

via email: contacto@presidencia.gov.co  
**Excmo. Sr. Presidente Iván Duque Márquez**  
 President of the Republic of Colombia

via email: despacho.fiscal@fiscalia.gov.co  
**Sr. Fiscal General Néstor Humberto Martínez Neira**  
 Attorney General of Colombia

December 21, 2018

Dear Sirs:

We are deeply disturbed by recent threats to **Enrique Cabezas**, a leader of the collective of Afro-descendent territories in Curvaradó (Chocó department, western Colombia), because of his work defending their ancestral territory and the right of the communities to not be involved in the armed conflict.

On December 2 and 3, Enrique Cabezas received requests to meet with the paramilitary group Gaitanistas Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AGC); they have accused him of being a member of the guerrilla group National Liberation Army (ELN). According to Enrique Cabezas, on previous occasions, the AGC have arranged meetings with community leaders using the same pretext only to kill them.

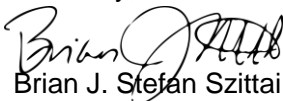
The Afro-descendant communities of the Curvaradó and Jiguamiandó River Basins are located in Humanitarian Zones established by the government of Colombia in 2006. These are 13 clearly marked zones whose inhabitants request that they not be drawn into the armed conflict by any of the armed groups. The communities have attempted to defend their land and to stop the expansion of illegal African palm plantations (palm oil) and other economic activity by outsiders in their territories. Paramilitary groups, however, have moved in and stolen some of their lands, often threatening or killing community residents.

To comply with previous Constitutional Court decisions in favor of the Afro-descendant communities, this year the Ministry of the Interior convened several authorities to carry out an eviction of illegitimate occupants, scheduled for December 4. However, in the days leading up to the eviction, death threats were made to Enrique Cabezas and some of the other authorities; therefore, the eviction did not take place.

We urge you to take the following actions to protect the rights of internally displaced people and the restitution of territories of the communities of the Curvaradó and Jiguamiandó River Basins:

- implement, in consultation with Enrique Cabezas and the Afro-descendant communities in Curvaradó, an effective collective protection plan as they continue their work to protect their right to land restitution.
- ensure that the land restitution for Curvaradó communities is accomplished in an effective way and that territory is returned to its legitimate owners;
- protect the safety of all people participating in the land restitution processes in the river basin of Curvaradó, with measures that align with their wishes
- take immediate steps to overcome the structural causes behind the attacks faced by human rights defenders in the region, including the persistence of paramilitary groups in the area.

Sincerely,

  
 Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
 Co-Coordinator

  
 Christine Stonebraker-Martínez

copies: Francisco Santos Calderón, 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 Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email  
 Margarete May Macaulay, Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons of African Descent and Against Racial Discrimination ~ via email  
 US Senators Brown & Portman  
 US Representatives Beatty, Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Ryan ~ via email

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