

via email: contacto@presidencia.gov.co Excmo. Sr. Presidente Iván Duque Márquez President of the Republic of Colombia	via email: servicioalciudadano@mininterior.gov.co Sra. Ministra Alicia Arango Olmos Minister of the Interior of Colombia
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May 26, 2020

Dear President Duque and Minister Arango,

We are deeply concerned about continued intimidation, surveillance and death threats against **Jani Rita Silva**, a defender of environmental and territorial rights in Putumayo Department.

Jani Rita Silva and three other community leaders in the Amazon Pearl Peasant Reserve Zone have received multiple death threats over the last year and a half. On April 17, at around 2:30pm, Jani Rita Silva heard six gunshots at less than 30 meters from her residence in Puerto Asís, Putumayo. On 22 April, she again heard three gun shots at less than 50 meters from her residence. It is unclear who is initiating these acts of intimidation or threats to kill Jani Rita Silva. Illegal armed groups have been prowling around the zone and moving up and down the Putumayo River and surrounding areas. These groups operate despite the presence of the Colombian armed forces, namely the 27th Jungle Brigade and the Southern Navy Force.

Jani Rita Silva has good reason to fear for her life. On March 26, the Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission (CIJP) announced that an anonymous source told them of a plan to assassinate her. After an investigative visit to the Amazon Pearl Peasant Reserve Zone earlier this month, representatives of CIJP reported that the military is conducting illegal surveillance on the environmental defender (as well as against staff of CIJP).

Jani Rita Silva is the legal representative of the Association for the Integral and Sustainable Development of the Amazon Pearl (ADISPA). She has been a vocal leader in Putumayo for protecting the environment, promoting full implementation of the Peace Agreement of 2016, promoting reforestation initiatives, and denouncing the socio-environmental effects of oil extraction operations, including those of Amerisur. Amerisur is a hydrocarbon exploitation company operating mainly in the Putumayo River basin. The multinational company has partners from India, Canada, Netherlands, Colombia, and the United States (Occidental Petroleum, headquartered in Houston, Texas). She has received threats for her vocal opposition to Amerisur's activities there.

We strongly urge that you

- carry out a transparent and thorough investigation into the acts of intimidation and death threats against Jani Rita Silva, publish the results, and bring the perpetrators to justice
- investigate any connections between Amerisur and armed groups in the area, both the Colombian armed forces and any illegal armed forces
- end any unnecessary and illegal surveillance of Jani Rita Silva's legitimate human rights activities
- provide protection measures to Jani Rita Silva, in strict accordance with her wishes

Sincerely,


Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordinator


Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: Francisco Barbosa Delgado, Attorney General of Colombia ~ via email
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 Urrejola, Rapporteur for Colombia, Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Persons, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email, US mail
CONPAZ: Red Comunidades Construyendo Paz en Colombia ~ via email
CIPJ: Comisión Intereclesial de Justicia y Paz ~ via email
Justice for Colombia ~ via email
Amnesty International ~ via email
Melissa E. Schoeb, Vice President for Corporate Affairs, Occidental Petroleum ~ via email and 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: