We [responded](#) to the **June 13, 2024** [W Radio report](#) on internal military intelligence from 2004 containing false allegations of WOLA promoting the agenda of the FARC. Such false allegations place WOLA personnel at risk. We encourage the U.S. and Colombia to review the intelligence archives and purge them of false information against WOLA and other international and national non-governmental organizations.

We received requests to intervene in all the following situations:

Killings of Social Leaders

Teachers' Union Member Killed in Montes de María (Bolívar)

On April 20, the Institute for Development and Peace Studies (*Instituto de Estudios para el Desarrollo y la Paz*, Indepaz) [reported](#) that unknown assailants killed Luis Alfredo Leones Álvarez, a local school principal affiliated with a Bolívar teachers' union (*Sindicato Único de Educadores y Trabajadores de la Educación del Bolívar*, SUDEB). He was murdered with a bladed weapon while at home in San Jacinto, located in the Montes de María region of the Bolívar department. Authorities found signs of torture on his body. The illegal armed groups operating in this area include the paramilitary Gaitanist Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (*Autodefensas*



Gaitanistas de Colombia, AGC) and the National Liberation Army (*Ejército de Liberación Nacional, ELN*) guerillas.

Trade Unionist Educator Killed (La Guajira)

On June 21, Hader Enrique Escobar, social leader and trade unionist, was shot and [killed](#) by an armed man. Escobar who formed part of the La Guajira Education Workers' Association (*Asociación de Trabajadores de la Educación de La Guajira, ASODEGUA*), was the rector of the Indigenous Educational Institution (*Institución Educativa Indígena, IEI*). Indepaz reported that he died after an armed hitman approached and shot him several times in Maicao municipality. The illegal armed groups operating in this area include the AGC, ELN, and the Conquistadores Self-Defense Forces of the Sierra Nevada (*Autodefensas Conquistadores de la Sierra Nevada, ACSN*).

Nasa Indigenous Leader and Healer Killed (Cauca)

On June 26, Indepaz [reported](#) the murder of Luis Eduardo Vivas, a social leader and traditional healer from the Indigenous territory of Mosoco in Páez, Cauca. On June 25, his body, which exhibited multiple gunshot wounds, was discovered in the Mosoco reservation. The Dagoberto Ramos Front of the EMC-FARC dissidents operates in the area.

Leader of Women's Organization Murdered in Magdalena Medio (Santander)

On June 28, Indepaz [reported](#) that armed men killed Yolí María Tolosa inside her home in Puerto Wilches, Santander. Tolosa was a coordinator at the Women's Popular Organization (*Organización Femenina Popular, OFP*), a women's social and political organization in the Magdalena Medio region. The AGC operates in this region.

FARC Dissidents Kill Community Leader (Valle del Cauca)

On July 1, Indepaz [reported](#) the death of Yeri Gaitán, president of the Community Action Board (*Junta de Acción Comunal, JAC*) of Villa Colombia community located in Jamundí municipality. The Jaime Martínez Front of the EMC-FARC dissidents is allegedly responsible for this murder. Illegal armed men forced Gaitán from his home, took him to a soccer field in rural Jamundí and killed him. Gaitán was known for his work to improve security in his community.



Kidnappings, Death Threats, and Intimidation of Social Leaders

Calls for Release of Kidnapped Social Leaders (Arauca)

On April 25, the UN Office of the High Commission for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Colombia [released](#) a statement calling for the immediate release of Luis Antonio Rubio and Luis Alfonso Maldonado, who were kidnapped by armed groups in Arauquita on June 12. Additionally, OHCHR called for the freedom of Soraya Moreno, Miguel Niño, David Céspedes, and Arévalo Fuentes, whom they believe are also being held by illegal armed groups in Arauca. OHCHR Colombia firmly urges non-state actors to end attacks against civilian populations, in accordance with principles of international humanitarian law.

Professor and Indigenous Leaders Threatened by FARC Dissidents (Cauca)

On May 2, the Western Coordinating Command (*Comando Coordinador de Occidente*), a division of the Central General Staff of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (*Estado Mayor Central de las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*, EMC-FARC) threatened to kill Indigenous and other leaders located southwestern Colombia who support the Total Peace process. The dissident guerilla group accuses the government of working with paramilitary forces in Nariño and Cauca to engage in attacks against them. The pamphlet states that all supporters of the government's Total Peace efforts are their "military targets." Among those listed are Indigenous leaders Jorge Sánchez, Saul Majín, Jhoe Sauca, Aida Quilcué, Norman Bañol, Manuel Masivoy, and Universidad del Valle professor Juan Bautista Jaramillo. Jaramillo also collaborates with SIS (*Sistema Informativo de Sintraunico*), a co-sponsor of WOLA and Colombia Acuerdo de Paz's video series.

Female Student Leader Faces Death Threats (Cundinamarca)

On June 11, the José Alvear Restrepo Lawyers Collective (*Colectivo de Abogados "José Alvear Restrepo,"* CAJAR) posted a tweet [condemning](#) threats against student leader Valentina Andrade Bautista of National University of Colombia (*Universidad Nacional de Colombia*, UNAL) which occur in the context of rising gender-based violence. Reportedly, disciplinary action for the ongoing strikes and protests to democratize the university's governance has stigmatized the work of student leaders like Andrade Bautista. She received death threats and various misogynistic comments from an X account identified as Manuel Rodríguez Adame, delegate of the Episcopal Church and RCTV panelist, and his supporters. CAJAR demands prompt investigations by the government of those responsible for the threats.



Female Rights Defender Survives Assassination Attempt (Valle del Cauca)

On June 22, Witness for Peace Solidarity Collective [circulated](#) a petition addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Colombia to support collective protective measures for the Association of Afro-descendant, Indigenous, and Peasant Communities (*Asociación de Comunidades Afrodescendientes, Indígenas y Campesinas*, CONPAZ COL). The organization's co-leader, María Eugenia Mosquera Riascos, survived an assassination attempt in Buenaventura on May 22. This attack on her life is part of a pattern of violence targeting CONPAZ COL members, which has claimed the lives of five of her colleagues. WOLA fully supports this petition and urges U.S. policymakers to take action to guarantee Maria Eugenia's protection. In 2022, she received the Women Building Peace Award from the U.S. Institute for Peace (USIP).

Community Leader Succumbs to Injuries Following Armed Attack (Bogotá, D.C.)

On June 25, Indepaz [reported](#) the killing of Alba Rocío Riaño, vice president of the Community Action Board (*Junta de Acción Comunal*, JAC) in the Verbenal-El Paraíso neighborhood of Ciudad Bolívar, Bogotá. The community leader was gravely injured in an armed attack that took place on June 16 in the El Paraíso sector. Illegal armed groups operating in the area include AGC, Venezuelan Tren de Aragua, ELN, and the 33rd Front of the Magdalena Medio Bloc of the EMC-FARC.

Third Victim Dies After Roadside Bombing (Cauca)

On May 17, an explosive device placed on a road connecting the municipalities of Miranda and Corinto killed a 12-year-old boy, a motorcycle driver, and gravely wounded the boy's mother. On June 18, Indepaz [reported](#) that the mother, Mercedes Impujan, had succumbed to her injuries. This incident occurs amid heightened armed conflict in southern Valle del Cauca and northern Cauca. Illegal armed groups operating in the area include the Dagoberto Ramos Front of the Western Bloc of the Central General Staff of the EMC-FARC, the Adán Izquierdo Company (*Compañía Adán Izquierdo*), and possibly the 57th front of the EMC-FARC.

Attacks Against LGBTQ+ People

Murders of Transgender Women Surge (Valle del Cauca)

On April 24, Caribe Afirmativo [reported](#) the murder of Sharon Muñoz, a transgender woman, in Yumbo, Valle del Cauca. Caribe Afirmativo expressed concerns about trends of violence against members of the LGBTQ+ community, noting that this incident marked the most recent in a spate of *at least four murders* of trans women since the beginning of 2024.

Police Brutalize Trans Woman (Bolívar)

On May 2, Caribe Afirmativo [reported](#) the case of police brutality against a transgender woman in Cartagena's San Pedro sector. In this, officers violently assaulted a transgender sex worker named Kata. The police officers chased Kata into a ditch of wastewater before beating her, tasing her, and stripping her naked. The excessive force used in her arrest alarmed Caribe Afirmativo, which calls for the Colombian police force to take action to eliminate police brutality and discrimination against trans people.

Ongoing Conflict and Security Challenges

ELN Threatens to Withdraw from Peace Talks

On April 24, the National Liberation Army (ELN) Peace Talks Delegation, (*Delegación de Diálogos del Ejército de Liberación Nacional de Colombia*) accused the Colombian government of violating protocols of the bilateral ceasefire by engaging with an ELN splinter group in Nariño under the command of Gabriel Yépez Mejía. The letter cites numerous instances of dialogue between this rival faction and representatives of the departmental and national governments and called for the government to renounce aspects of the "Total Peace" policy that deal with ELN hierarchies outside of the Central Command. The ELN delegation considers recognition of opposing ELN factions to violate the terms accorded at the second round of ELN talks in Mexico in 2023. We strongly urge both parties to the conflict to resolve conflicts within the peace dialogue table and to advance towards an agreement.

Civil Society Reaction to the ELN's Resumption of Kidnappings (Nationwide)

On May 7, the Center of South American Political Studies, (*Centro de Estudios Políticos Suramericanos*, CEPC), Total Peace in Colombia through Civil Society, (*Paz Total Amplia en Colombia desde la Sociedad Civil*, PAZTAC), and Political Conflict and Peace Construction Observatory (*Observatorio de Conflictos Políticos y Construcción de Paz*), distributed a public statement (PDF) expressing concern about the National Liberation Army (*Ejército de Liberación Nacional*, ELN)'s resumption of kidnapping. The statement calls for the national government to sustain peace dialogues with the ELN, emphasizing that civil society must be a part of those conversations.

Afro-Colombian San Juan River Communities at Risk of Internal Displacement (Chocó)

On May 18, the General Community Council of San Juan (*Consejo Comunitario General de San Juan*, ACADESAN) [reported](#) that various Black communities along the San Juan River, including Isla Cruz, Dipurdú, San Miguel, Negría, and Chambacú, were confined to their homes by illegal

armed groups and are at great risk of internal displacement. ACADESAN urges international organizations, civil institutions of the state, and non-governmental organizations to accompany these vulnerable communities to prevent their internal displacement. Additionally, they demand a multilateral ceasefire from the national government involving all actors, accompanied by the demining of over 683,591 hectares of their territory.

Afro-Colombian Organization Calls for the Protection of Youth in Quibdó (Chocó)

On May 25, *Chocó 7 días* [reported](#) that the NGO Círculo de Estudios Foundation asked the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights (IACHR) to issue precautionary measures and demand the Colombian government to protect the youth of Quibdó from systemic violence. Círculo de Estudios notes that young people in Chocó are highly vulnerable to human rights abuses, as armed groups have murdered at least 600 young people within the last decade. In response, the IACHR may issue precautionary measures that require the government of Colombia to address and prioritize the security of vulnerable populations in the city.

Illegal Armed Group Tortures and Kills Fisherman (Santander)

On May 27, the Colombia-Europe-United States Coordination (*Coordinación Colombia-Europa-Estados Unidos*, CCEEU) [denounced](#) the murder of a local fisherman in Puerto Wilches, Santander. Fisherman Diomer Ospino was tortured and murdered in his home, apparently by members of the Gaitanist Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (*Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia*, AGC) in the rural community of El Guayabo. The statement calls attention to previous warnings transmitted by the Office of the Governor of Santander, the Ombudsman's Office of Colombia, and other authorities regarding the grave security situation. The CCEEU laments the lack of protection measures applied and emphasizes the need for comprehensive actions by authorities to protect the civilian population.

Attempted Break-in of the Chocó Inter-Ethnic Solidarity Forum's Office (Chocó)

On June 4, the Chocó Inter-Ethnic Solidarity Forum (*Foro Interétnico Chocó*, FISCH) [issued](#) a statement condemning acts of violence and vandalism that took place at its headquarters in Quibdó on June 3. Unknown individuals attempted to enter and rob the facility, potentially exposing sensitive information stored on the computers of the organization. The message was accompanied by an image of the door of their offices, apparently damaged by the would-be thieves.

Armed Confrontations Lead to Internal Displacement (Cauca)

A statement [issued](#) on June 7 by the Inter-Church Commission for Justice and Peace (*Comisión Interclesial de Justicia y Paz, CIJP*) informed the national government and international human rights organizations of communities' massive displacement in Argelia, Cauca. Due to impending confrontations between the EMC and the Second Marquetalia dissident groups of the FARC, individuals are forced to relocate from their homes. It is reported that several families have already been displaced to the municipal seat of Argelia and other locations in Cauca.

San José de Apartadó Peace Community Under Attack After the Murders (Antioquia)

On June 16, the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó (*Comunidad de Paz de San José de Apartadó*) reported a series of violations of their territorial rights and threats in the wake of the murders of two community members this past March. From May 17 to June 12, the community noted a strong presence of known paramilitaries and ELN guerrillas. The community also reported deforestation of protected areas, violence against livestock, and the circulation of assassination orders against local leaders, including their legal representative, Germán Graciano. The Peace Community expressed deep concern over the lack of proper investigation by local authorities, citing irregular procedures by a prosecutor in Urabá whose investigation is focused more on family members of the victims than on armed groups. The community also denounces continued illegal activities, such as unauthorized road construction and the extraction of construction materials from riverbeds, despite a visit from national government officials and international representatives on June 5.

FARC Dissidents Confine Indigenous Communities (Casanare)

According to a statement [posted](#) on June 19 by the Special High-Level Instance of Ethnic Peoples (*Instancia Especial de Alto Nivel de los Pueblos Étnico, IEANPE*), the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (*Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia, ONIC*) denounced the confinement of Indigenous communities in eastern Casanare. Due to the presence of the FARC dissident José María Córdoba Front under the command of alias Antonio Medina, community members have been prohibited from leaving their territories to perform daily activities, including gathering food and hunting, since June 1. The ONIC warns of large-scale internal displacement if the confinement of the Indigenous communities is not lifted soon.

Indigenous Youth Forcibly Recruited (Cauca)

On June 21, the Çxhab Wala Kiwe - Association of Indigenous Councils of Northern Cauca (*Asociación de Cabildos Indígenas del Norte del Cauca, ACIN*) [condemned](#) the increasing forced

recruitment of Indigenous youth by armed groups in the Cauca Department. This modality has increased greatly since 2017. ACIN calculates that at least 817 Indigenous minors were recruited from January 1, 2020, to April 30, 2024, making it the principal challenge to peace in local communities.

Gulf Clan Paramilitaries Kidnap Two Miners (Antioquia)

On June 25, the Jesus María Valle Jaramillo Human Rights Committee Corporation (*Coporación Comité de Derechos Humanos Jesús María Jaramillo*) [denounced](#) the kidnapping of two young people in the rural community of Rancho Quemado by the Gulf Clan (*Clan del Golfo*). The abduction of the victims, who were affiliated with the Community Action Board (*Junta de Acción Comunal, JAC*) of El Carmen and worked at the Rancho Quemado Mine, occurred in the early morning hours of June 24 and has sown fear in the community.

Civilians Caught Between in Conflict Between Illegal Armed Groups (Antioquia)

On June 25, Social Process of Guarantees Antioquia (*Proceso Social de Garantías Antioquia, PSG*), alongside other NGOs, [issued](#) a statement denouncing the humanitarian crisis in Puerto López, municipality of El Bagre, Antioquia. FARC dissidents from the EMC summoned the town's business owners to a meeting. Upon discovering this, the AGC warned residents that anyone who participated in the meeting would be declared "military targets." The community refrained from attending, and in response, the EMC-FARC ordered the indefinite closure of all commerce and transportation, effectively confining the civilian population. PSG emphasizes that the terms of the peace negotiations that the EMC is currently engaged in demand that the armed group refrain from harming the civilian population. PSG also calls on the government to dismantle paramilitary structures in the region.

Internal Displacement Continues Despite the 2016 Peace Agreement (Antioquia)

On June 26, the Humanitarian Action Corporation for Coexistence and Peace in Northeast Antioquia (*Corporación Acción Humanitaria por la Convivencia y la Paz del Nordeste Antioqueño, Cahucopana*) [denounced](#) that authorities are failing to adequately respond to the crisis of forced displacement in the country despite a 2004 court order requiring them to do so. Citing figures from the Consultancy for Human Rights and Displacement (CODHES), over 1,050 cases of massive forced displacement have been documented since the signing of the 2016 peace agreement with the FARC. Some 1,600,000 persons were internally displaced, and the number is growing. Cahucopana claims that authorities have not paid limited attention to this situation. In northeastern Antioquia, armed confrontations over access to lucrative legal and illegal

economies, such as coca cultivation, mining, and cattle ranching, have been the principal drivers of displacement.

FARC Dissidents Kidnap Indigenous Nasa Youth (Cauca)

On June 27, ACIN condemned the kidnapping of a local youth named Eyber Danilo Poto Pazú. Poto Pazú was kidnapped on June 22 by the FARC dissident commander “Pájaro” of the Dagoberto Ramos Front in the rural community of El Tierrero in Caloto. The area has experienced numerous attacks, selective killings, curfews, sabotage of communal autonomy, and the appearance of graffiti representing armed groups vying for control.

Tourism Operator Halts Services Over Escalating Conflict (Caquetá)

On June 27, two tourism companies operating in Miravalle in the municipality of San Vicente de Caguán [announced](#) they would suspend operations due to the deteriorating security situation. Caguán Expeditions and Remando por la Paz (“Rowing for Peace”), a tour operator that employs former FARC combatants, states that a “senseless dispute” between FARC dissidents (Segunda Marquetalia of the FARC and the EMC- FARC) have made it impossible for them to operate in the area.

Illegal Armed Groups Cause a Humanitarian Emergency (Antioquia)

On July 2, the Popular Training Institute (*Instituto Popular de Capacitación*, IPC) [issued](#) a statement describing the humanitarian crisis inflicted by armed groups in the town of Puerto López, Antioquia. On June 25, departmental government officials brought food packages and extended institutional support to the town. However, armed groups continued to assert control and confine the community after the government departed. This confinement affects 7,000 families and 19 communities, including many children and adolescents now facing a public health crisis due to a lack of medical supplies. A similar situation was reported by the IPC in February when the AGC declared the residents of Puerto López “military objectives” and accused them of collaborating with FARC dissident groups.



Journalists

On July 2, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) and the Foundation for Liberty of the Press (FLIP) [expressed](#) concern over Colombian President Gustavo Petro’s social media response to a column by journalist María Jimena Duzán in *El Colombiano*. Duzán received death threats after being accused of practicing “Mossad journalism” and trying to oust his chief aide, Laura Sarabia, and destroy his government.

We remain concerned about the safety and security of *La Nueva Prensa*’s staff and legal team, who have received death threats and are facing multiple spurious legal charges.

We thank you in advance for your efforts. Please feel free to contact me at gsanchez@wola.org to discuss any of the issues raised in this letter.

Respectfully,

Gimena Sánchez-Garzoli
Director for the Andes
WOLA

July 16, 2024