

via email: contacto@presidencia.gov.co Excmo. Sr. Presidente Juan Manuel Santos President of the Republic of Colombia	via email: despacho.fiscal@fiscalia.gob.co Sr. Fiscal General Néstor Humberto Martínez Neira Attorney General of Colombia
--	--

October 25, 2017

Dear Sirs:

We are deeply saddened to learn of the death of **Efgenia Vásquez Astudilo**, age 31, an indigenous reporter and presenter with the radio station *Renacer Kokonuko*, a community radio station operated by the Kokonuko people in Puracé, in Cauca Department. She was fatally shot on October 8 while covering a Mobile Anti-Riot Squad (ESMAD) operation to evict members of the indigenous community occupying disputed land.

For the past six months, the Kokonuko peoples have been protesting “Aguas Tibias,” a tourist resort in Puracé. They claim the private land is part of the indigenous people’s ancestral territory which they have been struggling to reclaim for over a decade.

Efgenia Vásquez’ death occurred on the same day as the death of a journalist for the Colombian weekly *Semana*, who was accompanying representatives of international organizations investigating the October 5 massacre in Tumaco in the neighboring department of Nariño (cf our letter of October 24). These two deaths illustrate the escalating difficulty and dangers of media coverage of social conflicts because of the security forces’ increasing attacks and violence against journalists.

We condemn this increase in police violence against journalists and **strongly urge** that you

- identify those responsible for the fatal shooting of Efgenia Vásquez Astudilio, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- increase efforts to respect and protect the work of all journalists, as President Santos committed to in an interview with Reporters Without Borders in August 2016.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordinators

and

Christine Stonebraker-Martínez

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
Francisco José Eguiguren Praeli, Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email
Edizon Lanza, Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email
US Senators Brown & Portman ~ via email
US Representatives Beatty, Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

Reporters Without Borders_10/17/2017_Colombia

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