

<p><b>Excmo. Sr. Presidente Iván Duque Márquez</b> President of the Republic of Colombia <a href="mailto:contacto@presidencia.gov.co">contacto@presidencia.gov.co</a></p>	<p><b>Sr. Fiscal Francisco Barbosa Delgado</b> Attorney General of Colombia <a href="mailto:despacho.fiscal@fiscalia.gov.co">despacho.fiscal@fiscalia.gov.co</a></p>
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February 2, 2022

Dear Sirs:

We are writing to inform you of and demand accountability for recent incidents of violence in Arauca Department. Three social leaders were assassinated (**José Avelino Pérez Ortiz, Álvaro Peña Barragán, Herman Naranjo Quintero**), as was **Rosalba Carmenza Tarazona Ortega**, the widow of Álvaro Peña Barragán.

On January 19, José Avelino Pérez Ortiz, a local leader of the Joel Sierra Human Rights Foundation (JSHRF), was killed around 3:00 pm on the road that leads to Clarinitero village in the rural area of Arauca municipality.

On January 20, at around 11:15pm, a car bomb was detonated in front of the Joel Sierra Human Rights Foundation in Saravena municipality, where social leaders were giving a workshop on human rights. Upon blowing up a white van that was parked in front of the building, the attackers fled while shooting at the people inside. The bomb destroyed nearby houses, stores, and government buildings. At least one person was killed.

On January 22, at least six civilians were kidnapped by an armed group in the rural hamlet Botalon in Tame municipality. Heavily armed men tied them up and took them in a truck to an unknown location. Community residents reported that there was no response from the Armed Forces or the police.

On January 25, Álvaro Peña Barragán, president of the Community Action Board of La Union village in Saravena municipality, was killed at approximately 6:40pm near the rural hamlet Casezin in Tame municipality.


On January 26, Rosalba Carmenza Tarazona Ortega, the widow of Álvaro Peña Barragán, was assassinated at her mother-in-law's house during the wake for her dead husband. Armed men entered the home, shot her, and escaped.

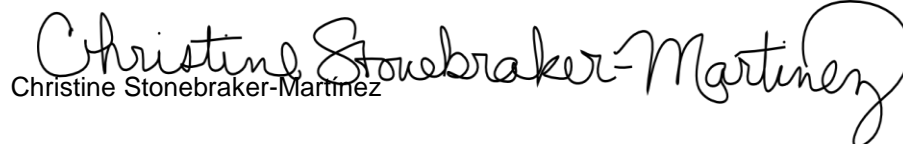
On February 1, Hermán Naranjo Quintero, member of the Community Action Board of Corocito (Tame municipality), was kidnapped by armed men while working at his family-owned store. He became the 16th social leader killed this year when his dead body was discovered today in a rural area outside of Tame.

We strongly urge that you

- investigate the incidents of violence listed above, especially the four killings, and bring those responsible to justice
- reevaluate the mission the Colombian Armed Forces in the region to ensure that they are protecting not only business interests (e.g., oil infrastructure) but civilian populations as well
- investigate whether there are ties between members of the Colombian Armed Forces and other armed groups operating in Arauca, reported to be ELN, Frente 10 Martín Villas, and FARC dissidents

Sincerely,

  
Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
Co-Coordinator

  
Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: Francisco Santos Calderón, Ambassador of Colombia to the US ~ via email, US mail  
Daniel Palacios, Minister of the Interior ~ via email  
Joel Hernández García, 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 and US Representatives Beatty, Brown, 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:**