

MINGA TELLS YOU

NEWSLETTER ON NATIONAL CONTEXT AND REGIONS
ACCOMPANIED BY THE MINGA ASSOCIATION



CAUCA - NARIÑO - PUTUMAYO - CATATUMBO

Contributions for debate and what to do

Today, as never before, a phenomenon such as the pandemic has exposed the structural problems of the development model that has been implemented in the country, showing the inability to overcome extreme poverty and exclusion, made more evident now in that wide strip of the population that survives in the instability of the informal economy, of the daily search. The State thus shows itself less legitimate, less guarantor of rights, to the same extent that these majorities increase, which, in the countryside and the marginality of the cities, see it increasingly distant from its precarious ways of subsistence, and in contexts of increasing violence that neither the model could nor did not want to stop.

It was expected that the provisions to face the health emergency would start from the recognition of such conditions, but the national government chose to favor the elites who had it elected. On the contrary, abusing administrative decrees, it placed rights and democracy in quarantine and enabled the State in function of the economic reactivation of companies and banks. In an environment in which social leaders have also endured one of the most aggressive periods against their lives, which are encouraged by an official discourse that ignores the peace processes.

The scenario posed by these and other similar situations in their intentions is that we are heading towards the dismantling of the Social State of Law, within a generalization of violence and limitation of freedoms, to establish the corporate and opinion State, centralist and authoritarian, as has been reiterated in the proposals that the extreme right is again brandishing on the occasion of the arrest of Mr. Uribe.

These are the general elements of the political moment that the country is experiencing in this pandemic semester, and its particularities in the regions, which we want to share through this Newsletter "Minga tells you", where we also collect the feelings, events and alternative proposals of the accompanied territorial processes in Catatumbo, Putumayo, Nariño and Cauca. We hope that the newsletter will be of great use for analysis, debate and decision-making in mainly social organizations.

We think that by advancing in the various articulations: national and regional, sectoral and thematic, we can generate new mobilizations to reactivate rights, democracy and peace. It is urgent!



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National look: reactivate the rights of democracy and peace

A before ...

When the WHO declared the COVID 19 virus as a pandemic, on March 11, Colombia was experiencing the following social and political conditions:

A government with a 77% disapproval according to the February[1] polls, but also measured by the highest levels of social mobilization achieved in recent years, due to its broad participation and sustainability. They reflected the fatigue for the generalized corruption and the complaints of electoral fraud and links to cartels of the Caribbean mafias; the evident favoritism to the interests of the businessmen, expressed in the National Development Plan, the Tax Reform and other policies that affect the economic, social, cultural and environmental rights of the population; non-compliance with the peace agreements, especially in relation to land restitution, crops for illicit use substitution programs, development plans for the territories most affected by the armed conflict and the representation of their communities in parliament, besides, the continuous harassment of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and the Commission for the Clarification of the Truth; the lack of guarantees for social leaderships in defense of rights and territories, which endured 204 murders in 2019[2]; a regional militarization that aimed at: one, the forced eradication of illicit crops with which the government pretends its anti-narcotics policy, focused on the peasantry and not on the cartels; two, the expulsion of peasant communities from natural park areas under the application of the new "environmental security" and, three, the repression of social protests, particularly in the face of territorial conflicts caused by mining, oil extraction and agri-industrial businesses.

Added to this is the discredit in the pernicious relations with world order institutions, in clear alignment with the foreign policy of the Donald Trump government, for instance, concerning the issue of drugs, the ignorance of international agreements, the violation of the sovereignty of other countries, or the diplomacy of war and, consequently, the closure of peace processes. The UN's annual report on human rights in Colombia, which marks 2019 as a very violent year, including the worrying homicide of social leaders, provoked negative reactions in the ruling party that went so far as to propose the closure of the UN offices, but it coincided with the results of the subsequent report from the US State Department, so the noise stopped.

[1]<https://bit.ly/2XRMSBF>

[2]We are defenders program. 2019 Report.
<https://cutt.ly/od2R4e3>



A now...

During the quarantine, Colombia has modified those realities, but not for the benefit of the country nor the people. The first case of infection by Covid 19 was identified on March 6, and although the WHO had set off alarms since January about the spread of the virus, and defined it as a pandemic on March 11, the Colombian government did not declare the State of Emergency until March 17[3] and, subsequently, with pressure from regional authorities that autonomously assumed controls and the performance of several national "cacerolazos", determined social isolation on March 22 and the closure of international flights on March 25.

Today, the records of more than 300,000 confirmed cases, about 11,000 deaths and the limit of the Intensive Care Units professionals, place Colombia as a global source of contagion, show the lateness of such measures, the uselessness of so many decrees and the inconsistency of the measures. The case of the Amazon is alarming, both because of figures that proportionally exceed national figures, and because of the supreme precariousness of the health system as a result of the abandonment of the State, which, as soon as it became historic, already denotes a racist character.[4]

In a pandemic, Duque has played three-way: with one, he ignores the risks of contagion to protect the business economy, pushing the people to work and consume; with another, he keeps going with the quarantine in order to maintain discretion over public policies in all areas; and with the other, he focuses media attention on the threat of the coronavirus and on promoting his personal figure as guardian of health. Cannon! points for the neodictatorial development model!

[3] <https://cutt.ly/Id2Tey8>

[4] <https://monitoreoterritorial-onic.co/> For indigenous peoples it is about the life of their elders and elders in whom their ancestralities are deposited concerning their worldviews and languages, that is the guarantee of their cultural survival.



Photo: La Resistencia

Thus, with the legislature in quarantine, justice in virtuality and the citizenship locked up, the Duque administration recognizes in the pandemic the opportunity to implement policies that the social movement in the streets and the political opposition in Congress had managed to block somehow. Since the declaration of the State of Emergency, the government has promulgated about 160 decrees that, as a whole, are especially aimed at safeguarding the interests of banking and the industrial and commercial sectors against the economic impacts of the crisis created by COVID 19. In general, it is all about the transfer of large volumes of public resources to the financial system, collected from different state funds[5] -including retirement funds-, which are passing to the business associations as soft loans, with the addition of the new tax reductions and the exemption of other social payments.

The movements of the \$ 117 billion that President Duque claims to have earmarked for the emergency -much of it offered through banking businesses- raises valid concerns regarding the profuse ongoing investigations into acts of corruption, and the resistance of the government alliance to apply any of the postulates of the referendum. Opposition congressmen, social organizations and academic centers have raised argued criticisms of the management of such resources, such as the Fiscal Observatory of the Javeriana University who pointed out the illegality that official expenditure reports presented in large categories without detailing, and contradictory between officials could hide, these are the only sources to know the government's plans[6]. The Colombian Association of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (Asociación Colombiana de las Micro, Pequeñas y Medianas Empresas-ACOPÍ-) complaints in relation to minor bussines not having access to the announced benefits[7], complaints from hospital centers for salaries, infrastructure, equipment and medicines, complaints about the meager Solidarity Income[8], or that in general the communities refer that humanitarian aid is only

[5] The government requested credit from the IMF, contrary to other countries that managed to renegotiate their debts with that entity in the framework of the pandemic crisis. <https://bit.ly/3gF7eWk>

[6] <https://bit.ly/2XA1J3O>

seen on the news, ratify these assessments.

With similar prerogatives, companies implement the dismissal of workers, and worsen their working conditions, in terms of wages and social security, protected by the health emergency, government decrees and the absence of control by the State. Also for the sake of economic reactivation, they promote the reduction of the procedures for prior consultations and environmental licenses, which implies less participation and less incidence in decisions; even with measures such as virtual audiences. With joint legal actions, the holding of virtual hearings to approve aerial spraying with glyphosate was stopped, but now with the increase in international gold prices, companies are getting ready to accelerate the mining exploitation authorized by Decree 990 that would allow them to carry out processes of environmental licensing and prior consultation in a semi-face-to-face way[9]. It is with this ambition that the Minesa company of Saudi Arabia rushes to start the exploitation of the "Páramos de Santurbán".

As has happened in other countries that placed social rights in the hands of the international market and business, Colombia shows the damage that the privatization policy has caused in sectors as decisive in this health crisis. However, the millions of pesos that are invested in a peremptory manner in the supposed adaptation of the health system follow the same model operated by the Health entities to whom it provides the management of such resources. And while most countries rush to build new hospitals, here, on the contrary, they are being closed and abandoned, or partial and temporary solutions are adopted in agreements with companies.

In the same way in the agrarian, the pandemic has confirmed the food crisis, whose emergence has provoked protests that occupy streets and squares, or those of a symbolic type such as the red flags in the houses of impoverished neighborhoods, as a sign of help causing the solidarity with the community collections and kitchens. And even though the country's peasantry has taken on the effort to guarantee domestic supply with a lot of spirit of solidarity, the government continues to ignore it as an economic subject and prefers to strengthen the businesses of national and international companies.

[7] <https://bit.ly/2DAE9g5>

[8] Decree 518 of 2020 creates the "Solidarity Income Program" for poor households to whom they would make monthly transfers of \$ 160,000, which is not even half of a basic food basket and is applied in only 178 municipalities of the existing 1,101 existing.

[9] <https://bit.ly/3iks9hF>

Decree 486 which seeks the "Sufficiency and accessibility of the population to the necessary food for their subsistence", prioritizes the international market and, without even considering the revision of the already unfavorable Free Trade Agreements, eliminates tariffs for the import of food^[10]. The same exclusion of the peasant economy is observed in the case of credits and economic aid funds, which are difficult to access due to the usurious management of the banks, to whom they gave the \$ 1.5 billion of the Colombia Agri-produces program (Programa Colombia Agroproduce) In fact, 94% was awarded to agro-industrial companies, 4% to medium-sized producers and only 2% to the peasantry. Transfers in which the banks also kept 6%, just for moving the money.

And even in the middle of the quarantine, forced eradication of crops for illicit use, have intensified in several regions of the country, ignoring agreements with the communities and exposing them to contagion, with the entry of large contingents of the Public Force and mobile groups of eradicators. These operations are carried out by joint forces of the Police and the Army, the latter participating in a condition that violates IHL insofar as it involves conflicts with the civilian population. In the development of such procedures, 6 deaths have already been recorded in the following departments: 1 in Nariño, 2 in Catatumbo, 1 in Antioquia and 2 in Putumayo; in addition to the beatings which have left people disabled. It is the Duque government's fictitious anti-drug policy directed against the weakest link in the business, not against the cartels that dominate it and ensnare the peasantry itself, who as growers keep 9% of the value of the business, while the marketers appropriate 79%, according to the Center for Studies on Safety and Drugs (Centro de Estudios sobre Seguridad y Drogas -Cesed-) of the University of Los Andes.

Thus, with an Executive centralizing all matters of public life, where the armed forces play an increasingly leading role, the pandemic of violence in the country has already reached its maximum peak: massacres, 4 in just the last 15 days: one in Córdoba^[11], another in Cauca and two in Catatumbo, the latter carried out by the so-called Rastrojos, those of the famous diplomatic service of border trails between the Duque-Guaidó "governments". The country has reached this point as a development of the accumulation of violence that the government alliance has encouraged with its authoritarian speeches and the persistent siege of the peace process with the extinct FARC, which coincides with the fact that since the signing of the Accords half of the 350 murders of social leaders and 220 ex-combatants have occurred during the two years of Iván Duque's mandate.^[12]

[10]<https://bit.ly/3klzu2A>

[11]Both, Cauca and Córdoba are departments, Catatumbo is a region located in the Norte de Santander department.

In the almost five months of quarantine, while the government focuses all the country's attention on the threat of the pandemic and the debates about its useless containment plans, 90 of the 183 murders of social leaders have occurred so far this year and 18 of the 36 ex-combatants. Attacks that are carried out in conditions of total vulnerability due to the absence of social relations and the permanent location in a single place, in which families are directly involved, as in the cases of the municipalities of Piamonte and Mercaderes where the leaders were murdered in their own houses along with part of the families.

Systematic violence is also carried out with the impunity offered by a General Prosecutor's Office more willing to persecute the social and political opposition to the government, based on judicial false positives, than to investigate and identify the intellectual authors of such crimes. In fact, of the 592 cases registered by the Prosecutor's Office of murders of leaders and social leaders, between January 2016 and December 31, 2019, in only 54 cases (9.12%) they have been established material actors, while 99 (16.7%) have some progress in the investigation and 439, that is, 74%, are in impunity.

And one after...

International studies such as Oxfam's conclude that, during the pandemic, the concentration of wealth in Latin America has multiplied, while the majority are sinking even further into misery. The accounts that are kept in the country on the monies that have gone from public to private, at least as officially announced; plus, the profits from uncontrolled abuses in the prices of basic necessities, utility rates and interest rates; moreover, the greater openness to the mining and oil industry, which implies fewer rights and territories for the country; moreover, the privatization of the remains of the public patrimony that is still in the hands of the nation, according to Decrees 637 and 811 of the State of Emergency; and more, the free circulation of drug trafficking money, would confirm this trend in the Colombian case. It is the attractive booty of this government that is making the expansion and consolidation of alliances viable, where businessmen, parties and cartels converge in one way or another.

But it is a government that loses international support due to the demonstrated ineptitude to comply with the peace accords and stop the systematic murders of social leaders, aggravated by extrajudicial executions, massacres and violence against women, in which the armed forces are involved in acts of rape. Even its main support in this area has weakened, the Trump government, to the same extent that its reelection is complicated but, especially, given the failure of all destabilizing actions to overthrow the Bolivarian government of



Photo: La Resistencia

Venezuela where Duque was the main tab.

This weakening of Duque's presidency in the world is also reinforced by national discontent with the erratic handling of the pandemic, and the measures that have meant the loss of rights for the majority of the population. It is a condition of illegitimacy that will be difficult for him to overcome, no matter how much advertising services he pays to the media; with public money, of course. Therefore, one way to maintain impunity for the generalized corruption and violence that have allowed the licit and illicit enrichment of the governmental alliance, will be to advance in the adaptation of the institutions to such interests, which implies dismantling the bases of the Social Law State. Almost like eternalizing and deepening the current State of Emergency, where the Courts and Congress seem to be annulled in the state of opinion that the extreme right has promoted from times ago, with the permanent figure of Duque ruling everything in the media and with an exclusive TV strip.

But discontent can translate into new social protests, and perhaps the prohibitive norms that arose in social isolation so that the military presence could be extended, sought to predispose repression for them. It has been questioned that amid the pandemic the government had allocated billions of pesos to reinforce the Mobil Riot Squad (Escuadrón Móvil Antidisturbios-ESMAD-) equipment, and not those of the health personnel. The militarization of regions with strong social fabrics and the capacity for mobilization will then increase, to make room for extractivist and agri-industrial projects, under the excuse of the false fight against drugs, as well as the false fight against deforestation of the Amazon, both directed against peasant communities. In parallel, as has happened so far, attacks on social leaderships will be accentuated in these same regions, by the armed structures at the service of the cartels, in the same counterinsurgency logic.

However, the social processes in the different territories have not lost the initiative during the quarantine and have adapted the agendas and methodologies to the new conditions. The peasant, indigenous and maroon guards organize community control measures for avoiding the spread of the pandemic in their territories; In this sense, ancestral and traditional health experiences and the use of medicinal plants are also being carried out; agroecological production tasks are accelerating,

promoting proposals for food sovereignty and solidarity economy, ways are invented to continue the training processes in distance popular schools, and communication strategies are perfected to break isolation and demobilization.

The reactivation of public actions begins to be called from the mobilizations against the military operations of forced eradication of crops, and the Marches for Dignity that walked from Popayán, Barrancabermeja[18] and Arauca to Bogotá, claiming the lives of social leaders and former combatants, and the dignity of women. Two workers of the Union Trade (Unión Sindical Obrera -USO-) of the oil industry have been tied in chains for a month and a half in the Manuel Gustavo Chacón square in Bogotá, denouncing the privatization of Ecopetrol and the CENIT national oil pipeline system.

Hunger strikes that have been carried out by students in various universities in the country demanding "zero enrollment", and the different pressures from trade union organizations together with groups of parliamentarians to demand the "basic income". That is, a set of citizen, national and territorial actions, which are opening possibilities for the reactivation of rights, democracy and peace, in a context of the expansion of the neodictatorial pandemic (which is no longer so liberal that we say).

[17] <https://bit.ly/30zsJT1>

[18] Popayán, Barrancabermeja and Arauca are municipalities located in three different departments.



Photo: La Resistencia

Cauca: Resistance in the midst of harassment and isolation

DEPARTMENTAL CONTEXT ANALYSIS



In the expansion of covid 19 through the South West of the country, the department of Cauca shows a significant difference in relation to its neighborhoods. To date, it ranks 23rd by department, with a figure of 2,125 cases, between Valle del Cauca with 28,620 and Nariño that is close to 9,000, in 4th and 8th place respectively[1]; this without pointing out the proximity to the dramatic picture that Ecuador presents. It has been said in different papers on the phenomenon of the current pandemic that one of the factors affecting the reduction of the vulnerability of certain populations in the world has been the collective forms of social organization, underlining that only from this type of societies will be able to overcome these kinds of threats. And it is good to speak of Cauca in this pandemic semester from such a perspective.

Obviously, the strengths of the community fabric of Cauca have demonstrated a high capacity to enforce rights that today guarantee minimum conditions to face the coronavirus health crisis and all the others crisis that it has revealed. The mobilizations for the defense of the territory, resisting the intervention of mining, energy and agri-business projects, who appropriate, pollute and deplete water, as well as resistance again drug trafficking, allow that today we still have this resource so vital to combat the coronavirus emergency. A dispute that includes the management of water avoiding its total alienation from the experiences of protecting water sources and those of the community aqueducts.

[1] <https://bit.ly/30GzFgQ>

The social struggles have achieved a public health that, although still limited, does not present the levels of precariousness that are common in the country. But the right to health has also been raised from the accumulated in a line of autonomous construction, and in the face of the emergency, the alternatives organized around the Life Plans, based on ancestral knowledge, are promoted, ordering community contingency methods, with the special participation of women, natural caregivers of life. And in the same sense of strengthening community government exercises for survival and coexistence in their territories, without waiting for solutions from the State or companies, control posts of the pandemic have been established where indigenous, peasant and maroon guards regulate the entry and exit of people and vehicles.

Despite these acts of social responsibility in the face of the pandemic, there are intimidating acts by Army units against those groups of Guards arranged in various parts of the Cauca territory to establish preventive community control for the spread of Covid 19. The Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca (Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca-CRIC) has also denounced during this time, a series of attacks and murders directed against the Kiwe Tegnás of the territory, which are due to this dispute in which the communities reinforce their government fabrics to face all the pandemics exacerbated by the coronavirus.

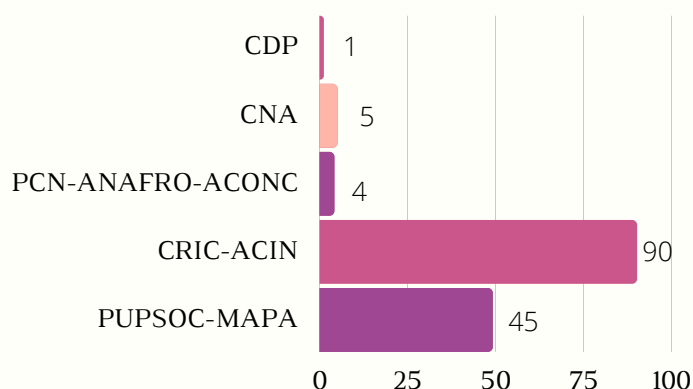
Another fundamental aspect indicated in the management of the pandemic crisis is food. Here, then, are the agroecological production collectives and the fair community markets, inviting children and youth - now the majority on forced vacations - to till the land in a pedagogical practice that guarantees the survival of rural cultures and territorial sovereignty. In this field, the government is required to deliver land, supply inputs, commercialization guarantees, and forgiveness of debts, to offer the supply that people are demanding, rather than resort to importing food and to public-private business. Focused on this component of food sovereignty of the Life Plans, the real alternatives to the economies dependent on drug trafficking have been partially outlined, with proposals for the productive transformation of the territories, which the government also ignores and represses.

However, these collective experiences must face the risks of the pandemic of violence, which in this region presents the greatest intensity in this semester, as in previous years, which corresponds to the obstinate intention of the oligarchic governments to dismantle the territorial social networks of Cauca that dispute their initiative and

legitimacy, even now while dealing with the emergency. Because the legal and illegal violence that is implemented in Cauca can only be interpreted from the application of a counterinsurgency strategy based on the continuity of the National Security doctrine that qualifies as "internal enemy" any expression that does not follow the government line, which Duque stipulates as "legality", one of his favorite slogans.

According to the Human Rights Report of the social organizations that are part of the Territorial Table of Guarantees in the department of Cauca, whose presentation was made in May of this year, since the Peace Agreement was signed between the National Government and the FARC-EP to date, 215 social leaders, human rights defenders and family members have been murdered in the department of Cauca; that is, half of the national cases. Likewise, 36 former FARC-EP combatants who signed the Peace Agreement and a member of the FARC party were assassinated in the same period, being the department with the highest number of such crimes.

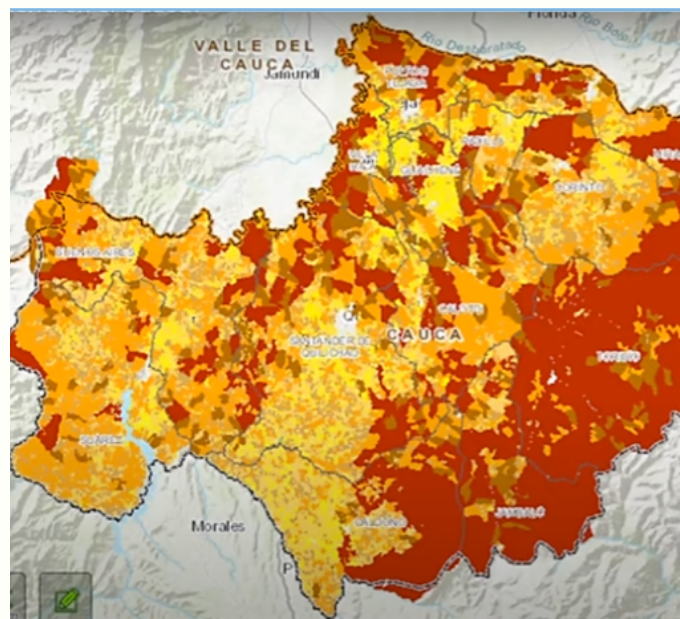
Homicides of social leaders and human rights defenders who are members of organizations that are part of the Territorial Table of Guarantees in the department of Cauca. Period: signing peace agreement (November 24, 2016) to May 2020



CDP: Congreso de los Pueblos (People's Congress)
 CNA: Coordinador Nacional Agrario (National Agrarian Coordination)
 ACONC: Asociación De Consejos Comunitarios del Norte Del Cauca- Association of Community Councils of North of Cauca,
 PCN: Proceso de Comunidades Negras – Black Communities Process
 ANAFRO: Autoridad Nacional Afrocolombiana – National Afrocolombian Authority)
 PUPSOC: Proceso de Unidad Popular del Suroccidente Colombiano -Process of Popular Unity of the Colombian Southwest
 MAPA: Marcha Patriótica – Patriotic March)
 CRIC:Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca -Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca
 ACIN: Asociación de Cabildos Indígenas del Norte del Cauca - Association of Indigenous Councils of North Cauca)

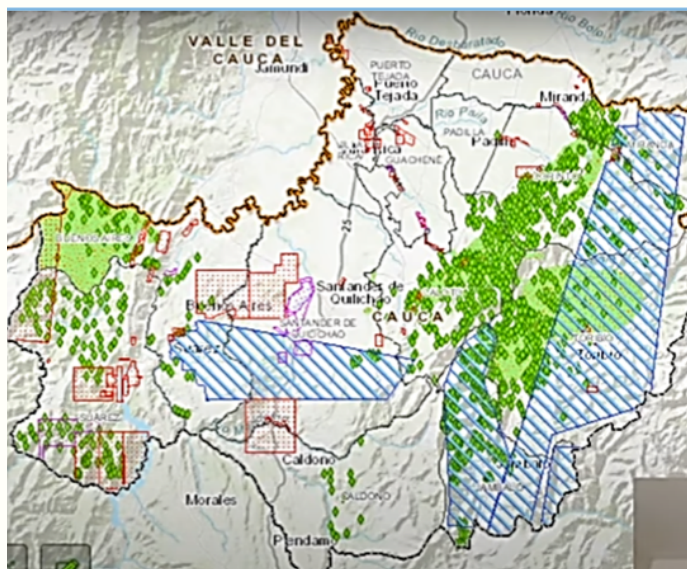
Taking into account the records of Indepaz, so far this year Cauca has already recorded 58 murders of social leaders, 31 of them perpetrated in times of quarantine, when Duque decreed the State of Emergency and centralized the State in the Executive; it is worth specifying, in the Presidency and the Armed Forces. Of that list, 34 belonged to indigenous communities, 14 to peasants, 9 Afro-colombians and 1 union member. Four of the murders were perpetrated in homes, in which wives, children and even a granddaughter also died.

The cases were mainly concentrated in the North of Cauca and in the Micay Valley, where social processes are facing the expansion of the sugarcane and agroforestry industry, in addition to several projects of small hydroelectric plants on the rivers of the Massif, amid a historical dispute over the territories where the native peoples were expelled from the valley by the landowners forcing them to live in the mountain ranges. But they also compete with non-community economies linked to the coca and marijuana crops and gold mining mafias, installed in their territories. In conditions that become more complex because this area is part of the corridors that the cartels have set up from the departments of Guaviare, Meta, Caquetá and Putumayo, to access the international routes of the Pacific Ocean.



Collective territories (red, in the mountain range) and private territories (yellow, in the valley) in the north of Cauca. [4]

[2]Special report: Emergency situation due to violations of Human Rights in the Department of Cauca. Prepared by: Human Rights Network of the South West of Colombia "Francisco Isaías Cifuentes", the Network for Life and Human Rights of Cauca and the Organizations of the Territorial Table of Guarantees in the Department of Cauca <https://bit.ly/3kKbKcH8>
 [3] <https://bit.ly/33Kk2af>
 [4] Institute of Intercultural Studies (2020). Javeriana university.



Mining and coca and marijuana crops in the North of Cauca. [5]

During this period of pandemic, confrontations between armed groups in the Micay Valley have intensified, especially in the municipalities of Algeria and El Tambo, whom harass and violate communities forcing them to displace[6]. One of the most recent and most cruel events occurred on June 5 in the village of Betania, where Paola del Carmen Mena was assassinated, along with Armando Suárez Rodríguez, belonging to the Afro Renacer Community Council, and Victor Alonso Calvo Guevara, from the Huisitó Peasant Association. According to the versions of the inhabitants of the region, the crime was committed by members of the so-called Carlos Patiño Front[7], with such brutality, they say, that it reminds them of the times of paramilitary barbarism. They are not the first social leaders in the region who have paid their commitment to the defense of the collective territory and a dignified life. In April of this year, the peasants Teodomiro Sotelo, Andrés Cansimance, Jesús Albeiro Riascos and Sabino Angulo Advíncula were murdered in this area.

Since June, military operations for the forced eradication of crops for illicit use began in 14 villages of the municipality of Santander de Quilichao. On July 18, amid one of these operations in the Agua Blanca village, the peasant and indigenous communities that gathered around the military units to stop the eradication and demand compliance with the voluntary substitution pacts,

were intimidated with rifle gunfires made above their heads[8]. It is feared, as has happened in other regions of the country, that a military body formed for war will respond to a social protest and that civilians would be killed.

All of the above occurs in a heavily militarized department, where the III Division of the National Army, the Specific Command of Cauca, the Rapid deployment force (Fuerza de Despliegue Rápido - FUDRA-) No. 4 and the Apolo Joint Task Force have jurisdiction, with their respective Mobile Brigades and Battalions, adding up to about 10,000 troops. In coordination with Region 4 of the National Police, since January 1, 2017, they have been developing the “Victoria Plan[9], for the consolidation and stabilization of the regions” and the Horus Plan or Victoria Plus Plan is already underway. However, the complaints of the communities and local authorities are persistent in pointing out the ineffectiveness of the armed forces in this region to guarantee the rights of the population.

The social dialogue “Why the war continues in Cauca”, organized by the Truth Commission[10], gives an account of the structural factors that maintain this high level of conflict in the department, where all legal and illegal armed groups seek to pursue their goals. But other factors that try to explain the logic of the war in this region were also pointed out, in an exercise of listening to people from the different public communities that directly or indirectly are part of that scenario, referring to economic, political, social influences, as well as, military and former combatants.

Crossing the set of testimonies clearly indicates the existence of a complex network of alliances between members of the Military, cartels, companies, regional political leaders, and guerrillas, which occur almost indistinctly depending on the circumstances. But analysis methods based on determining variables, would ratify the perception of the communities repeatedly raised in the complaints in the sense that the Army would act in collusion with the armed structures at the service of drug trafficking, such as cases of corruption, but in the context that we have described could also be said to have reasons of State.

[8] Again they expelled the army in Cauca. <https://bit.ly/3ilGTWn>

[9] <https://bit.ly/2PARZln>

[10] Why the war continues in Cauca? Commission to clarify the truth [In spanish] <https://bit.ly/2XDWTao>

[5] Ibid

[6] <https://bit.ly/3gHRcer>

[7] Other groups such as Carlos Patiño made up of fractions of the extinct FARC are: Jaime Martínez, Dagoberto Ramos, Nueva Marquetalia and Jacobo Arenas. The ELN structures are also present in Cauca: the José María Becerra and Manuel Vazquez Castaño Fronts, and the Lucho Quintero, Camilo Cienfuegos and Milton Hernández Ortiz Companies; in addition to the EPL and the neo-paramilitaries: Clan del Golfo (Gulf Clan), Águilas Negras (Black Eagles) and Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (United self-defense groups of Colombia).



Photo: Ordeurca



Photo: CRIC



Photo: CIMA

Nariño: between the armed conflict and COVID - 19

DEPARTMENTAL CONTEXT ANALYSIS



Photo: UNIPA

The unprecedented situation that the world is going through with COVID-19 permeates the reality of the department of Nariño, as it adds to the difficult conditions of the social, political, economic and armed context of the region. This emergency worsens the tensions stemming from poverty and state absence, showing structural precariousness and demonstrating once again the difficult situation the country is experiencing referred to human rights.

Concerning the sanitary emergency, the official figures from the Governor's Office of Nariño^[1] confirmed 7,970 cases and 57 affected municipalities until the 31st of June. The registry of probable cases and people who are being followed up due to close contact with the people directly affected is far from the reality since the operational inability and the lack of coverage of the health system make it impossible to keep track of the infections. From the beginning of the emergency, the community denounces that the official figures are underreported because, due to the few examinations the department has, the reporting of cases is low in contrast to reality. However, Nariño has ranked between the fifth and seventh departments with the highest rate of infection during the last three months.

The border situation with Ecuador and the crisis that the neighboring country is facing, increase the risk of infections. The seven irregular entry points that exist from the border to the Pacific coast are controlled by the indigenous and peasant guards

[1] Classification of COVID-19 cases by municipality -Nariño Governor's Office: <https://covid-19.narino.gov.co/tabs/mapa>



Photo: CIMA

(community authorities), with the support in some cases of the police. The public force controls regular migration points, but irregular ones, such as water entry, by sea or river, like the Rumichaca bridge, are hard to keep under control. This situation implied a massive contagion in the coastal zone, particularly in Tumaco.

At the beginning of May, the mayor of this municipality, María Angulo, publicly announced that the only two level-one hospitals (Hospital San Andrés and the Divino Niño Hospital Center) in the Pacific region of Nariño, were at its full capacity and the institutionality prepared itself for the worst. Now, the San Andrés Hospital - the only second-level hospital - is undergoing intervention by the superintendency, overwhelmed in capacity and with 32 cases of COVID-19 diagnosed among its personnel.

In this coastal town in June, 15 beds from the Intensive Care Unit without medical equipment arrived for the first time, these without specialists do not have functionality. For now, people who are aggravated from the 12 municipalities of the Nariño coast and some from the coastal foothill are transferred by land to the city of Cali, and other few cases to Pasto, as this city has already exceeded its attention capacity as it also receiving some patients from the department of Putumayo.

The serious situation is not focused solely on Tumaco and Pasto; at the beginning of July, the Governor of Nariño Jhon Rojas declared a hospital red alert in the entire department due to the high

occupation of the ICU, which corresponds to 82.8% and the growing number of contagion cases in the region. Although the presence of the community guards has been essential to cover State absenteeism and prevent the spread of the virus in the municipalities, particularly in rural areas; the official authorities have delegitimized and subordinated this expression of self-government. Events such as the one that occurred in the month of May in the towns of Sandoná and Consacá, where the police disrespected the disinfection plan and entered their vehicle at one of the peasant checkpoints, demonstrate this.



The communities also point out that since March 16, the precariousness of food supplies begins, the daily wage workers have serious socioeconomic needs and, along with this, the speculation of prices does not stop, leaving the rise in costs in the intermediaries and again ignoring peasant labor. For their part, other farmers have not been able to commercialize their harvest due to the onerous transportation costs that continue to rise in the speculative dynamic. In the case of coffee, the rise in the price of agricultural supplies (mostly imported) has directly affected the economic activity of coffee growers in the region.

As far as is related to organizations such as the Integration Committee of the Colombian Massif (Comité de Integración del Macizo Colombiano CIMA), call for care and protection practices; these measures include: to continue working on farms as a bet for food sovereignty amid the crisis; not to summon to meetings, visits or massive meetings; and a permanent relationship with the presidents of Community Action Boards to prevent risk factors from spreading.

In the rural areas of Nariño there is a curfew. Some municipalities such as San Pablo, San Lorenzo, Yacuanquer, Chachaquí, among others, are being protected by the Indigenous and Peasant Guard; others such as Tumaco, Policarpa, Cumbitara, the Telembí Triangle and Leiva are being controlled by the armed actors, who amid the emergency have not

ceased their activity, while the communities try to solve the situation without confrontation. Besides, various pamphlets have circulated, threatening the population with disrespect for isolation and threatening the lives of those who are infected, increasing fear and anxiety in the region.

Social leaderships are also at risk, since the pandemic has been used to attack leaders in their homes as a natural scene of isolation. The threats also continue, such as those suffered by the leaders of the Association of Community Action Boards of the Mira, Nulpe and Mataje rivers in Tumaco, threatened with death by the Gulf Clan. The situation of siege is also suffered by the indigenous Awá people in southern Nariño, where their traditional authorities have received direct threats from armed groups linked to the interests of drug trafficking. There is a latent need: to maintain the communication channels enabled for human rights defenders who are at risk under isolation.

In the particular case of the Awá indigenous people, it is necessary to note the serious situation in the region of the Pacific foothill in the Nambí Piedra Verde reservation, a territory heavily hit by violence, especially during the month of July. During this period the indigenous Governor Fabio Alfonso Guanga García was assassinated, in this aggression, a woman was also assassinated and two people were injured, including a two-year-old boy and another minor. According to complaints from this population, in addition to these murders, seven indigenous community members and guards have also had their lives taken away. [2]



The violence in the Telembí triangle (Barbacoas, Roberto Payán and Maqui Payán) structures a regrettable and worrying picture of aggression against the human rights of the population that lives there. In addition to facing the adverse public health situation, they have been confined by the war that takes place between armed groups, state forces and

[2] Taken from <https://bit.ly/2DZaLjF>

drug trafficking mafias. In June the confrontations continued, the dispute over the territory and the dominance of the drug trafficking routes between Structure 30 and Oliver Sinisterra keep generating permanent clashes, affecting the tranquility of the Magui Payán population. It should be noted that during the month of June the population of this municipality was left unprotected without a health care service due to the closure of the Integrated Health Services Subnet Saúl Quiñones which presented a contagion of 97% of the medical staff (one doctor and six nurses) in addition to the mayor Alejandro Quiñones Cabezas who also tested positive for COVID-19.

In relation to crops for illicit use, farmers from Nariño filed four guardianship actions during this first semester, focusing on due process and citizen participation to avoid giving free rein to aerial spraying with glyphosate. During the month of June, the Second Administrative Court suspended the process for the necessary environmental license that allows restarting the aspersion, protecting the right to due process, citizen participation, the right to prior consultation and the right to access information; since the peasantry, Afro-colombian and indigenous communities do not have the technical means to guarantee their participation in virtual hearings.

However, as in other departments, forced eradication continues during the emergency; operations have intensified and centralized in the coastal region and the mountain range area. Such is the case of the villages [3] La Chamba and Casa Vieja of the Anyuca municipality, where in early hours of last May 31, military forces arrived for the eradication (it should be noted that this municipality was one of those who signed a collective agreement with National Comprehensive Program for the Substitution of Illicit Crops (Programa Nacional Integral de Sustitución de Cultivos Ilícitos (PNIS)).

Under this situation of aggression, hunger and confinement, there have been massive displacements. Such is the case of the municipality of Roberto Payán, with the departure of almost 250



people from the rural area and the municipality of Francisco Pizarro with the displacement of 24 families due to the confrontation during the month of March[4].

In Tumaco, at the beginning of April, a medical mission was attacked in the Vaquerío area by the armed group "Los Contadores". This mission left Barbacoas with two patients seeking medical assistance. In the attack, a patient and the driver died. According to the inhabitants of the area, this occurred in the evening hours without prior information from the groups that made territorial control, which ended in a clear violation of International Humanitarian Law.

The continuous crisis that the region is experiencing, added to the crisis due to COVID-19, marks an unprecedented scenario, with a high vulnerability of communities regarding human rights attacks: there are greater difficulties in the attention to the victimized population due to the restriction to access the territories as guarantees for human rights or to concentrate the population displaced by the conflict; the precariousness of the Colombian health system is more profound in these regions that have suffered from the absence of the state in terms of access to rights; the virtual education proposed by the government does not work, because the population does not have access to internet and even electricity infrastructure; many women are isolated with their aggressor and in rural areas they do not have the support of any institution; finally, the militarization of the border, of Ipiales, Cumbal, Carlosama and overall Nariño with the additional presence of over 500 men from the Third Division of the Army who came to reinforce the "safeguard" efforts are a clear threat amid this state of exception of a warlike government.

[3] In Colombia, the jurisdiction of a municipality consists of its urban and rural area, the rural area is divided into corregimientos, in turn, the jurisdiction of corregimientos, covers the smallest rural administrative unity, which is called vereda. In this document we will refer to veredas as villages

[4] Taken from <https://bit.ly/3kBmWUQ>



Putumayo quarantine: deepening violence and state abandonment

DEPARTMENTAL CONTEXT ANALYSIS



Photo: Putumayo communities



Photo: Campesino Colombiano



Photo: Putumayo communities

The economic, social and ecological emergency decreed by the government on March 17 of this year, in response to the arrival of COVID 19 in the national territory, shows that the most widespread and uncontrolled virus in the country is not COVID, but violence and hunger. The humanitarian crisis, which is already structural in Colombia, stands out in front of the indifferent gaze of the institutionality, and Putumayo is no stranger to it, quite the contrary, violence and state abandonment are increasingly vicious with this Andean-Amazonian territory, while drug trafficking continues to expand and extractive economies keep advancing.

Social and humanitarian crisis

According to the 2018 quality of life survey[1], the intensity of multidimensional poverty in Putumayo is 40.3%; the casual labor indicator is 91%, the indicator of low educational achievement is between 60-70%, and 50.3% of the population does NOT have access to drinking water. These discouraging indicators become more critical in the context of the pandemic and the containment measures, which impede the mobility of a very high percentage of informal workers, but above all, what occurs is the deepening of a departmental development model that is not sustainable neither social, culturally nor environmentally. Putumayo economy depends largely on the extractive industries, (mining and oil extraction) and Tourism, this within the “legal” economies.

In 2019, 71% of Putumayo had been given in concessions for the exploration and exploitation of hydrocarbons. In 2020, under the new modality “Permanent Process for Allocation of Areas” (Proceso Permanente de Asignación de Áreas - PPAA-), the National Hydrocarbons Agency (Agencia Nacional de Hidrocarburos -ANH-) has 11 available contracts in areas located in Puerto Asís, Valle del Guamuez, Mocoa, San Miguel, Orito, Puerto Guzmán, Villagarzón and Puerto Caicedo. The communities also denounce the reactivation of a mining contract that affects Mocoa and the corridor to upper Putumayo, against which they are carrying out actions in defense of the territory.

As is known, extractive industries are not employment sources; on the contrary, they tend to “build” economic environments characterized by being ephemeral and unstable, transforming and displacing traditional economic activities, changing land uses, profoundly impacting ecological systems and forming “assistentialist” socioeconomic circuits, since they assume the role of beneficiaries and even providers of goods and services in the enclave territories characterized by state abandonment. Institutional and budgetary abandonment and absence, sometimes seem programmed and arranged to legitimize the presence of companies on one side, and to create needs in the communities to justify the arrival of this industries, from the other. This is the dynamic of Putumayo in the regions where the oil and mining enclaves continue to grow, because as we said before, a large percentage of the department is under concession, undermining not only the social and economic sustainability and food sovereignty of

[1] <https://bit.ly/2F653x1>

its population, but affecting the biological and cultural diversity of this Andean-Amazonian department.

It is noteworthy that the national government excluded mining and oil extraction activities from mandatory confinement and in Putumayo, oil extraction has occurred non-stop in March and April 2020, with everything that implies: transportation of crude oil in tank trucks that constantly enter and leave the territory, to other departments and the border with Ecuador, putting at high risk the peasant, indigenous and Afro-colombians populations in the areas with platforms and oil wells.

As for tourism, the national quarantine and the departmental control measures have paralyzed this activity, on which an important sector of the population depends, and therefore, they are not receiving any type of income. Although tourism was gaining strength in the department after the Peace Agreement, since the perception of security in the territory grew; the state absence and the lack of institutional presence in a comprehensive way, the non-compliance with the mentioned Peace Agreement implementation especially of points 1 and 4, and the permissiveness (and in some cases complacency / collusion as has been denounced by communities and organizations) of authorities and public force with the drug trafficking and armed groups, have made of Putumayo one of the most violent regions in the country; this and the risk of COVID, directly affect the tourism sector.

But extractivism and the pandemic are just some of the social problems plaguing the Putumayo population. Undoubtedly, the coca economy, instrumentalized by drug trafficking, largely supports the socio-economic dynamics of the territory in the middle Putumayo and constitutes an important portion of occupation for the population, contributing decisively (as the extractive sectors do), to the loss of sovereignty and food security, worsening the violence and armed conflict, and breaking the community and cultural fabrics, as we will see below.

The dispute for social and territorial control and aggressions against communities and social leaders

In the Putumayo department, after the signing of the peace agreements between FARC EP and the Colombian Government, different armed groups are disputing over territorial control and the drug trafficking business: dissents from Front 1 Carolina Ramírez and Front 48 of FARC. According to recent reports, the second one is operating with drug trafficking groups and holdouts from paramilitary groups who call themselves "La Mafia" (The Mafia) "their structure of the paramilitary groups under the



Photo: Putumayo communities



command of Héctor Orlando Bastidas a.k.a. "Bonito"[2] (Pretty boy) , especially in the municipalities of Puerto Asís, San Miguel, Valle del Guamuéz and Puerto Guzmán. The presence of international drug trafficking structures that have territorial alliances with these armed groups has also been noticed. All this happens amid the national decree of confinement, the departmental decree that further reinforces the measures in mobility control, the curfew and the permanent presence of the police and army, in charge of enforcing - fully - quarantine.[3]

Despite the extremely high militarization, the murders and attacks against the population, and particularly against social leaders, have increased. Between January and June 2020, Gloria Isabel Ocampo, secretary of the Community Action Board (Junta de Acción Comunal -JAC-) from the village of La Estrella in Puerto Guzmán, Yordan Tovar, director of the Putumayo agricultural peasant workers union (Sindicato de trabajadores campesinos agrícolas del Putumayo) and member of Patriotic March (Marcha Patriótica), Biron Rueda Ruiz, who was president of the CAB of the village[4] called The 18 on the border with Ecuador, Luis Alberto Parra and Jader Parra of the CAB of Villa Fátima in Puerto Guzmán, Emilio Campaña, Oscar Quintero Valencia, Gentil Hernández Jiménez, Diego Alejandro Nuñez, Guillermo Jojoa Jamioy, Edison León López, and Leydi Viviana Trompeta, an indigenous woman belonging to the Cabildo Indígena (Native Council) Nasa Kuesh Kiwe indigenous council have been assassinated.

Another of the crimes attributed to the structures of the 48th front and "the Mafia" is that of Marco Rivadeneira, assassinated on March 19, president of

[2]<https://bit.ly/3ixqQfu>

[3]Public complaint "In Putumayo, armed men threaten to kill people with COVID-19" www.colectivodeabogados.org

[4] In Colombia, the jurisdiction of a municipality consists of its urban and rural area, the rural area is divided into corregimientos, in turn, the jurisdiction of corregimientos, covers the smallest rural administrative unity, which is called vereda. In this document we will refer to corregimientos as administrative units, and to veredas as villages, most villages have their own Community Action Board, we will indicate them in the text as

the Peasant Association of Puerto Asís (Asociación Campesina de Puerto Asís-ASOCPUERTOASIS-), member of the board of directors of the National Agrarian Coordinator (Coordinador Nacional Agrario -CNA-) and of the People's Congress (Congreso de los Pueblos), delegated to the Human Rights platform Coordination Colombia, Europe and the United States (Coordinación Colombia, Europa y Estados Unidos CCEEU). Marco led a process of productive transformation with 7 villages of the Puerto Vega Teteyé corridor, which seeks to move from the Coca economies to the agri-food peasant economies. Carrying out this struggle, in the middle of an appointment with the communities, he was assassinated. It should be noted that this process is the result of a dialogue table between the communities of the Puerto Vega corridor, (who had been pressured and attacked by the public force in forced eradication operations) and the National Government, headed by the Ministry of the Interior, which began in August 2019. This process is being retaken by the leaders of the seven villages amid growing anxiety, social mobilization against forced eradication and state repression.

In addition to the assassinations of social leaders, in the first semester of 2020, 4 FARC ex-combatants who were in the process of reincorporation were killed: Daniel Jiménez Ospina, Juan Carlos Castillo Certijama, Angel Alberto Calderón Ruiz and Raul Lipence Peruche; some of these killings directly affected the territory of the Nasa People, Kwinas Cxhab reservation, due to their perception of having their collective and territorial rights threatened, so this indigenous territory has declared itself in Permanent Assembly.

Attacks on social leaders through threats also increased during the quarantine. Jani Silva, representative of the "Perla Amazónica" Peasant Reserve Zone (Zona de Reserva Campesina Amazonian Pearl), deputy Andrés Cancimance, former candidate for governor, Yuri Quintero, Yule Anzueta, and Wilmar Madroñero who belong to the

Human Rights Network of Putumayo, Piedmonte (Cauca)[5] and Cofanía Jardines de Sucumbíos (Nariño)(Red de Derechos Humanos del Putumayo, Piamonte y Cofanía Jardines de Sucumbíos), have been threatened with death, some of them had to leave the department.

These facts, along with the intimidation produced by the presence and permanent control of these groups in the territory, and within the communities, make actual Putumayo, one of the departments where more social leaders are being attacked and where Communities are being pressured, intimidated and displaced.



Photo: Putumayo communities

Although in the second week of April the army and the police announced "blows" against drug trafficking groups and dissent, such as the capture of Abel Antonio Loaiza alias "Azul", dissident of the 48th front of FARC, who allegedly led the caravans of death; the dismantling of a coca processing laboratory belonging on Front 1 Carolina Ramírez in Puerto Leguizamo; the Human Rights crisis during the so-called "Coronavirus quarantine" is intensifying, and institutional actions at the local, regional and national levels are absolutely insufficient.

Forced Eradication

The balance of implementation of point 4 of the Peace agreement, especially regarding voluntary substitution is not encouraging in the department. According to data from the United Nations in 2019, 20.000 peasants voluntarily uprooted more than 12.000 hectares of coca in Putumayo and over 11.000 families in Putumayo signed agreements to replace 7,000 additional hectares of Coca crops, however, the systematic failure of the government, the absence of sustainable productive programs, the armed territorial control exercised by the paramilitaries and mafias, and the forced eradication, submerge the population in an unprecedented humanitarian crisis.

[5] Both, Cauca and Nariño are surrounding departments.



Photo: Putumayo communities

Although the coca-growing communities have demonstrated peacefully in mobilizations and permanent assemblies, demanding their rights to the minimum vital, to health, to the permanence in the territory, they have received state repression and more forced eradication operations as a response. According to the website Rutas del Conflicto (Roads of the conflict), around 17 serious incidents have been registered in the Putumayo department in 2020 amid forced eradication operations. Likewise, during the last three months these operations have left a young man seriously injured in the San Diego village of the Municipality of San Miguel, the deaths of the peasant Educardo Alemeza Papamija in the Puerto Vega - Teteyé corridor and a minor from the Awá community in the municipality of Villagarzón, all of them due to the disproportionate action of the public force.

It is important to note that despite the existence of a dialogue table between the Ministry of the Interior and the communities of the Puerto Vega Teteyé corridor, several of the eradication operations have been carried out on villages that are part of this process: La Esmeralda, Caucasia, Nueva Granada, where eradication operations were carried out only two days after the murder of Marco Rivadeneira. Operations have also been denounced in the Indigenous Reservation el Descanso in Puerto Guzmán since April 11.

During the month of July, over 800 people from the communities of the Puerto Vega - Teteyé corridor massively protested; tired of the aggressions during the forced eradication operations and of state indifference, they demand National Government the installation of a National Concertation Table that allows to address the problem comprehensively, and to stop the human rights violations they have been victims of. Again, just a few days after the mobilizations, in a violent operation of forced eradication in Villagarzón, a minor is assassinated.

These repressive actions demonstrate the false will of dialogue of the national government and above all, the hypocrisy of the call for "national unity" in a context of evident emergency in the face of the pandemic. The affected communities are today facing a high-risk situation due to the following factors:

1. The introduction of COVID 19 to the region by members of the Public Force and the group of eradicators who come from places where there is circulation of the virus.
2. Carrying out the operation without any sanitary protocol to reduce the spread of the virus through external agents.
3. The loss of guarantees for the food security of this population in a context of extreme restrictions on income generation.
4. Frequent abuses by the security forces, already reported in all similar cases, especially due to the absence of regional and national control entities and international organizations.

The anti-drug policy of this government focuses on the persecution of growers, peasant, indigenous and Afro-Colombian families, who for various reasons, beginning with state abandonment, have been forced to depend on the coca economy in Putumayo. Even though many of them signed agreements within the National Comprehensive Program for the Substitution of Illicit Crops (Programa Nacional Integral de Sustitución de Cultivos Ilícitos (PNIS), which have been breached by the government, others did not enter the programs derived from the Peace Agreement. However, the situation of uncertainty is the same for everyone: How will a vital minimum be guaranteed for cultivating families that are subject to forced eradication operations? How will a humanitarian crisis like the one that arose in the 1990s and early 2000s with the Colombia plan be avoided? What advances are there in public policies that guarantee peasants, indigenous people and Afro-colombian families to implement productive projects with commercialization security and fair prices for the producer, for the sustainability and economic recovery of the regions and territories?

We would like to be less pessimistic, but the harsh reality of Putumayo speaks for itself. The violence of drug trafficking and paramilitary groups continues to run through this beautiful territory with impunity, and the only response that the government gives to the people from Putumayo is militarization, corruption and repression. Despite this, one more time, the resistance, the defense of the territory and the search for a dignified life continue to guide the way of these communities.



Photo: Putumayo communities

Catatumbo, converging drivers of violence amid the pandemic

REGIONAL CONTEXT ANALYSIS

Waking up every day in this country and particularly in regions like Catatumbo, demands creativity and courage, creativity to guess where the battle of that day will start and courage to survive physically, morally and culturally

Catatumbo Social Integration Committee, Cisca[1]

Catatumbo has been the most visited region by President Iván Duque as well as the pilot of the Presidential Council for Stabilization and Consolidation in the implementation of Development Programs with a Territorial Based Approach (Programas de Desarrollo con Enfoque Territorial PDET). However, it is at the same time, a militarized territory in which the communities have exposed four extrajudicial executions by the National Army in less than two years: the murders of Dimar Torres, in April 2019 and Salvador Jaime Durán, in June 2020 and those of Álvaro Carvajal and Emérito Buendía amid forced eradications. Besides, the community denounces a massacre in the rural area of the municipality of Tibú, where 6 people were killed, and the massive displacement of more than 400 people, which recalls practices associated with paramilitarism from several years ago.

Murders continue to be the most significant violation in the region. Very high numbers and patterns similar to previous periods remain the same. In the majority of cases, the victims have been killed with bullet wounds by men who travel by motorcycles, and who await them near their places of work or residence. According to information from the National Police, in the municipalities of the Catatumbo region, 218 homicides occurred between January 2019 and May 2020, of which Tibú records 102, followed by Convention with 26. In this period, four femicides were registered, in Sardinata, Tibú and El Tarra. In all these cases, women were murdered by their former partners, one of the victims was a minor.

According to the We Are Defenders Program (Programa Somos Defensores), during 2019 and March 2020 there were 44 attacks on social leaders in the department of Norte de Santander and 11 murders, including one case in the city of Cúcuta and another one in the municipality of Ocaña. All the deceased played an active role in the Community Action Board of their village and in most cases also led processes of substitution of crops for illicit use. To these figures it is important to add the most recent cases of Emérito Buendía in rural areas of the city of Cúcuta and Carmen Ángel Angarita in the



Photos: Cisca

municipality of Convencion and Ernesto Aguilar in Tibú.

Catatumbo also presents one of the highest figures concerning the murder of FARC ex-combatants. During 2019, four events took place in Convention and Cúcuta and two in Tibú. The confirmed systematic monitoring of Dimar Torres is highlighted, since he was assassinated by the Army who intended to present him as an insurgent killed in combat, becoming a decisive case against extrajudicial executions. Also, the most recent case of Mario Téllez Restrepo, who was assassinated in rural Tibú, is added.

There is a significant increase in the attack on military targets in the municipalities of Tibú, El Tarra and Convencion with 28 cases, most of them in the second half of 2019. Likewise, the use of anti-personnel mines in San Calixto, Teorama, El Tarra and Tibú. According to the report of the International Red Cross, in the department of Norte de Santander there were 110 cases of victims of anti-personnel mine accidents in 2019. Meanwhile, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights -OHCHR-, registers 14 people killed and 70 injured by anti-personnel mines and unexploded ordnance -APM/UXO- between 2018 and the first months of 2020 in the Catatumbo region.

Cases of forced displacement continue as a result of the confrontation between the ELN and the EPL; according to the figures of the United Nations Human Rights Office in 2019, 2,874 people were registered as in forced displacement condition. Until April 2020, 946 more people have been forced to move forcibly, of which 176 have done so during the health emergency.

[1]Comité de Integración Social del Catatumbo in spanish.

Forced and violent eradication during the pandemic

In several villages (veredas)[2] in the municipalities of Sardinata, Tibú and Hacarí, the National Army has been carrying out forced eradication operations on coca leaf crops. This situation has been further aggravated since the operations are being carried out during the confinement decreed by President Iván Duque on March 24, due to the COVID 19 pandemic.

Two days after the mandatory isolation was decreed, the peasant Alejandro Carvajal was assassinated by members of the army in the Santa Teresita village, part of La Victoria administrative unit, Sardinata municipality. Along with a hundred farmers, he protested against the forced and violent eradication of the coca crops, the government's failure to comply with previous agreements with the communities and the risks that this implies amid the COVID 19 emergency. Another peasant killed during a forced eradication operation was Emérito Digno Buendía Martínez.

On this occasion, the peasants were in a humanitarian camp to demand the government the implementation of voluntary substitution programs for crops for illicit use, when soldiers from the Hermogenes Maza Battalion, from the 30th Brigade, shot at them on May 18 in Banco de Arena administrative unit, part of the city of Cúcuta.



Photo: Catatumbo Communities



Photo: Cisca



Photo: Catatumbo Communities

The peasants demand National Government compliance with the agreements reached with the communities and in the peace negotiations regarding the substitution of crops for illicit use and a clear advance with the PDETs implementation. The only response of the government to the demands of the Catatumbo communities has been the implementation of programs such as the Strategic Zones of Integral Intervention (Zonas Estratégicas de Intervención Integral-ZEII), with strategies that

include Future Zones and / or Sustainable Catatumbo (Zonas Futuro o Catatumbo Sostenible); more than promoting economic outlets and productive alternatives to the coca leaf crops, this approach strengthens the military presence, which attacks the weakest link while leaving intact the structures linked to drug trafficking, distribution and consumption.

The situation is further complicated in the region with the arrival of special commands of the North American army to support the self called fight against drugs in Colombia and the announcements of ground spray with glyphosate. This fact will increase the confrontations between the security forces and a peasant sector that, despite being willing to substitute coca leaf crops, will not do so through violent treatment when it could be resolved by complying with the peace agreements and with a significant investment to support the peasant economy.

Health and education amid pandemic and war

In this region, 85% of the population belongs to the Subsidized Health Regime and although the resources drawn by the State amount to 165 billion pesos per year, according to the Administrator of the Resources of the General System of Social Security in Health (Administradora de los Recursos del Sistema General de Seguridad Social en Salud - ADRES-), the dissatisfaction of the Catatumbo people is constant for several reasons: 1) this quota is exclusively for the population of "low-income", strengthening the idea of health access as a service and not as a right. 2) In the Catatumbo region there are only 2 second-level hospitals, destined for appointments with specialist doctors, surgeries and simple hospitalization, located in the municipalities of Ocaña and Tibú and 9 first-level hospitals, in the rest of the municipalities there are only health posts with every conceivable precariousness. 3) The shortage of hospital centers implies long journeys that can vary from 3 to 9 hours and, when they are emergencies, patients are not transported by ambulance, but through cars, motorcycles, and even trucks, the cost of which must be borne by the family of those who require care or by the patient himself.

The medical staff is insufficient to serve the entire population, with the attention of a general practitioner being on average between 25 to 30 assigned appointments per day. In some of the health centers the supplies do not arrive on time, arrive incomplete or are depleted, when this happens it's up to the patients to acquire the supplies for the procedure they require, including the gauze for a

[2]In Colombia, the jurisdiction of a municipality consists of its urban and rural area, the rural area is divided into corregimientos, in turn, the jurisdiction of corregimientos, covers the smallest rural administrative unity, which is called vereda. In this document we will refer to corregimientos as administrative units, and to veredas as villages.

treatment or the thread for a suture. This situation is more than unfair. The State makes monthly transfers to the Health Provider Entities (Entidades Prestadoras de Salud EPS) according to the number of affiliates, while the debts grow in the care centers, because the Health Providers take between 60 to 120 days and even years, to pay for the consultations or treatments already carried out. This is how in the region the debt amounts to 1,100 million pesos, according to the responses given to some Rights of Petition processed[3] in 2019.

According to data obtained in the midst of the pandemic through health personnel, councilors, social and community leaders of the Catatumbo municipalities, it can be established that the Catatumbo has around 304,082 inhabitants and has a total of 125 doctors in its entire hospital network. That is, 1 doctor for every 4,826 inhabitants and a nurse for every 781.7 inhabitants. Figures that contrast with the military presence that amounts to more than 17,000 troops, according to information provided by Semana Magazine (2018) and, therefore, confirms the presence of 1 military man for every 17.8 inhabitants. This same relationship is reflected in the existence of five Battalions and a rapid deployment force, in contrast to 2 second-level hospitals, located at the exits and / or entrances of the region.

Regarding education, the school year in the Catatumbo region is often limited to 4 months a year by reasons of armed conflict, geographical distances and teacher recruitment problems. The Presidents of Community Action Boards (JAC) denounce the School Feeding Program (Programa de Alimentación Escolar -PAE-), which does not offer quality food nor promote the rural economy in the region. Also, some teachers require parents to buy equipment (telephones or computers) whose value is equivalent to a third or more of the monthly income of a family in Catatumbo. In other cases, it is reported that teachers are requesting to take several photocopy packages to carry out the tasks and workshops that their students have to accomplish.

These complaints reflect a bigger problem. In Catatumbo there are 52,866 students officially enrolled (excluding the municipality of Ocaña) and according to this register, the Ministry of National Education made a draft of \$ 1,953,930,409 million pesos for the concept of "resources for the purchase of pedagogical material" to the educational establishments of the region in the context of COVID-19. Where are these resources? What was invested so that teachers continue to demand additional expenses from parents? Do these resources reach all rural locations?

[3]The right of petition is the power granted to all persons within the national territory, so that they can present petitions to the authorities and different entities, with the purpose of giving them information on situations of general and / or particular interest

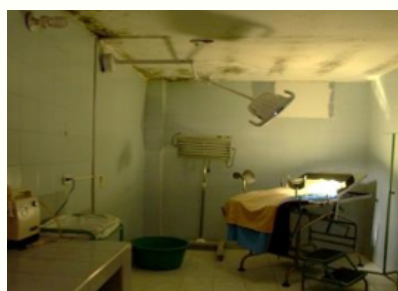
Investment of resources in education has never been clear. Schools remain in poor condition and students do not have access to the materials and tablets that have allegedly been purchased.

The response of communities and social organizations

The Associations and Community Action Boards of the region have taken control of the crisis generated by the pandemic, creating the figure of "strategic health checkpoints". These posts were installed since March 22 in each municipality, administrative unit and village, to regulate the entry and exit of people and vehicles on the roads of the municipalities in the region, as well to coordinate and regulate all work and commercial and activities. The community organization has guaranteed the provision of some safety equipment, antibacterial gel to health personnel and people in each of the checkpoints. Furthermore, in coordination with the municipal administrations and the Governor's office, food baskets have been delivered to the neediest population.

However, the food crisis caused by the pandemic also makes it possible to insist on the need to grow food and guarantee food sovereignty. Community and social organizations are promoting seed exchanges and the creation of home gardens. It is a time when both agroecology and exchange, marketing and supply systems can be promoted at local levels with fair prices. In addition, the principles of the peasant economy can be taken up and processes of reforestation and preservation of micro-basins can be carried out.

This is a time when isolation measures must be taken collectively and under the principle of solidarity. However, one cannot fail to insist on the historical demand for a public health model that responds effectively to the pandemic, investment guarantees for the strengthening of the peasant economy and quality rural education.



Photos: Asociación Minga