

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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January 24, 2019

Dear Sirs:

We are deeply distressed about an armed attack on human rights defender **Alfimir Castillo Bermúdez** near Pradera Municipality in Valle del Cauca Department.

On the evening of January 11, **Alfimir Castillo Bermúdez** was riding in a car with her husband and two bodyguards of the National Protection Unit on their way to Pradera when two unidentified men on a motorcycle fired three times at the car. Two bullets hit a back seat window. Fortunately, no one was injured, and the driver was able to drive to Candelaria Police Station (Valle) to report the incident.

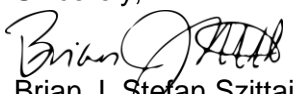
This is the latest in a series of threats and incidents against Alfimir Castillo Bermúdez for her work pursuing truth and justice for extrajudicial killings carried out during the armed conflict. Her own son, Darbey Mosquera Castillo, was a victim of the “false positives” scandal in 2008; armed forces unlawfully killed civilians to present them as “guerrilla killed in combat” in order to get rewards. She has since exposed several crimes involving members of the Colombian armed forces, leading to ten investigations, with six of those facing criminal charges. Because of the reprisals she has consequently faced, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights granted precautionary measures for her protection in October 2012.

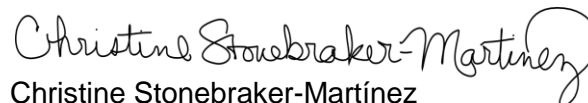
Because of increasing threats (by text, email, and phone), the National Protection Unit has been providing her with bodyguards and a car since October. On October 15 she received a death threat on her phone in relation to her attendance at the Special Jurisdiction for Peace for the hearing of former Army Commander Mario Montoya, who could be linked to the death of her son. The message said, “...we don’t want to see you at the hearings because this time our threats will become true...your death is close.” In December there was an attempted break-in at her house. On January 10 and 11 the threats claimed that her protection measures would be useless to protect her life, that she “will pay in blood her insolence against [their] commander” and “will pay for all that has happened to [them].” On the day of the shooting incident, she received a text message stating “...don’t think we are not joking...not even your protection team will be able to save you...”

We **strongly urge** that you

- carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the threats and attacks against Alfimir Castillo Bermúdez, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice, including those who ordered the attacks;
- 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-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
 US Senators Brown & Portman
 US Representatives Beatty, Fudge, Gibbs, Gonzalez, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Ryan ~ via email

Jan 15_Frontline_Colombia

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