

<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>
--	--

June 12, 2018

Dear Sirs:

We are very disturbed by the massive unjust arrests of dozens of elected community leaders and human rights defenders in the Departments of Valle Del Cauca, Cauca, and Nariño on April 23. Among them are **Sara Quiñonez** and her mother **Tulia Maria Valencia**, both members of the Black Communities' Process (PCN), an internationally recognized organization that has worked to dismantle illegal armed groups' activities in Afro-descendant territories. Both human rights leaders have been formally accused of narcotics trafficking and working with the National Liberation Army (ELN). At their arraignment hearing on April 25, a judge refused to release them pending trial.

Sara Quiñonez is on the governing board of the Afro-Colombian Community Council of Alto Mira and Frontera in the municipality of Tumaco in Nariño Department. She defends the land rights of her community, which faces constant harassment from numerous armed groups that have tried to exercise control over their territory, especially those related to coca crops. Tulia Valencia is also a recognized local leader, who promotes and protects the individual and collective rights of her community. Both live in Cali after being displaced from their communities, following the killings of two other community leaders: Genaro Garcia in 2016 and José Jair Cortes in 2017 (cf our letter of October 26 2017).

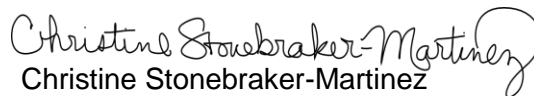
In March 2018 the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights granted precautionary measures to the leaders of the Governing Board of the Alto Mira and Frontera Community Council, including Sara Quiñonez. She has also received protection measures from the National Protection Unit (UNP) in recognition of her risk as a social leader. It is incomprehensible that a forcibly displaced person with a government bodyguard who is with her almost 24 hours a day/7 days a week could be engaged in guerilla and narco-trafficking activities without the UNP having detected and reported such activities.

We believe that the charges against these two women are politically motivated and we **strongly urge** that you

- refrain from pressing charges without strong evidence, which would result in an unfair trial
- adequately implement the precautionary measures that have already been granted to Sara Quiñonez and the Community Council, and provide comprehensive protection measures to Afro-descendant women human rights defenders in accordance with their wishes
- protect civilian populations during the implementation of the coca crop substitution program and other provisions of the Peace Agreement.

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
 Margarette May Macaulay, Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons of African Descent, 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: