

via email: <a href="mailto:contacto@presidencia.gov.co">contacto@presidencia.gov.co</a> <b>Excmo. Sr. Presidente Iván Duque Márquez</b> President of the Republic of Colombia	via email: <a href="mailto:despacho.fiscal@fiscalia.gov.co">despacho.fiscal@fiscalia.gov.co</a> <b>Sr. Fiscal General Néstor Humberto Martínez Neira</b> Attorney General of Colombia
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March 21, 2020

Dear Sirs,

We are deeply concerned about the assassinations of three more social leaders in Colombia: **Didian Agudelo**, **Amado Torres** and **Julio Gutiérrez Avilés**. We are disturbed to learn that members of the Colombian Army could be implicated in two of those killings.

On February 26, a search party discovered the body of **Didian Arley Agudelo**, age 38, near his home in Campamento municipality, Antioquia Department, four days after he had failed to return home from work. Arley Agudelo was a former city councilor and head of farmers' organizations. His body was found in a zone controlled by the Seventh Division of the Army. He was found with his shirt tied around his neck, his hands tied together and tied to the base of a tree. Community members suspect army involvement in his disappearance and death because of a series of incidents of soldiers detaining and interrogating people in recent weeks.

At 6am on February 29, armed men in military clothes went to the home of **Amado Torres**, age 49, in San José de Apartadó, Antioquia Department, took him by force to a remote location, and shot him in the skull with a rifle at point-blank range. Amado Torres was treasurer of the community council in the rural zone of La Miranda.

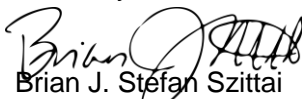
On March 2, rural community leader **Julio Gutiérrez Avilés** was shot dead in Huila Department. He was walking home to his farm after leaving a meeting with the planning director of Campoalegre municipality. As he approached his farm in the rural zone of El Esmero, he was intercepted by unknown individuals, who shot him repeatedly, killing him immediately. A well-known coffee farmer in the region, Julio Gutiérrez Avilés was founder of the local Association of Rural Workers and president of the community council in El Esmero.

According to INDEPAZ (Institute for Development and Peace Studies), 817 social activists, trade unionists and community leaders have been murdered since the peace agreement was signed in late 2016. The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) reports that 108 human rights defenders were killed in Colombia in 2019. Of those 108 murdered social leaders, 75% occurred in rural areas. In just the first two months of 2020, 53 social leaders have been killed (cf our letter of January 26).

We **strongly urge** that you

- make a thorough and impartial investigation into the assassinations of Didian Agudelo, Amado Torres and Julio Gutiérrez, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice
- take all necessary measures to fully implement the peace agreement as the most effective means of reducing violence against social leaders

Sincerely,

  
Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
Co-Coordinator

  
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  
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

03/03/20\_JusticeForColombia\_Colombia

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