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S'bu Zikode  
Abahlali baseMjondolo,  
South Africa

Mr. David Boyd, United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment

Chris Grove  
Executive Director

**Re: New threats attributed to the Águilas Negras group targeting human rights defenders and political leaders in Tolima**

August 11th, 2021

Your excellency,

As the ESCR-Net - International Network for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, we are writing to express our deep concern about threats attributed to paramilitary group Águilas Negras sent via Whatsapp on July 20, 2021 to human rights defenders and political leaders including ESCR-Net members, among others, in Tolima.

ESCR-Net is the largest global network of organizations, movements and activists working to achieve economic, social, cultural and environmental justice through human rights. The Network connects more than 280 member organizations and activists from 75 countries.

The threats were declared in a pamphlet (attached) featuring a symbol of an eagle carrying two assault rifles above the words “AGUILAS NEGRAS BLOCO CENTRO-SUR”. [sic] The pamphlet calls the human rights defenders and political leaders, several identified by name, as “military targets to annihilate” and concludes with a call to action: “YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED!!! BE ADVISED AND COMPLY!!!” [sic]

The threatened activists are:

“The *exalcalducho* (derogatory term for “mayor”) Guillermo Alfonso Jaramillo, deputy Renso García, Jaime Tocora Disque environmentalists, the Indian Herminso Vega de Crid, the so-called human rights defenders Luis Duarte, Marilus Biscue, Flor Munera, Isabel Pardo, Carlos Gualteros, Eduin Enao, among others, the unions, the front line, all the leaders of social and indigenous organizations, those of the human rights network-commissions, everything that smells of the left and wants to destabilize the country, leaders and political parties that support the communist “*petro*”, supporting leftist candidates for Congress and the Presidency who want to change the rules of this country.” [sic]

These threats arise within current and historical contexts of human rights violations by paramilitary groups in Colombia, including in Tolima, with allegations incriminating the armed forces and other authorities in Colombia. The United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial executions cited the Águilas Negras in the part of his 2010 [report](#) on Colombia, describing “new illegal armed groups,” noting that their “affiliated groups may operate in up to 24 departments.” In fact, this is already the second letter we have written to your Excellency denouncing threats attributed to the Águilas Negras that are directed at human rights defenders in Tolima, including ESCR-Net members. These threats also arise in the context of recent demonstrations in Colombia that have been violently repressed by the authorities. In a [public statement](#) on May 2021, ESCR-Net condemned the violence against demonstrators in Colombia and urged the State to respect human rights, citing reports of repression by the [Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights](#), as well as several member organizations of the network. According to OHCHR’s report, “[f]rom April 28 to June 16, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) registered allegations of 56 deaths, 54 civilians and two police officers, in the context of the protests.”

The State’s lack of respect for the human rights of protesters has given confidence to extreme right-wing groups in Colombia, such as the Águilas Negras (Black Eagles). Their pamphlet, in apparent reference to the current context, accuses those threatened of being “arsonists” and of promoting “disorder” and “rebellion”. As the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights [explained](#) regarding the legitimate motivation of the demonstrations, “[t]he Commission found a broad consensus among representatives of the State and civil society regarding the causes of the unrest underlying the protests, including deep inequality in the distribution of wealth, poverty and extreme poverty, and lack of access to economic, social and cultural rights, particularly the rights to education, work and health. Also of concern are the high levels of violence and impunity, as well as ethnic-racial and gender discrimination.”

It is also important that these threats be understood as part of an illegal effort to silence and impede the legitimate defense of human rights by human rights defenders. According to a statement signed by, among others, Comité Ambiental en Defensa de la Vida, an ESCR-Net member, whose representatives are among

those threatened:

The expansion of risk has represented throughout the territory of Tolima an affront against political participation, the right to opposition, freedom of expression, social protest and peaceful assembly, as well as the mechanisms of participation that have managed to raise the voice of the people such as the Popular Consultations, which have managed to confront and question the extractivist model that represents development for the elite.”

In its most recent [report](#), the OHCHR:

received information about the killings of 49 human rights defenders (5 documented and 44 under verification): 43 men and 6 women, of whom 4 were Afro-Colombians and 10 were indigenous leaders. A total of 71 killings have been reported in 2021 (7 documented and 64 under verification): 63 men and 8 women, of whom 24 were ethnic leaders and 1 was a leader in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex community.

Also, the OHCHR warned in the same [report](#) that:

“Threats and attacks against members of political parties and elected public officials were reported in Antioquia, Bogotá, Caquetá, Chocó, Sucre and Valle del Cauca Departments. Affected parties include Alianza Verde, Centro Democrático, Colombia Humana, Comunes, Polo Democrático, Partido Conservador and Movimiento Alternativo Indígena y Social (MAIS).”

We remind Your Excellency that the Colombian State is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), among other relevant international standards. Colombia is obliged to guarantee, among other rights, the rights to life and personal integrity; these include the general obligation to investigate any violations committed by State and non-State actors, and to provide protection through legal and/or other measures, to any person whose rights to life and personal integrity are at risk. The ICCPR also recognizes the right to peaceful assembly, the right to associate freely with others and the right to participate in the conduct of public affairs, rights that the Colombian State must guarantee to environmental and human rights defenders. Colombia is also a party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which recognizes the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living, including the right to a healthy environment and to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, the right to water and the right to food, among others. In the [report](#) on its recent visit to Colombia, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights recommended that the State “[s]trengthen the guarantee and protection of [economic, social, cultural and environmental rights] ESCERs, particularly the rights to health, food, education, work and social security, with a focus on equality and non-discrimination, citizen participation and accountability that fosters social inclusion and the creation of opportunities.” The UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders determines, among other standards, “the protection by the competent authority of everyone, either individually or in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of rights referred to in the Declaration.”

Given the seriousness of these threats and the urgency of guaranteeing the human rights of those impacted, we request that the State of Colombia take the following measures:

1. Necessary and appropriate measures – if agreed with the persons being targeted – to effectively guarantee their life, personal integrity and conditions to continue their work;
2. A prompt, independent, complete and effective investigation of the facts denounced and

- measures to hold the perpetrators accountable;
3. Necessary and appropriate measures to dismantle the paramilitary groups in Tolima and the country;
  4. The full guarantee of human rights of the demonstrators, the de-escalation of violence, and reparations for the violations that occurred, along with other requests included in our [May 2021 statement](#);
  5. The ratification of the Escazú Agreement;
  6. An effective dialogue in response to the social demands of the demonstrations and full compliance with Colombia's obligations in terms of economic, social, cultural, environmental, civil and political rights; and
  7. Detailed information about the investigations and other official actions taken as a result of the alleged facts attributed to the Águilas Negras in our [first letter](#), sent in 2019.

Respectfully yours,



Chris Grove

Executive Director

ESCR-Net – International Network for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

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A11 Initiative

Abahali baseMjondolo

Above Ground

Accountability Council

Action Contre l'Impunité pour les Droits Humains (ACIDH)

ActionAid International

Adalah – The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel

Advocates for International Development (A4ID)

African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies (ACDHRS)

African Resources Watch (AfreWatch)

Al - Haq

Al-Marsad Golan

Al Mezan Center for human rights

Aliança para Promoção do Desenvolvimento da Comunidade de Hoji Ya Henda (APDCH)

All-Ukrainian Public Organization “Foundation of Medical Law and Bioethics”

Alternative ASEAN Network on Burma (ALTSEAN Burma)

Amnesty International

Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND)

Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP)

Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD)

Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)

Asociación Civil por la Igualdad y la Justicia (ACIJ)

Asociación para el Desarrollo Integral de las Víctimas de la Violencia en las Veraces, Maya Achi (ADIVIMA)

Asociación Pro Derechos Humanos

Asociación Q'ukumatz

Association for emancipation, solidarity and equality of women

Association for Law and Advocacy for Pastoralists (ALAPA)

Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID)  
Association Nigerienne de Défense des Droits de l'Homme, Niger (ANDDH)  
Association of Environmental Lawyers of Liberia (Green Advocates)  
Association Tunisienne des Femmes Démocrates (AFTD)  
Avocats Sans Frontières  
Awaj Foundation  
Bangladesh Legal Aid & Services Trust (BLAST)  
BAOBAB for Women's Human Rights  
Bretton Woods Project  
Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation  
Canada without poverty  
Center for Constitutional Rights  
Center for Economic and Social Rights (CESR)  
Center for Human Rights and Development in Rwanda (CHRD-Rwanda)  
Center for Human Rights and Environment (CHRE)  
Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL)  
Center for Reproductive Rights (CRR)  
Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL) | Rutgers University  
Centre de Recherche sur l'Environnement, la Démocratie et les Droits de l'Homme (CREDDHO)  
Centre for Applied Legal Studies (CALs)  
Centre for Democracy and Human Rights (CEDEM)  
Centre for Economic Social Cultural Rights In Africa (CESCRA)  
Centre for Equality Rights in Accomodation (CERA)  
Centre for Human Rights and Development - Mongolia (CHRD-Mongolia)  
Centre for the Sustainable use of Natural and Social Resources (CSNR)  
Centro de Archivos y Acceso a la Información Pública (CAinfo)  
Centro de Derechos Economicos y Sociales (CDES)  
Centro de Derechos Humanos | Universidad Diego Portales  
Centro de Derechos y Desarrollo (CEDAL)  
Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales (CELS)  
Centro Mexicano de Derecho Ambiental (CEMDA)  
Centro por la Justicia y el Derecho Internacional (CEJIL)  
Charter Committee on Poverty Issues  
Chiadzwa Community Development Trust  
Child Rights International Network (CRIN)  
Citizen News Service (CNS)  
Collectif des Femmes du Mali (COFEM)  
Collective for Research & Training on Development - Action (CRTD.A)  
Comisión Colombiana de Juristas (CCJ)  
Comision Mexicana de Defensa y Promocion de los Derechos Humanos (CMDPDH)  
Comité Ambiental en Defensa de la Vida  
Conectas Direitos Humanos  
Confederación Campesina del Perú (CCP)  
Consejo de Pueblos Wuxhtaj  
Conservación Investigación y Aprovechamiento de los Recursos Naturales (CIARENA)  
Construons Ensemble le Monde (ONG CEM)  
Coordinadora Andina de Organizaciones Indigenas  
Corporación Colectivo de Abogados José Alvear Restrepo (CCAJAR)  
Corporate Accountability  
Corporate Responsibility Coalition (CORE)  
Defend Job Philippines

Dejusticia - Centro de Estudios de Derecho, Justicia y Sociedad  
Desarrollo, Educación Y Cultura Autogestionarios Equipo Pueblo A.C.  
Due Process of Law Foundation (DPLF)  
Dullah Omar Institute | University of the Western Cape  
EarthRights International (ERI)  
Economic and Social Rights Academic Network — UK-Ireland  
Economic and Social Rights Centre (Hakijamii)  
Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Asia (ESCR Asia)  
Egyptian Association for Collective Rights  
Egyptian Center for Civil and Legislative Reform (ECCLR)  
Egyptian Center for Economic and Social Rights (ECESR)  
Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR)  
Ekta Parishad  
El Centro de Derechos Humanos de la Montaña “Tlachinollan”  
Endorois Welfare Council (EWC)  
EnGendeRights  
Environmental Defender Law Center (EDLC)  
Equis: Justicia para las Mujeres  
Equitable Cambodia  
Escuela Nacional Sindical (ENS)  
Estudio Para La Defensa De Los Derechos De La Mujer (Demus)  
European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN)  
European Roma Rights Centre  
Federação dos Órgãos de Assistência Social e Educacional  
Federation of women Lawyers - Kenya (FIDA - Kenya)  
Femmes Côte d'Ivoire Experience (FCIEX)  
FIAN International  
Foro Ciudadano de Participación por la Justicia y los Derechos Humanos (FOCO)  
Forum for the Protection of Public Interest (Pro Public)  
Forum Tunisien pour les Droits Economiques et Sociaux (FTDES)  
Foundation for the conservation of the Earth (FOCONE)  
Franciscans International (FI)  
Frente Autentico del Trabajo (FAT)  
Front Line Defenders (The International Foundation for the Protection of Human R...  
Fundación de Estudios para la Aplicación del Derecho (FESPAD)  
Fundacion Etnica Internacional (FEI)  
Fundación para el Desarrollo de Políticas Sustentables – FUNDEPS  
Fundacion Promocion Humana  
Fundar- Centro de Análisis e Investigación  
Georgian Young Lawyers' Association  
Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (GI-ESCR)  
Habitat International Coalition (HIC)  
Harvard Law School Project on Disability  
Human Dignity  
Human Rights Action  
Human Rights Law Centre (HRLC)  
Human Rights Law Network (HRLN)  
Inclusive Development International (IDI)  
Initiative for Gender Equality and Development in Africa  
Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (ISER)  
Institut Prometheus pour la Démocratie et les Droits Humains (IPDDH)

Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP)  
Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa (IHRDA)  
Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti (IJDH)  
Instituto de Estudios Legales y Sociales del Uruguay (IELSUR)  
Instituto de Estudos, Formação e Assessoria em Políticas Sociais (PÓLIS)  
Instituto de Formacion Feminina Integral (IFFI)  
Instituto de Liderazgo Simone de Beauvoir  
Instituto Latinoamericano de Servicios Legales Alternativos (ILSA)  
Interamerican Association for Environmental Defense (AIDA)  
International Accountability Project (IAP)  
International Commission of Jurists (ICJ)  
International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)  
International Human Rights Internship Program  
International Network of Human Rights (RIDH)  
International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific (IWRAW Asia Pacific)  
Just Associates (JASS)  
Just Fair  
Justiça Global  
Justice Pour Tous (JPT)  
Kairos - The Center for Religions, Rights and Social Justice  
Karapatan  
Kebetskache Women Development & Resource Centre  
Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC)  
Kenya Land Alliance  
Kituo Cha Sheria (Center for Legal Empowerment)  
Observatoire de la Société Civile Congolaise pour les Minerais de Paix (OSCMP)  
Labour, Health and Human Rights Development Center (LHAHRDEV)  
Law and Society Trust (LST)  
Lawyers for a Democratic Society (MINBYUN)  
Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights (YUCOM)  
Legal Resource Center  
Legal Resources Center - Ghana  
Lok Shakti Abhiyan  
Maison des Droits de l'Homme du Cameroun (MDHC)  
Manushya Foundation  
Media Mobilizing Project (MMP)  
mines,minerals & PEOPLE (mm&P)  
MiningWatch Canada  
Minority Rights Group International  
Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP)  
Movimento dos Atingidos por Barragens (MAB)  
Movimiento Unificado Francisco Sánchez-1932 (MUFRAS-32)  
Movimientos Afrocolombiano CIMARRON  
Nairobi Peoples Settlements Network (NPSN)  
Narasha Community Development Groups  
National Center for Advocacy Studies (NCAS)  
Partners for Dignity and Rights (Formerly NESRI)  
National Fisheries Solidarity Organization (NAFSO)  
National Union of Domestic Employees (NUDE)  
Natural Resource Women Platform  
Natural Resources Alliance of Kenya (KeNRA)

Nazdeek  
Network Movement for Justice and Development (NMJD)  
New Women Foundation (NWF)  
Občan, demokraciá a zodpovednosť (CDA)  
Observatoire Congolais des Droits de l'Homme (OCDH)  
Observatoire de la Societe Civile Congloaise por les Minerias de Pais  
Observatori DESC - Drets Econòmics Socials i Culturals  
Observatorio Ciudadano (OC)  
Observatorio de Política Social y Derechos Humanos (OPSDH)  
Observatorio de Política Social y Derechos Humanos de INCIDE Social, A.C  
Ogiek Peoples' Development Program (OPDP)  
Organización Fraternal Negra Hondureña (OFRANEH)  
Otros Mundos AC Chiapas  
Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum  
Participation of the Practice of Rights (PPR)  
People's Health Movement  
People's Movement for Human Rights Learning (PDHRE)  
Phenix Center  
Plataforma Dhesca Brasil  
Posco Pratirodh Sangram Samiti (PPSS)  
Programa Venezolano de Educacion Accion en Derechos Humanos  
Programme on Women's Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (PWESCR)  
Project on Organizing, Development, Education, and Research (PODER)  
Proyecto de Derechos Económicos, Sociales y Culturales (ProDESC)  
Rencontre Pour La Paix Et Les Droits De L'Homme (RPDH)  
Réseau Marocain de l'Economie Sociale et Solidaire (REMESS)  
Right To Education Initiative (RTE)  
Right to Water Forum in the Arab Region (RWFAR)  
Rights and Accountability in Development (RAID)  
Sahmakum Teang Tnaut (STT)  
Samahan Ng Manggagawang Kaagapy Sa Pag-Unlad  
Samata  
SAPCONE – Turkana People Organization  
Section 27  
Sierra Leone Network on the Right to Food (SiLNoRF)  
Syndicat National Autonome des Personnels de l'Administration Publique (SNAPAP)  
Social and Economic Rights Action Centre (SERAC)  
Social Rights Advocacy Centre (SRAC)  
Socio-Economic Rights Foundation (SRF)  
Socio-Economic Rights Institute of South Africa (SERI)  
Spaces for Youth Development and Social Change (Spaces For Change) (S4C)  
STAR Kampuchea  
Sustainable Development Foundation (SDF)  
Tamkeen Fields for Aid  
Tebtebba Foundation (Indigenous Peoples' Centre for Policy Research and Education)  
Terra de Direitos  
Thailand Burma Border Consortium (TBBC)  
The Democracy & Workers' Rights Center in Palestine (DWRC)  
The Democracy Center  
The Jus Semper Global Alliance  
The Program on Human Rights and the Global Economy (PHRGE) at Northeastern University



School of Law  
The Syrian Legal Development Programme (SLDP)  
Tierraviva a los Pueblos Indigenas del Chaco  
Unión de Trabajadoras Afrodescendientes del Servicio Doméstico - UTRASD  
United Sisterhood Alliance  
Video Volunteers (VV)  
WITNESS  
Women and Law in Southern Africa Research and Educational Trust (WLSA)  
Women in Law and Development in Africa (WiLDAF)  
Women's Economic Agenda Project (WEAP)  
Women's Rehabilitation Center (WOREC)  
World Forum of Fisher People (WFFP)  
World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)  
Zi Teng  
Zimbabwe Environmental Law Association (ZELA)  
Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association  
Alicia Ely Yamin  
Anna Cody  
Abdoul Aziz Niang  
Adams Aswani  
Alison Symington  
Ayman Bardawil  
D.J. Ravindran  
Danwood M Chirwa  
David Kinley  
Deborah Ewing  
Dolamohan Singh Babu  
Evelyne Schmid  
Ganesh Devi  
Ge Mingzhen  
George Kent  
Ingrid Gorre  
Jacques Tshibwabwa Kuditshini  
Julieta Rossi  
K'nyaw Paw  
Malcolm Langford  
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Mrs. Patricia Ramírez Parra  
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Raju Prasad Chapagai  
Pemii Benedict  
Rodrigo Bustos Bottai  
Sarmila Shrestha  
Suad Elias  
Tara Melish  
Tyler Giannini  
Vincent Calderhead  
Yves Lador  
Mary Jane Real

Robert Robertson  
Claire Mahon  
Maria Herminia Graterol Garrido  
Lisa Pusey  
Tessa Kahn  
Rasha Jarhum  
Jackie Dugard  
Lillian Chenwi  
Alison Gita Aggarwal  
Aoife Nolan  
Luis Vittor  
Charlene May  
Areli Sandoval Terán  
Melania Chiponda  
Ana Lucía Maya Aguirre