

<p>Excmo. Sr. Presidente Gustavo Petro Urrego President of the Republic of Colombia contacto@presidencia.gov.co</p>	<p>Sra. Luz Adriana Camargo Attorney General of Colombia despacho.fiscal@fiscalia.gov.co</p>
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September 25, 2024

Dear President Petro and Attorney General Camargo:

We, members of the InterReligious Task Force, are deeply distressed over the recent assassinations of three members of the LGBTIQ+ community: **Armando René Torres Bohórquez** on August 29, **Germán Ríos Cifuentes** on September 1, and **Valeska London** on September 4.


Armando Torres Bohórquez, who made his living as a motorcycle taxi driver, was found shot in the middle of the street in an isolated area in the barrio Los Almendros of Soledad municipality in Atlántico Department. Germán Ríos Cifuentes, a 55-year-old leader of the LGBTIQ+ community, was spending time with friends in Buga, Valle de Cauca Department, when armed actors arrived and shot him. Valeska London, a transwoman, was in barrio Los Olivos II de Barranquilla, Atlántico Department, when she died from a gunshot to the head. These three deaths in less than a week is evidence of the vulnerable conditions faced by members of the LGBTIQ+ community in Colombia.

Caribe Afirmativo, an LGBTIQ+ advocacy organization based in Barranquilla, reports these deaths are part of a growing wave of systemic violence toward the LGBTIQ+ community in Colombia. They have documented at least 31 killings in 2024, with at least 16 victims who were transwomen. Atlántico is the department where most LGBTIQ+ murders occurred in 2023: 13 killings. Systemic violence against persons who identify as members of the sexual and gender diversity community leaves many, especially transwomen, in extremely vulnerable social conditions. Authorities believe that Valeska London, for example, who was killed outside a commercial establishment on Circunvar Avenue, was being extorted by a criminal organization called Los Costeños for 10 million pesos.

Because of the assassinations of Armando Torres Bohórquez, Germán Ríos Cifuentes, and Valeska London and concern for the safety of the members of the LGBTIQ+ community of all Colombia, especially transwomen, we call upon your integrity and humanity to:

- carry out a thorough and impartial investigation into the intellectual and material actors in the assassinations of Armando Torres Bohórquez, Germán Ríos Cifuentes, and Valeska London, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice, in accordance with international standards
- work to end the culture of impunity of crimes committed against members of the LGBTIQ+ community
- create a culture of economic and social inclusion to integrate transgender individuals so that they can live and work in less vulnerable conditions
- effectively comply with the creation of the mechanism for monitoring and preventing violence and discrimination against LGBTIQ+ people, as established in the National Development Plan
- guarantee that all human rights defenders, in particular LGBTIQ+ human rights defenders, are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of restrictions or reprisals in Colombia.

Sincerely,


Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordinator


Christine L. Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: Daniel García-Peña, Ambassador of Colombia to the US ~ via email, US mail
José Luis Caballero Ochoa, Rapporteur for Colombia, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) ~ via email, US mail
Roberta Clarke, Rapporteur on the Rights of LGTBI Persons, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) ~ via email, US mail
Juliette De Rivero, Representative in Colombia of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights ~ via email
Caribe Afirmativo ~ via email
Ministerio de Igualdad y Equidad / Ministry of Equality and Equity ~ via email
US Embassy: Francisco Palmieri (Chargé d'Affaires, ad interim); Adam Levy (human rights) ~ via email
US State Department: Desk Officer for Colombia ~ via email
US Senators from Ohio: Brown & Vance and US Representatives from Ohio: Beatty, Brown, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Miller, Sykes ~ via email

The following people hereby urge you to take action on this matter as indicated in this letter: