

<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.gov.co Sr. Fiscal General Néstor Humberto Martínez Neira Attorney General of Colombia</p>
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February 15, 2018

Dear President Santos and Attorney General Martínez:

We are very disturbed by the attempted assassination of **German Espinel**, a trade unionist and active member of the Patriotic March Social and Political Movement.

On February 14 at about 9:30pm, as German Espinel was walking to a local grocery store in the Bolívar City district of Bogotá, he was approached by two armed men on a motorcycle. They shot him twice, once in the chest and once in the back. They rode off, shouting: "That's what happens to you, toad !" [Toad is the slang word for snitch.] He survived because he was wearing a bulletproof vest.

German Espinel works for the Association of Agroecological and Mining Brotherhoods of Guamocó (AHERAMIGUA), a small-scale miners' union based in the South of Bolívar Department. AHERAMIGUA regularly posts articles on its website condemning violent acts carried out by organized criminal groups, Self-Defense Gaitanista Paramilitaries (AGC), and the National Liberation Army (ELN) in the South of Bolívar Department and the northeast region of Antioquia Department.

German Espinel has received threats since 2016 because of his support for community land rights. As a member of the Patriotic March, a grassroots political and social organization that represents some 2,000 civil society groups across the country, Espinel has dedicated years to human rights and urban development. Recently, he had been monitoring a number of armed groups traveling throughout the area and alerting government officials to their presence.

We are concerned about increased attacks on political activists like German Espinel. INDEPAZ (Institute of Studies for Development and Peace), a non-governmental organization based in Bogotá, reports that 29 social activists and 10 demobilized FARC guerillas have been killed in the first 40 days of 2018 alone.

We **strongly urge** that you

- immediately investigate this attempted assassination, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice
- provide increased security to guarantee and protect the human rights of all to life, work, transportation as well as personal and psychological integrity.

Sincerely,


Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordinator


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 and Human Rights Defenders, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email
US Senators Brown & Portman
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: