

<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 25, 2019

Dear Sirs:

We are horrified at the continuing violence being inflicted by paramilitary groups in areas from which the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) withdrew following the signing of the peace agreement in 2016. We are particularly disturbed by targeted attacks on farmers who are participating in voluntary programs to replace coca plantations with legal crops, a core component of the peace agreement.

Recently, paramilitaries forcibly displaced hundreds of families from their homes in Córdoba Department and abducted three local peasant farmers from their homes in San José de Uré. On March 22 two of those abducted, **Jhon Jeimer González Vasquez** and **Julio César Taborda Caro**, were found dead. Both men had been tortured. Authorities also expect to find the body of the third man. All had enrolled in land restitution programs for victims of forced displacement.

The forced displacement has been rampant. On March 21, about 160 families were forced to leave the villages of La Esmeralda, La Flecha and Santa Rosa. On March 24, another 400 families were displaced from the villages of Rogero, Soledad, Riosucio, Santa Bárbara, La Jagua and Puerto Mutatá. Other community members were trapped due to the presence of armed groups


Despite the peace agreement, armed groups have proliferated, particularly in regions where the FARC's withdrawal created a power vacuum. As a result, murders of social leaders, coca production and forced displacement have increased significantly in the last two years.

According to a spokesperson for the regional human rights organization Social Córdoba Foundation, paramilitaries in Córdoba are targeting people participating in the crop substitution program: "They are removing people involved in coca substitution from the territory. They are displacing them to make way for new inhabitants and feed the drug trafficking business."

We **strongly urge** that you

- conduct an immediate and thorough investigation into the murders of the three farmers from San José de Uré in Córdoba Department, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- take all necessary steps to protect all who are working in restitution programs to grow legal crops in place of illegal coca plantations in keeping with the peace agreement of 2016;
- 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
Stefan Zittai
Co-Coordinators


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 mail
US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Beatty, Fudge, Gibbs, Gonzalez, 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: