

URGENT ACTION

YET ANOTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENDER KILLED

In less than a week, two members of the Ríos Vivos (Living Rivers) Movement have been killed in Antioquia, Colombia. The lives of other Ríos Vivos members are at risk as they continue demonstrating against the Hidroituango hydroelectric project.

On 8 May, **Luis Alberto Torres Montoya**, 35, and his brother Duvián Andrés Correa Sánchez were killed by unknown assailants in the sector known as El Pescadero while working in the field. Luis Torres was a member of the Association of artisanal miners and fishermen of Puerto Valdivia, and part of the **Antioquia Ríos Vivos Movement** (Movimiento Ríos Vivos Antioquia, MRVA); he was an active leader in his community. This killing occurred six days after unknown assailants murdered **Hugo Albeiro George Pérez** in Puerto Valdivia, as the community was preparing a new demonstration against the Hidroituango hydroelectric project to denounce the damages the dam has brought to the area. Both Luis Torres and Hugo George publicly opposed the construction of the dam and demanded compensation for affected families in 2013 after the construction of a road connecting it with Puerto Valdivia impacted their land and their farming activities.

Heavy rain has blocked a tunnel built by the hydroelectric project that helps divert the Cauca river. This caused an increase in water levels that, according to Ríos Vivos, has caused flooding affecting nearby communities. Medellín Energy Company (Empresas Públicas de Medellín, EPM), who are in charge of the dam construction, announced that the tunnel will be cleared by flooding the controlling room area. Ríos Vivos said that once the blockage is cleared, there is still a risk that water levels will rise, potentially affecting communities further up the river.

Members of the Ríos Vivos movement told Amnesty International that government authorities continue to delegitimize their work. The Ministry of the Interior, which is responsible for the collective Prevention and Protection plan for Ríos Vivos members, has not taken any specific steps to implement a comprehensive collective protection plan for them. They state that the authorities are also reluctant to recognize the dire situation that inhabitants of the area are living in and the potential threat that the floods might cause to the environment. Ríos Vivos is calling on the regional government to declare a social and environmental emergency in the area.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Requesting that authorities conduct a prompt, thorough and impartial investigation into the killing of Hugo Albeiro George Pérez and Luis Alberto Torres Montoya taking into account their roles defending the rights of those affected by the Hidroituango hydroelectric project, and that all those found responsible be brought to justice;
- Calling for full and immediate implementation of the collective Prevention and Protection Plan for members of the Ríos Vivos Movement;
- Demanding that they take immediate steps to overcome the structural causes behind the threats, killings and attacks faced by human rights defenders in the context of the Hidroituango hydroelectric project.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 21 JUNE 2018 TO:

Attorney General

Nestor Humberto Martínez
Fiscal General de Colombia
Diagonal 22B No. 52-01
Bogotá, D.C., Colombia
Email: contacto@fiscalia.gov.co,
denuncie@fiscalia.gov.co

**Salutation: Dear Attorney General/
Estimado Señor Fiscal**

Ministry of Interior

Guillermo Rivera Flórez
Ministro del Interior
Calle 12 B No. 8 – 46
Bogotá D.C., Colombia
E-mail:
servicioalciudadano@mininterior.gov.co

**Salutation: Dear Minister/ Estimado
Señor Ministro**

And copies to:

Gobernación de Antioquia
Calle 42B Número 52- 106
Medellín, Antioquia
E-mail:
gobernaciondeantioquia@antioquia.gov.co

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 88/18. Further information:

www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr23/8360/2018/en/

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 2 May, unknown assailants killed Hugo Albeiro George Pérez, 47, a member of the Association for Victims and Individuals affected by Megaprojects (Asociación de Víctimas y Afectados por Megaproyectos, ASVAM), part of the Antioquia Ríos Vivos Movement (MRVA). Two armed men on motorcycles shot him twice while he was in a café in Puerto Valdivia in northern Antioquia, resulting in his death. Hugo George's nephew, Domar Egidio Zapata George, 23, was also killed during the course of the attack. These events took place the same day as Ríos Vivos organized an all-day demonstration, where around 160 people gathered to express their concerns over flooding and the risk of avalanches in their communities.

People from the Ríos Vivos movement told Amnesty International that despite police presence after Hugo George was killed, authorities did not restrict access to the crime scene, and the body was moved without forensic protocol being followed. They also denounced that the governor of Antioquia and the Antioquia police denied that Hugo George was a leader from their movement in public declarations. On previous occasions, regional authorities have publicly delegitimized the Ríos Vivos movement.

Construction of the Hidroituango hydroelectric project began in 2010. The dam is located on the Cauca river in Antioquia. One of the stated activities of the project includes the "temporary diversion of the Cauca river", amongst other activities. According to Ríos Vivos, more than 500 families have been displaced as a consequence of the project to date. Hidroituango's own social and environmental impact study states that the communities of Oroabajo and Barbacoas in the area "will be completely flooded" as a result of the project.

The dam is being built by EPM Ituango, a consortium of the Medellín Energy Company (Empresas Públicas de Medellín, EPM) and the Antioquia government. The project is also partly financed by the Inter-American Development Bank. EPM wants to flood the area on 1 July 2018 in order to start operations by 30 November.

In the context of protests against the Hidroituango hydroelectric project, Ríos Vivos reports that 151 attacks have been carried out against its members, and three members have been killed. A further two attempts have reportedly been made against the lives of its members, and more than 60 threats have been recorded.

On 20 April 2018, 25 members of the European parliament sent a letter to the Colombian authorities expressing their concern about the situation of the inhabitants of this area before the imminent filling of the dam. They expressed great concern regarding the fact that the dam is located in an area with the presence of mass graves and scattered bodies, to date 159 bodies have been exhumed, but there is a high probability that many more bodies will be found there.

A collective Prevention and Protection plan was granted to members of the Ríos Vivos movement in 2013, however, to date, authorities have reportedly not initiated implementation of this plan. To this regard, a group of deputies from Sweden sent a letter requesting the implementation of the MRVA Prevention and Protection Plan.

According to the NGO Somos Defensores, more than 40 human rights defenders have been killed in Colombia since the beginning of the year.

Name: Luis Alberto Torres Montoya (m), Hugo Albeiro George Pérez (m) and other members of the Antioquia Ríos Vivos Movement
Gender m/f: all

Further information on UA: 88/18 Index: AMR 23/8384/2018 Issue Date: 10 May 2018