

<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 Fabio Espitia Garzón Attorney General of Colombia</p>
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September 24, 2019

Dear Sirs:

We are deeply concerned about threats issued by the Black Eagles (Águilas Negras) paramilitary organization against Colombia's largest trade union, the Colombian Federation of Education Workers (FECODE). Named in the threats are: **Nelson Alarcón**, the president of FECODE; **Martha Alfonso**, second vice president of FECODE; **Domingo Ayala**, prosecutor for FECODE; and **Carlos Rivas**, former president and current secretary of Legal Affairs of FECODE.

The threats arrived at the FECODE Executive Committee on September 3, one week after FECODE staged a series of strikes in a long-running dispute over health coverage and conditions for teachers in the national education system. FECODE is also demanding full implementation of the 2016 peace agreement and an end to chronic levels of insecurity that have seen hundreds of social activists murdered since the agreement was signed.

FECODE wishes to enter into dialogue with the government over the National Development Plan, which would lower wages and pensions and negatively impact working conditions. According to FECODE's website, 3,000 complaints are lodged per day over inadequate health care, lack of medicine, and delays of up to five months in appointments, as well as other issues. FECODE is also opposed to any efforts to privatize public education and other public goods and services.

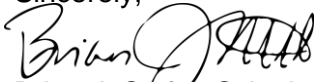
In the pamphlet, the Black Eagles threaten: "it is time to clean this country" and that there will be "death to all guerrilla collaborators, called union and social leaders" because "they support and promote leftist policies to the rest of the people." They add: FECODE trade unionists "are really camouflaged guerrillas among civilians."

Violence against trade unionists escalated dramatically in 2018, with murders more than doubling to 34 from 15 the previous year. Teachers were the worst-affected workers, with at least 13 teacher trade unionists killed. The violence has continued during 2019. According to Nelson Alarcón, more than 700 FECODE colleagues have been threatened this year. On August 12, school principal Orlando Gómez was abducted and killed in Cauca.

We strongly urge that you

- investigate the threats being made against the FECODE Executive Committee, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice
- enter into dialogue with FECODE to negotiate fair wages, health coverage, and other protections

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
Christine Russell, Desk Officer 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
Soledad García Muñoz, Rapporteur on Economic, Social, Cultural, and Environmental Rights – 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: