

As International Civil Society Organizations we reiterate our willingness to accompany these processes and declare ourselves on alert for an Arauca in peace.



**Bogotá, January 24, 2022.** The international civil society organizations signed on to this statement alert of the serious humanitarian situation and human rights crisis affecting the civilians of Arauca department. The crisis has exacerbated in recent days, but social organizations have denounced the situation in the region for several years now.

The presence and actions of armed state and non-state actors has intensified conflict in the region. The civilian population is at risk, as they are victims of the constant crossfire and the absence of the Colombian state. These circumstances had already been alerted of in the past by civil society organizations and the Ombudsman’s Office through Early Warnings 029-2019 and 023-2021. The warnings responded to the escalating violence under the scope of non-state armed groups in which “a potential scenario of armed confrontation between the Eastern War Front of the National Liberation Army (ELN) and dissident factions of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) should not be ruled out,” (Ombudsman’s Office Early Warning 029-2019).

According to the Attorney General’s office, the events that marked the beginning of 2022 include the murder of 33 people, the disappearances of at least 50 people, the internal displacement of 170 families and 36 former combatants of the FARC, and a car bomb detonated against a human rights organization’s office. These events are in addition to increased forced recruitment of children and adolescents and the armed confrontations

that affect the livelihoods and physical and emotional integrity of civilians. The current circumstances limit their constitutional rights in the territory.

It is urgent that all armed actors present in the territory recognize their obligation and duty to observe international humanitarian law, by excluding the civilian population from confrontations. Civilians must be, "in all circumstances, protected and treated humanely, without any distinction of an unfavorable nature" (Article 3 common to the four Geneva Conventions).

We encourage the international community present in Colombia, diplomatic corps, and the United Nations System to urge the Colombian government to give a comprehensive response in which dialogue with guarantees and Humanitarian Agreements are privileged as the way of overcoming the structural conditions that generate the current crisis in the department. This must include a concrete commitment not to stigmatize the work and commitment of social organizations and human rights defenders and former FARC combatants (signatories of the peace agreement) who are in the territory.

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#### More information

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