

WE ASK THE UNITED NATIONS TO DESIGNATE A SPECIAL ADVISOR FOR THE COLOMBIAN-VENEZUELAN BORDER CRISIS

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Colombia and Venezuela cannot use the events of Apure and Arauca that occurred this week as an excuse for escalating tensions. At this time, rationality and good sense between the leadership of both countries must be exercised, to build a solid institutional mechanism for the protection of border residents, with the support of the United Nations, that allows start working in a solution to serious security problems related to the way that armed illegal groups are taking advantage of a lack of institutionality affecting both sides of the border.

After over five years of intermittent closures of formal border crossings, and in the absence of minimal coordination between national institutions in Colombia and Venezuela to address shared border problems, it is urgent to activate a mecha-

nism that can respond to humanitarian and security problems involving both countries. Those of us who subscribe to this statement: citizens linked to universities, business associations, humanitarian organizations, and civil society in Venezuela and Colombia, consider it urgent that the Secretary General of the United Nations designate a special advisor for the border crisis, while we request that the governments of both countries allow this envoy to act on the ground. This is necessary for the following issues to be advanced:



-  To coordinate necessary security efforts between Venezuela and Colombia, given that for almost two years they have lacked diplomatic or consular relations and the entire institutional framework to manage the relationship is paralyzed. Meanwhile, border dynamics are seriously and quickened affecting the lives of more than five million people that are living in these border areas, with a massive and escalating impact on regional security.
-  To establish an international observation and monitoring mechanism for the protection of human rights on the border between Venezuela and Colombia.
-  To contribute to the urgent social and economic needs of citizens living in the shared border, who suffer the consequences of the political situation and the action of illegal groups.
-  To cooperate facilitate urgently humanitarian assistance, addressing the forced displacement and exodus from those fleeing Venezuela due to violence and the complex humanitarian crisis, as well as returning Colombian population.
-  To guarantee the exchange of epidemiological information, just as to facilitate dialogue between the respective authorities of both countries and coordinated an adequate response to the pandemic.
-  To cooperate in the demobilization of armed groups and economic structures which are illegal that operate on the border.
-  To help eliminate antipersonnel mines and remnants of used or unexploded ordnance planted by illegal armed groups, which have become a serious border security problem.
-  To promote and facilitate dialogues between the authorities of both countries for the immediate reopening of all formal border crossings, to allow the regularization and legalization of the flow of people,

merchandise, goods, and services between Colombia and Venezuela.

We reiterate our request to the Secretary General of the United Nations, to urgently designate a special advisor for the common border area between Colombia and Venezuela, just as to the authorities of both countries involved in this binational civil society petition, so that they may permit the functioning of an official designated for the border crisis. Without cooperation between Venezuela and Colombia, the situation on the border will worsen in the short term, with dramatic consequences for border area populations, and at risk of climbing up confrontation in such a way for both states to consider settling their differences outside the framework of international law.

Colombia and Venezuela, March 31, 2021

