



Ambassador Antonio José Ardila  
Embassy of Colombia  
3 Hans Crescent  
London  
SW1X 0LN

**14 October 2020**

Dear Ambassador,

We are writing to express our strong concern at the murder of yet another trade unionist in the FENSUAGRO agricultural union, Jayder Quintana.

Workers Uniting is an international trade union formed by the largest private sector union in Great Britain and Ireland, Unite the Union, and the largest private sector union in North America the United Steelworkers, and Los Mineros of Mexico, representing more than 3 million workers in the United Kingdom, Ireland, USA, Canada and Mexico. Workers Uniting has a long-running partnership with FENSUAGRO and Worker Uniting members have met with FENSUAGRO trade unionists on delegations to Colombia organised by the British-Irish organisation, Justice for Colombia (JFC).

On Saturday 3 October, Jayder was killed in Cajibío, department of Cauca. He was only 18 years old, with his life ahead of him, yet he was utterly committed to the defence of human rights and improving social conditions in his community, as evidenced by his membership in the PUPSOC human rights organisation and the ANZORC peasant farmers association.

In May 2019, Jayder attended a meeting in Cajibío between local communities impacted by human rights violations and a JFC delegation, which included Unite the Union executive council member Philippa Marsden. In a statement, the delegates said that during the meeting they ‘heard about the horrific number of killings of social leaders and the death threats received on a regular basis from paramilitary successor groups’.

Since the peace agreement was signed in November 2016, FENSUAGRO has registered more than 30 of its members killed. According to the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), Colombia is the world’s most dangerous country for organised labour, with 14 documented murders of trade unionists between January 2019 and March 2020.

In its latest report on the peace process, published on 25 September, the United Nations Verification Mission said that ‘Cauca remains one of the most dangerous departments for social leaders.’ It is extremely alarming that even though the dire security conditions in Cauca are well-documented, authorities appear unable to curtail the devastating impact of violence on local communities also affected by structural poverty and state abandonment.

The rise in massacres this year suggest that the security situation is deteriorating, despite repeated warnings and recommendations for urgent measures from the UN and other bodies. According to the Institute for Studies in Development and Peace (INDEPAZ), the murders of four people in Valle del Cauca on 9 October was the 67<sup>th</sup> massacre committed in Colombia in 2020. Many attacks have taken place in zones subject to early warnings by the Ombudsman’s Office yet it appears that in several instances this has been ineffective to prevent attacks.

The renewal of the UN Mission’s mandate for another year is a positive step and we strongly hope that its observations will elicit the recommended response from the government. While we welcome the recent convening of the National Commission of Security Guarantees, we hope the Commission will engage in dialogue with civil society organisations to finalise its policy towards dismantling armed groups so that this may be implemented as soon as possible.

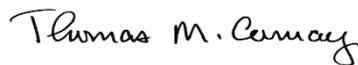
We urge authorities to ensure all necessary resources are provided to carry out thorough investigations of Jayder’s murder and those of other human rights defenders. We ask that any outstanding petitions for protective measures are swiftly processed to improve security for individuals and communities.

We also ask that you raise these concerns with the relevant authorities in Colombia and that you provide information about any investigations into Jayder’s killing.

Yours sincerely,



Len McCluskey  
General Secretary,  
Unite the Union



Tom Conway  
International President,  
United Steelworkers



Napoleón Gómez Urrutia  
President and General Secretary,  
National Union of Mine, Metal, Steel  
and Related Workers of the Mexican  
Republic

C.C.

- Wendy Morton MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary for the Americas
- Ambassador Colin Martin-Reynolds, British Ambassador to Colombia
- Rosario Herrera, Human Rights Attaché, Embassy of Colombia to the UK
- Federación Nacional Sindical Unitaria Agropecuaria, FENSUAGRO
- Justice for Colombia