

<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 23, 2023

Dear Sirs:

We write to you in deep sadness and anger over the murders of community leaders **Temístocles Beltrán** on June 19 in the municipality of El Copey, César Department, and **Pablo Enrique Rodríguez** on June 30 in the municipality of Tello, Huila Department. These two most recent assassinations bring the number of murdered social leaders to more than 80 this year.

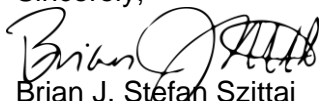
On the night of June 19, farmer, human rights defender, and community leader Temístocles Beltrán was murdered at the age of 56, when an armed assailant dressed in military clothing entered his home in the village of Caracolicito, El Copey, and shot him with a firearm. Temístocles Beltrán was an important social leader in his community, and a pre-candidate for the council of El Copey before he was killed. Several criminal organizations are known to be active in El Copey, including the AGC (Gaitanista Self-Defense Forces), Autodefensas Conquistadoras de la Sierra, as well as the First Division of the Colombian Army, executing social control over and thus severely endangering the rights and freedom of the local communities.

On June 30, Pablo Enrique Rodríguez, a social leader and president of the Community Action Board (JAC, Junta de Acción Comunal) of the Anacleto García corregimiento in Tello, Huila Department, was murdered along with the farmer **Cielo Ramírez Tovar**. While Rodríguez and Ramírez were traveling to the village of El Bosque that day, they were shot with a firearm. Organized criminal groups such as ELN (National Liberation Army) and the FARC dissident group Nueva Marquetalia pose daily threats to local rights defenders and community leaders in the area.

Since the November 2016 signing of the Peace Agreement, 1,500 social leaders have been assassinated and many more endure severe safety threats against them and their families. Because of the continued violence against community leaders and human rights defenders, **we strongly urge you to:**

- conduct thorough and impartial investigations into the assassinations of Temístocles Beltrán, Pablo Enrique Rodríguez, and Cielo Ramírez Tovar, and hold accountable those responsible for the attacks
- provide adequate protection for community members and human rights defenders in Huila and Cesar departments, in strict accordance with their wishes
- strongly enforce a demilitarization and hold criminal groups accountable for the violence inflicted on non-combatants

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: