

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 Francisco Barbosa Delgado Attorney General of Colombia
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November 23, 2020

Dear President Duque and Attorney General Barbosa:

We are deeply concerned for the safety of members of the FECODE federation of teachers' trade unions, especially after the killings of FECODE members **Byron Revel Insuasty** (Nov 22 in Tumaco, Nariño Department) and **Douglas Cortés Mosquera** (Nov 22 in La Virginia, Risaralda Department).

On October 26—just days after FECODE and other trade unions led a new round of National Strike protests—death threats were made against all fifteen members of the Executive Committee of FECODE (Colombian Federation of Educators), as well as **Diógenes Orjuela**, a former FECODE leader who now heads the CUT (Central Union of Workers), the largest federation of trade unions in the country. The threats took the form of a funeral wreath with the words "Rest in Peace," sixteen candles, and obituaries with the name of each of the threatened union leaders. The threats were delivered to the home of Diógenes Orjuela and the home of **Carlos Rivas**, secretary of legal affairs for FECODE.

Byron Revelo Insuasty, a member of the SIMANA teachers union in Nariño, was abducted while en route to union elections on November 13. He was never seen again until November 22 when his body was found in a morgue in Tumaco. Also on 22 November, Douglas Cortés Mosquera, a member of the Risaralda Teachers Union (SER) who taught visual arts in Balboa, was killed with two gunshots in La Virginia, Risaralda.


The situation for trade unionists and other social movement leaders is dire. More than 1,000 teachers and trade unionists have been killed in Colombia in the last 25 years. The year 2020 has shown no improvement. According to INDEPAZ (Institute of Studies for Development and Peace), 237 human rights defenders and 51 former guerrillas in the peace process were killed between January 1 and October 21, 2020. In addition, 69 massacres have been committed, more than double the documented figure for the whole of 2019.

FECODE leads initiatives to defend public education and democracy and to promote schools as zones of peace by fostering inter-community dialogue. FECODE and other trade unions have been organizing protests against government measures aimed to increase labor market flexibility by reducing the scope of collective bargaining and imposing limits on the right to strike. In an attempt to silence teachers and their unions, the government is carrying out a systematic campaign of defamation on social networks aimed at FECODE.

We strongly urge that you

- investigate the assassinations of Byron Revel Insuasty and Douglas Cortés Mosquera, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice
- investigate the threats against all 15 members of the FECODE Executive Committee and against CUT president Diógenes Orjuela, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice
- guarantee the safety of FECODE and CUT leaders, in strict accordance with their wishes
- stop the public defamation campaign against FECODE and other trade unions
- fully respect the freedom of association for trade union members

Sincerely,


 Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Co-Coordinator


 Christine Stonebraker-Martínez

copies: Francisco Santos Calderón, Ambassador of Colombia to the US ~ via email, US mail
 Antonia Urrejola Noguera, Rapporteur for Colombia, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email, US mail
 Juliette De Rivero, Representative in Colombia of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights ~ via email
 US Embassy: Kristen Farrell (human rights) and Mariel Chatman (vulnerable populations) ~ via email
 US State Department: Christine Russell, Desk Officer for Colombia ~ via email
 Justice for Colombia ~ via email
 Comisión Intereclesial de Justicia y Paz / InterChurch Commission for Justice and Peace ~ via email
 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: