

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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October 22, 2023

Dear Sirs:

We are writing to demand urgent protections for residents in Caquetá, where there are territorial disputes among two dissident groups: the FARC dissident group Central General Staff (EMC) and the Teófilo Forero Column of the Second Marquetalia. We are especially concerned for the safety of these social leaders who have been declared military targets: **Javier Güependo, Javier Sotto, Darwin Manchola**

Peasant farmers have been caught in repeated crossfire between the EMC and the Second Marquetalia. Additionally, ex-combatants living in the Miravalle village were declared military objectives of the EMC. And now, new intimidations are directed at farmers, who represent the region as signatories of the Peace Agreement.


On Saturday, October 7, the Central General Staff of the FARC-EP named three social leaders as military targets: Javier Güependo, legal representative of the Municipal Association of Colonos del Pato (Amcop); Javier Sotto, prosecutor of Amcop and manager of the COOPABI cooperative; and Darwin Manchola, signatory of the Final Peace Agreement, president of the Guayabal Community Action Board, and current candidate for the San Vicente del Caguán Council. Two unidentified men on a blue Yamaha motorcycle delivered the letter between 5:30 and 6:00pm at Guayabal village. The letter with the official insignia of the EMC stated: "we remind you that as an organization we have regulations to comply with, anyone who disobeys will be declared a military objective."

The residents of the Campesino Reserve Zone (ZRC) El Pato-Balsillas (municipality of San Vicente del Caguán, Caquetá Department) are at risk from the escalating conflict and struggle for dominance between the armed groups EMC and the Second Marquetalia. In late August, the EMC increased control over the zone by requiring that residents show identification for entry and exit from the territory. While the government has negotiated with EMC to begin a three-month ceasefire, which began on October 16, agreements have been broken in the past, and the community continues to hold increasing fear of being attacked by the dissident groups present in the region. The Office of the Ombudsman warned that the EMC has entrenched itself in territories between Huila and Caquetá with "exemplary murders, threats, imposition of charges and forced displacement."

We strongly urge that you:

- implement state protections for the people of the El Pato-Balsillas Peasant Reserve Zone (ZRC), in accordance with the community's requests
- investigate the delivery of the death threat against Javier Güependo, Javier Sotto, and Darwin Manchola
- devise protection mechanisms for Javier Güependo, Javier Sotto, and Darwin Manchola, and other leaders of Amcop, in accordance with their requests.

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); Adam Levy (Human Rights Unit Chief) ~ 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: