

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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May 11, 2018

Dear Sirs:

We are extremely disturbed at the assassination of yet another human rights defender in Colombia. On May 2 an unknown individual shot and killed **Hugo Albeiro George Pérez** while he was participating in a peaceful protest to oppose the negative environmental impacts of the Hidroituango hydroelectric project, under construction on the Cauca River near Ituango municipality in Antioquia Department. His nephew, **Domar Egidio Zapata George**, was also killed in the attack.

Hugo Albeiro George Pérez was a member of the Association of Victims and Those Affected by Megaprojects (ASVAM, *Asociación de Víctimas y Afectados por Megaproyectos*) in the rural area of El Aro outside of Ituango. ASVAM is one of 15 organizations affiliated with Living Rivers of Antioquia (MRVA, *Movimiento Vivos Ríos de Antioquia*), which monitors environmental and human rights violations related to the construction of hydroelectric projects. MRVA has been denouncing: 1- hazardous waste disposal affecting more than 26 hectares of land in 19 municipalities, and 2- illegal logging that increases the risks of floods and landslides, threatening homes and lives. The protest on May 2 was organized by communities surrounding the town of Puerto Valdivia who are particularly worried about destruction of local land and property resulting from the construction of the dam wall.

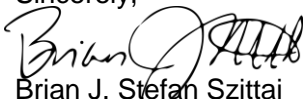
MRVA members have suffered greatly for their organized opposition to the Hidroituango project. There have been attacks against 152 MRVA members. Three people have been killed, two have survived attempts on their lives, and 63 have been threatened and harassed by paramilitary forces. Two attacks involved explosives; two involved torture. Additionally, there have been 17 smear campaigns against MRVA members, 10 cases of discrimination because of links with MRVA activities, one attempted enforced disappearance, and two cases of harassment.

The biggest threats to MRVA members come from the private security company hired by Public Enterprises of Medellín (EPM, the project construction company) and illegal armed groups. MRVA has created a collective Prevention and Protection Plan and has met with the Ministry of the Interior, which agreed to adopt political and material measures to help with security. Those measures, however, have not yet been implemented.

We believe the assassination of Hugo Albeiro George Pérez is linked to his work in ASVAM and MRVA. We **strongly urge** that you

- carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the assassination Hugo Albeiro George Pérez and the multiple attacks on MRVA members, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice
- implement the political and material measures agreed to in the Prevention and Protection Plan of MRVA
- guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.

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 and US Representatives Beatty, Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

Frontline 5.4.2018_COLOMBIA

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