

<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 Francisco Barbosa Delgado Attorney General of Colombia</p>
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December 23, 2020

Dear President Duque and Attorney General Barbosa:

We are deeply concerned about the safety of indigenous communities and their leaders in Cauca Department. On December 5, **Juan Carlos Petins** was killed in Paéz; **Carlos Escue** was one of four victims of a massacre on December 6 in Santander de Quilichao in the north of Cauca.

Juan Carlos Petins, age 45, was an indigenous Nasa resident and spokesperson of the Nega Cxhab Belalcázar reservation in Paéz municipality of Cauca. He ran a business that offered internet services to community residents. He was killed at 11am on December 5 in the Tálaga reservation, shot in the chest several times by armed gunmen.

Late that same night, at approximately 1:00am on December 6, hooded men carried out a massacre in the rural area of Santander de Quilichao. They entered a family home in the middle of the San Pedro and Gualandai villages, fired gunshots indiscriminately at six people, killing four. One of those killed was Carlos Escue, a musician who served as youth coordinator in the nearby Munchique Los Tigres reservation.

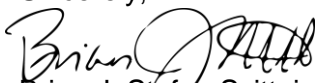
Within hours of the massacre, indigenous leaders who are members of the ACIN (Indigenous Leaders of Northern Cauca) received a death threat from the “Dagoberto Ramos Front,” a FARC dissident organization that is one of the most brutal and powerful illegal armed groups in the region. They threatened to kill more than a dozen more indigenous leaders, including Senator Feliciano Valencia, for impeding their drug trafficking activities. Because their reservations are strategically located near fluvial drug trafficking routes to the Pacific Ocean, indigenous communities are finding themselves increasingly under fire from rearmed former FARC guerrillas who want to use their lands to cultivate coca and marijuana.

In a separate incident on December 6, **Hernán Eduardo Pino Julicué**, the 30-year-old son of the renowned indigenous leader Luz Eyda Julicué, was shot to death in the Los Tanques neighborhood of Caloto municipality, Cauca.

According to INDEPAZ (Institute of Studies for Development and Peace), 281 social leaders and other human rights defenders have been killed this year; indigenous leaders are among those dreadful statistics. Massacres are increasing. INDEPAZ reports that 309 people have died in 77 massacres perpetrated this year, with 12 committed in Cauca. Because of this increasing danger, we **strongly urge** that you

- carry out a thorough and impartial investigation into the massacre of December 6, the murders of **Juan Carlos Petins** and **Hernán Eduardo Pino Julicué**, and the death threats against members of ACIN, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice
- take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological security of indigenous communities and their leaders in Cauca, in regular consultation with them

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 & for the Rights of Indigenous Persons, 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: