

Excmo. Sr. Presidente Iván Duque Márquez

President of the Republic of Colombia

contacto@presidencia.gov.co

Sr. Fiscal General Francisco Barbosa Delgado

Attorney General of Colombia

despacho.fiscal@fiscalia.gov.co

April 23, 2021

Dear Sirs:

We are saddened and horrified at the murder of **Dr. Luis Octavio Gutiérrez Montes**, manager of the César Uribe Piedrahita Hospital in Cauca, one of six municipalities in the Bajo Cauca region of Antioquia Department. He was shot on April 13 by unknown assailants as he was moving through a sector known as Parque de las Ceibas. He died the following day in a hospital in Montería, in the bordering department of Córdoba.

Dr. Gutiérrez Montes was a dentist who had served as a specialist in quality management and health audit and director of the ESE Hospital San Juan de Dios de Ituango, in the Northern Antioquia region. In 2019, Dr. Gutierrez had denounced before the Cooperative of Hospitals of Antioquia (COHAN) alleged acts of corruption that were being committed in his hospital. In May 2020, he assumed the management of the César Uribe Piedrahita Hospital in Cauca with the intent of serving in that role for a period of four years. As manager, he denounced several irregular events occurring in the municipality, including a union that outsourced health personnel and wanted to declare bankruptcy to evade payments.


Dr. Gutiérrez is the second worker at César Uribe Piedrahita Hospital to be shot dead in less than a year. Anesthesiologist Oscar Pastrana, who also denounced irregularities in 2019, was found dead in Bogotá in December 2020.

On April 14, the Ministry of Health denounced the murder of Dr. Gutiérrez, noting that there have been 45 incidents against Medical Mission (public health) team members so far in 2021, including threats, personal injuries, and impeding the transit of drugs and equipment. Bajo Cauca is a region rife with turf wars among armed groups: the paramilitaries Clan del Golfo and Los Caparrapos, as well as the guerrilla rebel group ELN (Ejército de Liberación Nacional) and dissident factions of the FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia).

We strongly urge that you

- conduct a thorough and transparent investigation into the murder of Dr. Gutiérrez Montes, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice
- take all necessary steps to address the irregularities in management at the hospital in Cauca, Antioquia Department.

Sincerely,


 Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Co-Coordinator


 Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: Francisco Santos Calderón, Ambassador of Colombia to the US ~ via email, US mail
 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 Embassy: Kristen Farrell (human rights) and Mariel Chatman (vulnerable populations) ~ via email
 US State Department: Christine Russell, Desk Officer for Colombia ~ via email
 US Senators Brown & Portman ~ via email
 US Representatives Beatty, Gibbs, Gonzalez, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Ryan ~ via email

15 APR 2021_Telesur_Colombia

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