

<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>
---	--

August 21, 2025

Dear President Petro and Attorney General Camargo:

We are writing to express our deep distress over the assassination of **William Ferney Pazú Toconás**. The 23-year-old was a renowned Indigenous cultural leader from Vitoyó village in Jambaló, Cauca Department. He was respected for his work teaching traditional Indigenous music and instruments to children and young adults. A member of the musical group Los Tiraflechas, he was passionate about playing flute and drum music.


On June 30, William Ferney Pazú Toconás became the 21st social leader assassinated in Cauca in 2025 when, in the early morning, he was found dead in La Mina village in the center of the Jambaló Reservation, an Indigenous territory located in the north of Cauca, inhabited primarily by the Nasa and Misak Indigenous peoples. His body showed signs of violence and was found on a river bank, meters away from the festival activities that took place that weekend.

This assassination reflects broader trends of violence against social leaders in Colombia, with 85 recorded killings thus far in 2025. Many suspect that the killing of William Ferney Pazú Toconás is related to the growing presence of the armed group Dagoberto Ramos Front. This dissident faction of the former FARC-EP uses the adjacent municipality of Toribío as one of its main centers of military and financial operations. In 2024, the Office of the Human Rights Ombudsman issued an alert (AT 019/24) warning residents of the municipalities of Caloto, Corinto, Jambaló, Miranda, and Toribío about the large presence of the Dagoberto Ramos Front. Just three days before the killing of William Ferney Pazú Toconás, peasant leader **Angie Leandra Henao Zambrano** was assassinated in the El Silencio area of Corinto. While at home with her three children, unidentified men burst in and shot her repeatedly.

The lack of protection for social leaders is a troubling and longstanding issue that puts the lives of those working towards a more just society in danger. We urge authorities in Colombia to:

- (1) conduct a thorough and transparent investigation into the killing of William Ferney Pazú Toconás, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice
- (2) consult with ACIN (Association of Indigenous Councils of Northern Cauca) to enact appropriate state mechanisms to protect the life and dignity of Indigenous cultural and human rights defenders

Sincerely,


Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordinator


Christine L. Stonebraker-Martínez

copies: Daniel García-Peña Jaramillo, 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
UN: Scott Campbell, Representative in Colombia of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights ~ via email
US Embassy: John McNamara (Chargé d'Affaires); Adam Levy (human rights) ~ via email
US State Department: Desk Officer for Colombia ~ via email
US Senators from Ohio: Husted and Moreno ~ via email
US Representatives from Ohio: Beatty, Brown, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Miller, Rulli, Sykes ~ via email

04 JUL 2025_TeleSUR_Colombia

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