



**Our Next Meeting:
Thursday, May 13th
7:00pm via Zoom.**



photo by Chad Fust, CC 2.0

Urgent Action: Colombia

Rural Communities and Environment at Risk

On April 12, 2021, President Ivan Duque signed decree 380 allowing the spraying of glyphosate for the eradication of illicit crops to resume. This policy, which was stopped in 2015 due to its detrimental effect on human rights and the environment, could negatively affect the health and other related rights of hundreds of campesino farming communities and have further environmental impacts in the country. We urge the National Narcotics Council to ensure the immediate suspension of aerial spraying with glyphosate.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In 2017, the ruling T- 236 by the Colombian Constitutional Court concluded that there are elements to affirm, provisionally, that glyphosate is a toxic substance that, depending on the level of exposure, can cause cancer or have other health implications. This ruling also sets the requirements that must be met before using aerial spraying to destroy illicit crops.

In 2019, the Constitutional Court issued the resolution 387 concluding that the government had the obligation to prioritize voluntary substitution over violent forced eradication methods. The Court also established that aerial spraying with glyphosate should be the last option, only if voluntary substitution and manual eradication have failed. The resolution also determined that the Colombian government should frame a decision on the return of aerial spraying within the framework of point 4 (“Solution to the problem of Illicit Drugs”) of the Peace Accords, signed by the Colombia government and the FARC-EP in 2016.

On December 17, 2020, ten UN independent experts sent a letter to the President of Colombia asking the government not to resume aerial spraying of illicit crops, as this program would present “enormous risks” for human rights and the environment and would violate the peace agreement, as well as could go against Colombia’s obligations under international human rights law.

In 2020, the government failed to significantly implement programmes for voluntary crop substitution, a key component of the Peace Agreement. Instead, the government set a goal of forcibly eradicate coca production on over 130,000 hectares, led by the military. On July 2020, Amnesty International issued a press release calling on the government to stop ground- spraying operations in coca plantations because they could result in human rights violations in the campesino farming communities that depend on coca for their livelihoods.



The death penalty is a poor person's issue. Always remember that: after all the rhetoric that goes on in the legislative assemblies, in the end, when the deck is cast out, it is the poor who are selected to die in this country.

Sister Helen Prejean

Amnesty International argued that beginning a process of forced crop eradication would exacerbate the situation of conflict in the country and leave rural communities and social leaders in an even more dangerous situation.

Despite the health emergency declared due to COVID-19 and government orders for mandatory isolation; as well as multiple requests by several civil society organizations to suspend forced eradication of coca during the sanitary emergency; the authorities carried out these operations in at least seven departments in the country.

Sample Letter

I am writing to express concern for the health and safety of thousands of people whose rights are on peril if the Colombian government resumes the eradication of illicit crops through aerial spraying glyphosate. Colombia should ensure that efforts to prevent illicit drug cultivation or eradicate illicit crops do not adversely affect the enjoyment of human rights, including of peasant communities whose livelihoods depend on such crops.

It is widely documented that the use of glyphosate has had a serious impact on the environment and the human rights of thousands of people, such as right to life, health, water, to a healthy and safe environment and to an adequate standard of living. The force eradication of illegal crops with glyphosate will exacerbate the situation of conflict in the country, leaving rural communities in an even more vulnerable situation.

We urge you to immediately agree on a suspension of aerial spraying with glyphosate, and to refrain from adopting drug policies that harm people. In this sense, I call on you to develop instead policies that address the underlying socio-economic causes that lead people to cultivate these crops and avoid entrenching poverty and deprivation in these communities. The government must provide peasants farmers who depend on such crops with the necessary support to develop economically viable and sustainable alternatives and to realize their right to work and an adequate standard of living. The programs for voluntary substitution, recognized in the Peace Agreement, have proven to be more sustainable and effective for the protection of communities' human rights.

Sincerely,

TAKE ACTION:

1. Write a letter in your own words or using the sample below as a guide to one or both government officials listed. You can also email, fax, call or Tweet them.
2. Click [here](#) to let us know the actions you took on Urgent Action 42.21. It's important to report because we share the total number with the officials we are trying to persuade and the people we are trying to help.

Minister of Justice and Law
Mr Wilson Ruiz Orejuela
President of the National Narcotics Council
Calle 53 No. 13 - 27, Bogotá, Colombia
Phone number: +57 1 2368025
Email: servicioalcliente@minjusticia.gov.co
Twitter: @WilsonRuizO
Salutation: Dear Mr Wilson Ruiz Orejuela

Ambassador Francisco Santos
Embassy of Colombia
1724 Massachusetts Ave NW,
Washington, DC 20036
Email: emwas@colombiaemb.org
Twitter: @ColombiaEmbUSA @
PachoSantosC Facebook: @
ColombiaEmbassyUS
Salutation: Dear Ambassador

Please take action as soon as possible until June 11, 2021. Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

Conviction of Derek Chauvin a Measure of Accountability Police Reform Still Needed

April 20th, 2021 In response to Derek Chauvin being found guilty of murder in the death of George Floyd, Amnesty International USA (AIUSA) released the following statement:

“Today a jury held Derek Chauvin accountable for actions emblematic of a broken policing system. No one should expect an encounter with law enforcement to end in death. And yet for George Floyd — and far too many others — that’s exactly what happened. Officers using excessive force, whatever the result, must be brought to justice. That’s what happened in the Minneapolis courtroom today,” said Paul O’Brien, Executive Director of AIUSA.

“In addition to our human rights to equal protection of law, security, and life, we have a right to be free from discrimination when interacting with law enforcement. This outcome is not enough, because George Floyd’s tragic death made all too clear the systemic failures of policing in the U.S. and that Black and brown communities bear the brunt of police violence. The truth is that Derek Chauvin being held accountable for

killing George Floyd is the exception — not the rule.”

“Of course, true justice for George Floyd would require him to still be alive. We saw former Officer Chauvin apply deadly force callously even after George Floyd was killed, ignoring pleas for him to stop. We can no longer tolerate the lack of accountability when it comes to the killing of Black and brown people,” said Kristina Roth, Senior Advocate for Criminal Justice Programs at AIUSA. “Not only did Derek Chauvin deny George Floyd his human rights, he also showed utter disregard for George Floyd’s humanity.”

“We must acknowledge the racist roots of law enforcement in this country if we are to address the systemic failures of policing and bring about meaningful public safety for those that have been historically overpoliced. This must include shrinking the size and scope of law enforcement in daily life, eliminating qualified immunity that creates a barrier to redress for victims of unlawful policing, demilitarizing law enforcement, and enacting strict limits on the use of force altogether.”

Daunte Wright’s Death Again Shows Need to Address Failures of Policing

Responding to the April 11 fatal shooting of Daunte Wright by a police officer in Minnesota, Kristina Roth, Senior Advocate for Criminal Justice Programs at Amnesty International USA, said:

“The Amnesty movement is saddened that yet another Black father, son and partner was taken from his family as a result of the actions of police.

“Daunte Wright was reportedly pulled over on the pretextual grounds of having expired registration and having an air freshener dangling from his rearview mirror, neither warranting what escalated into a fatal encounter. Last year Black and Latino Army Lieutenant Caron Nazario suffered a violent traffic stop in Windsor, Virginia. Officers claimed to have not seen his paper license plate on his new car in the rear window. These incidents speak to a common denominator and remind us of systemic failures of policing, resulting in disparate enforcement on people of color, particularly Black people. Plain and simple, armed law enforcement should be taken out of the equation of traffic enforcement.

“Surviving an interaction with law enforcement shouldn’t depend on where you live or the color of your

skin. International standards are clear that in addition to rights to equal protection of law, security, and life, we have a right to be free from discrimination when interacting with law enforcement. Officers responsible for excessive force, whatever the result, must be held accountable.

“The local community in Brooklyn Center and the Minneapolis region are understandably frustrated and enraged by these recurring incidents of police violence and have taken to the streets demanding accountability for the death of Daunte Wright. Law enforcement must protect and facilitate protesters’ rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and ensure that any decision to disperse a crowd is made as a last resort, when lesser means would be insufficient. Officials must ensure that any measures used to disperse a crowd are necessary, proportional and lawful. They must also take into account the impact on the surrounding residential community, for instance when deciding to use chemical irritants.

“Protests against police violence should not be met with more police violence, as we saw for months following the death of George Floyd last summer.”



Urgent Action: Colombia

PROTECT HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER AT RISK

On March 24, the Santander’s (North) Regional Corporation for the Defense of Human Rights (CREDHOS in Spanish) received a threatening call from a unknown man self-identified as member of the Magdalena Medio Block of the armed group FARC-EP saying “stop making publications and being toadies, CREDHOS Staff is a military objective, you have 48 hours to leave Barrancabermeja”. Minutes later the President of CREDHOS received a threatening voice message. We urge authorities to fully guarantee their protection as per their collective reparation plan granted in 2016.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Santander’s Regional Corporation for the Defense of Human Rights (CREDHOS) was founded in 1987 in the city of Barrancabermeja. For more than thirty years, CREDHOS has worked for the defence, promotion and protection of human rights, with its work extending to eight municipalities of the Magdalena Medio region of Colombia (North). In recent years, addressing socio-environmental conflicts in the region has gained great importance within the organization. CREDHOS defends the communities’ rights to a healthy environment.

Due to their work since their foundation, CREDHOS staff have been threatened, harassed and killed. The latest security incidents faced by CREDHOS staff include:

- On February 10, 2021, a confidential community source notified CREDHOS that armed group have qualify CREDHOS staff as military objective
- On January 9, 2021, a pamphlet signed by people that identify themselves as “The Magdalena Medio Block of the PAFC-EP” was circulating in social networks and instant messaging applications. The pamphlet orders a change in a report released by CREDHOS weeks

AIUSA Group 48

<https://aipdx.org>

www.facebook.com/amnestygroup48/

Group Coordinator

Ron Noble
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Treasurer

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Newsletter

Daniel Webb
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OR Area Coordinator

Marty Fromer
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Prisoners’ Cases

Jane Kristof
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Concert Tabling

Will Ware
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Central Africa/ OR State Death Penalty Abolition

Terrie Rodello
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www.amnestyusa.org

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Within the United States
\$0.55 - Domestic Letter up to 1oz
\$0.35 - Domestic Postcard

International Postage
\$1.20 - Up to 1 oz

earlier, that includes an analysis of the dynamic of armed groups and illegal economies in 2 subregions of Colombia: South Bolivar, Northeast of Antioquia

- On October 24, 2020, unknown men broke into the apartment of Dr. Ivonne Suarez Pinzón, a member of CREDHOS' Board of Directors who is also the Director of the Oral Memory Archive of Victims of the Internal Armed Conflict (AMOVIVUIS) where documents of the cases presented by the organization before the "Special Jurisdiction for Peace" (JEP) were stored.

- On September 1, 2020, The Secretary of the Board of Directors of CREDHOS Abelardo Sanchez, denounced to the Attorney General's that his house was watched by unknown men the night before.

In 2016, the Unit of Victims and Reparation recognized CREDHOS as a subject of collective reparation for the damages caused throughout its existence. The implementation of the measures officially started in March 2019. The Plan contemplates sixteen measures that will be applied at its Barrancabermeja main offices and in the eight municipalities that are impacted by CREDHOS' work.

Sample Letter

I am writing to express concern for the safety of the members of The Santander's Regional Corporation for the Defense of Human Rights (CREDHOS) and organization committed to the defense, promotion, and protection of human rights in the Magdalena Medio region since 1987.

Since September 2020, their members have received at least 5 death threats, the latest one on March 24th, when unidentified people made a threatening call to their office telling them that CREDHOS staff were military target and giving them 48 hours to leave the city. Immediately after, Ivan Antonio Madero Vergel, President of the organization received a voice note with a death threat against him and his family.

We urge you to fully implement the integral plan of collective reparation (Plan Integral de Reparación Colectiva , PRIC) granted by your office to CREDHOS on 2016 that included the guarantee for full protection for the members of the organization.

Sincerely,

TAKE ACTION:

1. Write a letter in your own words or using the sample below as a guide to one or both government officials listed. You can also email, fax, call or Tweet them.

2. Click [here](#) to let us know the actions you took on Urgent Action 38.21. It's important to report because we share the total number with the officials we are trying to persuade and the people we are trying to help.

Ramón Rodríguez, Director

Unit for Attention and Integral Reparation of Victims,

Carrera 85 D # 46 a- 65.

Complejo logístico Sa Cayetano. CP 111071.
Bogotá, Colombia

Email:

ramon.rodriguez@unidadvictimas.gov.co

Salutation: Dear Mr. Ramon Rodríguez

Ambassador Francisco Santos

Embassy of Colombia

1724 Massachusetts Ave NW

Washington, DC 20036

Email: emwas@colombiaemb.org

Twitter: @ColombiaEmbUSA @PachoSantosC

Facebook: @ColombiaEmbassyUS

Salutation: Dear Ambassador

Please take action as soon as possible until June 3, 2021. Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

Urgent Action: Sri Lanka

Women Migrant Workers Detained for Months

At least 41 Sri Lankan women migrant workers have been detained in Saudi Arabia for as long as 18

months. Three women have young children with them, and one woman is known to be in urgent need of medical care. None of the women have been informed of any charges against them, nor have they been granted any legal support to better understand the length or reason for their detention. Sri Lankan authorities must proactively take measures to ensure their immediate repatriation so that these women are able to return home and reunite with their families.

At least 41 Sri Lankan domestic workers are currently detained at the Exit 18 Deportation Detention (Tarheel) Centre in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia awaiting repatriation.

While the authorities have not disclosed the legal basis for the women's detention, it is believed that many of the women have been detained due to their migration status under the notorious kafala system in place in Saudi Arabia. This includes reasons such as the expiration of their work permit and their employer's failure to obtain an exit permit for them or because they have fled from an abusive employer.

The majority of the women wish to return to their home country in recent months. Prison officials as well as the Sri Lankan embassy officials in Riyadh have repeatedly promised the women that they will be repatriated imminently, however they are still in detention as of April 2021.

Domestic workers are among the most vulnerable group of migrant workers in the Gulf countries. Often isolated within homes and highly dependent on their employers in almost every aspect of their lives, they are also not covered by labour law protections across the Gulf including Saudi Arabia. They are at risk of being detained for overstaying their residence permits, often because their sponsors failed to renew it or because they fled abuse and exploitation. They usually face gruelling working conditions with many working long hours without breaks or days off. They also frequently face verbal and physical abuse and have their passports regularly confiscated at the hands of abusive employers who act with impunity. Recent labour reforms in Saudi Arabia excluded domestic workers, meaning that they still cannot leave the country without the permission

of their employers, which increases their vulnerability to abuses of their rights, including forced labour and physical and sexual assault.

The Sri Lankan and Saudi Arabia governments have obligations to protect migrant workers from abuse under a range of international treaties they have ratified, including the International Labour Organization's Forced Labour Convention. In this case they must ensure the urgent release from arbitrary detention and voluntary, safe, and dignified repatriations of all the affected women.

Sample Letter

I am writing to express my grave concern about the worrying and continuing delay in the repatriation of 41 Sri Lankan women migrant domestic workers who are currently detained at the Exit 18 Deportation Detention (Tarheel) Centre in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

It is distressing to learn that none of the women have been informed of the charges against them, nor have they been granted legal support to understand why and for how long they will continue to be detained. Detained for periods ranging from eight to 18 months, at least three women have young children detained with them, and at least one woman is known to be in urgent need of medical care which she is not receiving. Prison officials have repeatedly promised the women that they will be repatriated imminently in recent months, but they all remain in detention as of April 2021.

While I understand that that the Sri Lankan embassy in Riyadh has been in touch with the detained women and has offered multiple reassurances, however it is concerning that no one has yet been repatriated. The government must ensure that the costs of repatriation, such as airfare and any COVID-related quarantine requirements, are covered as many of the detainees cannot afford them.

The Sri Lankan government has an obligation to protect the human rights of all of its migrant workers in Saudi Arabia and to work in a timely manner to ensure that these detained workers are released and safely returned to Sri Lanka. Migrant workers are one of the major contributors to the Sri Lankan economy, and



the government must not turn its back when it's most needed.

I call on you to ensure that the Sri Lankan government acts urgently:

- To facilitate and ensure the voluntary, safe, and dignified repatriation of all detained migrant workers as soon as possible;*
- Guarantee adequate consular support to all those detained to ensure their medical needs are met promptly and they enjoy decent conditions in detention.*

Sincerely,

TAKE ACTION:

1. Write a letter in your own words or using the sample below as a guide to one or both government officials listed. You can also email, fax, call or Tweet them.
2. Click [here](#) to let us know the actions you took on Urgent Action 39.21. It's important to report because we share the total number with the officials we are trying to persuade and the people we are trying to help.

State Minister of Foreign Employment
Promotion and Market Diversification,
Piyankara Jayaratne Nawala, Sri Lanka
Email: ministerofficemfe@gmail.com ,
secretary@mtfes.gov.lk
Salutation: Dear Minister Jayaratne,

Ambassador Ravinatha P. Aryasinha
Embassy of Sri Lanka
3025 Whitehaven Street NW,
Washington, DC 20008
Fax: 202 232 7181
Email: slembassy@slembassyusa.org
Twitter: @EmbassyofSL , @RavinathaArya
Salutation: Dear Ambassador

Please take action as soon as possible until
June 15, 2021

The United States Must Ban the Use, Production and Transfer of Landmines

April 28, 2021

Amnesty International, as a member of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, urges all governments to ban the use, production, stockpiling, or transfer of anti-personnel landmines and to join and implement the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty.

Read the full letter to President Biden here.

Dear Mr. President:

We appreciate the statement by our UN Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield on April 8 that: "President Biden believes we need to curtail the use of landmines. Now, there has been some discussion of the previous administration's landmine policy... Biden has been clear that he intends to roll back this policy, and our administration has begun a policy review to do just that."

In response to the announcement that the administration is conducting a policy review, we — the U.S. Campaign to Ban Landmines – U.S. Cluster Munition Coalition (USCBL-USCMC) and our partners — strongly encourage you to adopt a policy that sets the United States on course not just to "curtail the use of landmines," but to ban their use, production, acquisition, and transfer and to swiftly accede to the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty.

Over the past twenty years, the world has rejected antipersonnel landmines through the Mine Ban Treaty – to which 164 countries, including every other member of NATO, are states parties – in recognition of the horrific effects of landmines on civilian communities around the world. While not a signatory, under President Barack Obama's 2014 policy the U.S. had functionally adhered to key provisions of the Mine Ban Treaty – except those prohibiting the U.S. from ordering the use of landmines on the Korean peninsula.

While the Obama administration brought U.S. policy further in line with the Mine Ban Treaty, it did not take specific measures toward U.S. accession. Under the 2014 policy, the U.S. committed not to assist, encourage, or induce other nations to use, stockpile, produce, or transfer antipersonnel mines outside of Korea. It also committed to no future production or

acquisition of antipersonnel mines, while allowing current U.S. stockpiles to expire.

However, the new landmine policy announced in January 2020 by the Trump administration further set the U.S. apart from its allies and the global consensus by allowing for the use of landmines anywhere in the world. While the new policy claims that non-persistent mines minimize civilian harm, the Mine Ban Treaty rejects the use of such mines and the faulty premise underpinning them.

Decades of efforts to enhance the “safety” of landmines have failed. No matter the technology, landmines are indiscriminate weapons. Regardless of their lifespan, they are victim-activated and do not distinguish between a combatant or a civilian while active, rendering them incapable of abiding by international humanitarian law.

In recognition of the dangers landmines pose to civilians and U.S. service members alike, the United States has not used antipersonnel landmines since 1991, excluding the use of a single munition in 2002; it has not exported them since 1992; and has not produced them since 1997. In the last five years, only the government forces of Syria, Myanmar, and North Korea, as well as non-state actors in conflict areas, have used antipersonnel landmines.

Of the more than 50 countries that once produced landmines, 40 have ceased and renounced production. Under the U.S. landmine policy introduced by the Trump administration, the United States would join the small handful of countries that defy the global norm against landmines by permitting production of these banned indiscriminate weapons.

We have a moral obligation to the past victims of landmines and to future generations to do better.

Additionally, despite significant backsliding on U.S. policy regarding antipersonnel landmines, the U.S. can and should be proud of its world-leading funding and technical support to mine clearance, stockpile destruction, mine risk education, and victim assistance efforts across the globe — amounting to more than \$177 million in 2019 alone. We urge your administration to continue this important humanitarian mine action work.

Recommendations for a New U.S. Landmine Policy

As you and your team evaluate current policy, we urge you not simply to go back to the Obama-era policy, but to build back better.

- Consult with civil society and victim advocates



during the policy review and in advance of any policy change or announcement.

- Commit to actively and constructively participate in regular meetings of the Mine Ban Treaty.
- Commit to increasing support to Humanitarian Mine Action, particularly in the State Department’s Conventional Weapons Destruction programs and the Defense Department’s Humanitarian Demining Research and Development program.
- Ban the use of antipersonnel landmines without geographic exceptions, including the Korean Peninsula.
- Ban the development, production or acquisition of all antipersonnel landmines, including so-called non-persistent landmines.
- Ban the sale or transfer of any type of antipersonnel landmine to any other government or partner.
- Set the United States on a short and direct path to accede to the Mine Ban Treaty by declaring the United States’ intent to accede to the Mine Ban Treaty by 2023 as part of the new policy.
- Lay out an accelerated timeline for the destruction of stockpiled landmines and provide concrete plans and mechanisms for public reporting on progress.

We appreciate your commitment to improving U.S. landmine policy and welcome the opportunity to work with your team as it moves forward with the policy review.

Sincerely,

Signed by Paul O’Brien, Executive Director,
Amnesty International and 34 representatives of other
member organizations of the International Campaign
to End Landmines