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| via email: <a href="mailto:contacto@presidencia.gov.co">contacto@presidencia.gov.co</a><br><b>Excmo. Sr. Presidente Juan Manuel Santos</b><br>President of the Republic of Colombia | via email: <a href="mailto:despacho.fiscal@fiscalia.gob.co">despacho.fiscal@fiscalia.gob.co</a><br><b>Sr. Fiscal General Néstor Humberto Martínez Neira</b><br>Attorney General of Colombia |
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December 26, 2017

Dear President Santos and Attorney General Martínez:

We are extremely disturbed by the attempted shooting of **Luis Carlos Ortiz**, a radio journalist in Rionegro in Santander Department.

On December 17 around 1a.m. as Luis Carlos Ortiz was returning from a photo shoot, Wilson González Reyes, the mayor of Rionegro, approached him in front of his home, berated him for his critical news coverage, grabbed him by the neck, and later fired a shot with a 9mm pistol. "He said he was going to kill me," said Ortiz. The bullet from the mayor's gun barely missed him. He reported the attack to police shortly after Mayor González drove away.

Luis Carlos Ortiz, age 27, works in Rionegro as a studio photographer and as host of a two-hour morning news program on *La Voz de la Immaculada*, a community radio station operated by the local Catholic church. He also writes for the Facebook page *Ciudad Rionegro*, which features local news and events. Earlier this year he posted on *Ciudad Rionegro* stories (some original, some from third parties) about the poor condition of local roads, the town's public swimming pool, and an article about the mayor's controversial decision to close a Rionegro senior citizens' center. These posts angered Mayor González. On the night he attacked Carlos Ruiz, the mayor shouted: "I'm not afraid of what they say on social media."


This is not the first act of violence by Mayor González against the journalist. In 2015, González punched both Ortiz and Ortiz's mother after Ortiz questioned the mayor about the González campaign offering free lunches in exchange for votes. After the attack on December 17, Ortiz is considering leaving Rionegro because he fears for his life.

Sebastián Salamanca of the Bogotá-based Foundation for Press Freedom (FLIP) informed the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) that his organization has asked the Office of the Attorney General to investigate this recent incident against Luis Carlos Ortz. On the day of the attack, FLIP solicited emergency protection for Ortiz from the government's National Protection Unit. We are not aware of any response to that request.

It is unacceptable for a public official to interfere with a local journalist doing his job and to openly threaten him with death. Therefore, we **strongly** urge that you

- conduct a swift, complete and credible investigation into Mayor Gonzalez's threats against Luis Carlos Ortiz;
- consider possible sanctions against Mayor Gonzalez while these investigations are taking place.

Sincerely,

  
 Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
 Co-Coordinator

and

  
 Christine Stonebraker-Martínez

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  
 Edison Lanza, Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression, 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:**