

<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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July 13, 2024

Dear President Petro and Attorney General Camargo:

We are writing in mourning and concern for the assassination of Nasa Indigenous ancestral scholar **Luis Eduardo Vivas**. He was shot five times on the morning of June 25 in the Moras area, Mosoco reservation (Resguardo Indígena Mosoco), north of the municipality of Páez, Cauca Department. A note was found with his body that read "every witch is cleansed."

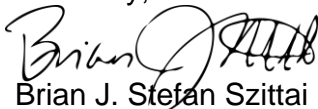
Communities in this area of Cauca are at risk because of the presence of armed groups, such as the Dagoberto Ramos column of the EMC. The revolutionary organization EMC (Estado Mayor Central) was formed by dissident former combatants of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) who rejected the 2016 peace deal with the state. Their imposition of social control means an ongoing risk of violation of the rights of the population.

We are deeply concerned for the safety of Indigenous elders who steward ancestral, regional, and social wisdom. The assassination of Luis Eduardo Vivas puts the wisdom, worldview, spirituality and territoriality of Indigenous peoples at risk. Ancestral knowers (sabedores ancestrales) are the guardians of this ancestral knowledge; their persecution threatens the disappearance of practices and knowledge that have been transmitted from generation to generation. The targeting of violence against ancestral knowers generates a crisis in the knowledge of biodiversity and medicinal plants. There is a great need for cooperation among the State, Indigenous organizations, and civil society groups to ensure that the rights, customs, and critical knowledge of Indigenous peoples are protected and respected.

We urge that your government work with the Cauca Regional Indigenous Council (CRIC) to:

- identify the material and intellectual authors of the assassination of Luis Eduardo Vivas and bring them to justice
- devise safety measures for Indigenous leaders
- strengthen and support CRIC's mechanisms for conflict prevention and management
- commit to protecting the biocultural and spiritual components of Indigenous peoples against the various threats that may arise.

Sincerely,


Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordinators


Christine L. Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: Daniel García-Peña, 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
Arif Bulkan, Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 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
Resguardo Indígena Mosoco/Indigenous Reservation Mosoco ~ 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: