

<p>via email: <a href="mailto:contacto@presidencia.gov.co">contacto@presidencia.gov.co</a>  <b>Excmo. Sr. Presidente Juan Manuel Santos</b>          President of the Republic of Colombia</p>	<p>via email: <a href="mailto:despacho.fiscal@fiscalia.gob.co">despacho.fiscal@fiscalia.gob.co</a>  <b>Sr. Fiscal General Néstor Humberto Martínez Neira</b>          Attorney General of Colombia</p>
--	--

October 24, 2017

Dear Sirs:

We are horrified at the **massacre of seven civilians and injuries to at least 20 others** that occurred on October 5 when security forces shot indiscriminately into a crowd of peaceful protesters in Tumaco in Nariño Department.

As part of the 2016 peace agreement between the Colombia government and FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia), farmers who cultivate coca are to have the opportunity to substitute their coca with alternative, legal crops through a national program. In April, more than 1,000 farmers around Tumaco signed an agreement with government representatives to participate in that program, despite pressure from armed narco-trafficking groups to continue growing coca for the cocaine trade.

On September 28, in violation of the agreement, police and military forces arrived in Llorente near Tumaco and began tearing up people's coca crops. In response, between 300 and 1,000 unarmed farmers gathered in a circle around the security forces in a multi-day, peaceful effort to set up negotiations. But then, without warning on October 5, anti-narcotics police opened fire on the civilian crowd. Security officials initially claimed they fired in response to an attack by FARC dissidents, but local residents deny any presence of FARC at the site.

On October 8, the National Police used tear gas and stun grenades to disperse an international team of investigators from the United Nations, the Organization of American States, and a journalist from the Colombian weekly, *Semana*.

Following this incident, the Colombian Ombudsman's Office determined that members of the national police — not dissident FARC rebels or local gangs as the government had earlier alleged — were responsible for the killing of campesinos in Tumaco on Oct. 5. Preliminary forensic testing showed the six farmers were killed by high-velocity long-range bullets. Four police officers were suspended for their involvement in the deaths.

According to Jean Arnault, chief of the UN mission in Colombia, which is overseeing the implementation of the peace deal with the FARC, "The events reinforce our conviction at the United Nations of the necessity of giving coca farmers in affected regions all the means to escape the terrible choice between extreme poverty and illegality."

We therefore **strongly urge** that you

- immediately conduct a thorough investigation into the police and military actions of October 5 and October 8, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice;
- immediately take all necessary steps to implement the integral agrarian reform that would distribute land more equitably;
- take all necessary steps to eliminate death threats from drug traffickers against those who participate in crop substitution and who resist pressure to participate in the anti-eradication protests.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai                      and                      Christine Stonebraker-Martínez  
 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  
 Ryan Reid, Senior Desk Officer for Colombia, US State Dept ~ via email  
 Christine Russell, Desk Officer for Colombia-human rights affairs, US State Dept ~ via email  
 José de Jesús Orozco Hernández, Rapporteur for Colombia, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email  
 US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Beatty, 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:**