

<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 Néstor Humberto Martínez Neira Attorney General of Colombia</p>
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April 26, 2020

Dear Sirs,

We are concerned for the safety of journalist **Eder Narváez Sierra** in the Bajo Cauca region of Antioquia Department. He has received death threats from the paramilitary group Los Caparrapos.

On April 13, a person who claimed to be “Manuel, alias El Negro,” the commander of Los Caparrapos, sent messages to Eder Narváez via WhatsApp. The paramilitary commander took credit for two killings in the Loma Fresca neighborhood of Cauca, Antioquia Department, on April 12. Eder Narváez had reported on the killings. The messages warned Eder Narváez “not to talk so much,” and said the journalist would be killed if he did not heed that warning. The text messages said the recent killings were “just the beginning,” accused Eder Narváez of spreading fake news, and said that “the only news that will be heard in the coming days is that they killed the NP guy.”

Eder Narváez is the founder and editor of the local news website NP Noticias. He also works as the Cauca regional correspondent for Teleantioquia TV. Cauca has long been a dangerous area for journalists, as rival armed groups fight for control over drug trafficking routes and plantations of coca. He has previously received death threats because of his news reporting.


Los Caparrapos is an armed group involved in cocaine trafficking, extortion, and illegal gold mining. After the demobilization of the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) that began in 2017, a power vacuum was left in southern Córdoba Department and the Bajo Cauca region of Antioquia. That opened up space for Los Caparrapos to carve out a presence there, aligning themselves with local criminal groups. Control of Cauca is key to their strategy because the city is a prime trading capital and connection point with Urabá, a subregion that encompasses northeast Antioquia, southern Córdoba, and southern Bolívar Departments.

Death threats against journalists endanger not only the lives of those journalists but also the integrity of their news organizations, which become more fearful to report on controversial topics such as violence by criminal organizations, attacks on human rights defenders, and political corruption. Your government must be resolute in your commitment to protect freedom of the press in Colombia.

We **strongly urge** that you

- thoroughly investigate the death threats made against Eder Narváez Sierra, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice
- instruct the National Protection Unit (UNP) to assess the level of risk to Eder Narváez Sierra, and, in direct consultation with him, implement the necessary measures to safeguard his life and integrity

Sincerely,


Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordiators


Christine Stonebraker-Martínez

copies: Francisco Santos Calderón, Ambassador of Colombia to the US ~ via 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, 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
CPJ: Committee to Protect Journalists ~ via email
FLIP: Fundación para la Libertad de la Prensa ~ via email
La Liga Contra El Silencio ~ via email
US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Beatty, Fudge, Gibbs, Gonzalez, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Ryan ~ via email
04/17/20_Committee to Protect Journalists_Colombia

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