

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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February 26, 2019

Dear Sirs:

We are outraged and saddened at the continuing increase in the murder of social leaders in Colombia (cf our letters of January 12, January 26, February 1). On February 25, **José Fernel Manrique Valencia**, age 34, an executive board member of the Union of Construction Material Industry Workers (SUTIMAC) was assassinated in Bucaramanga in Santander Department. At 9:30pm two assassins on a motorbike shot him twice, killing him outside his home in the Café Madrid neighborhood.

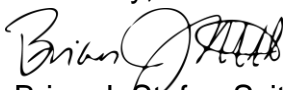
José Manrique Valencia worked for Cemex Colombia, a national construction company, for more than a decade. He was recently disabled from a traffic accident but remained actively involved in trade unionism.

This latest murder further illustrates the dangerous climate for trade unionists in Colombia, where thousands of union members have been murdered since the 1980s. Since SUTIMAC was formed in 1972, at least 40 of its members have been murdered, but only one person has been convicted. This reality is alarming for other union leaders who fear for their safety.

We **strongly urge** that you

- immediately launch a prompt, thorough and impartial investigation into the killing of José Fernel Manrique Valencia, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice;
- provide security guarantees to union members and union leaders, in strict accordance with their wishes.
- take swift action to implement the “Action Plan for the Protection of Social and Community Leaders, Human Rights Defenders, and Journalists” (which President Duque signed in November 2018)
- guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Colombia, including labor 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-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
Soledad García Muñoz, Special Rapporteur on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 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

JFC&Telesur_2/27/19_Colombia

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