

<p><b>Excmo. Sr. Presidente Gustavo Petro Urrego</b> President of the Republic of Colombia <a href="mailto:contacto@presidencia.gov.co">contacto@presidencia.gov.co</a></p>	<p><b>Sra. Luz Adriana Camargo</b> Attorney General of Colombia <a href="mailto:despacho.fiscal@fiscalia.gov.co">despacho.fiscal@fiscalia.gov.co</a></p>
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August 1, 2024

Dear President Petro and Attorney General Camargo:


We are writing with deep concern for the safety of Wayúu Indigenous leader **Javier Rojas Uriana** of the Association of Shipia in Manaure, La Guajira Department. On July 2 while he was in Valledupar, the capital city of Cesar Department, he suffered an assassination attempt when assailants targeted him with an explosive device. Fortunately, he was not injured in the vicious attack.

For more than a decade, Javier Rojas Uriana has denounced the humanitarian crisis facing the Wayúu people, the largest Indigenous community in Colombia. Where they live in La Guajira, the department with the highest prevalence of food insecurity, extreme climate phenomena have been causing droughts and heatwaves, affecting food staples such as rice and corn. Their economy—based on artisanal fishing, sheep and goat breeding, and handicraft production—has been disrupted. According to the National Health Institute (INS), 93 percent of the 55 children who died of malnutrition in La Guajira over a 9-month period in 2023 were Indigenous. (Nationally, most child nutrition in Colombia is experienced in Indigenous communities.) In La Guajira, some of the most affected municipalities are in the Wayúu people’s home region of Alta Guajira. Exacerbating the humanitarian crisis is the presence of armed groups causing potential for massive displacements related to territorial disputes (cf our letter 20 JAN 2024).

Because of his bold leadership in protecting the Wayuu people, Javier Rojas Uriana has previously suffered other reprisals: assassination attempts, death threats, slander, and trumped-up legal charges. Because of our concern for his safety, we strongly urge that authorities in Colombia:

- conduct a transparent and thorough investigation into the attack against Javier Rojas Uriana, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice
- reinforce the National Protection Unit’s (UNP) protection measures for Javier Rojas Uriana and his family, in strict accordance with their wishes
- adopt all necessary measures to effectively protect the three groups of beneficiaries in four municipalities in La Guajira who were identified by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (resolutions 60/2015, 3/2017, and 51/2017): children and adolescents, pregnant and breastfeeding women, and older persons
- convene the National Roundtable on Guarantees (Mesa de Garantías) with high-level officials responsible to create consensus and momentum on the protection of human rights defenders
- involve Indigenous organizations such as Association of Shipia in developing and implementing an Emergency Plan for the protection of social leaders

Sincerely,

  
Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
Co-Coordinator

  
Christine L. Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: Daniel García-Peña, Ambassador of Colombia to the US ~ via email, US mail  
Margarita Leonor Cabello Blanco, Procuradora General de la Nación de la República de Colombia ~ via US mail  
Augusto Rodríguez Ballesteros, Director de la Unidad Nacional de Protección ~ via email  
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  
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:**