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December 30, 2017

Ambassador Camilo Reyes
Ambassador of Colombia to the United States
1724 Massachusetts Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Ambassador Reyes:

I am writing to urge the Colombian government to intervene for the safety of residents of the central settlement of San Josesito in San José de Apartadó. Constituents from my Congressional District in Minnesota notified me that four paramilitary persons assaulted the central settlement of San Josesito yesterday morning. Witnesses at the scene believe the assault was aimed at assassinating Germán Graciano Posso, the designated representative and spokesperson for the Peace Community. I am also requesting a briefing on the situation, along with the measures the Colombian government is taking to restore peace and safeguard the lives of residents. While the attempted assassination failed, the community in San Jose remains traumatized and anxious.

Given the deeply concerning reports from my constituents, I accepted a telephone call from Padre Javier Giraldo, S.J., who briefed me on the details of the assault. He informed me that two of the assailants escaped and two others were captured by local residents. The Peace Community called the Human Rights Ombudsman's Office to deliver the detainees, as of the evening of December 29th they had not arrived. Representatives of the Peace Community have been in communication with the Vice President of the Republic, General Óscar Naranjo, who promised to investigate the assault as well as the threats and hostilities that led to the assault.

The settlement at San Jose is a self-designated Peace Community, a status recognized by the Inter-American Community on Human Rights. The community excludes the presence of armed actors as well as storage of fire arms within the Peace Community. The establishment of the Peace Community is based on principles of international humanitarian law that protect civilians from being involved in the armed conflict. Since 1997, the Peace Community has operated under protective precautionary measures from the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights, and since 2000 with provisional measures from the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR). The community seeks resolution of conflict through non-violent means only.

Thank you for your urgent attention to this matter, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Keith Ellison". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Keith Ellison
Member of Congress

Cc: Ambassador Kevin Whitaker, U.S. Ambassador to Colombia