

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 21, 2017

Dear Sirs:

We are deeply troubled to learn about the assassination of **Ruth Alicia López Guisao**, a defender of indigenous and Afro-descendant rights in Chocó Department. On March 2, Ruth Alicia Lopez Guisao was visiting family members in Medellín, Antioquia Department, when she was assassinated by two unidentified gunmen who fired several gun shots into her taxi. This brings the number of community leaders killed in Colombia to at least 25 since the start of this year.

Ruth Alicia López Guisao was a member of ASONKINCHAS (Intercultural and Interethnic Agroecological Association), an organization that is part of the National Agrarian Coordinator and the Congress of the Peoples. In Chocó she worked with a group of 12 indigenous and Afro-descendant communities in the municipalities of Medio San Juan and Sipí on a food security project organized by the Agrarian Summit. Both Ruth Alicia and her family are respected community leaders recognized for their sense of social responsibility and their solidarity with the local communities.

In these areas of Chocó where paramilitary forces want to retain control, Ruth Alicia Lopez Guisao and her family had repeatedly been threatened and forcibly displaced by paramilitary groups on several occasions. The day after the killing, Ruth Alicia Lopez Guisao's sister received a phone call from someone in the area warning her that there was a rumor that the killers were waiting at the funeral of Ruth Alicia Lopez Guisao to target her sisters and mother.

Although your government has signed a peace deal with the FARC, this has not made Colombia safer for indigenous and human rights activists. In light of this recent assassination, we **urge** that you

- strongly condemn the killing of Ruth Alicia Lopez Guisao
- make a public statement condemning systematic killings that are linked to paramilitary activities
- demand that Colombian military forces cut all ties with paramilitaries
- take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of the members of the family of Ruth Alicia Lopez Guisao, in accordance with their wishes
- carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the assassination of Ruth Alicia Lopez Guisao, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice
- 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

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordinator

copies: Juan Carlos Pinzón, Ambassador of Colombia to the US ~ via fax: 202.232.8643
Rebecca Daley, Human Rights Officer, US Embassy in Colombia ~ via email DaleyRS@state.gov
Colombia Desk, US State Department (attention: Ian Arzeni and Gail Morgado) ~ 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
Francisco José Eguiguren Praeli, Rapporteur for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202 458. 3650
Margarette May Macaulay, Rapporteur for the Rights of Women, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email rcelorio@oas.org
US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

Frontline_03/07/2017_Colombia

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