

<p>via email: contacto@presidencia.gov.co Excmo. Sr. Presidente Juan Manuel Santos President of the Republic of Colombia</p>	<p>via email: despacho.fiscal@fiscalia.gob.co Sr. Fiscal General Néstor Humberto Martínez Neira Attorney General of Colombia</p>
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October 26, 2017

Dear Sirs:

We are extremely concerned that, as Colombia endeavors to implement the peace process, at least five political activists have been killed in one week this month: **José Jair Cortes, Liliana Astrid Ramírez Martínez, Liliana Patricia Cataño Montoya, Eliecer Carvajal** and **Miguel Pérez**.

Jair Cortés, a member of the local council of the Alto Mira and Frontera Community, was killed in a sector called Y, in Tumaco municipality, Nariño Department. He was one of seven community leaders who received death threats in recent months. It was his community council that first accused the National Police of being responsible for the massacre that occurred in Tumaco on October 5. This was contrary to the security forces' stance that initially blamed dissident members of FARC for the killing. Videos published by the local community disproved the initial version and President Santos eventually publicly agreed (cf our letter of Oct. 24). On October 12, three days after the Vice-President Oscar Naranjo left Tumaco, Jair Cortés was killed.

Eliecer Carvajal, killed by unknown persons on October 17, was a member of the Communal Action Council (JAC) in Puerto Guzmán, Putumayo Department. Local residents affirmed that he had been facing death threats for a long time, but local officials never responded.

On October 19, in Coyaima in Tolima Department, school teacher and trade unionist **Liliana Astrid Ramírez Martínez** was on her way to school in San Miguel village when a group of men surrounded her, shot her as she left a taxi, left her body in the road and escaped. Her death follows threats against several teachers at the same school over union activities.

Liliana Patricia Cataño Montoya, age 39, was murdered October 19 in the Comuna 13 neighborhood of Medellín, Antioquia Department. She worked organizing land claims among local residents.

On October 22, a group of armed men murdered **Miguel Pérez**, a campesino leader, a member of the Bajo Cauca Peasant Association, of COCCAM-Tarazá (Coca, Marijuana and Poppy Growers of Colombia), and ANZORC (National Association of Campesino Reserve Zones) in Tarazá, Antioquia Department. COCCAM's primary objective is to persuade the government to end the forceful eradication of illegal crops.

No arrests have been made in any of these deaths. The U.N. Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights has condemned the killing of human rights and land defenders in Colombia: "The armed conflict with the FARC may be over, but the country's incredibly brave human rights defenders continue to be threatened and killed at an alarming rate."

We therefore **strongly urge** that you

- conduct an immediate and thorough investigation into the murders described above, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice;
- take all means necessary to implement the provisions of the November 2016 Peace Agreement which calls for government support for coca farmers who are trying to grow substitute crops for illegal coca that is promoting drug trafficking.

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
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: