

January 9, 2012

Vivian Morales  
Fiscalía General de la Nación  
Diagonal 22B No. 52-01 (Ciudad Salitre)  
Bogotá, Colombia

Dear Ms. Morales,

Thank you for your important work to support the rule of law in Colombia. We are writing to ask for your intervention in the following human rights cases of concern:

*Murder of Afro-Colombian Leader (Unguía, Chocó)*

The Foro Interétnico Solidaridad Choco (FISCH) reports that Machado Parra, the newly elected legal representative for the Major Community Council of Unguía, was traveling from Unguía to Turbo when he was kidnapped and subsequently killed by an unidentified illegal armed group on January 4. The incident took place in the area of Palo Blanco while Mr. Parra was traveling with his wife.

*Murder of Indigenous Leader (Guachaves-Nariño)*

On December 31, Jaime Alberto Chasatar Bastidas, leader of the indigenous community of Guavaches and mayor elect for AICO, died of multiple gunshot wounds inflicted upon him by two men. Despite the fact that a police station is located right next to Mr. Bastidas' home, two men in motorcycles shot him right outside his home. Mr. Bastidas was scheduled to begin his new position with AICO on January 1. He leaves behind a widow and three children aged 17, 10 and 3 years old.

*New Threats and Defamation of Curvaradó Land Rights Leaders (Chocó)*

In late December, "Liria Rosa Muerte" was scratched into a tree and a doll without a head was placed in front of the entrance of Caracolí community. The sign is a death threat against recognized land rights leader Liria Garcia. Members of the community council of Caracolí who are attempting to return to their lands are facing constant death threats and harassment from persons linked to the cattle ranching business of La Tukeka. When attempting to cultivate basic food crops, men have tried to commit sexual abuses against the women of the community and threatened children and members of the community councils. These men have also cut down the wire fence that demarcates the Humanitarian Zone (which helps to signal to armed groups where civilians are present) and destroyed the communities' food crops.

On January 6, the 72 year-old Afro-Colombian matriarch, mother of eight children and grandmother to 41, Ligia Maria Chaverra, was subject to a false report by RCN that alleged connections with the FARC. Ms. Chaverra has been subjected to multiple defamation campaigns that place her life at risk since December 2003, when she publicly denounced the violent displacement of her community at the hands of paramilitaries

working in collusion with members of Colombia's 17<sup>th</sup> Brigade. Reports we received allege that the source of the RCN was the local Fiscalía.

*New Death Threat against Martha Giraldo of MOVICE Valle*

On January 4, a new death threat was received by Martha Giraldo, Technical Secretary for the National Victims Movement of Crimes by the State (MOVICE) and daughter of a high-profile extrajudicial execution victim. The message that Martha received on her cellphone stated, "The families of the guerillas also demobilize, to the contrary you have two alternatives either you follow the law or you lose what you most love and we will start with the little ones attention Black Eagles for a country without guerillas." Ms. Giraldo has received repeated death threats and survived security incidents. Despite the fact that the Minister of the Interior approved protection measures for her on August 22, 2011, it has not yet given her the complete measures promised.

*Threats Against Labor and Rights Activists in Valle del Cauca*

On December 10, 2011, text messages were sent to Maria del Carmen Londoño Sanna, Press Chief for Senator Alexander Lopez Maya, and to the senator's personal cellphone. These messages stated: "All of you that support the FARC and ELN militias in Valle del Cauca and the Suroccidente we declare to be enemies of the government..CRIC, EMCALI, CUTValle, PCN, DDHH Valle Alcade Jorge ARis Alexander Lopez Feliciano Edward Villegas GustBiz? Lici Freddy...attention Aguilas Negras."

That same day members of the trade union CUT received similar messages.

Ten days later, on December 20, 2011, text messages were sent to Mireya Zambrano, Secretary for Senator Alexander Lopez Maya's office in Cali and to Martha Selene Lozada Cardozo, the senator's private Secretary in Bogotá. These messages stated: "All of you that support the FARC and ELN militias in Valle del Cauca and the Suroccidente we declare to be enemies of the government..CRIC, EMCALI, CUTValle, PCN, DDHH Valle Alcade Jorge ARis Alexander Lopez Feliciano Edward Villegas GustBiz? Lici Freddy...attention Capital Bloc of the Aguilas Negras."

That same day members of the PCN (Black Communities Process) in northern Cauca received similar messages. They were also sent to the cellphones of Berenice Celeyta and Olga Araujo of the human rights group NOMADESC. The texts mention 'LiciFreddy' who is Lisifrey Ararat, an Afro-Colombian leader from La Toma, Cauca.

The recipients of these death threats are important leaders for labor, human, Afro-Colombian and indigenous rights in Valle del Cauca and northern Cauca. Berenice Celeyta, the Robert F. Kennedy Center for Human Rights and Justice Memorial laureate, and Senator Lopez Maya, a labor rights activist turned senator who is on the Senate Human Rights Commission, have worked on labor rights cases and EMCALI labor cases for years. The senator has held numerous hearings on the "associative cooperatives" issue in the sugar, oil palm and port sectors.

On January 6, six council members from Suarez, Cauca received death threats from

illegal armed groups. These threats led three of these council members to leave the area to seek safety. While the identity of the group behind the threats is unknown, local groups allege that these men were threatened because they were likely to vote for a local *personero* who favors respecting Afro-Colombian collective land rights in Suarez rather than one that would do the bidding of multinational companies.

*Jailed Human Rights Defender Accused of Having Escaped*

On December 22, while government representatives, including Vice President Garzón, met with community, labor and human rights leaders in Barrancabermeja, a prosecutor from the Fiscalía's Antiterrorism Unit No. 22 called the director of La Modelo prison in Bucaramanga, where human rights defender David Ravelo is being held on charges that many consider questionable, claiming that Mr. Ravelo had escaped the prison and was appearing at the meeting. Though it was quickly proven that the claim was false, the prosecutor at La Picota prison in Bogotá, citing the incident, issued an order to transfer Mr. Ravelo to that prison. Such an order violates the process laid out in Colombian law, which requires the judge hearing the case to order to a transfer, and also contradicts the Supreme Court, which has indicated that there are no reasons to transfer Mr. Ravelo. This incident raises concerns about partiality in the treatment of Mr. Ravelo, as well as concerns for his safety given possible repercussions from the perception that he escaped. This incident occurs in the context about a pending change of judge on the case, despite the fact that the trial is already nearly half completed.

We kindly ask that your office promptly investigate and bring to justice the perpetrators of the murders of the Afro-Colombian and indigenous leaders outlined in this letter, and that you take bold steps to investigate the death threats mentioned above. In the case of Ligia Maria Chaverra, we ask you to personally investigate this incident and if indeed the Fiscalía provided such information, that your office publicly retract this information and ask RCN to report this correction. In the case of Mr. Ravelo, we ask that the same judge remain on the case in order to ensure continuity and consistency in the case.

We are happy to provide further information and details if needed. Please contact Gimena Sanchez of WOLA at [gsanchez@wola.org](mailto:gsanchez@wola.org) or 202-797-2171. Thank you very much for your attention to these important matters.

Sincerely,

Gimena Sanchez  
Senior Associate  
Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA)

Marino Cordoba  
AFRODES USA

Dana Brown  
Executive Director  
U.S. Office on Colombia

Lisa Haugaard  
Executive Director  
Latin America Working Group

Nora Rasman  
Interim Director of Latin America and Caribbean Policy  
TransAfrica Forum

Carlos Quesada  
Regional Director for Latin America  
Global Rights

Marselha Goncalves Margerin  
Advocacy Director  
Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice & Human Rights

Charo Mina Rojas  
PCN International Working Group