

<p>via email: contacto@presidencia.gov.co Excmo. Sr. Presidente Iván Duque Márquez 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>
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March 21, 2019

Dear Sirs:

We are horrified at three recent assassinations of social leaders in Puerto Asís, Putumayo Department: rural organizers **Milena García** and her husband, **Darwin Reyes**, and **Doctor Zonia Rosero**.

On February 23, abductors took Milena García and Darwin Reyes from the urban center of Puerto Asís to the Tres Bocanas Zone (a rural area about 9km away) where they killed them and threw their bodies into the Putumayo River. Milena’s body was found the next day. Darwin remains missing.

The married couple were community leaders in the rural reserve Zona de Reserva Campesina Perla Amazónica (ZRCPA), where they helped coordinate voluntary crop substitution programs. Putumayo is one of Colombia’s most productive coca-producing regions and a strategic corridor for drugs trafficking. Replacing coca plantations with legal crops was one of the core components of the 2016 peace agreement. The zone where Milena and Darwin were killed is known for paramilitary activity.

One day later, Doctor Zonia Rosero, age 45, became the next social leader attacked in Puerto Asís. On February 24 armed men entered the clinic where she worked and shot her several times. She was taken to a medical center in Pasto, Narino Department, and treated in an intensive care unit. She died two days later.

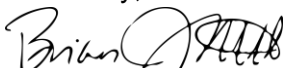
Zonia Rosero had always worked in healthcare (first as a nurse, then as a doctor) and had focused her efforts in communities most affected by poor social conditions and state abandonment. She was well-known for her defense of women’s rights and peace. She had helped coordinate a regional campaign against gender-based violence. She was planning to announce her candidacy for mayor of Puerto Asís, promoting education and health as fundamental rights for all communities.

These attacks have occurred amid a wave of violence against women in the regions of Medio and Bajo Putumayo. Although communities have warned authorities about paramilitary threats, little has been done to address the issue, leading to increased security concerns.

We **strongly urge** that you

- conduct an immediate and thorough investigation into the murders of Maria Garcia, Darwin Reyes, and Doctor Zonia Rosero, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- take all measures necessary to implement the replacing of coca plantations with legal crops, as required by the peace agreement;
- take urgent measures to protect social activists in Putumayo, in strict accordance with their wishes

Sincerely,


 Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Co-Coordinators


 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 mail
 Margarette May Macaulay, Rapporteur on the Rights of Women, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email, US mail
 US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Beatty, Fudge, Gibbs, Gonzalez, 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: