

Excmo. Sr. Presidente Gustavo Petro Urrego President of the Republic of Colombia contacto@presidencia.gov.co	Sr. Fiscal Francisco Barbosa Delgado Attorney General of Colombia despacho.fiscal@fiscalia.gov.co
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May 25, 2023

Dear Sirs:

We are saddened and outraged to learn of the assassination of social leader **Diego Mauricio Mejía Rojas**, a member of the National Council of the Memoria Viva Union (Sindicato Nacional Memoria Viva de los Trabajadores de la Seguridad y Protección del Pueblo), a member of the Departmental Council of the Commons Party (Partido Comunes), and a signer of Colombia's Peace Accords. On April 9, two persons riding on a motorcycle shot Diego Mejía in the Los Prados neighborhood of Puerto Asis, Putumayo Department. He became the 364th signer of the Peace Accords who is an ex-combatant and enrolled in the formal reincorporation process to be killed. He also became the eighth member of Memoria Viva killed since the union was established five years ago.

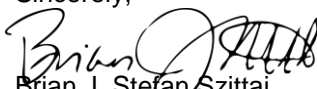
Another member of the Memoria Viva union, **Jhon Jader Ferreyra**, was wounded in a separate attack in Ibagué, Tolima Department, on April 13. Both of these attacks occurred after public false statements were made by government agents against the Memoria Viva national union, whose workers are security experts, many of them former combatants and signers of the Peace Accords. The workers are currently in negotiations with the UNP (National Protection Unit), which contracts Memoria Viva members as security personnel. On March 22, Memoria Viva sent a letter to officials asking that UNP respect the internal processes of the Memoria Viva union to elect its own representation and that UNP not encourage its contracted workers to disaffiliate from Memoria Viva.

Memoria Viva is also asking for concrete measures to advance the Total Peace Plan, which was authorized by the National Congress in October 2022. To advance the 2016 Peace Accords, the Total Peace Plan proposes putting impacted communities at the center of negotiations with illegal armed groups. The law grants powers to negotiate with armed groups such as the National Liberation Army (ELN) and the FARC dissidents that rejected the 2016 agreement (and returned to the armed struggle). It also allows for peace negotiations with organized crime groups such as the Clan del Golfo (also known as Gaitanista Self-Defense Forces), which is a prominent paramilitary organization that runs one of the largest drug cartels. Furthermore, the law authorizes the creation of a peace fund to guarantee social investment in remote areas hit by violence and the presence of illegal armed groups.

We urge that authorities in Colombia

- carry out thorough and transparent investigations into the attack on **Jhon Jader Ferreyra** and the assassination of **Diego Mauricio Mejía Rojas**, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice
- instruct the UNP to provide adequate equipment and tools for Memoria Viva union members and all UNP escorts to perform their duties, including properly functioning vehicles
- instruct the UNP to end the practice of arbitrary transfers of its escorts, and that the UNP pay due compensation for overtime work
- fulfill the government's commitments made in the Peace Accords, especially the end of threats and assassinations against members of the Memoria Viva Union, and against all signatories of the Peace Accords

Sincerely,


Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordinator


Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: Augusto Rodríguez Ballesteros, Director de la Unidad Nacional de Protección (UNP) ~ via email
Luis Fernando Velasco Chaves, Ministro del Interior ~ via email
Luis Gilberto Murillo, Ambassador of Colombia to the US ~ via email, US mail
Joel Hernández García, Rapporteur for Colombia, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) ~ via email, US mail
UN: Juliette De Rivero, Representative in Colombia of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights ~ via email
US Embassy: Francisco Palmieri (Chargé d'Affaires, ad interim); Sandra Lee (human rights) ~ via email
US State Department: Christine Russell, Desk Officer for Colombia ~ via email
US Senators from Ohio: Brown & Vance and US Representatives from Ohio: Balderson, Beatty, Brown, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Miller, Sykes ~ via email

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