

<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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November 15, 2019

Dear Sirs:

We are dismayed at the burning of the boat and motor (the main form of transportation) belonging to journalist **David Torres** in Simití in Bolívar Department on November 6.

David Torres is the founder and reporter of *El Original*, a news website with a monthly print edition. He used the boat (*chalupa*) and 40-horsepower outboard motor, worth about US\$10,000, to make reporting trips from his home in Simití and to distribute copies of his paper to communities along the Magdalena River where there are few roads.

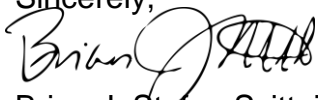
Prior to the October 27 mayoral election in Simití, David Torres was reporting on alleged political corruption in Simití and the nearby towns of San Pablo and Cantagallo. Following that reporting, his friends warned him of rumors that people intended to burn the boat. After the warnings, he hid the boat for several days but brought it back to Simití after the election and parked it in his backyard where it was later burned. Since the burning of his boat, he has gone into hiding for his safety.

Burning a boat that enables a journalist to report on and bring vital news to remote communities is an alarmingly extreme form of censorship. Those responsible for the destruction of his boat must be punished. The Special Rapporteurship for Freedom of Expression of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights has stated in its report on violence against journalists and media workers: "To prevent violence against journalists and media workers, it is essential that the legal system sanction these behaviors proportional to the damage committed."

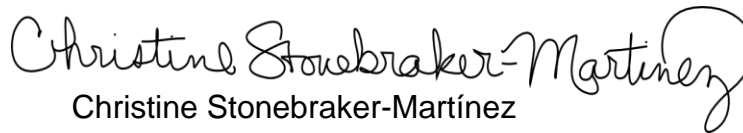
We therefore **strongly urge** that you

- thoroughly investigate the arson attack that destroyed David Torres' property, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice
- instruct the National Protection Unit to assess the level of risk to David Torres, and, in direct consultation with him, implement the necessary measures to safeguard his life and integrity

Sincerely,



Brian J. Stefan Szittai
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
 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
 Edison Lanza, Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email, US mail
 Committee to Protect Journalists ~ via email
 US Senators Brown & Portman
 US Representatives Beatty, Fudge, Gibbs, Gonzalez, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Ryan ~ via email

11/08/19_CPJ_Colombia

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