

<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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January 17, 2024

Dear Sirs:

We are writing to demand justice for the assassination of campesino leader **Pedro Pablo Salas Sánchez** in Putumayo. He was killed with a cold steel weapon on December 4, 2023, in the rural hamlet of Carmelita, territory of Puerto Vega Teteje, municipality of Puerto Asís, Putumayo Department.

Pedro Pablo Salas Sánchez was a well-respected community leader. He served on the Community Action Board of ACSOMAYO (Campesino Association of Southeast Putumayo) and as a member of the campesino guard of MOVICCAAPA (Agricultural and Environmental Campesino Movement of Coca Growers of Putumayo).


Campesino associations like ACSOMAYO and MOVICCAAPA have been vocal in defense of their lands and waterways. For the past 20 years, at least 16 of the 18 streams in the Carmelita Corridor have been contaminated with cadmium, arsenic and lead. Oil spills and clouds of glyphosate (the main chemical used for the eradication of coca crops) have contaminated the water and soil that support the lives of the 3,000 inhabitants of the 63 rural settlements in the Corridor. In response, campesinos—alongside Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities—have organized protests and strikes against the oil exploitation, water pollution and glyphosate. Along the Carmelita Corridor, water defenders have been intimidated, persecuted, threatened, and assassinated by armed groups and oil companies. Several defenders have been killed over the past decade (cf our letter 26 JAN 2020).

The government has been aware of the risk to social leaders in the southeast of Putumayo because of armed groups operating in the area. The Ombudsman's Office issued early warning AT 022/22, stating: "deterrence, control and mitigation of the threat context must be ensured, based on a focus on human security and protection of communities, leaders, human rights defenders and signatories of the peace agreement that are at risk as a result of the presence and constant threats from the armed groups that are present in the territory." Among the armed groups operating in the area are: Carolina Ramírez Front of the Central General Staff, Bolivarian Border Commands-Second Marquetalia, the Sixth Division of the Colombian Army, and other criminal groups.

Pedro Pablo Salas Sánchez became the 157th social leader killed in 2023 and the 1,571st killed since the signing of the 2016 Peace Accords. We urge that you:

- publish the results of the investigation into the assassination of Pedro Pablo Salas Sánchez and bring those responsible to justice
- work with the campesino leaders of southeast Putumayo to provide protection measures, in accordance with their wishes
- move forward in designing (and funding) a new comprehensive plan for the protection of social leaders, as ordered by the Constitutional Court on December 11, 2023, and involve social leaders in the process

Sincerely,


Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordinator


Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: Luis Gilberto Murillo, Ambassador of Colombia to the US ~ via email, US mail
José Luis Caballero Ochoa, 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
CIPJ: Comisión Intereclesial de Justicia y Paz / Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission ~ via email
CAJAR: El Colectivo de Abogados "José Alvear Restrepo" / José Alvear Restrepo Lawyers Collective ~ via email
US Embassy: Francisco Palmieri (Chargé d'Affaires, ad interim); Adam Levy (human rights) ~ via email
US State Department: Desk Officer for Colombia ~ via email
US Senators from Ohio: Brown & Vance ~ via email
US Representatives from Ohio: Beatty, Brown, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Miller, Sykes ~ via email

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