

via fax: 011 571 596 0631  
**Excmo. Sr. Juan Manuel Santos**  
President of the Republic of Colombia

via fax: 011 57 1 570 2000  
**Sr. Fiscal General Eduardo Montealegre**  
Attorney General of Colombia

March 23, 2016

Dear Sirs:

We are writing to express our sadness and dismay at the assassination of **William Castillo Chimo**, age 43, founder and treasurer of the Association of Agroecological and Mining Brotherhoods of Guamocol (AHERAMIGUA). At 6 pm on March 7 unidentified men armed with heavy-duty guns killed him in a public building of Los Galvanes in Villa Echeverry, in the municipality of El Bagre in Antioquia Department. He was killed following a meeting he had attended with the municipal authorities to discuss the city's development plan. On March 3 and March 6, he and his colleague, **Maria Dania Arrieta Pérez**, had received several death threats in text messages sent to her mobile phone.

AHERAMIGUA is a human rights organization founded in 2007 by farmers and miners in Guamocó in southern Bolívar Department that works to defend land rights, particularly the right of local communities to remain on their land. Since its beginning its members have been subjected to continuous human rights violations including murder, unlawful arrests, detention, physical attacks, attempted killings, threats, harassment and intimidation.

Chima's killing is the latest in a series of recent attacks on indigenous and community leaders. On March 1 William Alexander Oime, the indigenous governor of Río Blanco, Tolima Department, was shot dead in the town of Popayán, Cauca Department. The National Indigenous Organization of Colombia called the crime "part of a strategy to exterminate indigenous leaders and peoples." On February 28 *campesino* activist, Maricela Tombé, was killed in the rural town of El Tambo, Cauca Department. Groups in the region had been reporting the distribution of pamphlets, signed by paramilitary groups, calling for "social cleansing."

Because of our concern about the continuing threats to all human rights defenders in Colombia, we **strongly urge** that you

- carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the killing of human rights defender William Castillo Chima, the death threats against human rights defender Maria Dania Arrieta Perez and all denounced security incidents against members of AHERAMIGUA, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- take all necessary measures, in consultation with the defenders, to guarantee the safety of family members of William Castillo Chima, Maria Dania Arrieta Perez and of members of AHERAMIGUA;
- 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      and      Christine Stonebraker-Martínez  
Co-coordinators

copies: Luis Carlos Villegas, Ambassador of Colombia to the US ~ via fax: 202.232.8643  
Andy O'Neal, Human Rights Officer, US Embassy in Colombia ~ via email [onealRA@state.gov](mailto:onealRA@state.gov)  
John Brandt, Desk Officer for Colombia, US State Department ~ via email  
José de Jesús Orozco Hernández, Rapporteur for Colombia, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202.458.3650  
Francisco José Eguiguren Praeli, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Rapporteur for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples ~ via email  
US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

Frontline Defenders 03/08/2016\_Colombia

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