

<b>Excmo. Sr. Presidente Gustavo Petro Urrego</b> President of the Republic of Colombia <a href="mailto:contacto@presidencia.gov.co">contacto@presidencia.gov.co</a>	<b>Sra. Luz Adriana Camargo</b> Attorney General of Colombia <a href="mailto:despacho.fiscal@fiscalia.gov.co">despacho.fiscal@fiscalia.gov.co</a>
--	---

April 12, 2025

Dear President Petro and Attorney General Camargo:

We are deeply concerned for the **safety of the civilian population of the rural community of El Plateado**, municipality of Argelia, Cauca Department, due to the recent escalation of violence and threats by an illegal armed group. The Residual Armed Organized Group (GAOr) Carlos Patiño (a dissident faction of the FARC, or Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) is known to operate in several rural zones of Cauca and is deeply involved in drug trafficking, extortion, and environmental destruction, particularly in the Micay River basin.

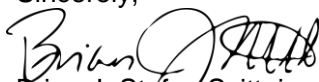
We have read evidence of audio, a radio communication reportedly intercepted by the National Army, inciting violence against the civilian population. Alias *Edwar Ramírez*, a commander of the Samanta Gómez Company of the GAOr said: "...gather everyone around, and if anyone doesn't want to leave, shoot them and they'll be hidden from the military. Son of a bitch, because today we have to burn those toys" [referring to Army armored vehicles]. In the audio, he also ordered his men to halt the purchase of coca leaves in the town, in an apparent strategy to coerce the civilian population—whose livelihoods depend heavily on coca cultivation—into confronting the military presence in the region. This manipulation of vulnerable communities for armed political objectives is unacceptable.

Further recordings also suggest that alias *Giovanny*, a high-ranking leader in the same armed structure, issued directives for the civilian population to violently target the Army, continuing a pattern of intimidation and terror. These actions are in clear violation of international humanitarian law and human rights, and they endanger both civilians and public servants alike. On March 7, a government shared a video showing one of the armored tanks burning while a soldier was still inside.

We strongly urge that your government:

- ensure an independent and thorough investigation into the events in El Plateado, including the incitement of violence by members of the GAOr, and publicly share the findings while prosecuting those responsible for crimes against both civilians and public officials
- consult with civilian leaders of El Plateado and surrounding areas to create protection schemes to ensure that they are not subjected to collective punishment, manipulation, or coercion by any armed actors
- strengthen civilian institutions and implement lasting, community-centered alternatives to coca cultivation in Argelia

Sincerely,

  
 Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
 Co-Coordinators

  
 Christine L. Stonebraker-Martínez

copies: Daniel García-Peña, Ambassador of Colombia to the US ~ via email, US mail  
 José Luis Caballero Ochoa, Rapporteur for Colombia, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) ~ via email, US mail  
 UN: Juliette De Rivero, Representative in Colombia of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights ~ via email  
 US Embassy: John McNamara (Chargé d'Affaires); Adam Levy (human rights) ~ via email  
 US State Department: Desk Officer for Colombia ~ via email  
 US Senators from Ohio: Husted and Moreno ~ via email  
 US Representatives from Ohio: Beatty, Brown, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Miller, Rulli, Sykes ~ via email

07 MAR 2025\_Intobae\_Colombia

**The following people hereby urge you to take action on this matter as indicated in this letter:**