

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	via email: <a href="mailto:despacho.fiscal@fiscalia.gov.co">despacho.fiscal@fiscalia.gov.co</a> <b>Sr. Fiscal General Néstor Humberto Martínez Neira</b> Attorney General of Colombia
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December 25, 2017

Dear Sirs:

We are deeply disturbed by the escalating rate of assassinations of social leaders across the country. We are grateful for the attorney general's recent statement identifying this as a systematic campaign against social leaders and pointing some of the blame on the "presence of what is left of the Self-Defense Units [paramilitaries], who would be acting with some level of systematic pattern in a few regions." We remain disappointed, however, by the state's protection for social leaders.

Here are some of the assassinations in recent weeks:

Dec 4: **Alfonso Giraldo Valencia**, active member of FENSUAGRO (United Agricultural Workers Federation) was shot dead by two men outside the home he shared with his wife and three children in Puerto Vega Teteye, Putumayo Dept

Dec 10: **Oscar Pai Pascal**, indigenous leader, was assassinated in Tumaco, Nariño Dept.; 44 indigenous activists killed since January 1

Dec 13: **Jhon Jairo Ortiz Betancur** was one of the FARC members benefiting from a political pardon. His murder makes in Ituango, Antioquia Dept., makes 11 former FARC members released from prison murdered this year

Dec 15: **Alexander José Padilla Cruz**, member of National Coordinator of Coca, Poppy and Marijuana Growers (COCCAM), was killed by Colombian soldiers in the Tierra Alta zone of Córdoba Dept. COCCAM members are threatened by armed groups for seeking to implement illicit crop substitution programs stipulated in the 2016 peace agreement

Dec 15: **José Rafael de la Hoz Villa**, peasant farmer and rural activist, was murdered as he returned home from a meeting of conflict victims that he helped coordinate in Las Canoas, Magdalena Dept.

Dec 18: **Alfonso Pérez Mellizo**, community leader, was shot four times while returning home from a community meeting in Pan de Azucar, Cauca Dept. He had been involved in coordinating community actions to demand implementation of the terms of the peace agreement concerning rural infrastructure and improved health, education and services.

There have been more than 130 murders of social leaders and 30 demobilized FARC rebels since the peace agreement was signed in November 2016. Most killings go unpunished, and the majority exhibit the hallmarks of paramilitary violence.

These trends are being followed by the international community. In a recent report by Nodo Antioquia, researchers from Colombia, the US and the European Union recently reported increased aggressions towards human rights defenders in Antioquia Department. They reported that the increase in aggression was made worse by state security forces' lack of protection for human rights defenders and social leaders.

**We strongly urge you to:**

- carry out a thorough and impartial investigation into the killings of the persons named above, make the results public, and bring those responsible to justice
- provide individual and collective protection measures for social leaders and their organizations, in consultation with them, and in accordance with their wishes

Sincerely,



Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
Co-Coordinators



Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: Camilo Reyes, Ambassador of Colombia to the US ~ via fax: 202.232.8643 and email  
 Rebecca Daley, Human Rights Officer, US Embassy in Colombia ~ via email  
 Ryan Reid and Christine Russell, Desk Officers for Colombia, US State Dept ~ via email  
 José de Jesús Orozco Hernández, Rapporteur for Colombia and for Human Rights Defenders, 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

2017\_12 Justice for Colombia

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