

via fax: 011 571 596 0631 Excmo. Sr. Juan Manuel Santos President of Colombia	via fax: 011 57 1 570 2000 Estimado Sr. Fiscal General Néstor Humberto Martínez Neira Attorney General of Colombia
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April 13, 2017

Dear Sirs:

We are deeply concerned about the threats and intimidation against **environmental defense organizations and human rights defenders who are organizing to ban large scale open-pit gold mining** in Cajamarca in Tolima Department. The project developer is the world's third largest gold producer, South Africa-based AngloGold Ashanti, is developing one of the world's largest planned gold mines, called La Colosa.

On March 25, around 7 am, members of the Environmental Committee in Defense of Life (CADV) and other human rights defenders were threatened and intimidated by a text message which demanded that they stop their work against the "development process" brought by mining projects in the region.

On March 30, around 10 am, a journalist received an anonymous phone call by someone who referred to himself as "we." The caller warned the reporter and his colleagues that his alleged "group" knew of the reporters' work, where they lived and worked, and warned that if they did not stop their advocacy against mining projects in Cajamarca, they would suffer the consequences. The journalist who was threatened works as coordinator of the communications team of El Salmón newspaper and is a reporter for Radio Program Report Colombia.

Residents of Cajamarca are unified in their opposition to the mining project. In a public referendum held on March 26, in an almost unanimous vote of 6,165 of 6,296 voters (about 98 percent), residents of Cajamarca voted against La Colosa.

The Ministry of Mines and Energy of Colombia is trying to de-legitimize the public referendum, stating that the referendum is not legally binding and giving permission for authorities to issue an environmental license for the operation of La Colosa. Local organizations object and call on the government to uphold Article 33 of Law 136 of 1994: "When the development of projects of a tourist, mining or other nature threatens to create a significant change in land use, resulting in a transformation in the traditional activities of a municipality, a public consultation shall be carried out in accordance with the law."

Because we are very concerned that the declarations of the Minister of Mines and Energy and other authorities portray those participating in the Consultation as being against the law and the country's development and may expose them to increased risks, we **strongly urge** that you

- carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the threats and acts of intimidation against environmental and human rights defenders participating in the Public Consultation in Cajamarca, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of the human rights defenders participating in the Public Consultation in Cajamarca;

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordinator

and

Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

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
 German Arce Zapata, Minister of Mines and Energy of Colombia ~ via email
 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
 US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

Frontline 4/4/2017_Colombia

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