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COLOMBIA

PROTECT THE HEALTH OF THE BARI PEOPLE

Since late August, the Comité de Integración Social del Catatumbo (CISCA) and other local civil society groups have raised the alarm about a serious health outbreak in the Bridikayra settlement of the Bari Indigenous People in Catatumbo, northeast Colombia.

Dozens of people are suffering from fever, pain, and haemorrhages. On August 26, a child died after showing these symptoms. The Bari community lives far from urban centres and has not been provided with proper health services, leaving them at even greater risk.

We call on Colombian health authorities to urgently respond to this outbreak in a way that respects the Bari People's rights to health, as well as their right to free, prior, and informed consent.

Write to the Minister of Health and Social Protection urging him to:

- Take immediate and effective action to protect the Bari People's rights to life and health.
- Ensure access to medical services in Bari settlements.
- Prevent, treat, and control epidemics by establishing adequately equipped medical facilities in Bari communities, so people do not have to risk their lives travelling long distances for care.
- Adopt any measures only with the free, prior, and informed consent of the Bari People.

Write to:

Guillermo Alfonso Jaramillo
Minister of Health and Social Protection
Carrera 13 No. 32-76
Bogotá DC, Colombia
E-mail: correo@minsalud.gov.co
X: @MinSaludCol
Salutation: Dear Mr. Minister,

And copy:

His Excellency Carlos Arturo Morales Lopez
Ambassador
Embassy of the Republic of Colombia
360 Albert Street, Suite 1002
Ottawa, ON K1R 7X7
Tel: (613) 695-0152 Fax: (613) 230-4416
Email: ecanada@cancilleria.gov.co

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Located in north-eastern Colombia's Norte de Santander department, the Catatumbo region stretches between the Eastern Andes and Lake Maracaibo in Venezuela. Despite its richness in natural resources, especially oil, Catatumbo faces extreme poverty, militarisation, armed violence, and a lack of access to health care, food, education, water, and housing. Poor infrastructure and limited connectivity isolate the region further. Catatumbo also remains one of Colombia's main areas for coca cultivation and cocaine production and transit.

Amnesty International has monitored violence against human rights defenders in Catatumbo for years, with a focus on the Catatumbo Social Integration Committee (CISCA). In [2020](#) and [2023](#), Amnesty highlighted the dangers faced by those defending collective rights to land, territory, and the environment. The deep poverty and denial of economic and social rights make the region especially hostile for social leaders.

Civil society in Catatumbo is largely made up of peasant rights organisations and the Bari Indigenous People. The Bari live in the Perijá mountains, near the Catatumbo-Bari National Natural Park, and on both sides of the Colombia–Venezuela border. Their settlements are spread across rural areas in municipalities like El Carmen, Convención, Teorama, El Tarra, and Tibú, far from the urban centres where the few State institutions present in Catatumbo are based.

Since late August 2025, groups such as [CISCA](#) and [Asociación Minga](#) have warned of a critical health crisis in Bari communities, underscoring long-standing issues of child malnutrition, poverty, and lack of public services.

For decades, Catatumbo has endured armed confrontations involving the military and various armed groups. Since January 2025, fighting between the National Liberation Army (ELN) and dissident groups from Front 33 of the former FARC-EP, now operating as the General Staff of Blocks and Fronts (EMBF), has intensified. These clashes have devastated civilians, leaving dozens dead and displacing tens of thousands.

Amnesty International has repeatedly called for civilian protection, issuing Urgent Actions and [Public Statements](#). It has also condemned stigmatising remarks by Colombia's president, who claimed Catatumbo's civil society was "permeated" and "subordinated" to armed groups, statements that further endanger communities.

Amnesty and [Colombian social organisations](#) continue to call on the government to support lasting, structural solutions. This includes implementing the Social Pact for the Territorial Transformation of Catatumbo, developed with the participation of local civil society and the authorities of the Bari Indigenous People.

Please take action as soon as possible until October 15, 2025. The UA will be duly updated should there be the need for further action.