



Bogotá D.C. November 30, 2020.

Honorable Congressmen of the Republic of Colombia

Honorable Members of the Congress of the United States of America

Social organizations defending human rights and environmental rights

**Re: Urgent call for non-reactivation of glyphosate fumigation in Colombia.**

Cordial greetings,

The Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA), Elementa DDHH, Alianza de Organizaciones de Mujeres Tejedoras de Vida del Putumayo, La Red en Movimiento<sup>1</sup>, Corporación Viso Mutop, and Consultoría para los derechos humanos y el desplazamiento (CODHES), write to express deep concern about the imminent reactivation of glyphosate fumigations in Colombia, ignoring the guidelines given by the Constitutional Court in Ruling T-236 of 2017, as well as the historical and documented serious impact on health and the dire consequences in terms of the environment and forced migration in the country.

The national government of Colombia, through various mechanisms, has expressed its determined interest to reactivate glyphosate fumigations for crops of illicit use; a decision motivated, in part, by pressure from U.S. President Donald Trump within the framework of the war on drugs.

Despite the various stages that must be carried out based on the guidelines given by Colombia's Constitutional Court regarding an eventual reactivation of fumigations, like modifying the Environmental Management Plan (PMA) and carrying out hearings with communities, these have not been fulfilled, since campesino and indigenous communities and civil society organizations have not been able to participate in virtual hearings with

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<sup>1</sup> Red en Movimiento: Investigación y acción en migraciones is a network of academics from different universities and social organizations in Colombia that seeks to make a social and political impact on the public agenda and opinion around the phenomena of migration in the city and the country. It is integrated by researchers, professors and activists from the Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Universidad de Los Andes, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Universidad Externado de Colombia, and Universidad Santo Tomás.

the government. On the contrary, the national government, through the Minister of Defense, Carlos Holmes Trujillo, announced in October of this year that aerial spraying will be resumed to combat drug trafficking.

Glyphosate spraying has been shown to be risky to human health, to negatively affect ecosystems, to threaten indigenous and Afro-descendant communities and their sacred territories, as well as the campesino economy and its efforts at alternatives to coca cultivation. The consequences in terms of food insecurity and the loss of productive capacity in rural areas have generated massive displacement within and outside of Colombia, with humanitarian impacts widely documented since 2000 by international organizations and governments of neighboring countries.

Glyphosate was classified by the WHO in 2015 as probably carcinogenic, and has been proven to cause death in animals essential to the preservation of the ecosystem, as well as in nearby water sources. Likewise, by affecting other non-illegal crops, it puts the food security of communities at risk and increases economic precariousness in these regions, thus generating forced internal and cross-border displacements and conflicts between public forces and the population, affecting the legitimacy of the state in these territories. All these consequences show how aerial spraying with glyphosate is a practice that leads to violations of the right to life, integrity and dignity of the population living in these regions, since it has also been proven to be correlated to respiratory diseases and miscarriages.<sup>2</sup>

In addition, the Final Peace Agreement between the National Government and the former FARC-EP guerrilla group, which is part of the constitutionality bloc, in Point 4 on "Solution to the Problem of Illicit Drugs", agreed to a Comprehensive National Program of Substitution of Illicit Crop Use -PNIS, which incorporates voluntary eradication and plans for immediate family care, which would be hindered and affected by the reactivation of glyphosate fumigation. It should be noted that glyphosate spraying has proven to be unsustainable over time, since it does not offer economic alternatives to the cultivating families, and its use is followed by a high percentage of replanting—the opposite of the case of voluntary substitution, for which it has been demonstrated that very few families return to illicit crops.

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<sup>2</sup> Today there is a complaint against the Colombian state before the Inter-American Human Rights Commission for the use of glyphosate that led to a campesino woman's miscarriage. Meanwhile Monsanto (through its parent company Bayer) has been compelled by US courts to pay damages on several occasions for the causal relationship between the use of Roundup (a herbicide whose main component is glyphosate) and the development of cancer in several people, some of the most emblematic of whom are the cases of Dewayne Johnson, Edwin Haderman, and Alva and Alberta Pillod.

As if the adverse effects of glyphosate were not enough, the return to these practices makes even less sense when analyzing these methods' effectiveness compared to their economic costs, since according to figures given by UNODC and the government itself, eradicating a hectare of crops with glyphosate costs 80% more than complying with a family's voluntary crop replacement plan. In fact, the total estimated cost of carrying out voluntary crop substitution processes with 80,438 families is 2.8 trillion Colombian pesos, while between 2005 and 2014, 79.9 trillion were spent on aerial spraying with glyphosate<sup>3</sup>.

For this reason, community, ethnic, human rights and environmental rights organizations reject the reactivation of glyphosate fumigation and call on the Congress of the Republic of Colombia, the Congress of the United States, and interested organizations to support alternatives to eradication and glyphosate fumigation, taking into account the innumerable scientific and community contributions that demonstrate the serious effects in terms of human and environmental rights, as well as the ineffectiveness of the war on drugs.

We share [as an annex to this communication](#) a brief but profound analysis of the serious consequences on the rights to life, integrity and dignity of the population in case of reactivation of glyphosate spraying in the country.

Sincerely,

WOLA - The Washington Office on Latin America

Elementa DDHH

Alianza de Organizaciones de Mujeres Tejedoras de Vida del Putumayo

Red en Movimiento: investigación y acción en migraciones

La Consultoría para los Derechos Humanos y el desplazamiento (CODHES)

Corporación Viso Mutop

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<sup>3</sup> Source: - UNODC. 2020. Comprehensive National Program for the Substitution of Illicit Crops - PNIS (report n° 21). Available at:

[https://www.unodc.org/documents/colombia/2020/Mayo/INFORME\\_EJECUTIVO\\_PNIS\\_No.\\_21.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/colombia/2020/Mayo/INFORME_EJECUTIVO_PNIS_No._21.pdf) and Response of the Directorate for the Substitution of Illicit Crops to a freedom of information request of the House of Representatives. October 2018.