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Attorney General Néstor Humberto Martínez,

We the undersigned organizations and individuals are writing to express our opposition to what appear to be unfair and politically motivated charges against human rights defenders from the Afro-Colombian Community Council of Alto Mira and Frontera.

Ms. Quiñonez and Ms. Valencia are members of the Black Communities' Process (*Proceso de Comunidades Negras*, PCN) social movement, and they have risked their lives to legitimately defend the individual and collective rights of Afro-Colombians. For decades, their home – the Afro-Colombian Community Council of Alto Mira and Frontera – has been subjected to violence and dispossession at the hands of paramilitary groups, guerrilla groups, narcotics traffickers, soldiers, and multinational corporations.

In 2012, another PCN activist, Felix Banguero, was arrested along with 27 others under similar circumstances for allegedly belonging to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). After spending more than two years in an overcrowded prison, Banguero was released based on insufficient evidence. He continues to maintain his innocence and remains committed to the struggle for Afro-Colombian rights. We are very concerned that Ms. Quiñonez and Ms. Valencia are potentially confronting a similar situation that violates their basic human rights.

Ms. Quiñonez and Ms. Valencia have established trajectories as human rights defenders. Ms. Quiñonez currently has protective measures from the Inter-American Human Rights Commission (IACHR) of the Organization of American States (OAS) due to death threats against her and the entire leadership of the Afro-Colombian Community Council of Alto Mira and Frontera. Ms. Tulia Maris Valencia, Sara's mother, is also a well-known leader of the women's group and serves on local committees in the Afro-Colombian Community Council. They both continued to defend the rights of the Afro-Colombian Community Council, even after the high-profile murders of their fellow community leaders Genaro Garcia in 2015 and Jair Cortés in 2017. Following the murders, Ms. Quiñonez and Ms. Valencia were forcibly displaced with their family to another part of the country where Ms. Quiñonez received protection measures provided by Colombia's National Protection Unit (UNP). Now, the government appears to be criminalizing their efforts to defend the constitutionally recognized collective and territorial rights of Afro-Colombian people.

Defending human rights is not a crime!
Defending Afro-Colombian rights is not a crime!
Defending women's rights is not a crime!
Defending territorial rights is not a crime!

We join the call of Colombian social movements: Drop the baseless charges against Ms. Quiñonez and Ms. Valencia and immediately release them!

Please contact PCN Human Rights and International Coordinator Charo Mina Rojas at +57-314-370-8931 or charominarojas@gmail.com if you have any questions or comments in relation to the letter.