News
Social Justice

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A report launched by nuns from a locally founded congregation in Colombia highlights difficulties faced by Indigenous and other rural communities and are calling for a stop in violence perpetuated by different armed groups.

The report was launched by the Missionaries of Mother Laura of the Province of Medellín.

Laura Montoya, the first Colombian to be canonized, founded the Missionaries of Mary Immaculate and St. Catherine of Siena.

Known as Mother Laura, the nun, who died in 1949, lived in the Colombian jungles to teach the Gospel and catechize Indigenous people and "become an Indian with the Indians," according to her Vatican biography. Her congregation now has a presence in about 20 countries.

The report warns about the effects of the worsening armed conflict, the territorial dispute between the National Liberation Army and the Gaitanist Self-Defense Forces of Colombia.

In the text sent to Fides, the missionaries point to the recruitment of minors, the installation of anti-personnel mines, threats to leaders and communities, selective assassinations, displacements, confinement and sexual abuse against civilians.

Respect of international humanitarian law and "the right to peace" is what the missionaries in the Interreligious Solidarity Network in the conflict zones in Colombia are asking, following the report by the Missionaries of Mother Laura.

The urgent appeal, addressed to the authorities, highlights the difficult situation of Indigenous, African American and peasant communities in the west of the department of Antioquia, Colombia.

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The network asks the National Liberation Army and various other armed groups to respect international humanitarian law and put an end to the installation of anti-personnel mines.

It also announces the creation of a special humanitarian mission that will begin in the municipalities of Dabeiba and Frontino with the aim of accompanying and providing moral support to such communities in crisis.

To do this, missionaries have called for the presence of national and international human rights organizations, such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Peace Accord Verification Mission in Colombia.

During Holy Week this year, Catholic bishops also appealed for peace, a stop to murders, injuries, kidnappings, extortion, imprisonment, displacement, recruitment of minors, threats and disorders that affect Indigenous communities, Afro-descendants and peasants.

Recent reports by the United Nations have also pointed to armed-group conflicts causing many people to flee their homes in numbers more than double when compared with the same period in 2020.

Colombia is presently in the midst of its worst outbreak of violence since a 2016 peace deal ended conflict in the country.

Editor's note: *This article originally appeared on La Croix International.*