

<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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April 1, 2018

Dear Sirs:

We are saddened and angry over the assassination on March 19 of **Silvio Duban Ortiz Ortiz**, age 27, and his brother **Javier Bernardo Cuero Ortiz**, age 32, sons of slain Afro-descendant human rights defender Bernardo Cuero Bravo.

On June 7, 2017, their father, Bernardo Cuero Bravo, leader of the National Association of Displaced Afro-Colombians (AFRODES), was murdered in front of his wife at his home in Malambo, in Atlántico Department (cf our letter of June 22 2017). On March 6, his two sons, together with members of AFRODES, attended a public hearing on Bernardo Cuero's assassination at the Judicial Center in Barranquilla, Atlántico Department, and participated in a protest to demand justice.

Thirteen days later, on March 19, at about 2:00am, Javier Bernardo and his family members were sitting outside of a relative's store in the Barrio Independencia neighborhood of Tumaco, Nariño Department. Two unidentified individuals approached them on a motorcycle and fired directly at them, killing them both instantly. The wife of Javier Bernardo Cuero Ortiz was injured during the attack with a gunshot wound to her left arm. Amnesty International has received reports that the assassins aimed directly at Cuero's relatives, a sign that it was a planned event and that the rest of the family could still be at risk.

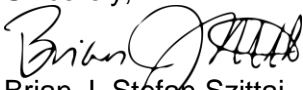
On March 21 Inspector General Fernando Carrillo condemned the killings, saying that the system of protection to social leaders in the country has failed.

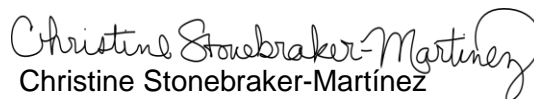
The trend in assassinations of social leaders is alarming. The Bogotá-based nongovernmental organization *Somos Defensores* reports 29 assassinations of social leaders or members of vulnerable ethnic communities during the first three months of this year; eight of those were in March.

We strongly condemn the killings described above and strongly urge that you

- carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the assassinations of Silvio Duban Ortiz and Javier Bernardo Cuero Ortiz, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice
- take all necessary measures to guarantee the security of their family members, in strict accordance with their wishes
- implement Presidential Decree 2252 from December 29, 2017 and all other decrees related to the protection of human rights defenders in Colombia

Sincerely,


Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordinator


Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: Fernando Carrillo Flórez, Inspector General of Colombia ~ via email
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
Margaret Macaulay, Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons of African Descent and Against Racial Discrimination, 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

03/23/18_FrontlineDefenders_Colombia

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