

<p>Excmo. Sr. Presidente Gustavo Petro Urrego President of the Republic of Colombia contacto@presidencia.gov.co</p>	<p>Sra. Luz Adriana Camargo Attorney General of Colombia despacho.fiscal@fiscalia.gov.co</p>
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April 26, 2024

Dear President Petro and Attorney General Camargo:

We are writing to our express our sadness and outrage over the assassination of campesino leader **Narciso Beleño Belaides**. On the evening of April 21 he was shot four times as he entered his home in the El Recreo neighborhood, an urban area of the municipality of Santa Rosa del Sur, Bolívar Department.

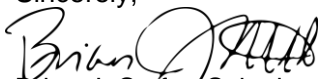
Narciso Beleño Belaides, age 62, was a peasant leader who defended human rights. He served as president of the Agromining Federation of Southern Bolívar (Federación Agrominera del Sur del Bolívar, FEDEAGROMISBOL) and was a member of the National Agrarian Coordinating Body (Coordinador Nacional Agrario, CNA). For more than three decades, he worked to defend campesino families and their farm lands in southern Bolívar against the presence of paramilitary groups that isolated and forcibly displaced communities in the region. He was recognized for his constant fight for the rights of peasant communities and the preservation of the San Lucas mountain range, which is currently being disputed by armed groups such as the Gulf Clan (paramilitaries) and the ELN (rebel group). Just hours before he was shot to death, Narciso Beleño Belaides had denounced the Gulf Clan paramilitaries for a new incursion into the area that began April 18.

FEDEAGROMISBOL had previously denounced and reiterated that its leaders were receiving death threats. For several decades, this federation has suffered attacks by paramilitary groups through threats, disappearances and murders, as well as by state agents in the past—of the latter through attempts at imprisonment, investigation, persecution and stigmatization by accusing them of belonging to paramilitary groups. Since 2009, the leaders of the Agromining Federation of the South of Bolívar have been beneficiaries of precautionary measures issued by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) in the face of the high-risk situation in which they find each other.

In order to make life in Colombia sustainable, the livelihoods of those who provide for some of society's most basic needs, like the farmers of FEDEAGROMISBOL, must be sustainable, free from exploitation, and free from fear. We therefore urge that you:

- conduct an exhaustive and impartial investigation into the assassination of Narciso Beleño Belaides in order to identify those responsible, bring them before a competent and impartial court, and apply the sanctions provided by Colombian law
- take measures to end attacks against land rights and human rights defenders in Colombia, so that they can continue their legitimate activities without fear of reprisals, in accordance with the international human rights obligations of Colombia
- provide effective protection measures to land rights and human rights defenders who are in situations of risk, which must be adapted to their local contexts and responded to immediately when they report specific threats

Sincerely,


Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordinator


Christine L. Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: Luis Fernando Velasco Chaves, Minister of Interior ~ via email
Luis Gilberto Murillo Urrutia, 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
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: