



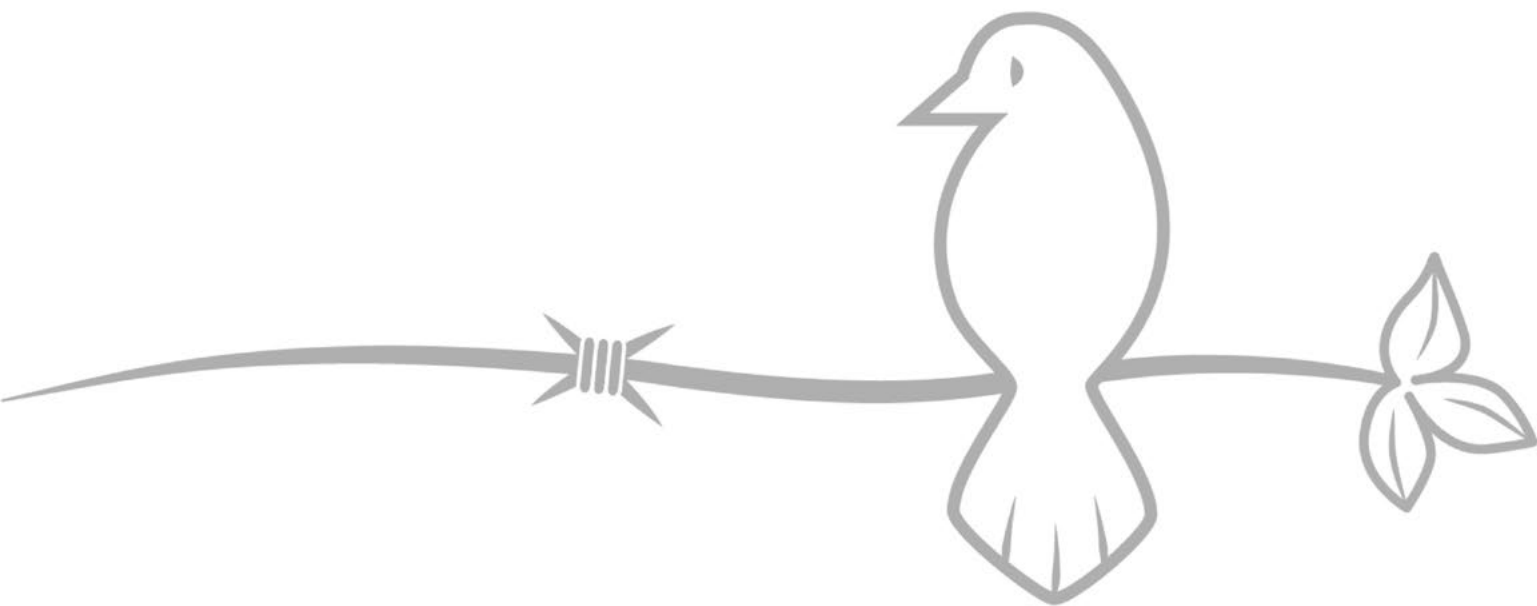
REPORT ON THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC SITUATION OF EL GUAYABO

CHRONICLES OF AN ANNOUNCED HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

REPORT

JUL 2022 - MAR 2023

CPT.ORG



REPORT ON THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC SITUATION OF EL GUAYABO.

CHRONICLES OF AN ANNOUNCED HUMANITARIAN CRISIS
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equipos y comunidades
de acción por la paz



COMMUNITY PEACEMAKER TEAMS

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS TO TRANSFORM
VIOLENCE AND OPPRESSION



CPT places teams at the invitation of local peacebuilding communities facing conflict situations. These teams support and amplify the voices of peacemakers who are at risk in confronting systems of violence and oppression.

CPT-International is currently present in Canada, the United States, Greece, Iraqi Kurdistan, Palestine and Colombia.

Our Work Includes:

Accompaniment of partners that nonviolently work, for the defense of their rights and communities.

Advocacy by amplifying the narratives and voices of those who experience oppression.

Observation and reporting on Human Rights violations

Networks of Solidarity to work towards change.

CPT COLOMBIA

The CPT Colombia program is a team of people who reflect the diversity of humanity. CPT provides solidarity through building advocacy networks and amplifies the voices of community processes and organizations that seek, through nonviolent resistance, to deconstruct the oppressive and violent systems that impact them. CPT is part of the global movement working for the creation of conditions of life with dignity.

CPT is an international solidarity and accompaniment organization that has been working in the Middle Magdalena and Northeast Antioquia regions since 2001.



10 YEARS ACCOMPANYING THE COMMUNITY OF EL GUAYABO

Since 2012, CPT has walked alongside the farming community of El Guayabo, bearing witness to their love, struggle and peaceful resistance for the land. We have witnessed increased violence against the community, which has required them to develop forms of self-protection, and CPT's accompaniment has strengthened these efforts. Our presence generates a deterrent against legal and illegal armed actors in the territory, allowing the community to replenish themselves and continue the struggle.

Political and legal persecution, threats, uncertainty, and the fear of losing their only livelihood have led them on a path of resistance that they cannot afford to give up—despite the fatigue the threats bring. Through psychosocial support, we listen and provide them with a safe space to process their experience.

The silence of the State in the face of the cries of pain, anger, and indignation of the community and the historical abandonment to which they have been subject without explanation has pushed the community to reinvent itself and create new ways of resisting and persisting in their territory. Through our political accompaniment, we amplify their voices through letters, videos, meetings, public actions, prayers, marches, emails etc.



CONTEXT OF THE REPORT

El Guayabo is a small humble farming community that has faced forced evictions, threats, judicial persecution, and physical and emotional violence by legal and illegal armed groups, as well as painful state abandonment. In addition, in 2022, the rainy season lasted for nine months, flooding their fields and destroying crops and pasture land, which their animals depend on. They were left with little capacity to sustain themselves, and now they find themselves in a severe humanitarian crisis that has them on the brink of starvation.

This report arises from the need to demonstrate the state's historical abandonment of El Guayabo and the issues that prevent the community from living with dignity and peace.



PROBLEMS

I. ACCESS TO EDUCATION

At a structural level, the school exhibits serious abandonment. Lack of maintenance has caused structural defects, such as cracks which have been hidden with paint. The entrance to the school is next to a large and deep pool of water that continues to grow.





The computers in the lab no longer work and have been stored in a warehouse for several years.



The few classroom desks available are in bad shape and must be fixed or replaced.



The school kitchen is in poor condition and lacks sufficient tools for food preparation.



The school bathrooms are in poor sanitary conditions exposing the children to contagious diseases from animal feces such as bats.





II. ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

The health center does not have adequate equipment to attend to a basic emergency (medication, stretchers, blood pressure monitor, etc.). It presents structural problems, and the sanitary conditions are inadequate for a space dedicated to health services.

Access to the health center is difficult as a result of the heavy rainy season.





III. THE RETAINING WALL

The heavy rainy season has had a severe impact on farming communities. In El Guayabo, the retaining wall needs serious maintenance in some areas; in others, approximately 150 meters of the wall remains incomplete.

This wall is essential to prevent a humanitarian crisis from the overflowing of the Magdalena River, which would have a social impact on the township and its surroundings.





IV. POTABLE WATER

Collection system I: The community collects non-potable water from the Magdalena River and attempts to make the water potable using chlorine or bleach.





Collection System II: The well/aqueduct. This water is not potable. The aqueduct does not distribute water to the entire community, and the homes that receive water must clean the water using chemicals such as alum or chlorine.





V. SEWAGE SYSTEM

There is no sewage system to prevent contact of contaminated water with people and animals. This contact is frequent due to rainwater mixing with sewage.





VI. ROADS

During the rainy season, roads in El Guayabo become unusable. Moving around town is very difficult, and people must wear rubber boots. In addition, repressed water mixes with wastewater from houses because the sewage systems are homemade channels that run into the streets.





VII. SPORTS FACILITIES

The deterioration and lack of maintenance of the only "official" sports facilities in EL Guayabo is evident.



VIII. IMPOSSIBLE TO CULTIVATE

The heavy rains and waterlogging on the farms have made it impossible to farm the land. Two (2) breaches in the retaining wall in Sitio Nuevo and Paturia have further complicated the situation that has degenerated into an economic and food crisis.



RAINY SEASON: A CRY FOR HELP.

The heavy rains in 2022 and the already deteriorated containment infrastructure that caused the tragic overflow of the Magdalena River and broke the retaining wall have impacted the lives of more than 8,000 families.* The wall protects the rural sectors of the northern part of the municipality of Puerto Wilches, Santander, from flooding.

In March 2022, due to breaches at "El Chorro" de Paturia and Sitio Nuevo, an opening of 500 meters in the wall allowed the river to flood the farms, and cassava, corn, and plantain crops, among others, were completely lost. Consequently, there was no more grass available to graze cattle. This resulted in the massive death of animals due to the lack of food.

Among the affected areas are the townships of Paturia, Campo Alegre, Chingalé, Bocas del Rosario, Vijagual, El Guayabo, Badillo, and Carpintero.

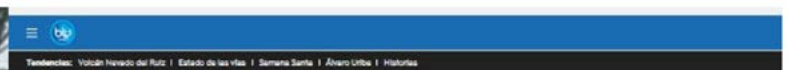
The dry months following the rainy season helped dry out the land, in principle, and allowed for repairs of the retaining wall. However, the dry months were just as harsh as the rains, resulting in the death of seven thousand heads of cattle from hunger.

1. **LA FM** "Desborde del río Magdalena afectó a más de 8.000 familias en Puerto Wilches."
<https://www.lafm.com.co/colombia/desborde-del-rio-magdalena-afecto-a-mas-de-8000-familias-en-puerto-wilches>
2. **VANGUARDIA** "https://www.vanguardia.com/santander/region/cerca-de-siete-mil-reses-han-muerto-por-hambruna-en-puerto-wilches-santander-DF6117335"



7.000 reses han muerto por ola invernal en Puerto Wilches, Santander

Los animales mueren en los suelos que se quedaron sin pasto, como consecuencia de la ola invernal.



Desde Puerto Wilches exigen reconstrucción de muralla para detener inundaciones del río Magdalena

Según un censo en la zona norte de Puerto Wilches el invierno provocó la muerte de más de 7.000 cabezas de ganado.



20 de julio de 2022 - 12:00 AM

campesinos de Puerto Wilches, desesperados

Las autoridades de habitantes de corregimientos y veredas de la zona norte de Puerto Wilches se dirigen al Gobierno local que dirija su mirada hacia los sectores rurales que llevan seis me



A CRUEL SUMMER

A photograph showing a group of cows of various colors (brown, grey, white) standing in a dry, grassy field. In the background, there is a dense forest with many trees and large green leaves, possibly banana trees. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

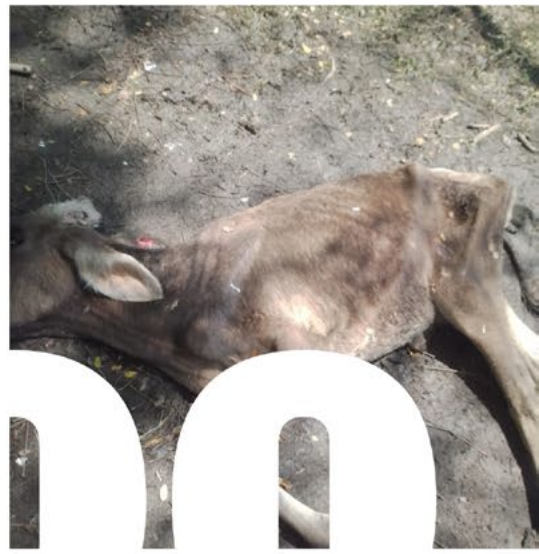
"THE MISERY AND LONELINESS THAT ENVELOPS THE FARMS IS TERRIFYING; THE LAND HAS BASICALLY BEEN CONVERTED INTO CEMETERIES FOR ANIMALS WHICH HAVE STARTED TO DISINTEGRATE UNDER THE HARSH SUN IN AREAS THAT HAVE NOW RECORDED MORE THAN ONE MONTH WITHOUT RAINS" *

AN ADMINISTRATION WITH NO ANSWERS

As an international accompaniment organization, the community of El Guayabo asked CPT to follow up on the complaints filed by the community on July 19, 2022, at Puerto Wilches City Hall that led to the signed agreements and commitments with Mayor Jairo Toquica, which have not been fulfilled yet.

During the eight months of writing this report, all our attempts to communicate with the administration have failed. Of all the letters sent, we only received one response, which did not address our concerns or provide evidence of compliance with the agreements signed with the community.

This report is one of the attempts to demonstrate the challenging situation the community of El Guayabo is experiencing. This report will be shared with other state agencies responsible for monitoring and intervening in the circumstances to which the community has been exposed. It will also be distributed to the international community.



+7.000

PETITIONS

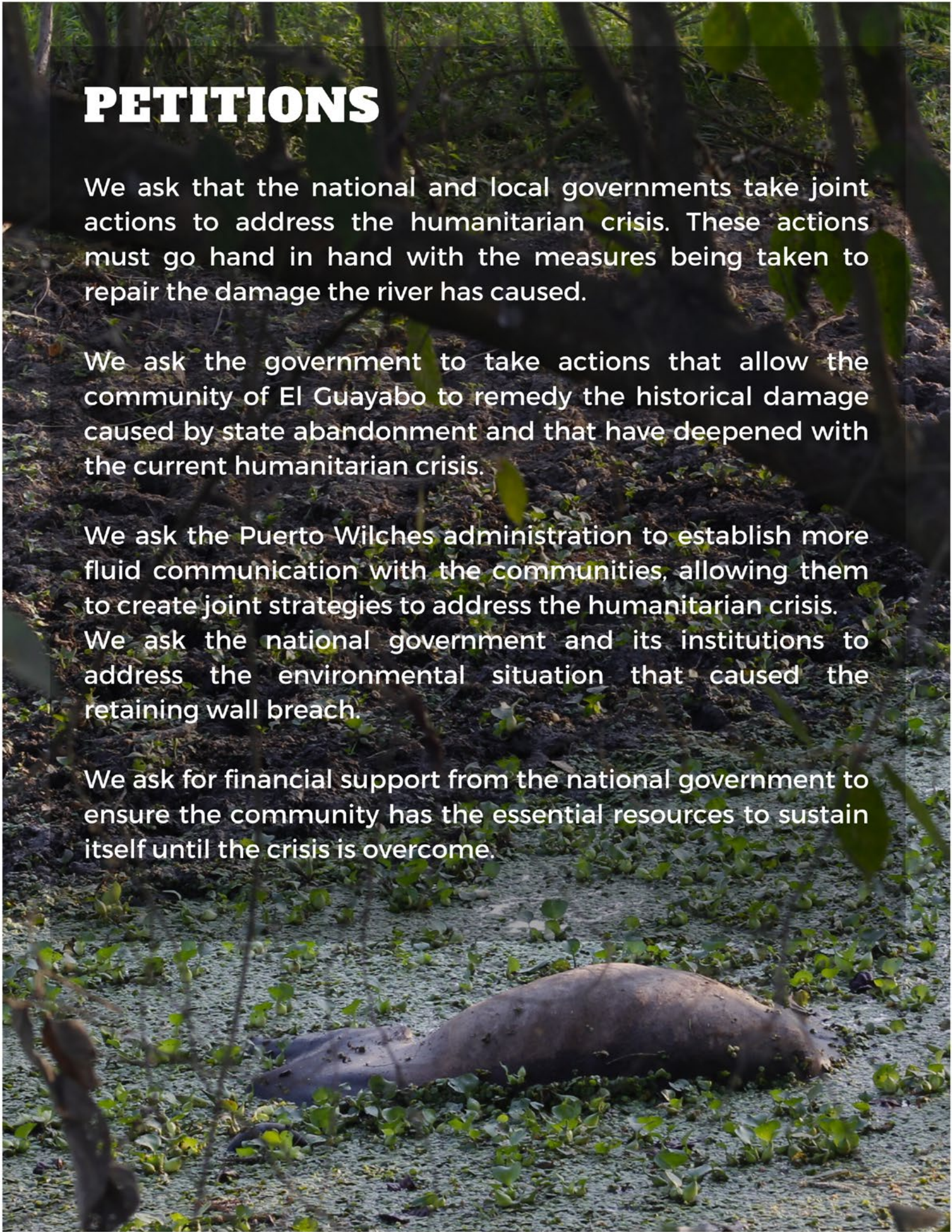
We ask that the national and local governments take joint actions to address the humanitarian crisis. These actions must go hand in hand with the measures being taken to repair the damage the river has caused.

We ask the government to take actions that allow the community of El Guayabo to remedy the historical damage caused by state abandonment and that have deepened with the current humanitarian crisis.

We ask the Puerto Wilches administration to establish more fluid communication with the communities, allowing them to create joint strategies to address the humanitarian crisis.

We ask the national government and its institutions to address the environmental situation that caused the retaining wall breach.

We ask for financial support from the national government to ensure the community has the essential resources to sustain itself until the crisis is overcome.



COOPERATIVE WORK AND SELF-MANAGEMENT

At the beginning of the year, towards the end of the writing of this report, the community of El Guayabo began collective work to strengthen the wall and reduce the risk that was forewarned due to its deterioration and thus prevent a greater calamity in the territory.

With the leadership of the Community Action Committee, headed by its president Maricela Jiménez, the community began self-management activities and collected aid to start the projects. The Committee ran raffles and collected food donations, and in solidarity, the community contributed its time and work. The community completed 200 meters of retaining wall expansion and strengthening at the end of May. The community managed and executed this without any intervention from the municipal administration or any other government entity.

In turn, the Puerto Wilches administration began working on the wall, which in comparison, did not complete more than 80 meters in the same period while having access to the State's resources for these projects and the full responsibility for reconstruction.

Once again, it is evident how the community strengthens its organizational process despite state abandonment.



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- Canadá • Grecia • Estados Unidos

Construyendo alianzas para transformar la violencia y la opresión

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