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| <b>Excmo. Sr. Presidente Gustavo Petro Urrego</b><br>President of the Republic of Colombia<br><a href="mailto:contacto@presidencia.gov.co">contacto@presidencia.gov.co</a> | <b>Sra. Luz Adriana Camargo</b><br>Attorney General of Colombia<br><a href="mailto:despacho.fiscal@fiscalia.gov.co">despacho.fiscal@fiscalia.gov.co</a> |
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August 25, 2025

Dear President Petro and Attorney General Camargo:


We are deeply concerned about the assassination attempt on young human rights defender **Nilson Andrés de Arco Salcedo**, age 27, an active member of the Atlántico Department chapter of the Committee in Solidarity with Political Prisoners. At about 12 noon on July 20, Nilson de Arco was in a public outdoor space in the Las Campanas neighborhood of Soledad, Atlántico Department, making a recording with three members of another human rights organization. The group was approached by an armed individual who stopped his motorcycle, stepped down, and shot Nilson de Arco directly. He sustained serious injuries, was rushed to the hospital and given specialized medical attention. His family and witnesses of the attack remain at risk of further violence.

One of the longest standing human rights organization in Colombia, the Committee in Solidarity with Political Prisoners (CSPP) “promotes truth, justice and reparation through legal representation before the Special Jurisdiction for Peace.” Before the incident on July 20, Nilson de Arco had been completing work that involved collecting testimonies and documenting rights violations. He had brought to the attention of local authorities some issues of concern, including allegations of corruption and fraudulent administration by certain individuals. The circumstances of his work—along with his presence as an advocate among other human rights defenders gathered outside in Las Campanas—suggest that the attack was a targeted attempt to silence any further investigations into corruption and human rights violations.

The violent attack on Nilson de Arco must be considered in the context of the increasing number of threats, harassment, and violence perpetrated against those participating in human rights defense in Colombia. We therefore urge that authorities:

- (1) continue a thorough investigation into the attack (ensuring that all potential motives related to his human rights work are considered), publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice
- (2) construct a protection mechanism for Nilson de Arco and the witnesses who saw the attack, in strict accordance with their wishes
- (3) take the necessary measures to ensure that human rights defenders, community leaders, and civil society organizations can carry out their work without fear of reprisals

Sincerely,

  
**Brian J. Stefan Szittai**  
Co-Coordinator

  
**Christine L. Stonebraker-Martínez**

copies: 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 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 ~ via email  
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:**