

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 24, 2023

Dear Sirs:

We write to you in deep sadness and anger about the killing of young Afro-descendant social leader **Milena Valdez** on September 26 in the community of Nueva Isla del Consejo Comunitario Unión Patía Viejo, municipality of Magüi Payan-Nariño, in Nariño department.

On September 26, illegally armed actors arrived in Nueva Isla del Consejo Comunitario Unión Patía Viejo and murdered Milena Valdez, age 26. Her body was found three days later in a state of decomposition. Milena Valdez was a member of the Unión Patía Community Council. According to other community members, the young woman was pregnant. Those responsible for the murder reportedly belong to the FARC-dissident 30th Front.


Communities in the Pacific coastal department of Nariño have reported an increase in arbitrary acts of violence against young people, especially women. Residents are left without protection or support as their homes become the locations of armed confrontations between the different armed groups that are present in the area.

The killing of Milena Valdez is sadly not an individual case; her death adds one more to the long list of social leaders who have been killed in Colombia in 2023 alone. Since the signing of the Peace Agreement in 2016, well over 1,000 social leaders have been assassinated, with many more having had to endure severe safety threats against them and their families.

We highly condemn the murder of Milena Valdez and are deeply concerned about the ongoing violence against peaceful activists and members of the affected communities. **We strongly urge you to:**

- conduct a thorough and impartial investigation into the murder Milena Valdez, holding accountable those responsible for her death
- immediately put into effect adequate measures to protect and safeguard the life and integrity of young people, especially Afro-descendant women, in Nariño, as well as all other community leaders and activists who have received serious safety threats against them and their family
- instruct the High Commissioner for Peace to review and strictly pursue the concrete commitments made in the peace dialogues with illegally armed groups
- strongly enforce demilitarization and protection of rights in rural areas of Colombia, and illegal criminal organizations accountable for the violence they cause

Sincerely,


Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordiators


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
Margarette May Macaulay, Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons of African Descent and Against Racial Discrimination, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ 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: