



Dear All,

Today we write to ask that you intervene in the following human rights situations:

Front Line Defenders' Annual Report Confirms Difficult Situation Faced by Colombian Activists

According to a new report by Front Line Defenders, 1,000 human rights defenders were killed, harassed, detained, or subjected to smear campaigns and other violations in 2016. The report highlights that 282 human rights defenders were murdered in 25 countries, 217 of which occurred in the Americas. Of these killings, 85 happened in Colombia, with the remainder occurring in Brazil, (58), Honduras (33), Mexico (26), Guatemala (12), El Salvador (1), Peru (1), and Venezuela (1).

Human Rights Networks Detail Series of Killings in Colombia

On January 9, the Human Rights Network of Southwestern Colombia and Marcha Patriótica's Human Rights Commission released reported a series of threats in Cauca, Valle del Cauca, and Tolima. According to the networks, on January 9 the Black Eagles paramilitary organization offered \$2,000 for the death of 14 members of the Marcha Patriótica in Tolima.

The networks also reported the January 6 assassination of Olmedo Pito Garcia. Mr. Garcia was a member of the Nasa indigenous group and a member of the Marcha Patriótica. He was killed in the outskirts of Caloto, Cauca. On January 3, both networks expressed their concerns over threats made by the Black Eagles paramilitary group to members and leaders of the Marcha Patriótica and other social movements in the Cauca and Valle del Cauca departments. The Black Eagles are offering money and rewards as incentives to persons who kill activists.

The networks also enumerated the following attacks to human rights defenders in Cauca:

- **December 31, 2016, Balboa:**
A man who fled the scene in a motorcycle killed human rights defender Yanet Alejandra Calvache Viveros, member of FENSUAGRO - CUT, Colombia's largest agricultural workers union, and Marcha Patriótica in Balboa, Cauca.

- **December 28, 2016, Popayán:**
Gunmen on a motorcycle threatened Edison Raúl Valencia Medina, a youth leader who is a member of the Popular Unity Process from the Southwest of Colombian (PUPSOC) and of the Political and Social Movement Marcha Patriótica of Cauca.
- **December 25, 2016, Algeria:**
Human rights defender Anuar José Álvarez Armero, director of the Cocaleros Committee of the Mirolindo Estate and member of the Algeria Peasants' Association (ASCAMTA), FENSUAGRO - CUT, Popular Unity Process from the Southwest of Colombian (PUPSOC), and of the Political and Social Movement Marcha Patriótica of Cauca, was murdered by a man on a motorcycle. He was shot four times while traveling from his home to work.
- **December 24, 2016, Corinto:**
On several occasions, an unidentified vehicle followed Cristobal Guamanga, a member FENSUAGRO - CUT, the Popular Unity Process from the Southwest of Colombian (PUPSOC) and of the Political and Social Movement Marcha Patriótica during his daily activities as a human rights defender in Cauca.

Afro-Colombian Leader and Partner Murdered in Buenaventura (Valle del Cauca)

On January 16, Emilsen Manyoma Mosquera and her partner Joe Javier Rodallega, both from the Puente Nayero Humanitarian Space, were found dead in Buenaventura. Although details of their death are unclear, the Inter-Ecclesial Commission for Justice and Peace (Justicia y Paz) reported that both Ms. Mosquera and Mr. Rodallega were forced into a taxi before they disappeared. Ms. Mosquera supported local peacebuilding initiatives in the Bajo Calima region, the Puente Nayero Humanitarian Space, and neighboring Punta Icaoco Humanitarian Space.

Community Leader Murdered in El Hatillo (Cesar)

On January 7, the International Office for Human Rights Action on Colombia (OIDHACO) reported the murder of Aldemar Parra Garcia, community leader of El Hatillo in rural Cesar. Mr. Parra Garcia was the president of the community action board of El Hatillo, which was implementing development programs after many community members returned to El Hatillo after being displaced from nearby communities due to coal mining contamination.

Paramilitaries Murder AFRODES President's Family Members (Choco)

On January 7 and 9, Gaitanista paramilitaries murdered Juan De la Cruz Mosquera (54 years old) and his son Moisés Mosquera Moreno (30 years old) in the Caño Seco community located on the Salaquí River within the Riosucio Municipality (Choco),

According to AFRODES, Juan De la Cruz Mosquera, a displaced person residing in Riosucio, was invited by known individuals to visit the Caño Seco community. In this area, paramilitaries have a command post just a few kilometers from a Colombian military base. Paramilitaries asked to speak to Moisés who was in the Tamboral community under the auspices that they needed to resolve a problem with him. When Moises arrived at this meeting on January 7 paramilitaries immediately killed him. When his father, who was detained by this group, found out about the death on January 9, he confronted the killers who then murdered him. Juan De la Cruz was born and grew up with his family in the Tamboral River area. In 1997 due to Operation Genesis he was forced to flee with his family to Panamá in order to save his life. He lived in Panama for a few years, until they forcibly repatriated against their will and returned to their community.

Juan De la Cruz and Moises are relatives of Marino Córdoba, president of Afrodes and International Coordinator of the Afro-Colombian Peace Council (CONPA). Mr. Cordoba's 21-year old son, Wilmar Cordoba Forero, was murdered in the same municipality in October 2016. While that murder was declared to the authorities and received international condemnation, the investigation has not yielded results. De la Cruz was the father to 10 children and a deeply religious man who served as a Pentacostal Pastor. He was also a member of the Tamboral Community Council and a community leader who worked as an agriculturalist. He is a man whose family was separated by the internal armed conflict. We urge US and Colombian authorities to protect Mr. Cordoba's family members and to bring the perpetrators responsible for these crimes to justice.

Black Eagles Paramilitary Group Threaten Human Rights Activist (Meta)

On January 13, the Civic Committee for Human Rights (CCDHM) reported death threats and harassment by the paramilitary organization Black Eagles. Martha Delgado, a journalist in the area and also member of CCDHM, received a letter that targeted her, Islena Rey Rodriguez, CCDHM's president, and Gustavo Lopez, another CCDHM member. The letter declared them and their family members "military targets" due to their work promoting human rights in the Meta region.

Threats against University Union (Valle del Cauca)

On December 27, the University of Valle denounced death threats received by SINTRAUNICOL and other university unions on December 16. The paramilitary group Gaitanista Self Defense Forces of Colombia appears to have sent the threats.

Land Rights Claimant Threatened in Bijao (Chocó)

On December 23, Justicia y Paz reported threats to land restitution claimant Eleodoro Polo Mesa. Mr. Polo Mesa's land is located on the banks of the Bijao ravine near the

collective territories of Curvaradó. According to Justicia y Paz, Mr. Polos's land, now used by a cattle rancher, was taken over by paramilitary groups operating in the area. Throughout 2016, paramilitary groups threatened Mr. Polo Mesa's family each time he attempted to reclaim his land.

Indigenous Leaders Threatened and Intimidated in Buenaventura (Valle del Cauca)

On December 22, Justicia y Paz expressed their concern over repeated threats and intimidation against indigenous leaders in Buenaventura. Esmerito Chamarra Pizarro, Marcía Mejía, and Miller Mejía received threats from the Gaitanista Self Defense Forces. Justicia y Paz expressed concern over the lack of state response, particularly considering the overwhelming number of attacks against human rights defenders in recent months.

Archbishop Darío de Jesús Monsalve Receives a Death Threat (Valle del Cauca)

On December 17, Colombia's daily *El Pais* reported that the Catholic Archbishop of Cali received a death threat. The death threat stated: "Death to the FARC, to Santos and to all communist clergies." Archbishop Monsalve, an active supporter of the peace process, has also been involved in negotiations between the National Liberation Army (ELN) and the Colombian government. He is also considered to be one of the utmost moral authorities in Colombia.

Large and Visible Paramilitary Presence in Cacarica (Chocó)

On January 17, Colombian news station Macondo Radio reported the presence of paramilitary organizations in Cacarica, Chocó. Residents of the area identified 70 paramilitaries who arrived with long weapons and docked their boats in the community of Bocachica. Paramilitaries are situated in the Cacarica Afro-Colombian collective territory, with permanent camps in Balsa, Bocachica, and Canal Zapata.

On December 23, 2016, Justicia y Paz had raised the alarm after nearly 300 members of the organization Gaitanista Self Defense Forces of Colombia were seen making their way through the collective territories of Cacarica. The men wore camouflage and carried various weapons, as well as radio transmitters. The presence of this group is extremely concerning considering that in 1997 the Cacarica basin was the epicenter of the infamous "Operation Genesis" that led to the forced displacement of thousands of people.

Peace Community of San Jose de Apartadó Expresses Concern over Paramilitary Presence (Antioquia)

On December 22, the Peace Community of San Jose de Apartadó published a statement expressing concern over paramilitary presence and intimidation. According to the

statement, on December 17 paramilitaries entered the municipality of La Esperanza near the peace community demanding information of community leader Cristóbal Mesa. On that same day and on December 18, a different contingent of paramilitaries entered the municipality of Arenas Bajas to declare that they were the main authority in the area. Finally, on Wednesday, December 21, paramilitaries intercepted a community leader and demanded that he distance himself from his work with the Peace Community. On December 31, paramilitaries entered Arena Altas. On January 3 they entered Mulatos Medio and on January 8 and 9 San José. According to the locals, paramilitaries are becoming more vocal about their distaste for the Peace Community and their leaders.

Illegal Mining Affecting Jiguamiandó y Curvaradó Afro-Colombian and Indigenous Communities (Chocó)

On December 23, Justicia y Paz reported the presence of illegal mining activity in Jiguamiandó and Curvaradó, Chocó. Justicia y Paz reports that mining machinery is present in the Apartadocito, Caño Claro, and Curvaradó rivers, and that it is directly affecting water sources for all nearby communities. Despite repeated requests by the community leaders for state intervention and a commitment by the police to remove the machinery, authorities have done nothing to end the presence of illegal miners in the area.

Report by Inspector General Leaves Peace Community Leaders Concerned (Antioquia)

On January 10, Peace Community of San Jose de Apartadó leaders expressed their concern to the Inspector General over a report submitted by the local office which dismissed security concerns by the community, as well as infrastructure problems in the region. According to this report, the National Protection Unit (UNP) protects leaders and infrastructure projects were completed. The Peace Community states that this is not accurate. The only security they were provided is cellphone that connects to an army battalion that historically refuses to acknowledge their concerns. Infrastructure projects are also far from complete. The roads continue to be problematic for people attempting to travel to the towns in the municipalities.

Colombia Government Presents Reparations Report to NGO (Antioquia)

On December 22, the *Instituto Popular de Capacitación* (IPC) released a statement containing the findings of a collective reparation process carried out by the National Unit for Care and Integral Reparation for Victims (UARIV). IPC found that for the past four years the UARIV clarified details and developed a memory reconstruction project that allowed the unit to understand violent trends used by the State and paramilitary organizations against IPC over the past few decades.

Human Rights Organizations Concerned over Excessive Use of Force by Members of the

Military (Boyaca)

On January 8, the *Corporación Social Para la Asesoría y Capacitación Comunitaria – COSPACC-* and the *Asociación Nacional Campesina “José Antonio Galán Zorro” – ASONALCA* expressed their concern over the abuse of force by the military during operations against insurgents in the municipality of Pajarito, Boyaca. According to the organizations, members of the military limited mobility in the municipality entered homes without a warrant, and accused civilians of collaborating with insurgents.

Tensions with Military Continue to Affect Defenders in Northeast Colombia (Cesar)

On December 27, members of the Community Action Board (JAC) in the municipality of La Paz, Cesar reported a confrontation with members of the army who accused them of being guerillas and coca growers. Members of the military reportedly shot at civilians. The confrontation was the result of a series of demands made by La Paz residents for the return of some cattle mistakenly taken away by the military. On December 24, JAC members also reported the arbitrary arrest of Osé Ángel Lindarte and Reinel Payares in the municipality of Pelaya. According JAC, both men are accused of rebellion and belonging to the National Liberation Army (ELN).

SINTRABIOFILM Union Objects to Decision by Labor Ministry and BIOFILM S.A. (Bolívar)

On January 13, the SINTRABIOFILM union, which represents workers in BIOFILM Company, publically objected to an agreement between the Ministry of Labor and the company that formalized less than 87 percent of jobs for union members. According to the SINTRABIOFILM, the December 9 agreement ignored the demands made by the union in a long labor dispute dating back to 2015. The union is asking the Ministry of Labor to continue with investigations and revise the agreement to include concerns not previously incorporated.

Labor Leaders Express Concern over Dismissals at Parmalat Colombia and Lactalis

On January 9, SINTRAINDULECHE and SINTRAIMAGRA, two unions representing workers in the dairy industry, expressed their deep concern over what they consider arbitrary dismissals from the Parmalat and Lactalis plants in Colombia. According to the unions, the workers were under direct contract with the companies and were fired without explanation.

We look forward to your actions on these important matters. For further information, please contact Gimena Sanchez-Garzoli at gsanchez@wola.org or (202) 797-2171.

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