

International organizations and NGOs warn of serious and sustained humanitarian crisis in the department of Chocó



Bogotá, May 3, 2022. The undersigned civil society organizations and international NGOs welcome the creation of the Humanitarian Working Group in Chocó that took place on April 9, 2022, an initiative that joins the efforts of the Chocó civil society to de-escalate violence, protect the civilian population and prioritize dialogue as stated in the Humanitarian Agreement NOW. In addition, they urge the Colombian state to take measures to stop the ongoing armed conflict that is endangering the existence of rural, black and indigenous communities in the department.

They also express their solidarity with the ethnic-territorial organizations, churches and humanitarian agents who, on the ground, have directly verified what is happening in the territories. They call for the use of dialogue to identify and overcome the causes of this situation, and to put limits to the armed confrontation while progress is made in a political negotiation to put an end to the internal armed conflict.

The armed actors have the obligation to respect International Human Rights Law and International Humanitarian Law, particularly Article 3, common to the four Geneva Conventions, which excludes the civilian population from the war: "Persons not taking direct part in hostilities... shall in all circumstances be protected and treated humanely, without any distinction of an unfavorable nature".

The reconfiguration of the armed conflict, state neglect, and the slow progress in the implementation of the Final Peace Accord (signed in November 2016) have generated a complex humanitarian and human rights crisis in the department of Chocó that, according to the Humanitarian Missions report, is deteriorating every day.

In this sense, it is urgent that the Colombian state, as constitutionally responsible for ensuring the life and dignity of all people, implement effective measures to protect the lives of human rights defenders, leaders and social leaders, their communities and organizations, and the signatories of the Final Peace Agreement, with comprehensive actions that go beyond the militarization of the territories.

The Department of Chocó is in a situation of alert and in this sense, we will permanently maintain our monitoring and dialogue with ethnic and territorial organizations in the territory and the international community, to strengthen the role of local organizations in their efforts to defend human rights and build peace.

