



February 6, 2024

### ***Afro-Colombian Leader Should Be Released Now***

We join the voices of others in strongly condemning the illegal retention and kidnapping of Jhon Jairo Jiménez Cuesta on the 16th of January 2024. Mr. Jiménez Cuesta is an Afro-Colombian human rights defender founder of the National Ethnic Coordination for Peace (Coordinación Étnica Nacional de Paz, CENPAZ) who participated in the construction of the 2016 peace accord including the Ethnic Chapter in Havana, Cuba. Mr. Jiménez Cuesta forms part of Citizen Power (Poder Ciudadano), an organization founded by the recently deceased Senator Piedad Córdoba. He was working as a mediator between the internally displaced owners of mining operations and the National Liberation Army (Ejército Nacional de Liberación, ELN) in Micoahumado when the incident occurred.

As international organizations that monitor closely events in Colombia we strongly:

- 1) Call on the ELN to guarantee the physical integrity of Mr. Jiménez Cuesta and to immediately release him from their custody.
- 2) Urge all parties of the Peace Negotiation Table between the Colombian State and ELN should prioritize getting Mr. Jiménez Cuesta released. A similar effort as the one made that freed the Luis Manuel Díaz, father of famous soccer player Lucho Díaz on November 9, 2023, should be made for Mr. Jiménez Cuesta.
- 3) Call upon the UN Verification Mission, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights of the UN, International Committee of the Red Cross to take actions within their mandates to facilitate the release of Mr. Jiménez Cuesta.

- 4) The U.S. government and other international donors should pressure the Peace Negotiation Table to work towards releasing Mr. Jiménez Cuesta and to guarantee that the ELN no longer kidnaps civilians (either directly or indirectly by subcontracting such operations to other illegal armed groups).

As international organizations we reiterate that illegal armed groups like the ELN will not receive any support for their peace and dismantlement efforts should they continue to kidnap and otherwise commit grave human rights abuses against human rights defenders and the civilian population.

**The Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA)**

**Witness for Peace Solidarity Collective**

**Veterans Global Peace Network**

**United Church of Christ**

**Presbyterian Church USA**

**Soulsapaz**

**Latin American Working Group Education Fund**

**Institute on Race, Equality and Human Rights**

**Inequality.org**

**Colombia Human Rights Committee**

**Colombia Acuerdo de Paz NGO**

**Claretian Team at the United Nations**

**Christian Solidarity Worldwide**

**Tim Pluta**

**Walter Turner, President Board of Directors Global Exchange**

**Eunice Escobar, Association for the Creative Human Ecology**