

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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June 25, 2019

Dear Sirs,

We join our voices to those of the Colombian peoples' outcry of national outrage and sorrow at the assassination of **María del Pilar Hurtado**, age 34, in Tierralta, Córdoba Department.

On June 21, as she was preparing to start her job as a recycler, armed men attacked and killed her in front of her 12-year old son. The video of her 12-year old son screaming and crying over his mother's dead body spurred an unprecedented national wave of indignation on social media and in crowds taking to the streets.

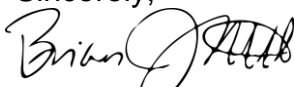
María del Pilar was a leading member of a community of 17,000 people who had occupied a plot on the outskirts of Tierralta after being displaced by the construction of a nearby hydroelectric dam in 2001. The occupied land had previously been owned by the father of Fabio Otero, the current mayor of Tierralta. On May 31 there was a failed police attempt to evict the community. On June 1 María del Pilar was named as one of multiple "military targets" in a death threat from the Gaitanista Self-Defense Forces (AGC). They referred to her as "the fat ____ of the scrap shop" she ran in her neighborhood. It stated, "We declare these people a military objective because we are fed up with this herd of unemployed . . . that went too far invading lots... Beware, we don't fool around. What we will do is kill and recover control, and if these people want [it] to get out of hand, let [it] get out of hand."

Authorities responding to María del Pilar's assassination have been forced to admit to false claims they told local media. The Defense Minister lied when he said the National Liberation Army (ELN) was responsible for her death. The mayor's office denied that she was a social leader in the community or that she was mentioned in the death threats received earlier in the month. Mayor Otero admitted that court documents ordered him to return land to more than 30 farmers displaced by the paramilitary organization United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC). (It is commonly known that the AGC, which issued the death threat to María del Pilar, was derived from the AUC).

We **strongly urge** that you

- conduct an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the assassination of María del Pilar Hurtado, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice;
- increase efforts to stop the paramilitary violence that has been terrorizing communities, especially since the signing of the peace accords in 2016.

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
 US Senators Brown & Portman
 US Representatives Beatty, Fudge, Gibbs, Gonzalez, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Ryan ~ via email

JFC_06/22/2019_Colombia

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