



Dear all,

Below are the human rights incidents and security situations WOLA received from September 13 to November 1, 2023.

These abuses and security incidents summarized below serve as evidence that the U.S. Congress should fund peace, human rights, justice, and Afro-Colombian and Indigenous efforts. U.S. policymakers should encourage the Colombian government to advance the implementation of the 2016 peace accord. Special attention should be paid to the Ethnic Chapter and the peace accord's provisions relating to the security and protection of civil society and former combatants. The U.S. State Department should designate a Special Envoy to support peace efforts. Everyone should publicly condemn the killings of social leaders and demand justice for the victims.

***Farmers Attacked for Protest Related to Land Dispute (Cesar)***

On September 12, the National Agricultural Coordinator of Colombia (*Nacional Agrario de Colombia*, NAC) [condemned](#) the attack on farmers that took place in the Agustin Codazzi municipality. The Colombian Federation of Cattle Ranchers called upon its “solidarity bridges” to take over the “El Torro” farm, resulting in over 150 members of the public forces, military, and armed civilians attacking protestors. Several individuals were injured, and two were arbitrarily detained. NAC urges the national government to intervene on behalf of the farmers and to broker the release of the detainees.

***Unionist and Teacher Murdered (Tolima)***

On September 12, Sumapaz [denounced](#) the killing of Stiven Charlarca, a trade unionist and teacher in Tolima. Armed men entered Charlarca’s classroom, forced him to exit the room, and shot him multiple times.

***Security Crisis in Indigenous Nasa Territories (Putumayo)***

On September 12, the Communities Constructing Peace in Colombia network (*Comunidades Construyendo Paz en Colombia*, CONPAZ Col) [called attention to](#) the to the confinement and internal displacement faced by indigenous and rural communities in Putumayo due to increased violent activity by the Carolina Ramirez Front and the Commanders of the Border (*Comandos de la Frontera*) dissident groups in Nasa Kwe’sx Kiwe Indigenous territory. This violence resulted in the internal displacement of indigenous persons to Piñuña Blanco, Putumayo. CONPAZ Col urges these armed groups to agree to a multilateral ceasefire within the total peace effort.



### ***Social Leader Threatened by FARC Dissidents (Cauca)***

On September 13, the People's Congress (*Congreso de los Pueblos*) [condemned](#) the death threats and intimidation faced by Marylén Serna Salinas, president of the Association of Women for Life and Territory. Salinas also forms part of the national executive committee of Alternative Democratic Pole (*Polo Democrático Alternativo*, PDA). On September 9, she received an ultimatum from a member of the Carlos Patiño Front, threatening her family. The People's Congress requests that the Colombian authorities investigate these threats and provide Salinas with necessary protection measures.

### ***Colombia Tops Global Ranking of Killings of Land and Environmental Defenders***

On September 13, Global Witness released their annual report documenting threats faced by land and environmental rights defenders. Colombia tops the global ranking with 60 killed in 2022. This is almost double the previous number from 2021. Overrepresented in these numbers are defenders of the Amazon, persons defending their territories from illegal armed groups and illegal mining. Over [70%](#) of land and environmental rights defenders killed in 2022 took place in Mexico, Brazil, and Colombia.

### ***Mayoral Candidate Receives Death Threats (Cauca)***

On September 14, the Municipal Association of Farmer Workers of Piamonte Cauca (*Asociación Municipal de Trabajadores y Trabajadoras de Piamonte Cauca*, ASIMTRACAMPIC) [condemned](#) the death threats received by Alexandra Cuella. Cuella is running for mayor of Piamonte municipality for the Colombia Renaciente Party. ASIMTRACAMPIC states that the attack on Cuella attacks democracy and the participation of women in politics. Women should have the right to participate in politics without being subjected to gender-based abuse. ASIMTRACAMPIC urges the national government, and departmental ministers to guarantee Ms. Cuella's right to life and freedom of association.

### ***Armed Groups Confine and Internally Displaced Indigenous (Putumayo)***

On September 16, CONPAZ COL called on the national government to provide humanitarian assistance and protection to civilians in Piñuña Blanco, Putumayo, heavily affected by the FARC dissident groups' armed confrontations, restricting the freedom of movement of civilians. Again, CONPAZ Col calls on dissident FARC groups to agree to a multilateral ceasefire to protect civilians.



***Indigenous Kiwe Traditional Authority Leader Killed (Cauca)***

On September 17, the Institute for Development and Peace Studies (*Instituto de Estudios para el Desarrollo y la Paz*, INDEPAZ) [reported](#) the murder of Jose Arley Cruz Chocue, an indigenous authority from the Granates Nasa Indigenous reservation. Armed men on a motorcycle killed him with a firearm in Miranda, Cauca.

***Afro-Colombian Rights Leader Killed (Bogota)***

On September 18, INDEPAZ [reported](#) that Afro-Colombian human rights leader Hector Enrique Rodriguez, known for his work fighting against racism and social discrimination of afro-descendant youth was killed in Usaquén, Bogota. Rodriguez was killed with a firearm, in an incident that left two women injured.

***Illegal Armed Group Confrontations Leave Indigenous Awá Confined (Nariño)***

On September 17, the Unity of Indigenous Awá People (*Unidad Indígena del Pueblo Awá*, UNIPA) [called](#) for armed groups to allow for humanitarian corridors in El Sande and La Montaña reservations. Illegal armed groups are installing anti-personnel landmines and blocking the entries and exits for these communities. These restrictions are leading to food insecurity placing the population at risk for malnutrition. Furthermore, locals are unable to hunt, fish, and gather food items. UNIPA urged the national government to support this plea. On October 3, UNIPA in a follow-up statement emphasized that they will be launching a Humanitarian Minga for Life and Dignity on October 6. UNIPA requests that illegal armed actors refrain from installing antipersonnel mines on the road leading to La Montaña and that they respect the lives of Indigenous authorities.

***Illegal Armed Groups Recruiting Minors (Bolívar)***

On September 22, the Colombia-Europe-United States Coordination (*Coordinación Colombia Europa Estados Unidos*, CCEEU) [asked](#) the national government, its ministries, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the international community to take action to prevent violations taking place in rural communities. CCEEU notes that both the Gaitanista Self-Defense Forces (*Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia*, AGC) and the 37th front of the FARC-EMC are recruiting youth. There is a high number of youths dropping out of school because they fear becoming forcibly recruited. Illegal armed actors are patrolling the villages.



### ***Internally Displaced Indigenous People in Need of Medical Care (Nariño)***

On September 21, Amazon Frontliners and others [reported](#) that 19 families were internally displaced and the rest confined in the Piñuña Blanco Reservation. 636 people are stranded without humanitarian assistance, with 421 of these being children. Despite repeated requests, no governmental institution at the regional and national level has helped these IDPs. Illegal armed groups are urged to cease hostilities. Civil society groups call on the Petro government to provide the IDPs with humanitarian assistance. They recommend that the Minister of Health develop a comprehensive health visit to this territory. The health of children and the elderly is particularly affected. The Director of the National Victim's Unit is urged to pay attention to this situation and provide reparations to the victims.

### ***Peace Community Members Killed (Antioquia)***

On September 22, the Peace Community of San José of Apartadó (*Comunidad de Paz San José de Apartadó*, CPSJA) [issued](#) a detailed statement describing the activities of illegal armed groups and government officials in their region. Heavily armed paramilitaries, led by aliases 'Conejo' and 'Gildardo', entered several villages on August 30. On September 10-12, paramilitaries prevented community members from working in the fields and entered private property. On September 14, a heavy gunfire exchange was heard, and Gildardo was seen continuously trespassing into the Peace Community in the days that followed. Dayron Andres Osorio Arteaga, and David Torres, two members of the Peace community were killed at the hands of paramilitaries on September 4 and 9. CPSJA criticized community outsiders who submit unfounded territorial claims supposedly authorized by the Land Distribution Unit (URT). Such claims undermine community members' legal acquisition of land.

### ***Attempted Armed Land Dispossession (Atlántico)***

On September 27, CONPAZ COL [detailed](#) the recent death threats perpetrated by a group of armed men and one woman who are claiming ownership of property located on disputed land in the Vereda las Nubes, in the Atlántico department. When the police arrived, the armed men hid their weapons in a nearby bush. This incident has generated fear in the entire community. The national, departmental, and municipal governments should take action to protect the lives and properties of this community.



### ***Afro-Colombian Community Council Member Killed (Córdoba)***

On September 28, INDEPAZ [reported](#) that Omar Hernández Simanca, a social leader from Chipés, was killed in the municipality of Planeta Rica, in the Córdoba department. Simanca was part of the committee working on the collective reparation process set out by the Community Councils of the La Larga and Tumaradó rivers. The AGC and other illegal armed groups are operating in the area.

### ***President Petro Called to Attend the National Guarantees Table***

On September 28, the Colombia Platform for Human Rights, Democracy, and Development (*Platforma Colombiana de Derechos Humanos, Democracia y Desarrollo*, PCDHDD) [announced](#) it would suspend its participation in the first session of the National Guarantees Table. So far, high-level institutional actors within the government have not responded to the crisis social leaders are facing throughout the country. Colombia is the most dangerous country for individuals defending human rights and socio-environmental struggles fueled by inequality. PCDHDD urges President Petro to take action so that authorities at all levels commit and participate in building peace.

### ***Pregnant Afrodescendant Youth Killed by Illegal Armed Group (Nariño)***

On October 2, Social Thought and Action (*Pensamiento y Acción Social*, PAS) [condemned](#) the murder of Milena Valdez, a young afro-descendant woman living in Patía Viejo, Nariño. The 30th front, a FARC dissident group, arrived in the community, murdered her, and returned her body three days later. Valdez was pregnant at the time of her death. Community members claim that violence against women and youth is increasing, especially those in the midst of the armed actors' interests. PAS urges the Colombian government to guarantee the protection for youth, particularly those of African descent residing in collective territories, and that it investigates Valdez's murder.

### ***Violence Surrounding Local Elections (Caldas)***

On October 4, CONPAZCOL [called](#) all actors to respect life in Palestina, in the Caldas department, after two female leaders were injured while mayoral candidate Juan Diego Pineda was traveling through the area on September 2. A death threat pamphlet is circulating signed by the Uriel Variela Front, a FARC dissident. This is causing fear within the community. CONPAZCOL asks judicial authorities to investigate these incidents.



### ***Magazine Accused of Plagiarizing Independent Foundation (Valle de Cauca)***

On October 5, the magazine *Revista Semana* was [accused](#) of plagiarizing entire paragraphs concerning the regional elections in Buenaventura. The information was originally produced by the independent organization Peace and Reconciliation Foundation (*Fundacion Paz & Reconciliation*, FPR). FPR reported that the magazine did not credit the original author. They questioned the magazine's journalistic integrity and ethics, and view this as a lack of respect for their investigative work.

### ***Afro-Colombian Female Murdered (Bolívar)***

On October 5, the Popular Movement of Black Women and Neighborhoods (*Movimiento Popular de Mujeres Negras y Barriales*, MPMNB) [reported](#) the assassination of community member Yotselis Paola Burgos in Cartagena. The marginalized communities living in these peripheral neighborhoods ask for the government to listen. They want to be heard without prejudice and being criminalized so that constructive solutions can be developed. In order to tackle the armed conflict, there needs to be an understanding that the root cause of violence is due to structural and institutional neglect. MPMNB calls on Cartagena's authorities and institutions and the national government to build bridges with them. Such an arrangement can help curtail the bloodshed and premature deaths of so many youths.

### ***Territorial Dispossession of Afrodescendant Community (Cauca)***

The Afrorenacer Micay Community Council stated they were mistreated by the conveners of the Territorial Transformation Table on October 2, as no national governmental institutions responsible for guaranteeing the rights of Black, Afro-descendant, Racial, or Palenquero populations participated in this Table. During the meeting, Community Council representatives were photographed and insulted by an association of rural people present in the area. This is a community of individuals who were internally displaced by FARC dissidents and arrived in the Afro-Colombian collective territory in 2020. The Council urges the government to stop the displacement of persons from their lands. They are asking for a meeting with high-level decision-makers so concrete solutions are found.

### ***Community Action Board President Killed (Nariño)***

On October 7, INDEPAZ [reported](#) that the President of the Community Action Board in Balcones de la Frontera, Gerardo Efraín Chávez, was killed. Chávez was murdered while traveling passing the checkpoint connecting Puente Nuevo and Yaramal in the border area with Ecuador. His death is under investigation. The National Liberation Army (*Ejercito de Liberación Nacional*, ELN) and local gangs are known to operate along this border.





### ***Massacre Leaves Three Killed (Magdalena)***

On October 7, INDEPAZ [reported](#) a massacre of three victims in the municipality of El Banco in Magdalena. The three victims, Abel Carpio, Chelo Garcia, and Manuel Zambrano were assassinated by hitmen traveling on a motorcycle. The AGC and the ELN are known to operate across this department.

### ***Afro-Colombian Artisanal Miner Killed (Chocó)***

On October 10, *Chocó7Dias* [reported](#) that Jose Liborio Sanchez Arce, an artisanal miner, was killed in Condoto, Chocó. His body was found along a road.

### ***Three Persons Killed by Armed Actors (Magdalena)***

On October 10, INDEPAZ [reported](#) that three people were killed with firearms by assassins who intercepted them while they were driving in their vehicle in the La Paz neighborhood of Santa Marta, in the Magdalena department. The AGC, the Self-Defense Conquerors of the Sierra Nevada (*Autodefensas Conquistadoras de la Sierra Nevada, ACSN*), and local bands operate in this area.

### ***FARC Dissidents Threaten Rural Zone Leaders (Caquetá)***

On October 10, the Municipal Association of Colonos del Pato (*Asociación Municipal de Colonos del Pato, AMCOP*) [detailed](#) recent violations and death threats levied against social leaders by FARC dissidents. On October 7, two men delivered an envelope to AMCOP staff allegedly from the Central General Staff (*Estado Mayor Central, EMC*) threatening to label anyone who disobeys as a military objective. In spite of this situation, AMCOP will continue to ensure the development and implementation of municipal projects and advance proposals within the framework of Total Peace.

### ***Female Community Action Board President Killed (Putumayo)***

On October 14, INDEPAZ [reported](#) that Yamili Bernal García, the president of the Joint Action Board (*Junta de Accion Comunal, JAL*) in Santa Rosa de Juanambu was killed. She was assassinated during the night by armed men while she was in a public establishment.

### ***Combat Between Illegal Armed Group Escalates (Putumayo)***

On October 16, Amazon Frontlines [issued](#) a statement calling attention to the severe human rights violations that rural, afro-descendant, and indigenous communities have suffered in Puerto Asís, Putumayo. Armed confrontations between the Carolina Ramirez Front of the EMC and the Second Marquetalia Border Commanders intensified leading to the deaths of several combatants. Confinement and internal displacement orders issued by the Border Commanders Front are restricting the mobility of the civilian population. The groups are pressuring youth to join their ranks, and threatening social leaders.



***Hundreds Internally Displaced by Illegal Armed Actors (Chocó)***

On October 16, the Chocó Interethnic Solidarity Forum (*Foro Interétnico Solidaridad Chocó, FISCH*) [sent](#) an alert reporting that 84 families belonging to Isla de Cruz, in Medio San Juan are currently displaced in Dipurdú. This is the result of heavy fighting between illegal armed actors. 208 people are currently terrorized because of this humanitarian crisis.

***Mass Confinement and Antipersonnel Mines Installed on Indigenous Land (Nariño)***

On October 16, UNIPA highlighted the crisis faced by indigenous Awá communities. Illegal armed groups are blocking main roads, forcibly recruiting minors, and installing anti-personnel landmines. All these abuses violate the autonomy and rights of the communities and their living on the banks of the Telembi, Naya, and Cristal Rivers. UNIPA urges illegal armed groups to respect International Humanitarian Law by keeping civilians out of the conflict. UNIPA asks that the Territorial Transitional Justice Committee be urgently convened.

***Illegal Armed Groups Generate Mass Displacement(Chocó)***

On October 17, the Community Council of General San Juan (*Consejo Comunitario General de San Juan, ACADESAN*) [called](#) for a multilateral ceasefire after a mass internal displacement of the Isla Cruz community in Medio San Juan took place. Almost the entire civilian population was impacted and an estimated 191 people became internally displaced. Humanitarian missions are needed in Bajo San Juan, Medio San Juan, Istmina, Novita, and Sipí communities. ACADESAN is urging that the humanitarian relief and other items agreed upon with the peace dialogue table between the government and the ELN be implemented in all their communities.

***Leader Killed During Jury Training for the Elections (Cauca)***

On October 20, INDEPAZ [reported](#) that Miller Silva Rosero, the vice-president of El Plateado Central Board in Argelia, Cauca was killed on his way to train for jury duty for the regional elections. He was intercepted in the Botafogo sector.

***Massacre of Three Persons (Atlántico)***

On October 23, INDEPAZ [reported](#) the massacre of three persons in Soledad, Atlántico. The three victims were killed in a public establishment by hired assassins. They are identified as Jean Carlos Betancourt, Franklin Guerra, and Jair Rodriguez. The armed groups operating in the area include Los Costeños, Rastrojos Costeños, and the AGC.





***Trade Unionists at Serious Risk***

On November 1, the Human Rights Defenders Union of the Colombian Ombudsman's Office (*Sindicato de Defensoras y Defensores de la Defensoría del Pueblo*, SINDHEP) issued an [alert](#) that detailed the risks faced by members of their union. Death threats were received by the union's President, William Salazar Valencia, Vice President, Ana Rosa Fuentes, and five other union members. One of their members, a community leader in southern La Guajira was murdered. Other members were internally displaced in Sucre in the past year. SINDHEP believes their union is facing a campaign that discredits their work. Dozens of SINDHEP affiliates have resigned from the union as a result.

We thank you in advance for the steps taken to address these situations. Please contact us if you need any further information.

Sincerely,

Gimena Sánchez-Garzoli  
Director for the Andes

December 12, 2023