

Public statement

Colombia

Forum of Humanitarian NGOs Calls for Respect for Humanitarian Action

The Forum of Humanitarian NGOs – Colombia integrates 30 national and international organizations with a presence throughout the country.

We have developed **humanitarian actions** serving the population affected by the armed conflict for more than two decades. In 2022, we addressed the immediate needs of 2.5 million people affected by armed conflict, migration crises, and disasters.

Through more than 5,400 humanitarian workers, our organizations reach the most dispersed and complex access areas in Chocó, Nariño, Cauca, Córdoba, Antioquia, Putumayo, Arauca or Norte de Santander, among other departments affected by armed conflict.

Today in Colombia, 60% of the rural population lives in areas with the presence and interference of organized armed groups. The recruitment of child soldiers is on the rise; every three days, there is a new mine victim. In 2022, a conservative estimate indicated that at least 343,000 people suffered forced displacement, and 102,300 were confined (70% in ethnic villages).

In recent months we have observed how armed groups seek to limit and condition humanitarian action in the territories under their influence, increasing the risks for local populations and humanitarian workers.

Humanitarian **action** is only possible in Colombia under the humanitarian principles we follow here and in all countries with crises. These principles are:

- **Humanity:** we work to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be,
- **Impartiality:** our humanitarian action is exclusively based on the needs of people, regardless of their sex, nationality, ethnicity, age, religion, or any other characteristic,
- **Neutrality:** we do not participate in hostilities or controversies of an ideological or partisan nature,
- **Independence:** Our action is independent and autonomous to political and economic interests.

Humanitarian action is framed in International Humanitarian Law, particularly Protocol II, Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949, mandatory for all organized armed groups.

We call on armed actors to respect humanitarian action, the **principles that guide us, and International Humanitarian Law**. Humanitarian action must be guaranteed as long as immediate needs affect the lives and increase the suffering of the population, even amid negotiation and dialogue processes within the framework of peace.

Respect for **humanitarian action** saves lives and alleviates suffering. By 2023, we are committed to serving 1.6 million people with urgent and severe needs. Any conditions or restrictions on the humanitarian action that erode its principles will negatively impact hundreds of thousands of people in Colombia.

Bogotá, February 27, 2023