

Excmo. Sr. Presidente Gustavo Petro Urrego President of the Republic of Colombia contacto@presidencia.gov.co	Sra. Luz Adriana Camargo Attorney General of Colombia despacho.fiscal@fiscalia.gov.co
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August 23, 2025

Dear President Petro and Attorney General Camargo:

We are writing to express our distress at the attack against **the son of Carmen García, President of the Catatumbo Mothers for Peace Association** (Madres del Catatumbo por la Paz, or MCP). According to a July 7 statement from MCP, two individuals on motorcycles near the MCP shelter for displaced women in Cúcuta, Norte de Santander Department, grabbed García's son, beat him, and dragged him along the asphalt, causing severe physical and psychological injuries.

Catatumbo Mothers for Peace is a collective of internally displaced women, mothers of victims of the armed conflict, and human rights defenders. Mothers for Peace provides shelter and psychosocial support to displaced women in the Catatumbo River trans border region (Colombia-Venezuela), plagued by armed conflict between the National Liberation Army (ELN) and the 33rd Front, a dissident faction of the demobilized Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). Women are particularly at risk; since 2017, the number of femicides has increased by over 100 deaths each year.


As the leader of Catatumbo Mothers for Peace, Carmen García and her family have faced constant threats and accusations. On June 25, Mothers for Peace denounced a series of false messages published on the digital platform Impacto Catatumbo. The defamatory content—which also included direct threats to Carmen García—seeks to delegitimize the association's work defending the rights of women, children, and adolescents in the Catatumbo region. The attack on her son, which occurred outside the organization's women's shelter, occurred less than two weeks later.

This attack against García's family is indicative of a larger environment of harassment towards those performing human rights work in Norte de Santander. It also reveals a serious failure by authorities to protect human rights defenders. Despite prior requests made by Catatumbo Mothers for Peace and international human rights organizations to increase security measures for Carmen García and her family, no tangible steps have been taken to improve their safety or the safety of other human rights defenders in the region.

We urge that authorities in Colombia:

- (1) investigate the attack on the son of Carmen García, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice
- (2) instruct the National Protection Unit (UNP) to coordinate a protection scheme for Carmen García, in strict accordance with her wishes
- (3) implement a comprehensive plan to ensure that human rights defenders in Catatumbo are able to execute their functions and are protected from threats and abuse, as ordered by the Constitutional Court in 2023
- (4) coordinate protective measures for displaced women and their families, in coordination with the Government of Norte de Santander and the offices of local municipalities

Sincerely,


 Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Co-Coordinator


 Christine L. Stonebraker-Martínez

copies: Sr. Gobernador William Villamizar Laguado, Gobernador del Norte de Santander ~ via email
 Daniel García-Peña Jaramillo, Ambassador of Colombia to the US ~ via email
 José Luis Caballero Ochoa, Rapporteur for Colombia, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) ~ via email
 Roberta Clarke, Rapporteur on the Rights of Women and Human Rights Defenders, 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 and US Representatives from Ohio: Beatty, Brown, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Miller, Rulli, Sykes ~ via email

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