I R T F

InterReligious Task Force on Central America
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Excmo. Sr. Presidente Iván Duque Márquez President of the Republic of Colombia contacto@presidencia.gov.co	**Sr. Fiscal Francisco Barbosa Delgado** Attorney General of Colombia despacho.fiscal@fiscalia.gov.co

March 26, 2022

Dear Sirs:

We are concerned for the safety of trade unionists and former FARC combatants **Jhon Sebastián Rivas** and **Leonardo Agudelo Murillo**, who received death threats, just days after they were attacked by plain-clothes police officers San Vicente del Caguán, Meta Department.

Their trade union, Memoria Viva, represents security personnel for former FARC combatants who are integrated in the peace process. Its members play a critical role in protecting at-risk individuals and groups. Various Memoria Viva members are themselves activists and former combatants.

On 12 February, Jhon Sebastián Rivas and Leonardo Agudelo Murillo were with other members of Memoria Viva in San Vicente del Caguán to provide security to another former combatant, Lucila Moreno, who was participating in a workshop organized by the Search Unit for Disappeared People, created in the peace agreement to locate the remains of victims of forced disappearance. Without provocation, the police began to attack. CCTV footage showed the agents violently assault one of the men from behind. When the two Memoria Viva trade union members tried to run away, at least one of the police officers opened fire. While none of the Memoria Viva members was hurt, a 14-year-old girl, identified as Lidia Durnely Lugo, was reportedly killed. She was with her three-month-old baby and her aunt and had been dining when she was caught in the gunfire. She was rushed to hospital but died.

Two days later, threats against Memoria Viva members were distributed in San José de Guaviare, Guaviare Department. The pamphlets are purported to be from an armed group and warned members to present their accredited weapons and vehicles or be "declared military objectives." Memoria Viva warned that some members had been forced to leave the zone as a result.

In addition to the police of San Vicente del Caguán, it has been reported that members of the army, under the command of José Alfredo Jiménez, were also involved in the violence against members of Memoria Viva on February 12. In light of long-running concerns about the attitudes of state agents towards former combatants and other social leaders, we strongly urge that you

- conduct a thorough and impartial investigation into the police attack on Jhon Sebastián Rivas and Leonardo Agudelo Murillo, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice
- investigate the threats to Memoria Viva members being distributed in Guaviare
- take measures to protect the lives of former FARC combatants as ordered on January 28 by the Constitutional Court, which said that the former combants' "fundamental rights to life, personal integrity and peace … were ignored" by the Colombian state.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai   Christine Stonebraker-Martínez
Co-Coordinators

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
Memoria Viva ~ 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: