

We, the undersigned U.S. civil society organizations, express our grave concern at the violent response by members of the Colombian armed forces and police to peasant protests in Catatumbo, Colombia.

We lament the killings of four civilians, Diomar Humberto Angarita, Hermides Palacios, Leonel Jacome and Edison Franco, allegedly by members of the police and military. We are also concerned that a verification mission that came to monitor the situation came under fire, allegedly by members of the public security forces.

We urge the Colombian government to:

- Effectively investigate these serious incidents in the civilian justice system;
- Respect the rights of peasant communities to exercise their legitimate rights to protest;
- Initiate dialogue with protestors and community members in Catatumbo in order to develop effective responses to legitimate demands; and
- Cease armed actions in Catatumbo that put at risk the lives of civilians.

We urge the U.S. State Department to consider this grave incident as it reviews how the Colombian government has met human rights conditions in U.S. law. We reiterate our conviction that the recent constitutional reforms regarding military jurisdiction are in contradiction to the requirement in these human rights conditions that all grave human rights abuses credibly alleged to be committed by members of the Colombian security forces be effectively investigated and prosecuted in civilian courts.

We express our solidarity with the family members of the four men who have been killed.

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