

May 15, 2019

Dear Ms. Breier and Mr. Kozak,

We, the undersigned civil society organizations, activists, academics and others who follow Afro descendant concerns and the human rights situation in Colombia write to ask that you immediately intervene to guarantee the safety of the Afro-Colombian victims of the May 4 grenade and gunfire attack that took place in the Department of Cauca's Santander de Quilichao. Such an attack against Afro-Colombian leaders who are at the forefront of promoting peace, land rights, civil rights and respect for the environment must be publicly condemned.

The 16 persons targeted were members of the Black Communities Process (Proceso de Comunidades Negras, PCN), the Association of Afro-Colombian Community Councils (ACONC), and the Association of Afro-descendant Women of Northern Cauca (ASOM) and the Mobilization of Afro descendant Women for the Care of Life and Ancestral Territories (Mobilizacion de Mujeres Afrodescendientes por el Cuidado de la Vida y los Territorios Ancestrales). Among those present were human rights activists Carlos Rosero, Francia Marquez, Clemencia Carabalí, Victor Hugo Mina, and Sofia Garzon, international accompaniers and two children. Two bodyguards from Colombia's National Protection Unit (Unidad Nacional de Proteccion UNP) who responded during the assault were injured. All these leaders were instrumental in guaranteeing the inclusion of the Ethnic Chapter in the 2016 peace accord between the Colombian State and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (PCN). Two members of PCN, most recently Francia Marquez in 2018, have received the Goldman Environmental Prize. In 2011, Clemencia Carabalí and Francia Marquez were featured in PBS's "The war we are living," episode of Women, War and Peace. Ms. Marquez was the 2015 National Human Rights Prize in Colombia. While such prizes are granted to individuals, the work done by these leaders is collective and in representation of thousands of Afro-Colombians in northern Cauca.

Sadly, the attack did not stop on May 4. Two days after, on May 6, several leaders who attended the meeting, received a menacing text death threat, alerting them that "what happened on Saturday was only the beginning of the extermination of all". We, therefore, kindly urge you to do as follows:

- Strongly condemn this attack in a public statement circulated to the U.S. and Colombia press.
- Direct the U.S. Embassy to meet with the victims of this attack to determine a collective protections measures and other actions that guarantees their security, prevents further violence against them and justice for this attack.
- Investigate as to why the perpetrators of this attack were able to pass several security checkpoints to reach the victims without being apprehended and determine whether or not the security forces involved receive financing from the United States. If so, funds to such security forces should be suspended in accordance with the human rights conditions pertaining to U.S. military assistance to Colombia.

-Urge President Ivan Duque to advance implementation of the 2016 peace accord and in particular to prioritize implementation of the Ethnic Chapter and all mechanisms pertaining to the dismantlement illegal armed groups and providing protection for civil society.

-Urge the Attorney General of Colombia to not only investigate but present the State Department with results (arrests and sanctions) of both the intellectual and material authors of this attack within three months of receipt of the request.

-Insist that the Ministry of the Interior provide the State Department with a detailed timeline containing steps on how they will implement the changes to the victims' individual and communities' collective measures that were agreed to with the victims' representatives on May 8.

We thank you in advance for your attention to this important matter and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Signers below:

Organizations:

Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA)

Presbyterian Peace Fellowship

Latin America Working Group (LAWG)

Institute of the Black World (IBW)

International Institute on Race, Equality and Human Rights

Global Exchange

Freedom House

Colombia Human Rights Committee

Africa World Now Project

Afro-Colombian Solidarity Network (ACSN)

Individuals:

Damani Aaquil, Co- Founder, Regional Council of Africans in the Americas (RCAA)

Jaime Amparo Alves, Visiting Professor, Centro de Estudios Afrodiasporicos, Universidad Icesi

Prof. Michael Birenbaum Quintero, Boston University

Karen Juanita Carrillo, co-founder AfroPresencia.org

Pablo Carvajal, Restorative Circles Facilitator, President. Claro KC, Inc.

Darryl Chappell, Board of Directors, WOLA

Dr. Ron Daniels, President, Institute of the Black World 21st Century

Anthony Dest, PhD, Coordinating Committee of ACSN

James Early, Institute for Policy Studies Board Member

Arturo Escobar, Professor of Anthropology Emeritus, UNC Chapel Hill

Eunice Escobar,

Justin Daniel Figueroa, Law Student, University of Massachusetts, USA

Stephanie Marie Figueroa, Real Estate Agent, New Jersey USA

Prof. Jonathan Fox, Accountability Research Center, American University

Richard Garcia, Electrician, USA

Eleanor Goldfield, activist, Art Killing Apathy  
Sandra Granobles  
Sheila Gruner, Algoma University  
Frank Hammer, Board Member, Michigan Coalition for Human Rights, Detroit, MI  
Kevin Healy, Georgetown University  
Dr. Marcus A. Johnson, CUNY Baruch  
Joseph Jordan, ACSN  
Evan King and Samantha Wherry as members of the Witness for Peace Solidarity Collective  
Daniel Kovalik, Adjunct Professor, International Human Rights, University of Pittsburgh  
Norma Lozano-Jackson, PhD, President, World Development Alliance, Professor, USA  
Yvette Modestin, Founder/Director of Encuentro Diáspora Afro  
Andrew Morehouse  
M'bare N'gom, Prof. Morgan University, Baltimore  
Ofunshi Oba Koso, Minnesota Yoruba Association  
Alison Paul  
Lisa J. Scott, co-founder AfroPresencia.org  
Paige Shell-Spurling, Coordinator of the Colombia Section, Portland Central America Solidarity  
Committee (PCASC)  
Lynn Stephen, Philip H. Knight Chair, Distinguished Professor of Anthropology, University of  
Oregon  
Frank Smyth, GJS  
Danielle Wegman, Omaha, Nebraska  
Coletta Youngers, Senior Fellow, WOLA