

Public Opinion Statement¹

The Indigenous communities of the Chocó are living under the ravages of the internal armed conflict and State who has abandoned them and forgotten them

The Chocó Inter-Ethnic Solidarity Forum (FISCH) that constitutes 56 organizations and the Diocese of Quibdó manifests its support for the indigenous communities situated in along the areas where the highway crosses between Quibdó and Carmen de Atrato. These communities have been suffering the burden of the internal armed conflict and the abandonment of the State at the local, departmental and national level. We are unified with them in their demands and urgings and take into account that these communities have had both their individual and collective indigenous rights violated by the armed actors, the Colombian State and public and private companies who view their territories as a source of profit.

These communities have had to suffer invasions of their territories, their sacred spaces, confinement, the presence of armed actors, forced recruitment, pressure on their leaders, as well as women, girls and boys. Their authorities are disrespected, their culture is negatively affected and their peoples stigmatized and signaled out. On many occasions, they have been caught in the crossfire between the different armed groups involved in the war. In addition to all of this, they are historically abandoned by a state that has not clearly identified public policies that would guarantee their access to health services, an adequate education system or concrete actions to recognize, protect, amplify and protect their territories. They also have not been recipients of affirmative actions that would enable the victims from these communities to receive a just and dignified reparation for what they suffer due to the armed conflict.

We, therefore, recommend that all institutions of the State responsible for these communities to act. We ask that they take efficient steps to quickly solve the problems faced by this population. This should include the coordination of a prevention and protection plan that follow and meet the constitutionally required rights to defend and guarantee the rights of indigenous communities. Also an early warning mechanism must be activated, as well as implemented and monitored in an opportune fashion in conjunction with these communities so as to protect them and prevent more of their members from becoming systematic victims of human rights violations.

Quibdó, April 6, 2011

Recommendations Made by Indigenous Communities

On March 28, 2011 in the indigenous zone of Sabaletas (Carmen de Atrato municipality) indigenous authorities from the communities of La Junta, La Puria, Bajo rio grande, Consuleo para baja and Quebrada Bonita gathered to discuss, analyze the consequences their members of their communities were facing due to the abandonment by the

¹ Translation from Spanish to English done by WOLA.

Colombian State and all of its institutions. This meeting resulted in the following recommendations with regards to issues of health, education, territories and the situation faced by families who are victims of internal displacement.

Education:

- 1) Creation of a Katio-Chami educational center in Sabaleta that is recognized by the Secretary of Education, Ministry of National Education and approved by the DANE.
- 2) Appointment and assignation of teachers and schools for the Katio-Chami educational center.
- 3) Appointment of administrative personnel for the education centers.

Health:

- 1) Construction of a health center that gives emergency health assistance to indigenous communities located along the highway zone and Sabaleta.
- 2) Appointment of health promoters and emergency nurses.
- 3) Formation and capacity building of indigenous personnel in the area of health.
- 4) Provisioning of medicines.

Territory:

Expansion and coverage of the indigenous reserves of Sabaleta and Puria and their recognition by INCODER.

Victims of Displacement:

- 1) Just and dignified reparations by the State for families who are victims of internal displacement, disappearances, deaths committed by illegal armed groups.
- 2) Recognition of the inventory done by the victims of displacement of their numbers and number of properties lost by these communities.