



AFRODES USA Strongly Condemns Armed Groups' Violations of Afro-Colombian Rights and International Humanitarian Law Violations in Timbiquí (Cauca)

AFRODES USA condemns the violent actions committed by the guerrilla groups against civilians in Timbiquí (Cauca) on October 2nd. It also condemns the indiscriminate use of force applied by members of the Infantry of the Marines that resulted in injuries of civilians in living in these communities. AFRODES USA wishes to remind all of the parties to the internal armed conflict that these actions armed groups currently based in Cauca that these actions violate international humanitarian law. According to the Geneva Conventions, combatants must distinguish between combatants and “to limit and avoid human suffering during the times of armed conflict” (Article 3). Also the Colombian armed forces that they are obliged to protect the rights of Afro-Colombian civilians living in this area. We remind the Colombian government that placing military bases in the community centers utilized by the civilian populations, as is the case in Timbiquí, is a violation of *Condition F*, the human rights condition pertaining to Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities of the foreign appropriations act of the United States.

Given the above, AFRODES USA:

-Demands that the Colombian authorities respect and apply IHL and the human rights of the Afro-Colombian communities. They should take steps to ensure the following:

- Recognition of the existence of an internal armed conflict in Colombia, the persistence of illegal armed groups (both paramilitary and guerrilla) operating in areas of the country inhabited by Afro-Colombians. Recognition of the problem is required in order to implement the legitimate demands of these communities for protection and respect of their fundamental rights. If the State does not recognize the problem then it cannot provide the adequate solution to the problem.
- Dismantle military bases that violate IHL. For example, move the current military installations that are located near Afro-Colombian civilian settlements (town centers, riverbanks near houses and schools, farms, etc) that endanger the lives of civilians including women and children. Violations of this IHL principle lead to civilians being caught in the crossfire between the warring groups and to their deaths, physical injury and internal displacement.
- Implement Colombian Constitutional Court Order 005 of 2009, which orders Colombian officials to take a number of steps to protect Afro-Colombian

communities at high risk of displacement and to protect the rights of those already internally displaced.

- Increase its political will to take steps towards a politically negotiated settlement to the internal armed conflict that is having devastating consequences for Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities.

-Demands that the guerrilla groups respect Afro-Colombian communities' territorial rights and respect IHL. They should:

- Cease and refrain from engaging in violent activities against civilian Afro-Colombian persons, community leaders and their organizations, goods and services.
- Refrain from engaging violent activity in city centers and areas inhabited by Afro-Colombians.

-Urges civil society and the international community to take steps to ensure the following:

- Denounce violent acts that convert communities into human shields, such as the latest actions in Timbiquí.
- Demand the removal of all military bases from areas in close proximity to civilians, such as town centers, riverbanks, zones of cultivation, etc.
- Advocate a for a peaceful resolution to Colombia's internal armed conflict, which is now concentrated in areas populated by Afro-Colombians and indigenous communities, and is the underlying cause of the worst humanitarian crisis in the hemisphere.

In solidarity with the community of Timbiquí.

Respectfully yours,

AFRODES USA

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