

# *Call for end to killings of Colombian activists*

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Bogota, March 20 (RHC)-- Human rights organizations in Colombia demanded this Friday an end to the murders of social leaders in the country at the hands of paramilitary armed groups in a trend that, they denounce, is on the rise in this year 2021.

The Human Rights networks of the departments of Putumayo, Cauca and Nariño issued a joint statement in which they demanded the government of President Iván Duque to investigate the cases and facts related to these deaths, and to implement plans to establish peace in the regions in conflict. They also called for the creation of protection mechanisms for the early warnings that should be processed by the Ombudsman's Office, which is called upon to adopt a firm position regarding the selective elimination of these social actors.

The signatories hold the national government, local authorities and the military forces responsible for the inefficiency with which they confront these armed groups, including paramilitaries and drug trafficking gangs. They also demand justice for the cases they consider to be in impunity and the "lack of commitment" to the reality of these regions, many of which are areas of conflict between the aforementioned criminal organizations.

The communiqué condemned the assassination the day before of the mayoress of the indigenous council of Camentzá Biyá, María Bernarda Juajibioy, and her almost two year old granddaughter, an act condemned by important sectors of the political and social life of the country.

According to data from the Instituto de Estudios para el Desarrollo y la Paz, more than 30 social leaders and human rights defenders have been murdered so far this year, a figure that exceeds that of the same period in 2020.

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