

via fax: 011 571 596 0631 <b>Excmo. Sr. Juan Manuel Santos</b> President of the Republic of Colombia	via fax: 011 57 1 570 2000 <b>Sr. Fiscal General Néstor Humberto Martínez Neira</b> Attorney General of Colombia
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June 22, 2017

Dear Sirs:

We are extremely saddened by the assassination of **Bernardo Cuero Bravo**, an Afro-Colombian leader in the municipality of Malambo in Atlántico Department on the Caribbean coast. He was an attorney for AFRODES, the National Association of Displaced Afro-descendants, a coalition of 96 internally displaced Afro-Colombian organizations with over 90,000 members.

On June 7 two men arrived on a black motorcycle while he was watching a soccer game to ask if they rented apartments in the area. When Bernardo approached them to respond, one of them pulled a weapon and killed him in the presence of his partner and other relatives, and then fled the place.

Human rights defenders like Bernardo Cuero Bravo fight to ensure the protection of others while facing deteriorating security challenges themselves. (In 2012, gunmen killed Miller Angulo, another AFRODES human rights defender in Tumaco.) Both Bernardo Cuero and AFRODES had requested police protection and other protection measures. He was given small protections which were later withdrawn by the police, alleging that he no longer faced unordinary danger. The Colombian government, and in particular the National Protection Unit (UNP), issued a statement after the assassination of Bernardo Cuero Bravo, arguing that it did not grant him protection measures because the threats he faced were not linked to his human rights work. This statement is inaccurate and creates the false idea that human rights leaders exaggerate the security risks they face.

Bernardo Cuero Bravo had survived several attacks and assassination attempts. In 2013 he brought the grave security situation faced by Afro-Colombian leaders to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, arguing that the Colombian government needed to provide stronger security measures.

We are greatly concerned about the increasing rate of assassinations of human rights defenders in Colombia, despite the signing of the Peace Accords. In 2016, 85 were killed. So far this year, at least 41 have been killed as a direct result of their human rights work.

We **strongly urge you to**

- carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the killing of Bernardo Cuero Bravo, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- investigate reports of death threats and other forms of intimidation against human rights defenders and adopt immediate measures to ensure their protection, in strict accordance with their wishes

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
Co-Coordinator

copies: Camilo Reyes, 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 on the Rights of Afro-Descendants, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email  
WOLA: Washington Office on Latin America ~ via fax  
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:**