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International Centre for Trade Union Rights

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ICTUR was founded to
defend and extend trade union rights and
to raise awareness of these rights and their violations
around the world

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Attn:

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CC:

Enrique Gil Botero, Minister of Justice
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Education International; International Union of Food, Agricultural,
Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations
(IUF); ITUC Trade Union Rights Dept.
Annalisa Ciampi, Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of
peaceful assembly and of association

Dear President Santos,

The International Centre for Trade Union Rights is gravely concerned
by a series of murders of trade unionists in the Republic of Colombia.

Specifically, we are aware of the murders of:

- Mario Calle Correa, President of the campesino peasant farmers
association ASTRACAVA, an affiliate of FENSUAGRO within
the CUT, who was killed on 14 May in Valle del Cauca.
- Washington Cedeño Otero, a member of the education workers
union of Córdoba, ADEMACOR, an affiliate of FECODE within
the CUT, who was killed on 6 June in Cordoba.

- Johanna Alarcón, a member of the SUTEV union, an affiliate of FECODE within the CUT, was killed on 7 June in Cali.
- Mauricio Velez, Vice-President of the public universities union SINTRAUNAL, within the CUT, who was kidnapped from his family home and executed on 21 June.
- Alberto Román Acosta González, President of the Guacarí branch of the agricultural workers' union SINTRAINAGRO, within the CUT, who was shot dead by gunmen on 1 July 2017.

The government's own agency responsible for the defence of civil rights (Defensoría del Pueblo) recently reported that between 1 January 2016 and 1 March 2017, 156 human rights defenders and activists were murdered in Colombia; a further five forced disappearances and 33 attacks were reported.

According to the ILO's Committee on Freedom of Association, the killing of trade unionists requires the 'institution of independent judicial inquiries in order to shed full light, at the earliest date, on the facts and the circumstances in which such actions occurred and in this way, to the extent possible, determine where responsibilities lie, punish the guilty parties and prevent the repetition of similar events'. Failure to hold guilty parties to account creates a culture of impunity, 'which reinforces the climate of violence and insecurity, and which is extremely damaging to the exercise of trade union rights' (*Digest of decisions and principles of the Freedom of Association Committee of the Governing Body of the ILO*, Fifth Edition, 2006, paras. 42-45, 46, 48 and 52).

ICTUR calls on the government to investigate the circumstances around these murders and to undertake all necessary measures to ensure the fundamental freedoms of workers to join and form unions and to take action in defence of their interests. ICTUR will report this incident in the journal *International Union Rights*, which was established in 1993, and which enjoys a readership in more than 100 countries.

Yours Faithfully,



Daniel Blackburn, Director