

LASA condemns attempt on Afro-Colombian social leaders and pleads with the government to defend their rights

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Since last August, the Latin American Studies Association (LASA) has expressed its concern for the growing number of threats and murders of defenders of human rights in Colombia, including social and community leaders and journalists.

At this time, LASA expresses its rejection of the attempt to make victims of various social leaders and human rights defenders from Cauca, among them Carlos Rosero and Francia Marquez. Rosero is the founder of Proceso de Comunidades Negras (PCN), one of the largest Afro-Colombian organizations in the country; he was one of the winners of the 2006 LASA award “Otros Saberes”, which involved a collaborative investigation jointing the academic world and civil society, and an academic publication and co-organizer of an academic panel in the last LASA congress in Barcelona in 2018. Marquez is a recognized Afro-Colombian leader, winner of the 2015 National Award for the defense of human rights in Colombia from the Swiss organization Diakonía, and in April 2018 the Goldman Environmental Award. He is currently a member of the National Council for Peace and Coexistence, an organization created to monitor compliance with peace treaties.

The event occurred on Saturday, May 4 in the afternoon in the rural zone of Santander de Quilichao, during a meeting of various leaders of the Asociación de Consejos Comunitarios del Norte de Cauca (ACONC – North Cauca Community Council Association) preparing for a meeting with the government on May 8, under the framework of the “Minga Nacional por la Vida, el Territorio, la Democracia, la Justicia y la Paz (National Cooperative Movement for Life, Territory, Democracy, Justice and Peace)”, a social movement that has brought together ethnic, rural and popular social forces throughout the country. During the event, two men from the Unidad Nacional de Protección (UNP – National Protection Unit) were wounded after repelling the rifle and grenade attack by illegal armed forces.

LASA condemns this attempt and once again asks the Colombian government to guaranty the protection of social leaders so that defenders of human rights can meet freely and work for their communities. It also demands an investigation of the events and appropriate punishment of those who are found to be responsible.

About LASA

With more than half a century of history, the Latin American Studies Association (LASA) is the largest professional association in the world that brings together individuals and institutions dedicated to the study of Latin America from a multidisciplinary perspective. LASA has more than 12,000 members worldwide, and has a section specialized in Colombian matters.

If you wish to interview a LASA Executive Council member, you can contact the LASA communications office at (412) 648-7929 or lasa@lasaweb.org.

LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION

416 Bellefield Hall
University of Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh, PA 15260
lasa@lasaweb.org
Tel: 412-648-7929
Fax: 412-624-7145

