

via fax: 011 571 596 0631

**Excmo. Sr. Juan Manuel Santos**  
President of the Republic of Colombia

via fax: 011 57 1 283 9876

**Sr. Ministro Juan Fernando Cristo**  
Minister of Interior of Colombia

October 26, 2016

Dear Sirs:

We are outraged about the assassination of land rights defender **Yimer Chávez Rivera**, a member of the Organization for Rural and Urban Development (ORDEURCA) in Cauca Department.

In the afternoon of October 16, Yimer Chávez Rivera was shot three times and killed by two unknown men while he was driving his motorcycle with his wife, Noira Castillo, in La Sierra, El Cauca Department. Noira Castillo survived the attack, but she was also injured and was hospitalized. The perpetrators of the assassination are still unknown.

This is not the first attack against ORDEURCA members this year. In May, Ana Milena Miranda, who is a member of both ORDEURCA and the Popular and Campesino Guard, survived an assassination attempt in Sotará, El Cauca Department.

According to Somos Defensores, a non-governmental Colombian advocacy organization, 19 human rights defenders and community leaders were killed in Colombia between July and September 2016. During this period, Somos Defensores registered 63 violations against human rights defenders, including threats, killings, attempted killings and theft of information.

Nonviolent methods used by human rights defenders can transform the society moving forward. It is essential that the Colombian government protect and support human rights defenders as an investment toward a long lasting peace.

We condemn the assassination of Yimer Chávez Rivera, which we believe is in retaliation for his peaceful and legitimate human rights work. We **strongly urge** that you

- carry out an immediate, thorough and exhaustive investigation into the killing of Yimer Chávez Rivera and the attack against his wife Noira Castillo, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice
- take all necessary measures, in consultation with the human rights defenders, to guarantee the physical and psychological security and integrity of all other members of ORDEURCA and their families, including Noira Castillo
- adopt a preventative and effective approach for the protection of human rights defenders that is responsive to the changing risks faced by defenders
- guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Colombia are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions, including judicial harassment.

Sincerely,

Christine Stonebraker-Martínez  
Co-Coordinators

and

Brian J. Stefan Szittai

copies: Juan Carlos Pinzón, 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 and for Human Rights Defenders, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202.458.3650  
 US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

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