

<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 26, 2019

Dear Sirs:

We are extremely concerned about the wave of violence targeting social leaders and human rights defenders in Colombia, particularly those working to implement the national program to substitute the growing of coca with legal crops. On March 17, **Argemiro López Pertuz**, a rural organizer, was murdered. Armed men broke into his home in the village of La Guayacana in Tumaco municipality, Nariño Department, attacked him and his family, injuring his partner and his mother.

Argemiro López Pertuz promoted the implementation of the Comprehensive National Program for the Substitution of Illicit Crops (PNIS), which was established under the peace agreement 2016. Three months earlier, Argemio López and the families who had signed the voluntary substitution agreements received threats, which were reported to authorities. The region in which he worked has remained severely affected by violence and instability. Tumaco produces more coca, the plant ingredient for cocaine, than any other municipality in Colombia. According to COCCAM (National Association of Coca Growers), more than 30 people working on crop substitution programs have been murdered in this area since November 2016. During this same time, there has been a high increase in coca production in Colombia.

We have written several letters over the past year about attacks—including torture and assassination—of organizers of the crop substitution program, as well as farmers participating in the program. These are occurring all over Colombia. So far this year, we have written about the killings of:

- Wilmer Antonio Miranda**, Association of Rural Workers of Cajibío in Cauca Department (Jan 4)
- Luis Alfredo Contreras Ortega**, President of the Community Action Board, Las Mercedes, Norte de Santander (Jan 17)
- Maritza Ramírez Chaverra**, President of the Community Action Council, Aguas Claras, Nariño (Jan 24)
- Milena García and Darwin Reyes**, Puerto Asís, Putumayo (Feb 23)

We **strongly urge** that you

- promptly investigate the murder of Argemiro López Pertuz, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- take all means necessary to support the illicit crop substitution program as mandated by the peace agreement signed in 2016
- protect the organizers of PNIS and participating farmers, in strict accordance with their wishes

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 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: