

Human Rights Cases at a Glance: Summary of letters written by IRTF in response to urgent human rights abuses

On behalf of our 190 Rapid Response Network members, **IRTF volunteers wrote and sent six letters each month** to government officials in these countries, with copies to officials in the US. See the letters at <http://www.irtfcleveland.org/content/rm> or ask us to mail you hard copies.

By signing our names to these crucial letters, human rights crimes are brought to light, perpetrators are brought to justice and lives are spared. Our solidarity is more important than ever. Together, our voices do make a difference.

Trends in 2019

COLOMBIA

targets: indigenous and Afro-descendant leaders, labor organizers, LGBTI rights defenders, women's rights defenders, former FARC members active in reintegration into civilian society (as designated by the 2016 Peace Accords), farmers active in the national crop substitution program (switching over from growing coca to growing legal crops)

EL SALVADOR

targets: journalists, LGBTI rights defenders

GUATEMALA

targets: indigenous communities (their allies, their lawyers) defending land, environmental, and cultural rights in opposition to hydroelectric, mining, and other mega-development projects

HONDURAS

targets: journalists, protesters in the street, indigenous communities (plus their allies, their lawyers) organizing resistance to mega-development projects

MEXICO (in the southern, mostly indigenous states)

targets: community leaders, indigenous and environmental defenders

NICARAGUA

targets: news outlets, anti-government demonstrators (criminalization of student leaders, other activists)

COLOMBIA

- Jan 11 attempted assassination of indigenous leader **Alejandro Pascal Pai** and his wife; he was recently elected Awá governor of the Pingullo Sardinero community in Barbacoas municipality, Nariño Department.
- Jan 12 assassination of **Gilberto Valencia**, social entrepreneur, peace builder and cultural manager of Suárez municipality in Cauca Department. He was shot and killed for his work disseminating the terms of the 2016 Peace Agreement between the government and the former Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC).
- Jan 12 assassination of **Jesús Adier Perafán**, founder of Courage Caicedonia and president of the Community Action Board of his neighborhood, by two armed men in Caicedonia municipality, Valle del Cauca Department.

- Jan 12 assassination by four armed individuals of **Wilmer Antonio Miranda**, an active member of the Association of Rural Workers of Cajibío in Cauca Department and a supporter of the crop substitution program that enables transitioning to legal crops replacing marijuana, poppy, and coca.
- Jan 12 assassination by four strangers of **José Rafael Solano**, president of the Community Action Board and manager of social projects for peasant farmers, including the defense of ancestral mining practices.
- Jan 12 assassination of **Wilson Pérez Ascanio** by 5 unidentified armed men on motorcycles in the Catatumbo region of Hacarí in Norte de Santander Department. He was the leader of several social movements, including the Popular Constituent Movement (MCP).
- Jan 12 assassination of **Maritza Quiroz**, mother of four and an Afro-Colombian representative on the Santa Marta Victims' Roundtable who worked on reparations for the victims of torture, kidnapping, displacement, and sexual violence that have occurred during Colombia's 50 year armed conflict.
- Jan 24 armed attack on human rights defender **Alfamiir Castillo Bermúdez** near Pradera Municipality in Valle del Cauca Department for her work pursuing truth and justice for extrajudicial killings carried out during the armed conflict.
- Jan 26 intimidation and assassination of community Action Board member **Miguel Antonio Gutiérrez** at his home in Cartagena del Chairá, Caquetá Department.
- Jan 26 abduction and assassination of **Faber Manquillo Gómez**, a rural organizer missing since December 26. He went missing in late December and was found dead in El Rosario near the Cauca border, Nariño Department.
- Jan 26 assassination of **Maritza Ramírez Chaverra** by unknown men in the El Tigre zone of Nariño. She was President of the Community Action Council in the village of Aguas Claras and helped coordinate programs to substitute traditional crops for illegal coca crops.
- Jan 26 abduction, torture, and assassination of **Luis Alfredo Contreras Ortega**, President of the Community Action Board in Las Mercedes and coordinator of voluntary replacement of coca plantations with legal crops in the Sardinata zone, Norte de Santander Department.
- Jan 26 assassination of **Lede María Ortega Ortiz**, who worked as a secretary for the Community Action Board of El Tarra, of which she was also a member, in the village of Mundo Nuevo, near El Tarra municipality, Norte de Santander Department.
- Jan 26 assassination of **José Jair Orozco Calvo**, member of the Community Housing Board of the Vista Hermosa Urbanization, a housing project for low-income residents, Valle de Cauca Department.
- Feb 1 assassination of labor organizer **Dilio Corpus Guetio**, a member of the **Mountain Area Association of Campesino Workers (FENSUAGRO)** affiliate) coordinating peasant farming communities and a member of the local volunteer Campesino Guard, which oversees security and organizing for rural communities. Cauca Department.
- Feb 25 intimidation, abduction, and torture of Dibeth Quintana, a leader of the Oil Workers' Union (USO) in Aguachica Municipality, Cesar Department.
- Feb 26 assassination of **José Fernel Manrique Valencia**, age 34, an executive board member of the Union of Construction Material Industry Workers (SUTIMAC).
- Mar 21 abduction and assassination of rural organizers **Milena García** and her husband, **Darwin Reyes**. The couple were community leaders in the rural reserve Zona de Reserva Campesina Perla Amazónica (ZRCPA), where they helped coordinate voluntary crop substitution programs in Puerto Asís, Putumayo Department.
- Mar 21 assassination of **Doctor Zonia Rosero**, a community healthcare provider and advocate for women's rights and peace who coordinated a regional campaign against gender-based violence and was planning to announce her candidacy for mayor of Puerto Asís promoting education and health as fundamental rights for all communities.

- Mar 22 assassination of LGBTI rights defender **Liliana Holguín** and **her nephew** (unnamed), for her work with the LGBTI Committee of Cauca, which campaigns against discrimination and in defense of equal rights, and for her leadership of support for victims of forced displacement in her Bajo Cauca region of Antioquia department.
- Mar 25 displacement, abduction, torture, and assassination by paramilitary forces of **Jhon Jeimer González Vasquez** and **Julio César Taborda Caro**, as well as the abduction of one more rural worker, and the forced displacement of hundreds of families in the areas from which the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) withdrew following the signing of the peace agreement in 2016.
- Mar 26 assassination of a rural organizer **Argemiro López Pertuz** for his support of the Comprehensive National Program for the Substitution of Illicit Crops (**PNIS**) and his work implementing PNIS (substitute the growing of coca with legal crops) in the village of La Guayacana in Tumaco municipality, Nariño Department
- Apr 11 assassination of **Edwin Andrés Grisales Galvis**, a musician and a member of a regional collective of popular artists (RAPSO) which uses music and the popularity of musicians in pop culture to promote the proliferation of peace and social justice.
- Apr 11 assassination of **Ebel Yonda Ramos**, an indigenous leader for the Nasa people who used his authority as a former governor to La Gaitana community to promote the rights of indigenous populations, especially in regards to land rights.
- Apr 23 assassination of **Policarpo Guzmán Mage**, a rural and agricultural labor organizer and human rights defender in Cauca Department through his participation in and leadership of numerous peasant, campesino, and human rights organizations and unions.
- Apr 24 assassination of **Nixon Willington Valencia**, a rural and agricultural labor organizer and human rights defender in Putumayo Department who has participated in and lead actions with FENSUAGRO and the Patriotic March social movement.
- Apr 26 assassination of **Samuel David Gonzales Pashaina**, a seven month old baby of a former FARC combatant who was undergoing the transition to civilian life. The family of three was attacked but Samuel David was the lone casualty.
- Apr 26 the assassination of **Dimar Torres**, a disabled former FARC combatant, who was going through the civilian transition process outlined by the 2016 peace accords.
- May 11 the circulation of defamatory and threatening pamphlets about **Fuerza de Mujeres Wayuu**, including threats to the lives of its director, **Jakeline Romero**, and five of its members: **Karmen Ramírez**, **Miguel Ramirez**, **Deris Paz**, **Luis Misael Socarras** and **Dulcy Cotes**.
- May 24 the assassination of **Daniel Eduardo Rojas Zambrano**, the President of the Community Council in the indigenous reserve of López Adentro in Cauca Department.
- May 24 the assassination of indigenous leader **Miguel Ángel Alpala**, member of the Indigenous Authorities of Colombia (AICO), who helped coordinate indigenous and rural protests, known as “La Minga.”
- May 25 the murder of **Dr. Christian Camilo Julio Arteaga**, age 24, in El Bagre in the Bajo Cauca region of Antioquia Department, who was in the region serving the community during his rural placement year required for medical certification.
- May 26 **Giovanny Murillas**, once a FARC combatant, was killed in Guaviare Department wherein the AGC paramilitary group had recently distributed pamphlets labeling FARC members as “military objectives,” announcing a plan to “exterminate” them.
- May 26 former FARC commander **Jorge Enrique Corredor** was assassinated, marking the highest-ranking member of the FARC murdered since the peace agreement was signed in 2016. Jorge Corredor had played a key role in establishing contact between the government and the FARC during the conflict.
- Jun 21 assassinations of two leaders in Nariño: **Benedicto Valentia**, President of the Community Council of Miraflores, was assassinated for his protection of land rights and his participation in programs of land restitution aiming to

benefit people forcibly displaced from their homes by violence; **Paula Andrea Rosero Ordóñez**, lawyer and representative of the Public Ministry of Samaniego, was assassinated for her career defending human rights and targeting corruption in Samaniego

- Jun 22 assassinations of three Awa indigenous following death threats given during the Awa annual general assembly: **Leidy Jacqueline Burgos Pai**, age 18, student at the Awa Bilingual Agro-Environmental Technical Education Institution and member of the indigenous reservation Resguardo Honda Rio in Barbacoas municipality, Nariño Department; **Rocío García Pai**, mother of two and member of the Awa reservation Hojal la Turbia de Tumaco, Nariño Department; **Robert Dionisio García Bisbicús**, age 21, of the Awa Indigenous Reservation of Gran Rosario in the municipality of Tumaco, Nariño Department.
- Jun 24 the public assassinations by the armed group Virgilio Peralta Arenas (“Caparros”) of two farmers active in the PNIS crop substitution program San José de Uré, Córdoba Department: **Jader Pertuz** and **Jader Polo** were members of the Peasant Farmer Association of Southern Córdoba
- Jun 24 the fatal beating by police, military, and heavily armed ESMAD (Mobile Anti-Disturbance Squadron) units, of 16-year-old indigenous human rights defender and FENSUAGRO trade unionist **Jeferson Tróchez Escue** at a farm in Caloto in Cauca Department.
- Jun 25 the assassination of **María del Pilar Hurtado**, an activist and a leader in social and environmental rights defense in her community. Her 12-year old son witnessed the assassination in Tierralta, Córdoba Department.
- Jul 1 assassinations of two former FARC members in Cauca, two in Nariño, one in Córdoba. In Cauca: **Rafael Polindara**, **Anderson Pérez Osorio** (also a member of FENSUAGRO trade union). In Nariño: **Daniel Esterilla**, **Servio Delio** . In Córdoba: **Manuel Gregorio González Segura** (also active in the campesino association ASCSUCOR)
- Jul 2 death threats by AUC paramilitaries to **Yirley Velasco**—as well as her family—for her work defending and empowering women and her participation on the El Salado Victims Roundtable, condemning the actions of the AUC during the El Salado massacre of 2000. Carmen de Bolívar, Bolívar Department.
- Aug 2 the intimidation of social leaders **Yampier Valencia**, **Orlando Castillo** and **Norha Isabel Castillo**, all active with CONPAZ (Comunidades Construyendo Paz en los Territorios) by paramilitary members in Buenaventura, Valle del Cauca Department.
- Aug 2 the intimidation by armed paramilitary members of **Luis Yasmani Grueso**, an Afro-descendant civic leader and co-manager of the Puente Nayero Humanitarian Space in Buenaventura, Valle del Cauca Department.
- Aug 2 death and displacement result from fighting paramilitary groups Urabeños and Bustamante in Buenaventura, Valle del Cauca Department: killing of **David Vivas Ramírez**, age 20, caught in crossfire; displacement of 74 families in Comuna 3 district; displacement of 200+ families in the Lleras neighborhood
- Aug 2 an **unnamed Afro-descendent woman** was seen being forced from her boat by heavily armed and hooded men on the Lower Calima River. Her lifeless body was discovered on the river banks the next day by fellow residents of the Santa Rosa de Guayacán Humanitarian and Biodiverse Reserve.
- Aug 2 an assassination attempt on **Carlos A. Tobar**, an Afro-descendant civic leader and coordinator of Access to Justice Table, left him hospitalized in critical condition in Buenaventura, Valle del Cauca Department.
- Aug 16 surveillance of and suspected intent to assassinate **Danelly Estupiñan**, an Afro-descendant peoples’ rights activist with Black Community Process (PCN) in Buenaventura, Valle del Cauca Department.

EL SALVADOR

- Feb 22 deportation and assassination of **Camila Díaz Córdova**, a transgender woman who sought political asylum in the US but was deported to her native El Salvador

- Mar 23 defamatory attacks against LGBTI rights leaders **Andrea Ayala** and **Barbara Romero** of ESMULES (Salvadoran Lesbian Women's Space for Diversity) in San Salvador.
- Aug 1 smear campaigns, threats, and online harassment against journalists **Bessy Ríos**, **Karen Fernández** and **Mariana Belioso**, for their criticism of the government's new "*plan de control territorial*" which will increase police and military presence in certain regions.

GUATEMALA

- May 23 death threats toward, nonconsensual surveillance of, and attempted attack on **Quelvin Jiménez**, lawyer of the indigenous **Xinca** people in San Rafael las Flores in Santa Rosa Department.
- Jul 3 attacks against the **Nuevo Día Ch'orti Indigenous Association (CCCND)** for their work defending land, environmental, and cultural rights in opposition to hydroelectric and mining projects in their territories in Olopa municipality in Chiquimula Department.
- Jul 3 attack on indigenous leader **Irma Méndez** by the owner of the Cantera los Manantiales mine in an attempt to break up a half-a-year-long **Cho'orti** peaceful protest in Olopa municipality in Chiquimula Department.
- Aug 3 surveillance of and attacks made against **Quelvin Jiménez**, lawyer for the **Xinca** people in San Rafael las Flores, Santa Rosa Department.

HONDURAS

- Mar 24 assassination of journalist **Leonardo Gabriel Hernández**, the director and presenter of the program *El Pueblo Habla* (The People Speak), broadcast on *Valle TV* Channel 25, on which he discussed social issues and local politics and was known to speak out critically against the municipal government
- Apr 12 attack by the Honduran National Police on individuals associated with **Hedme Castro** and **ACI PARTICIPA**, which promotes citizen participation in decision-making and the exercise of civil and political rights, as well as administration transparency.
- May 22 threats and attacks against **Rosalina Domínguez**, Finance Coordinator for the Indigenous Council of Río Blanco in Intibucá Department, her four sons (ages 16 to 30), and two other members of the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH).
- Jun 26 military forces shot and killed **Erick Peralta**, a 37-year-old taxi driver, as he stepped out of his vehicle to get through protests calling for the removal of President Juan Orlando Hernández in Yarumela, La Paz Department.
- Jun 26 military forces shot and killed 24-year-old **Luis Maldonado**, a peaceful protestor in the demonstrations against the government's efforts to privatize education and health care in Yarumela, La Paz Department.
- Jun 26 **Eblin Noel Corea Maradiaga**, age 17, was shot and killed while maintaining a road block during peaceful protests in Yarumela, La Paz Department.
- Jul 14 political prisoners **Edwin Espinal**, **Raul Alvarez**, and **Romel Portillo** are human rights defenders who have been wrongfully detained since 2018 in the maximum security, military run "La Tolva" military prison, in which they are receiving death threats and being isolated and denied medical treatment.
- Jul 16 the Madrid family destroyed with machetes more than 15 manzanas of the **Lenca** indigenous community's corn harvest, destroying the principal food source and main livelihood of at least 25 families. The incident took place on the land that was intended for the Agua Zarca hydroelectric project. Río Blanco community, Intibucá Department.

Aug 14 death threats to **COPINH** Finance Coordinator **Rosalina Domínguez**, her family, and other members of the indigenous **Lenca** community at Río Blanco in Intibuca Department.

MEXICO

- Jan 25 assassination of human rights defender **Sinar Corzo Esquinca** in Arriaga, Chiapas, for his work with the Citizen Committee for the Defense of Human Rights, and his defense of the right to water, health, security and basic services for citizens of diverse communities.
- Feb 23 assassination of **Noé Jiménez Pablo** and **José Santiago Gómez Álvarez**, members of the Independent Regional Campesino Movement (MOCRI) in Amatán, Chiapas
- Feb 24 illegal detention, fabrication of charges, and abuse to **Froylán González**, a member of the Committee for the Defense of Indigenous Peoples (CODEDI), which works to defend and transform living conditions in 48 indigenous communities in Oaxaca State.
- Apr 25 assassination of **Luis Armando Fuentes Aquino**, an indigenous and environmental defender on the Isthmus of Tehuantepec in Oaxaca State. He was targeted for his opposition to development policies and projects that conflict with indigenous peoples' right to self-determination.
- Jul 15 assassination of **Mario Moreno Jiménez**, member of National Front for Socialism (FNLS); he worked defending land rights for campesinos and publicly denouncing human rights violations perpetrated by the Mexican government. Venustiano Carranza, Chiapas.
- Aug 15 harassment and intimidation by Mexican authorities of personnel working at the **Casa del Migrante de Saltillo** in Coahuila.

NICARAGUA

- Jan 13 police censorship, raiding, and banning of independent television news channel **100% Noticias** in Managua and the arrest of two of its journalists: **Miguel Mora Barberena**, the station's owner and director, and **Lucía Pineda Ubau**, the station's news director.
- Jun 23 more than 80 political prisoners remain behind bars (according to opposition groups), despite calls by OAS to release activists, demonstrators, student leaders, journalists and others who have been criminalized for protest over the past year

Rapid Response Network human rights cases at a glance

JAN-AUG 2019		COMPARISON JAN-AUG 2018	
COUNTRIES			
	%		%
27	56%	Colombia	18 38%
7	15%	Honduras	10 21%
3	6%	Guatemala	16 33%
6	13%	Mexico	3 6%
3	6%	El Salvador	0 0%
2	4%	Nicaragua	1 2%
48	100%	total	48 100%
TARGETED GROUPS			
26	36%	indigenous/peasants/land rights	21 34%
2	3%	Afro-descendant groups	6 10%
12	17%	human rights lawyers/defenders/observers	5 8%
	0%	workers' rights	1 2%
4	6%	women's rights	1 2%
	0%	LGBT rights	0 0%
0	0%	student/youth rights	1 2%
3	4%	environmentalists: opposing mines, highways, dams	12 19%
4	6%	journalists/community radio	10 16%
0	0%	political candidate/political office-holder	1 2%
10	14%	community leaders/political activist	4 6%
1	1%	migrants/ migrant rights	0 0%
10	14%	other	0 0%
72	100%	total	62 100%
TYPES OF ABUSE			
4	1%	death threats	11 8%
61	17%	assassinated (or otherwise killed)	43 30%
1	0%	forced disappearance/suspected assassination	4 3%
0	0%	tortured (but not killed)	0 0%
5	1%	hit/beaten/assaulted	19 13%
11	3%	attempted assassination: shot at/stabbed (not killed)	1 1%
14	4%	threatened/attempted assault	0 0%
7	2%	surveilled/followed/intimidated	0 0%
6	2%	criminalization of protest: illegal search,arrest,detention,conviction	42 30%
200	57%	forced evictions/seizure of communities by armed groups (# of families)	5 4%
7	2%	police attacks on groups/illegal raids	8 6%
0	0%	burglary, ransacked office/home	1 1%
0	0%	kidnapping/attempted kidnapping	1 1%
26	7%	food crops destroyed	0 0%
5	1%	defamatory statements/misinformation campaign	6 4%
2	1%	medical attention denied	0 0%
0	0%	homes/encampments burned down	0 0%
349	100%	total	141 100%