

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

April 25, 2017

Dear Sirs:

We are very disturbed by the kidnapping and assaults on a woman associated with human rights defender **Marylen Serna Salinas**, in Popayán, Cauca Department.

Marylen Serna Salinas is the leader of the Peasant Movement of Cajibío (MCC) and has leadership roles with Agrarian National Coordinator (CNA) and the Agrarian, Peasant, Ethnic and Popular Summit. She is also the national spokesperson for the Congress of the Peoples. Congress of the Peoples was launched in 2010 and has played a prominent role in large social mobilizations, such as the agricultural strikes of 2013, 2014 and 2016.

In Popayán on the morning of April 7, three armed men approached a peasant woman associated with Marylen Serna Salinas, forced her into a vehicle, covered her head with a black bag, beat her face and arm, and injected an unknown substance into her right arm. They interrogated her about the location of Marylen Serna Salinas and asked her about their relationship. After the interrogation, the abductors took the vehicle to a quiet location in the city, tied up the woman, sexually abused her, and left her tied up. They called Marylen Serna Salinas to confirm her relationship with the victim, stating that the act was perpetrated because of their association and because of the work of Marylen Serna Salinas. The crime had already been reported to the National Public Prosecution.

This gendered act of violence is the latest in a series of attacks, killings, threats and intimidation against social, indigenous, campesino and land rights movement leaders, especially in areas that have been historically affected by the presence of illegal armed groups. On March 2 the killing of Ruth Alicia Lopez Guisao, a member of the Congress of the Peoples, brought the number of community leaders killed in Colombia to 25 this year (cf our letter of Mar 21). Between March 21 and 22, during a series of coordinated events, the Police and the National Army raided homes and arrested several social leaders and human rights defenders from the southern Bolívar region, including members of the Congress of the Peoples (cf our letters of Mar 22, 25 and 26).

Because of our concern for the victims of these incidents and the apparent failure of the recent peace accords to effect safety for indigenous and human rights defenders, we **strongly urge** that you

- carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the crimes perpetrated against the woman associated with Marylen Serna Salinas, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice
- take all measures necessary to guarantee the safety of Marylen Serna Salinas, the woman who was attacked on April 7, and all members of the Congress of the Peoples
- investigate the pattern of killings and harassment of human rights defenders, identify the root causes and the authors, and take determined action to prevent them.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
 Co-Coordinators

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  
 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  
 Margarette May Macaulay, Rapporteur for Women's Rights, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email  
 Francisco José Eguiguren Praeli, Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email  
 US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

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

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