

<p>Excmo. Sr. Presidente Gustavo Petro Urrego President of the Republic of Colombia contacto@presidencia.gov.co</p>	<p>Sr. Fiscal Francisco Barbosa Delgado Attorney General of Colombia despacho.fiscal@fiscalia.gov.co</p>
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July 22, 2023

Dear Sirs:

We are deeply distressed about the danger facing human rights defenders in Barrancabermeja, Santander Department, after an office break-in at the San Silvestre neighborhood office of CAHUCOPANA (Humanitarian Action Corporation for Coexistence and Peace in Northeast Antioquia) on June 26 and the subsequent arrest of one of its leaders, **Carlos Arturo Morales Mallorga**, on July 4. Carlos Morales and other members of CAHUCOPANA have been beneficiaries of precautionary measures from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) since 2018.

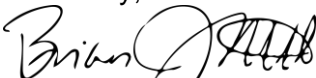
On June 23 in the early hours of the morning, the CAHUCOPANA team discovered their San Silvestre office had been broken into and collective reparations supplies, including cash, were stolen. Then on July 4, **Carlos Arturo Morales Mallorga**, legal representative of CAHUCOPANA, was detained by police at around 4pm. He was with his minor daughter and in the presence of bodyguards outside the EcoPetrol refinery in Barrancabermeja, about to take a drink of water, when police used excessive force and took him to detention at Policia de Muelle. This is the second time he has been detained without warrant. In 2015 he was imprisoned for seven months in Palo Gordo prison in Santander. Eventually, a judge annulled his trial and ordered his release because of a lack of evidence.

In 2004 in the midst of massacres, bombings, and economic blockades by illegally armed actors that caused a food and medicine crisis, campesinos organized CAHUCOPANA for survival. With approximately 150 members, they organize to benefit around 3,000 people in rural areas, in the context of continual systematic violence and humanitarian crisis. In 2005, extrajudicial executions of human rights organizers began by members of the National Army and private companies in the region. Conflicts over the environment have been volatile because of the government's support of large-scale extraction companies. Starting in 2019, the National Victims Unit granted CAHUCOPANA with Comprehensive Collective Reparation Plan (PIRC) because of the many years its members have endured threats, assassinations, sexual violence, forced displacement, torture and more.

Because of our concern for the safety of CAHUCOPANA leaders and members, we strongly urge that you:

- carry out a thorough and impartial investigation to identify the intellectual and material authors of the break-in at the CAHUCOPANA office
- release **Carlos Arturo Morales Mallorga** from detention for lack of warrant
- guarantee that all human rights defenders are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of restrictions or reprisals in Colombia.

Sincerely,


Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordinators


Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: 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
US Representatives from Ohio: 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: