

<p>via email: contacto@presidencia.gov.co Excmo. Sr. Presidente Juan Manuel Santos President of the Republic of Colombia</p>	<p>via fax: 011 57 1 570 2000 Sr. Fiscal General Néstor Humberto Martínez Neira Attorney General of Colombia</p>
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August 25, 2017

Dear Sirs:

We are astounded and outraged at the **continuing threats and intimidation against several human rights defenders and organizations in Barrancabermeja, Santander Department, who are well-known for their work in the Colombian peace process.**

On July 28, at about 10am, Iván Madero Vergel, President of the Regional Corporation for the Protection of Human Rights (CREDHOS) received a call on his cellphone from an unidentified person threatening that if he did not stop denouncing human rights violations, he would be killed.

Maria Leonilda Ravelo Grimaldo is the President of the National Association for Solidarity Aid (ANDAS). On the morning of July 30, while she and her daughter were participating in a workshop, several unidentified persons on motorcycles were monitoring the area and taking photos of her. Around midday, one of the bikers approached a member of the community and warned that Maria Ravelo should leave the area immediately and never come back.

On July 31, the paramilitary organization Gaitanista Self-Defense Forces (AGC) circulated a threatening pamphlet in Barrancabermeja and surrounding areas. It included the names of the following human rights defenders:

Ivan Madero Vergel, President of CREDHOS

David Ravelo Crespo, Secretary of the Board of CREDHOS. On June 20, he was released on parole after being detained since September 14, 2010, when he was falsely accused of an aggravated homicide committed in 1991 for which he was sentenced to 18 years in prison.

Sonia María Nevado Morales, a member of Broad Front for Peace, who has had an active role in the peace process in Barrancabermeja

Melkin Hernán Castrillón Peñau, a campesino leader, Coordinator of Rebellious Youth and Treasurer of the Peasant Farmer Association of the Cimitarra River Valley (ACVC)

Maria Leonilda Ravelo Grimaldo, President of the National Association for Solidarity Aid (ANDAS) and a member of the Peace Commission in Colombia

The AGC paramilitary group accused the human rights defenders of colluding with the government and Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), whom they called rebels against the interests of the Colombian people. AGC stated that they would bring them back “chopped up in plastic bags”. . . “for your knowledge this is not a threat, it is a declaration of war, we are already in the area. You and your family know that.”

These pamphlet threats follow the pattern of previous ones from AGC in 2016 (cf our letter of Aug 13 and Dec 12 2016). We **urgently request** that you

- carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the death threats against those named above, publish the results and bringing those responsible to justice;
- take all the necessary measures to guarantee the safety of those named and members of several human rights organizations mentioned on the threat message, in strict accordance with their wishes

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordinators

and

Christine Stonebraker-Martínez

copies: Camilo Reyes, Ambassador of Colombia to the US ~ via email
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 Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, 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

Frontline 8/4/2017_Colombia

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