

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

January 26, 2017

Dear Sirs:

We are deeply saddened and concerned to hear of the recent assassination of **Emilsen Manyoma Mosquera** and her partner **Joe Javier Rodallega**. Emilsen was an Afro-Colombian community leader with CONPAZ (a network of community and victim organizations) living in the port city of Buenaventura, Valle del Cauca Department. Their bodies, inflicted with both knife and gun wounds, were found on the morning of January 17 in Barrio El Progreso, Comuna 10 of Buenaventura.

Emilsen Manyoma Mosquera worked to support local peacebuilding initiatives in the Bajo Calima region, the Puente Nayero Humanitarian Space, and the neighboring Punta Icaico Humanitarian Space. Although details of the assassination are unclear, the InterChurch Justice and Peace Commission (la Comisión Intereclesial de Justicia y Paz) reported that on the evening of January 14, the two were forced into a taxi in Barrio Villa Linda, Comuna 12 of Buenaventura.

This assassination occurs in a context of increasing threats in this waterfront region, where five families were displaced from a nearby street after an armed neo-paramilitary confrontation on January 2. There were also 14 families displaced last December due to neo-paramilitary threats. Despite the high presence of state security forces (military and police) in the area, threats and human rights violations continue to occur at an alarming rate against the Afro-Colombian population of Buenaventura.

We are concerned that despite the advances made by the Colombian government and the historic peace accords with the FARC, threats and assassinations of human rights defenders are increasing. In 2016, it is reported that between 85 (according to Somos Defensores) and 117 (according to Indepaz) human rights and social leaders were assassinated. Somos Defensores also reported that 78% of total aggressions against human rights defenders during the first half of 2016 were committed by paramilitaries and Colombian state security forces.

In light of this dangerous climate for Afro-Colombian leaders in Buenaventura, we strongly urge that you:

- carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the killing of **Emilsen Manyoma Mosquera** and **Joe Javier Rodallega** publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- work to dismantle neo-paramilitary groups throughout Colombia;
- cut any ties between state security forces and any criminal or paramilitary organizations;
- guarantee the security of family members of those who have been assassinated and of other CONPAZ members, in strict accordance with their wishes

We thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordinators

and

Christine Stonebraker-Martínez

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
John Brandt, Desk Officer for Colombia, US State Department ~ via email
Margarette May Macaulay, Rapporteur on the Rights of Afro-Descendants, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email
José de Jesús Orozco Hernández, Rapporteur for Colombia and 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

Frontline Defenders 1/12/2017_Colombia

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