

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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February 24, 2020

Dear Sirs,

We are very disturbed by the violent kidnapping attempt on **Yesid Conda Pacho**, a leader of the Nasa indigenous community in Silvia municipality in Cauca Department.

On January 19 at approximately 9:50am, a group of 10 heavily armed men, wearing national army and national police uniforms and carrying long-range armaments, arrived in a black truck at Yesid Conda's residence in the center of the Pitayó indigenous reservation. They threatened him at gunpoint, ordered him to get into the truck, and violently intimidated the National Protection Unit bodyguards assigned to him. The attackers gave no identification or reasons for the violent attack.

Fortunately, community members encircled the armed group and prevented the kidnapping. Driving away at high speed, the truck almost ran over Yesid Conda Pacho and others. Community members quickly installed several checkpoints along the road, but the truck managed to avoid them until it finally stopped at the Jambalo Police Station. Community members say that the truck had left that same police station before heading directly to the house of Yesid Conda Pacho.

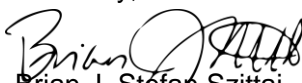
Yesid Conda Pacho served as Traditional Authority of the Indigenous Reservation of Pitayó in 2017 and 2019. Because of his community work as a leader of the Nasa people, he has been the victim of multiple death threats by armed groups. The government granted protection measures to the community including, a protection plan assigned by the National Protection Unit (UNP). The current Traditional Authority (the position held previously by Yesid Conda Pacho) has also been subjected to intimidation and threats by members of the illegal armed group Dagoberto Ramos.

The work of indigenous authorities and other human rights defenders has been essential to address and minimize the impacts of the violence perpetrated on populations in rural areas. We are extremely concerned about your government's failure to officially recognize the systemic character of crimes against human rights defenders and reluctance to address the root causes, which are often due to the participation of, or tolerance by, government and state agents.

We therefore **strongly urge** that you

- carry out a thorough and impartial investigation into the attack, intimidation, and threats against Yesid Conda Pacho, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice
- take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical security and psychological integrity of Yesid Conda Pacho and his family members, in strict accordance with his wishes
- guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities, free of all restrictions and without fear of reprisals

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
 Antonia Urrejoa, Rapporteur for Colombia and Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Persons, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email, US mail
 US Senators Brown & Portman ~ via email
 US Representatives Beatty, Fudge, Gibbs, Gonzalez, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Ryan ~ via email

01/24/20_FrontlineDefenders_Colombia

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