

via email: contacto@presidencia.gov.co Excmo. Sr. Presidente Juan Manuel Santos President of the Republic of Colombia	via email: despacho.fiscal@fiscalia.gov.co Sr. Fiscal General Néstor Humberto Martínez Neira Attorney General of Colombia
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February 12, 2018

Dear President Santos and Attorney General Martínez:

We are in mourning, along with Colombia's Pacific port city of Buenaventura, after the assassination of well-known Afro-descendant community leader and political organizer, **Temístocles Machado**, who was shot on January 27.

Temístocles, age 58, was a leader of the Black Communities Process (*Proceso de Comunidades Negras, or PCN*). PCN was instrumental in defending the rights of persons displaced due to atrocities committed in the Naya, Raposo and Yurumangui river communities during the 1990s and 2000s. More recently, in mid-2017 he was one of the leaders of the regional strike called in Buenaventura, in Valle del Cauca Department. Before and since then, he had received several threats over his prominent activism but continued to conduct his work in the Isla de La Paz neighborhood. The community is home to displaced families who have resettled there, now facing tremendous pressure to leave, due to infrastructure and development projects linked to the large sea port there. He was killed in a shop in that neighborhood where he knew virtually everybody and to which he had devoted his life.

This is a high level assassination of an ethnic leader. The communities represented by Temístocles Machado are part of the Ethnic Commission for Peace, which represented the interests of Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities during Colombia's peace negotiations with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). Although the threats against Temístocles Machado were well documented, the Colombian state failed to provide any security for him.

We are deeply concerned about the increasing rate of assassinations of social movement leaders. Reports of social movement leaders killed in 2017 range from 105 (United Nations) to 167 (INDEPAZ). Temístocles Machado is at least the tenth social organizer murdered in January 2018. Another ethnic leader, **Eleazar Tequia Vitucay** of the indigenous Embera Katio peoples, was killed January 26 when members of the Colombian military shot him. He was on his way home from participating in an event about education rights involving young children and adolescents.

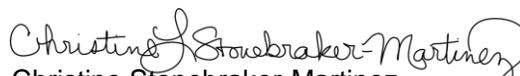
Because of our serious concern about the extreme violence and threats towards the Afro-Colombian Peoples of Colombia, we strongly urge you to

- carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the assassination of Temístocles Machado, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice
- provide a comprehensive state presence in Buenaventura to guarantee the physical integrity and security of the indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples in areas at risk due to the presence of armed groups
- provide a comprehensive plan for the prevention and protection of indigenous communities who are displaced or at risk of displacement, in compliance with the ruling of Constitutional Court Order 004 of 2009

Sincerely,


 Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Co-Coordinators

and


 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
 Francisco José Eguiguren Praeli, Rapporteur for Colombia, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email
 Margarete May Macaulay, Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons of African Descent, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email
 Antonia Urrejola, Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 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

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