

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

January 26, 2020

Dear Sirs,

We are outraged at the wave of violence that continues to impact many regions of Colombia. Since January 1 more than 20 social leaders have been assassinated across the country. These include the killings listed here that occurred in the following departments: Antioquia, Cauca, Chocó, Huila, Norte de Santander, and Putumayo.

Jan 1 - Guapi, Cauca Dept. **Benjamín Banguera**, former FARC combatant and signatory of the peace agreement; chased on his motorcycle by armed men who killed him with two gunshots.

Jan 2 - Ituango, Antioquia Dept. **Carlos Cardona** who was about to begin work as the director of the Ituango Hospital in Antioquia Department and was celebrating with friends when an unidentified armed man approached, shot and killed him.

Jan 3 - Guapi, Cauca Dept. **Cristian David Caicedo**, age 22, son of a well-known regional Afro-Colombian legal representative of the Community Council Guapi Abajo and a member of the National Space of Prior Consultation of Black Communities was assassinated execution style by armed men.

Jan 5 - Nuquí, Chocó Dept. **Anuar Rojas Isaramá**, age 29, member of the indigenous guard from Agua Blanca community; his assassination caused the displacement of 28 families (123 people) who are currently taking refuge nearby.

Jan 6 - Puerto Guzmán, Putumayo Dept. **Gloria Ocampo**, age 37, assassinated in her home alongside her 69-year-old neighbor Heladio Moreno. She was a leader in her community and on a departmental level for crop substitution, one of the core elements of the peace agreement, under which coca-farming communities replace illegal crops with traditional ones.

Jan 7 - Páez, Cauca Dept. Indigenous Nasa elder of the El Canelo Reservation, **Virginia Silva**, age 71, had been receiving death threats; she was assassinated at her home in front of her husband.

Jan 8 - Puerto Guzmán, Putumayo Dept. Peasant leaders **Óscar Quintero** and **Gentil Hernández Jiménez** were assassinated. Armed men dragged Óscar Quintero from his home and killed him in front of his wife. The same group subsequently murdered Gentil Hernández Jiménez at his home nearby. A third potential victim is at risk: **Arturo Tovar Collazos**, a community leader in the village of Buena Esperanza, managed to escape with his family after being warned the men were looking for him.

Jan 8 - Algeciras, Huila Dept. **Mireya Hernández Guevara**, age 56, was the former treasurer of the Community Action Board of the 20 de Julio neighborhood. When she and her husband were walking home at night, armed gunmen approached on a motorcycle and shot her multiple times. She was rushed to a nearby hospital where she died from the gunshot wounds.

Jan 10 - Caloto, Cauca Dept. **Amparo Guejia Mestizo**, a Nasa indigenous leader and founder of the Landless Workers Movement—Grandchildren of Quintin Lame, was assassinated along with her son, **Juan Pablo Dicué**

Jan 10 - Inza, Cauca Dept. **Nelson Enrique Meneses**, age 29, member of the Peasant Association of Inzá Tierradentro, shot and killed in his home in front of his wife and 3-year-old daughter.

Jan 10 - Chiriguana, Cesar Dept. **Henry Cuello**, leader of a community action board, killed by unidentified armed men.

Jan 10 – Tibú, Norte de Santander Dept (region Catatumbo) **Tulio César Sandoval**, age 61, member of the Coordinators of Coca, Marijuana and Poppy Growers (COCCAM), a member of the Patriotic March, and agricultural union leader in his village of La Silla (ASCAMCAT), was assassinated at his home in front of family members

Jan 10 - Turbo, Antioquia Dept. **Sergio Manuel Narváez Tapias**, former city council member, was shot several times and killed in his home.

Jan 11 - Algeciras, Huila Dept. **John Freddy Álvarez**, President of the Association of Peasant Workers in Algeciras, and member of the Patriotic March, was assassinated

Jan 13 - Montelíbano, Córdoba Dept. **Jorge Luiz Betancourt**, community and sports leader, was shot multiple times and killed by armed men while he was at home with his family.

Jan 14 - Toribío, Cauca Dept. **Jaiber Alexander Quitumbo** shot dead by armed men while he did agricultural work in the Indigenous Reservation of Toribío

Jan 16 - Puerto Guzman, Putumayo Dept. **Yordan Tovar**, member of the Trade Union of Agricultural Peasant Workers of Putumayo, was assassinated at the union's community store.

Jan 21 - Río Arriba, Antioquia Dept. **Hernando Herrera**, a community leader of the rural zone El Brasil, part of Sonsón municipality, was shot dead.


Jan 25 - Pitalito, Huila Dept. **John Fredy Vargas**, age 42, a former FARC guerrilla was shot multiple times and killed while traveling by motorbike after meeting with state officials from the government body responsible for overseeing the peace process, the Agency for Reincorporation and Normalization (ARN).

We are seriously concerned about the systematic killing of social leaders in Colombia, including ex-combatants who are part of the reincorporation process and farmers who are part of the crop substitution program. We echo the statement by the United Nations Security Council on January 15 which characterizes this as “a grave situation of security” and demands that your government take “effective actions” to stop these egregious crimes against social leaders.

We strongly urge that you

- carry out transparent and thorough investigations into the assassinations listed above, publish the results, and bring the perpetrators to justice
- provide protection measures to members of the Patriotic March and the other organizations listed above, in strict accordance with the wishes of their local leaders
- consult with community leader Arturo Tovar Collazos of Buena Esperanza (Puerto Guzman, Putumayo) to provide him with protection measures, in strict accordance with his wishes

Sincerely,


 Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Co-Coordinator


 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
 Joel Hernández García, Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email, US mail
 Margarette May Macaulay, Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons of African Descent, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email, US mail
 Antonia Urrejola, Rapporteur for Colombia, Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Persons, 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: