

via fax: 011 57 1 596 0631 Excmo. Sr. Juan Manuel Santos President of the Republic of Colombia	via fax: 011 57 1 324 5208 Amylkar Acosta Minister for Mines and Energy of Colombia
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September 14, 2014

Dear Sirs:

We are extremely concerned about the death threats, surveillance, break-ins, smear campaigns and harassment that environmental human rights defenders from Living Rivers Movement (MRV) have been facing for over a year. Living Rivers Movement defends the territories and communities affected by dam constructions and mining projects in the departments of Antioquia, Santander, Huila and Caldas.

On September 17, 2013, **Nelson Giraldo Posada**, environmental rights defender from MRV, was found dead with bullets in his chest and legs on the banks of the Cauca River in Ituango municipality in Antioquia Department (cf our letter of October 24, 2013). Then on November 30, 2013 **Robinson David Mazo** of MRV was shot and killed with seven bullets in Toledo municipality in Antioquia Department.

This year the following incidents have occurred:

January 2: **José Orlando Gonzalez Herrón**, MRV leader in Briceño municipality in Antioquia Department, where the Hidroituango Dam is currently being constructed, was exhorted by two unknown men to “abandon the village or we will find you in your house or in the mines.”

June 20: Someone broke into the home of MRV spokesperson **Isabel Cristina Zuleta** and stole a hard disk with MRV information. Since her participation in the social protests in 2012 and 2013 against the construction of the Hidroituango dam, she has been a victim of surveillance, interventions in her communications, death threats and criminalization.

June 27: **José Orlando Gonzalez Herrón** received a death threat at his work place.

July 2: In the Nueva Llanada community, the teenage daughter of MRV leader **Asened Higueta Higueta** was followed by an unknown man in black clothes with his face covered. Members of the National Army have also questioned Asened Higueta Higueta and her daughter about her human rights work.

July 6: The companies FOCUS and Empresas Públicas de Medellín surveyed citizens in Ituango, Antioquia Department, regarding the work of current MRV members. MRV had not consented to the survey and sees this as surveillance and intimidation.

July 13 and 22: **Isabel Cristina Zuleta** received messages on her social media account accusing her of being a member of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC); the account sending the messages was identified as being part of the National Army.

We believe these incidents are part of an ongoing campaign of intimidation and harassment against the legitimate work of environmental rights defenders. We therefore **strongly urge** you to

- conduct an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the deaths, threats and surveillances described above, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- take all necessary measures to guarantee the safety of MRV members;
- guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai, Co-Coordinator

copies: Luis Carlos Villegas, Ambassador of Colombia to the US ~ via fax: 202.232.8643
 Kevin Whitaker, US Ambassador to Colombia ~ via fax: 011.571.275.4600
 Eric Falls, Desk Officer for Colombia, US State Department ~ via US mail
 José de Jesús Orozco Hernández, Rapporteur for Colombia, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202.458.3992
 US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

The following people hereby urge you to take action on this matter as indicated in this letter: