



## **For immediate publication**

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### **Environment of war in La Alsacia, Cauca can end in another Bojaya tragedy**

In response to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navanethem Pillay's, visit to Colombia, President Juan Manuel Santos insisted that Colombia [no longer needed external human rights monitoring](#). Yet in Afro-Colombia communities across the country hidden from the glare of the media and the concerns of the government, communities still find themselves facing outrageous assaults on their collective dignity and fundamental rights.



Community of La Alsacia

This reality is graphically captured by the situation that the communities in the municipalities of Suarez and Buenos Aires, department of Cauca have found themselves in.

Caught in the ongoing conflict between the government and FARC, the communities since April 2013 have experienced the [violence of military conflict](#), including bombings. On July 25, 2013, the village of La Alsacia, municipality of Buenos Aires, experienced [heavy bombardment](#) and cross fire, causing severe distress on the community and affectation of houses and crops. More than 150 persons have fled to Santander de Quilichao and the rest of community members are confined in the Community Center of La Alsacia, still expose to the confrontation.

"We are at the gates of having another [Bojaya](#)" expressed one of the leaders of the Community Council la Alsacia. "We haven't been able to go to the farms, we are losing our crops and animals, one of us suffered fractures in both legs trying to escape the bullets when he was in his farm, a woman had a miscarriage and a three year old girls loss consciousness during the explosions." With the community becoming a conflict zone,

villagers report that explosive devices landed in their backyards and around their houses. “I could hear the whistle of the bullets over the roofs of my house” said a villager. This climate of war has not abated with reports that another fight occurred in the area last night, July 31<sup>st</sup>.

Despite the perilous situation, the community of La Alsacia had resisted the internal displacement due to their previous experiences. This would be the third displacement suffered by the communities of this Community Council. The First one was in the 1980s with the imposition of the Salvajna Dam. The second happened in April 2001 after the [Naya massacre](#) committed by the Calima Bloc of the AUC, a tragedy from which they have not been repaired yet.

The environment of war in which communities of La Alsacia find themselves today in, is a painful foretelling of a tragedy like that of Bojaya in May of 2002, which cost the lives of 119 Afro-descendants in Chocó and has yet to be repaired.

The human rights and humanitarian situation of the communities in the Buenos Aires and Suarez municipalities seems serious enough for close monitoring on the ground from UN human rights bodies The UN High Commissioner Ms. Pillay, was thoroughly debrief by organizations and leaders about their situation during her meetings in the area. We hope as a result that her message to President Santos will be the contrary, that UN presence in Colombia is needed now more than ever.

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