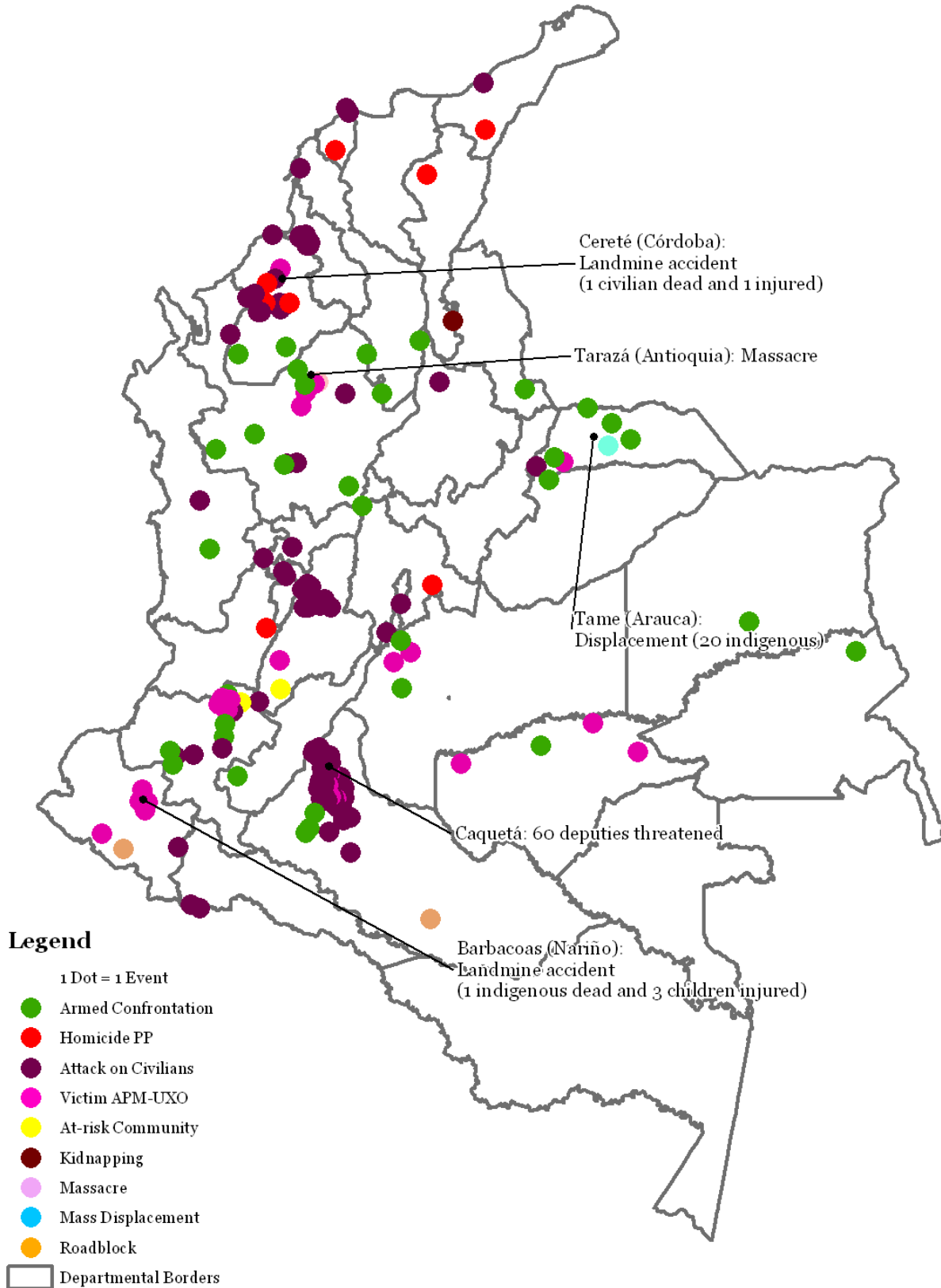


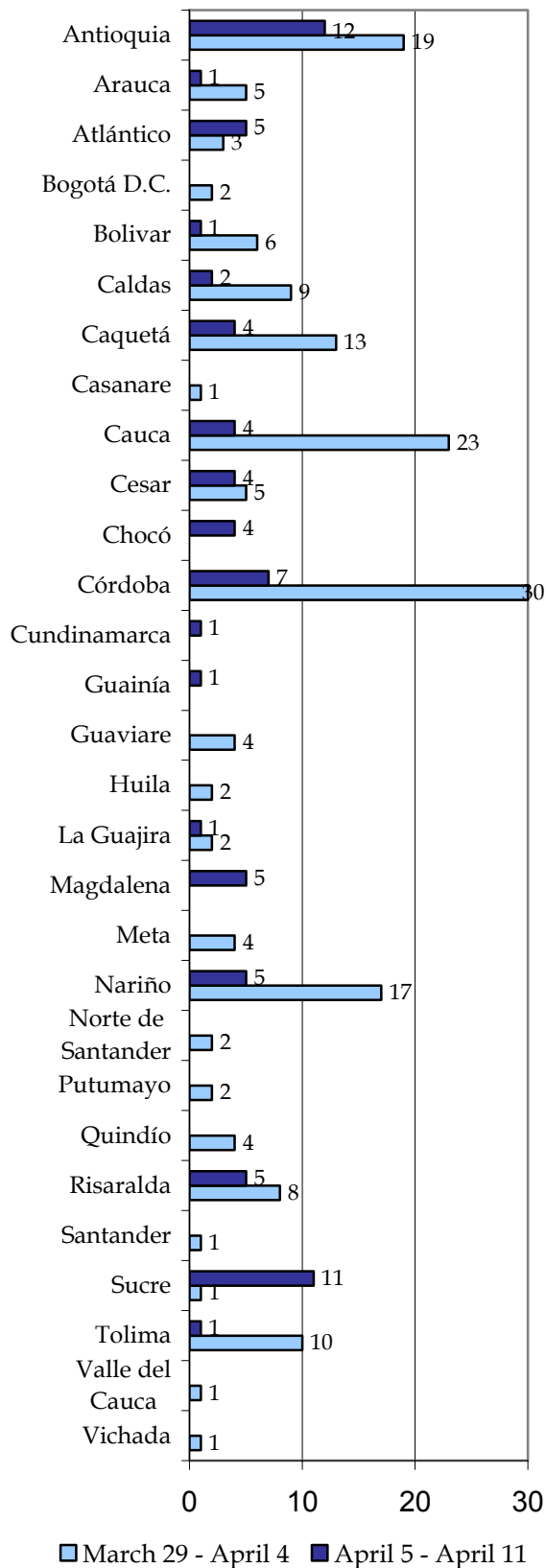


WEEKLY HUMANITARIAN REPORT

ISSUES 13.14. | March 29 – April 11, 2009
COLOMBIA



Events per department*

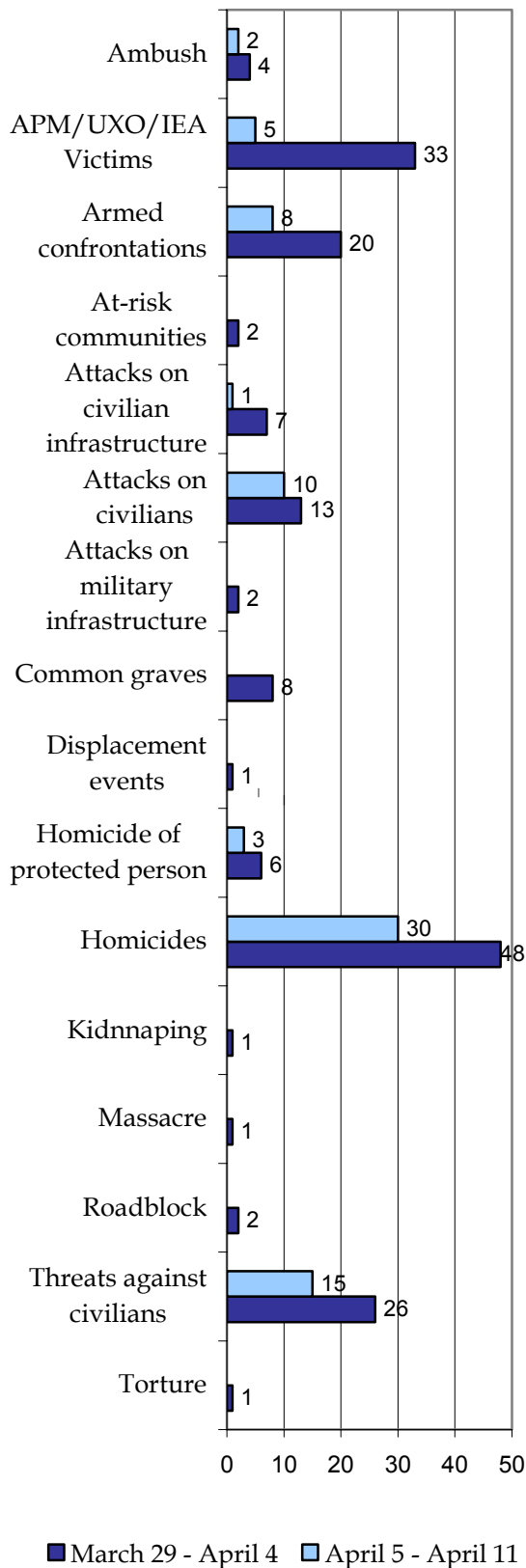


Indigenous communities in Chocó facing critical conditions

Over 2,000 indigenous remain displaced along the Baudó River due to rising violence and presence of non-State armed groups

The continued and generalised deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the Pacific coast is a growing concern for the humanitarian community, which has pledged to local and national authorities to strengthen protection measures and humanitarian assistance to communities facing deadly hazards such as selective murders, attacks and the planting of landmines that result in mass displacements and confinements. A fact finding mission (30 March - 2 April) carried out by PAHO, UNHCR, OCHA and the Embera-Wounaan indigenous organisation, OREWA, established the critical conditions of indigenous IDPs gathered in villages of Alto Baudó (Catrú, Playita and Nuncidó) and Bajo Baudó (Puerto Meluk) municipalities. Communities denounced mistreatments of illegal armed actors and various cases of sexual violence against women --a growing trend reported in previous issues--. Intense combats and threats create great risks for these particularly vulnerable communities. UNHCR highlights that an unknown number of members of these IDP communities are missing. Twenty five villages are completely deserted while host communities are overburdened and in cases see their population size doubled by incoming IDPs. Overcrowded and inadequate temporary shelters, lacking safe-drinking water and scarce or often absent medical assistance, aggravate health conditions. Fourteen children have died over the past three months in Alto Baudó, where cases of tuberculosis sporadically yet increasingly sprout. A school in Playita and a community centre in Puerto Meluk precariously serve as temporary shelter for many families. MSF Belgium and a private health provider, Caprecom, arrived in Catrú and Playita to provide healthcare assistance as much as possible, and PAHO and the Departmental Health Institute (DASALUD) will deliver 30 water filters in Alto Baudó. Food requirements are being delivered partly by host communities themselves, and mostly by ICRC, the Colombian Family Welfare Institute (ICBF) and Acción Social, who are also providing kitchen and hygiene kits in Playita, Nuncidó and Puerto Meluk. Not all families, however, have received assistance because of their location in hardly accessible areas where food insecurity is a concern given hunting and harvesting has also become dangerous. Another UN assessment mission to the area is scheduled for 20 April, the Health Working Group of Chocó met on 15 April in Alto Baudó, and the Municipal and Departmental Committees for IDPs Assistance continue to evaluate and coordinate response.

Events per type



Armed strike in Arauca ends with serious consequences

Violence decreased after the FARC declared the end of the armed strike (31 March). An indigenous community in Arauquita municipality was forced to displace upon direct attacks with firearms and civilians still fear retaliation and threats

The winding down of violence is notable but still slow. UNDSS observes a reduction of armed actions in the Catatumbo region after the 31 March --when the FARC issued a communiqué ending the armed strike--, as well as the restoration of transport. However, disturbances, selective murders, bombardments, landmine accidents and the burning of buses were recorded during the period under review.

A mass-displacement was reported by Acción Social on 31 March. 46 indigenous persons (11 families) of *La Esperanza* community in the municipality of Arauquita fled after a non-State armed group opened fired against several of them who were hunting --a means of self-sustenance--. One indigenous was wounded. UNHCR informed the group arrived in the village of Puerto Seco, in Tame municipality. According to information provided by Acción Social, IDPs are hosted in abandoned houses of the village. This same community had displaced back in 2007 and returned to their village claiming difficult conditions and lack of humanitarian assistance. Access restrictions due to landmines and UXO have been reported. The UNHCR office in Arauca confirmed IDPs want to return to their reservation to collect livestock and goods, and later displace to a safer location where they can receive assistance. The indigenous community pledged authorities and humanitarian actors for their support and protection. The municipality of Tame, Acción Social, ICRC and Lutheran World Relief (LWR) have delivered food aid for the population. Also, the municipalities of Tame and Arauca delivered potable water, water tanks and hygiene kits.

Awa humanitarian "minga" recovered eight bodies

The Awa recovered eight of the twelve massacred bodies after a long search by foot inside dense forests and under perilous risks posed by heavy rains, continued combats and minefields in the area

On 3 April, members of the humanitarian "minga" arrived in El Verde (municipality of Barbaçoas) where Awa indigenous communities remain displaced after the massacre of 13 of their

members on 4 February by FARC. After twelve-days of difficult walking along the forest, the 700 indigenous succeed in recovering eight out of the twelve bodies. According to the Ombudsman's Office, who supported the minga, only five of the bodies belonged to people killed during the massacre and the other three were identified as members of the community killed in 2008. One more body has still not been identified. The remains were transported in helicopters of the Colombian Red Cross to the municipality Barba-coas where the Procuraduria General will undertake the identification procedures in order to return them to their families during a public audience. Besides the recovery of the bodies, members of the "minga" verified the situation of the communities that are still in the area trapped by landmines and the ongoing combats. People there face critical health conditions due to food shortages and the lack of assistance, as reported by the spokesman of the Colombian Indigenous Organisation (ONIC). On 6 April, press sources reported a landmine accident in the area; one indigenous man died and his three children resulted wounded.

137,000 affected by severe flooding during the first quarter of 2009

On 31 March, the Minister of Internal Affairs ordered the activation of special mechanisms, such as direct public hiring, in order to respond to the effects of severe flooding caused during the first rainy season

The Minister urged governors and mayors to activate the Local Committees for Disasters Prevention and Attention and allocate resources for the implementation of prevention measures in their locations. According to the National Directorate for Disasters Prevention and Attention (DPAD) 137,000 people in 24 out of the 32 departments in the country have been affected by flooding in the first quarter. These figures represent a 42% increase in the affectation by natural disasters in the country, as compared to the same period in 2008. According to the Colombian Red Cross (CRC) nearly 10,000 houses were damaged or destroyed by floods and landslides. The National Institute for Hydrology, Meteorology and Environmental Studies (IDEAM) reported a 30% increase in precipitation in the last years that has particularly hit the Andean region in the departments of Antioquia, Santander, Norte de Santander, Caldas, Risaralda, Quindío, Cauca, Nariño and Valle del Cauca. Through the declaration of emergency, the National Government will apportion US\$48,000 for relief and recovery operations as well as to carry out prevention mechanisms. The UNETT, WFP, UNICEF, IOM, OCHA, Plan International, MSF and IRD are supporting the Local Committees for Disasters Prevention and Response (CLOPAD) in responding to the emergency and in the elaboration of action plans.

* All data herein reflected was processed by OCHA from official and secondary sources

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