

7 March 2017

Colombia: Assassination of human rights defender Ruth Alicia Lopez Guisao

On 2 March 2017, human rights defender **Ruth Alicia Lopez Guisao** was in Medellín, Colombia, when she was shot dead by two unidentified gunmen.

[Ruth Alicia Lopez Guisao](#) was a member of *Asociación Agroecológica Interétnica e Intercultural ASONKINCHAS (Intercultural and Interethnic Agroecological Association)*. The human rights defender worked with a group of twelve indigenous and afro descendant communities of Medio San Juan and Sipí in the department of Chocó on a food security project organised by the Cumbre Agraria (Agrarian Summit). Both Ruth Alicia Lopez Guisao and her family are respected community leaders recognised for their sense of social responsibility and their solidarity with the communities in which they have lived.

On 2 March 2017, Ruth Alicia Lopez Guisao was visiting family members in the Olaya Herrera neighbourhood in Medellín, Colombia, when she was assassinated by unidentified gunmen. According to witnesses, two men fired several gun shots into Ruth Alicia Lopez Guisao's taxi. As a result of her social engagement in health and education projects, areas in which paramilitary militias want to retain control, Ruth Alicia Lopez Guisao and her family had been repeatedly threatened and forcibly displaced by paramilitary groups on several occasions. The day after the killing, Ruth Alicia Lopez Guisao's sister received a phone call from someone in the area warning her that there was a rumour that the killers were waiting at the funeral of Ruth Alicia Lopez Guisao to target her sisters and mother.

Front Line Defenders is greatly concerned over the number of killings of human rights defenders in Colombia. The killing of Ruth Alicia Lopez Guisao brings the number of community leaders killed in the country to 25 since the start of this year. In its [2017 Annual Report](#), which covers the period January to December 2016, Front Line Defenders reported 281 killings of human rights defenders worldwide. 86 of those killings took place in Colombia, which makes it the country with the highest number of killings of human rights defenders in the world.

The Colombian government signed a peace deal with *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, FARC) rebels in November 2016, but this has not made the country safer for indigenous and human rights activists. Despite all evidence to the contrary, the government continues to maintain the position that these killings are neither systematic nor linked to paramilitary activity, and refuse to recognise the cause of the deaths instead of taking actions to prevent them from happening.

Front Line Defenders strongly condemns the killing of human rights defender Ruth Alicia Lopez Guisao, as it believes that the assassination was linked with her work in defence of the rights of her community.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Colombia to:

1. Strongly condemn the killing of Ruth Alicia Lopez Guisao;

2. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of the members of the family of Ruth Alicia Lopez Guisao;
3. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the assassination of Ruth Alicia Lopez Guisao, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
4. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Colombia are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment.