

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
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December 22, 2018

Dear Sirs:

We are extremely disturbed about the escalating armed assaults and murders of social leaders and human rights defenders that have occurred in Colombia in 2018. We are calling for justice in the assassinations of **Edwin Dagua Ipia** and **Gilberto Antonio Zuluago Ramirez**, and the armed attack on **German Valencia**, all which occurred in Cauca Department this month.

On the evening of December 20 a group of at least six armed and hooded men attacked **German Valencia** at his home in the Vilachi village in Cauca Department and shot him in the abdomen. He is the human rights coordinator of the Association of Indigenous Cabildos of Northern Cauca. This attack follows the circulation on December 18 of pamphlets, signed by the Aguilas Negras (Black Eagles) paramilitary group, offering millions of Colombian pesos for the “heads” of any indigenous leaders from “governors” to “collaborators.” They are part of a series of threats that have circulated through pamphlets disseminated in public spaces in the municipalities of northern Cauca (cf our letter of October 24).

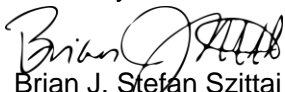
The latest pamphlets followed the murder on December 7 of **Edwin Dagua Ipia**, age 28, governor of the indigenous territory of Huellas in Caloto municipality, Cauca Department. Two persons shot him four times, on the sidewalks of La Buitrera in Caloto, killing him instantly. He worked with youth leadership in the region. He was one of six authorities of the Association of Indigenous Government of Northern Cauca (ACIN) and had received several death threats, including ones in earlier pamphlets, which prompted a request to the Colombian government in July for protection. He did not receive any protection.

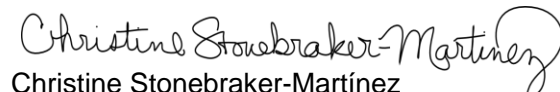
On December 9, an unidentified attacker shot and killed **Gilberto Antonio Zuluago Ramirez**, age 55, as he waited for a bus in Corinto, Cauca Department. He was a member of the United Agricultural Trade Union Federation (FENSUAGRO) and of the Association of Workers of the Peasant Reserve Zone of Corinto (APROZONAC), involved in the development of a rural reserve area.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2018 is the deadliest year for human rights and social leaders since the 2016 signing of the peace accords with the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia). Around 400 social activists have been murdered since then, with more deaths in Northern Cauca than anywhere else. Therefore, we strongly urge that you

- carry out a thorough and impartial investigation into the attacks and killings described above, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders and social leaders 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: 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
 US Senators Brown & Portman
 US Representatives Beatty, Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Ryan ~ via email

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