

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 Francisco Barbosa Delgado</b> Attorney General of Colombia
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December 22, 2020

Dear President Duque and Attorney General Barbosa:

We are deeply concerned about the safety of environmental leaders in Colombia following the assassinations of **Javier Francisco Parra Cubillos** in Meta Department and **Harlin David Rivas Ospina** in Chocó Department, as well as ongoing threats to **Nini Johana Cárdenas Rueda** in Santander Department. Environmental defenders are among the documented 262 social leaders killed this year in Colombia.

On November 30 hitmen on motorcycles shot Javier Francisco Parra Cubillos as he was en route to his office in La Macarena, Meta. He was transferred by air to a hospital in Villavicencio but died due to the severity of his wounds. The 47-year-old environmentalist worked as coordinator of CORMACARENA (Corporation for the Sustainable Development of the Special Management Area of La Macarena), which organizes against deforestation in the region. He was known in the Serranía de La Macarena mountain range as "the protector of Caño Cristales," the famous "river of five colors," named so for its rock bed and colorful aquatic life.

Also on November 30 hitmen on motorcycles murdered Harlin Rivas at his work place in the Barrio Yesca Grande neighborhood of Quibdó, Chocó. He was a student of environmental engineering at the Technological University of Chocó and environmental activist in the National Youth Environment Network.


Nini Johana Cárdenas Rueda is an environmental defender in Carmen de Chucurí in Santander Department who is active in the *Alianza Colombia Libre de Fracking* and *Movimiento Nacional Ambiental*. Because of her work denouncing illegal extractive projects, she has been the victim of death threats, surveillance, and physical attacks for the past few years. On December 1 at 8:30 a.m. she received a phone call from a man who identified himself as commander "Bajirá" from the paramilitary group "Los Caparrapos"; he threatened to kill her and her family. Later, another man who identified himself as Michael Sierra, a sub-commander of "Los Caparrapos," called and told her that a group of men were coming to take her to a meeting at La Salina del Carmen village. He threatened that if she did not comply, her fate would be similar to that of social leaders who were murdered in regions such as Corozal in Sucre Department. After the phone calls, Nini Cárdenas went to a safe and secure place for protection.

According to the international non-governmental organization Global Witness, 64 environmental leaders were assassinated in Colombia in 2019, making it the most dangerous country in the world for environmental defenders. Many say that your government has failed to provide environmental leaders with effective protection.

We **strongly urge** that you

- carry out a thorough and impartial investigation into the murders of Javier Parra and Harlin Rivas, and the death threats against Nini Cárdenas, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice
- take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological security of Nini Cárdenas and her family, in regular consultation with her

Sincerely,

  
 Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
 Co-Coordinator

  
 Christine Stonebraker-Martínez

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