

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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June 23, 2023

Dear Sirs:

Last month we wrote to you to denounce the assassination of **Diego Mauricio Mejía Rojas**, member of Memoria Viva union of security guards (Sindicato Nacional Memoria Viva de los Trabajadores de la Seguridad y Protección del Pueblo). He became the eighth member of Memoria Viva killed since the union was established five years ago (cf our letter of May 25, 2023). We write to you again today, distressed to learn of another violent attack against members of Memoria Viva. These attacks against members of Memoria Viva come at a time when the union is negotiating contracts with government agencies, such as the National Protection Unit (UNP).


On June 6 at a discotheque in Miranda, Cauca Department, two men arrived on a motorcycle. One of them entered the night club, located his victims and in a matter of seconds he drew a firearm and shot them at close range. **Alexander Garcés Biscunda** was shot in the head. **Bleider Andrés Garcés Biscunda**, his brother, was seriously wounded. Also wounded was 32-year-old **Paola Andrea Chantre Pilcué**. The perpetrators fled the scene. The Garcés Biscunda brothers are members of Memoria Viva.

In a related case of government negotiations with union workers, the Defensor del Pueblo (Ombudsman for Human Rights), Carlos Ernesto Camargo Assis, has been illegally intercepting private communications of union workers in his own office and has expelled the SINDHEP union (Sindicato de Defensoras y Defensores de Derechos Humanos de la Defensoría del Pueblo) from the negotiation table. This dismissal of SINDHEP from negotiations came just days after SINDHEP publicly denounced Ombudsman Carlos Camargo, warning about the risks of corruption, clientelism (patronage), and wiretapping of workers taking place under his administration. Carlos Camargo has long been at odds with his union staff. During the National Strike of 2021, SINDHEP criticized Carlos Camargo for undercounting the assaults and killings and failing to protect the rights of protesters and social leaders. In March, 2021, SINDHEP accused Carlos Camargo of being complicit in state terrorism (militarized response to the protests) and called for his resignation.

Memoria Viva and SINDEHP are founding members of SINDEPAZ (Colombia's Union Network for Peace). To promote the peace process and protect human rights defenders, we strongly urge that you

- investigate the attack on Memoria Viva union members in Cauca on June 6, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice
- instruct the UNP to negotiate in good faith with Memoria Viva
- instruct the office of the Defensor del Pueblo to re-open negotiations with SINDHEP and stop intercepting private communications of its members

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: Beatty, Brown, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Miller, Sykes ~ via email

08 JUN 2023_SINDHEP_Colombia

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