

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
--	---

November 25, 2025

Dear President Petro and Attorney General Camargo:

We are deeply dismayed about the recent death of human rights defender **Nilson Andrés de Arco Salcedo**, on November 14, 2025.

Nilson de Arco, age 27, was a community leader in Soledad, Atlántico Department, and a member of the Committee of Solidarity with Political Prisoners (CSPP). His death was a direct result of the injuries he received in a targeted firearm attack in July 2025 (cf our letter 25 AUG 2025). At the time of the attack, De Arco was conducting community service and documenting activities in a public space in the Los Campanos neighborhood. In a group with three members of another human rights organization, he was approached by an armed individual on a motorcycle and shot directly. Despite receiving specialized medical attention for four months, his injuries proved fatal.

The CSPP is one of the longest-running human rights organizations in Colombia and “promotes truth, justice and reparation through legal representation before the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP).” Before the attack on July 20, Nilson de Arco’s work with the CSPP involved gathering testimonies and documenting rights violations in a context of serious social unrest. The CSPP has pointed out that Nilson de Arco had previously brought major issues of concern to the attention of local authorities, including allegations of corruption and fraudulent administration by private actors.

The circumstances of Nilson de Arco’s work and his presence as an advocate among other individuals from human rights organizations gathered in Los Campanos suggest that the attack in July was a targeted attempt to silence continued investigations into human rights violations. His murder underscores the escalating violence against human rights defenders working in Colombia. According to the Institute for Development and Peace Studies (Indepaz), the death of Nilson de Arco brings the total number of human rights defenders and other social leaders killed in Colombia thus far in 2025 to 170.

In light of this, we urge that authorities:

- (1) continue a thorough investigation into the murder (ensuring that all potential motives related to his human rights work are considered), publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice
- (2) 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

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 and US Representatives from Ohio: Beatty, Brown, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Miller, Rulli, Sykes ~ via email

14 NOV 2025_Caracol_Colombia

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