

Brussels, 13 December 2017

To:

Ms María Ángela Holguín Cuéllar
Mr Sergio Jaramillo

Cc: Mr Francisco Coy

Dear Minister, dear Ambassador,

We, the undersigned organisations, strongly condemn the assassination of Hernán Bedoya, Colombian community leader and human rights activist, [reportedly](#) by neo-paramilitary group Autodefensas Gaitanizas de Colombia. He was shot dead last Friday, 8 December, in the collective territory of Pedeguita and Mancilla, Municipality of Riosucio (Chocó) where he created the Humanitarian and Biodiversity Zone 'Mi Tierra'.

Hernán returned to his land with his family (and a group of families) in 2012 after being displaced by paramilitary groups in 1996. Since 2012 he had fought to claim back his land, denouncing palm oil, banana and rancher companies in Pedeguita and Mancilla for illegal landgrabbing and deforestation. Since 2015 Hernán had received numerous threats on his life, which were reported to the State authorities as documented by [NGO Comision Intereclesial de Justicia y Paz](#).

Hernán generously gave testimony for Transport & Environment's award-winning documentary [Frontera Invisible](#) about palm oil expansion for biodiesel production in Colombia. A short video of Hernán's last recorded testimony can be watched here: <https://youtu.be/EFMIRhNoSJY>

Hernán Bedoya is the second leader to be assassinated in the region in 10 days. [Mario Castaño Bravo](#) was murdered on 26 November. According to the Colombian government agency Defensoria del Pueblo (Ombudsman), between 1 January 2016 and 5 July 2017, [186 community leaders were murdered](#) in Colombia. In the first half of 2017, 63 rural and indigenous leaders were assassinated, according to [human rights watchdogs](#).

We deplore this appalling crime and call upon you to duly investigate this assassination and bring the perpetrators to justice. We also urge Colombia's Home Affairs Minister to take real action to protect the lives of Hernán's relatives and the dozens of threatened community leaders in the region.

Yours sincerely,

William Todts, Executive director of Transport & Environment, on behalf of Forest Peoples Programme, Rainforest Action Network, FERN, Corporate Europe Observatory, Zero Waste Europe, Ecologistas en Acción, Milieudéfensie, NABU, BirdLife Europe and Central Asia, Salva la Selva, Welthaus Graz, 2 Celsius, ZERO, Mighty Earth, Greenpeace España, Both ENDS, Quercus, Cross-Roads Festival, Rettet den Regenwald, ARA, Darnaus Vystymo Iniciatyvos, The Danish Ecological Council, Focus, Pro-regenwald, LPN, Peace Watch Switzerland, Friends of the Earth Europe, Global Witness, Oxfam.

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