

9 August 2019

Our reference: MIN-61877-2019

Louise Winstanley
ABColumbia Programme and Advocacy Manager
Romero House
55 Westminster Bridge Road
London
SE1 7JB



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

King Charles Street
London SW1A 2AH

Minister of State

Dear Ms Winstanley,

Thank you for your email of 30 July, expressing concern at threats against members of the Colombian human rights organisation CIJP and violence in the Chocó region. I am replying as minister responsible for our relations with Colombia.

I welcome ABColumbia's long-standing commitment to human rights in Colombia, and share your concern at these threats. As you know, the United Kingdom frequently raises human rights issues with the Colombian government, directly and in multilateral fora. We are also making a difference on the ground, in the form of programmes led and funded by the British Embassy in Bogotá.

As your letter acknowledges, the Colombian state is already providing protection measures to many social leaders across the country. But the threats you mention prove that there is much work to be done. We consistently press the Colombian government to focus on extending the rule of law to all parts of Colombia: I will continue to reiterate this message in my interactions with members of their government. More widely, the United Kingdom's significant programming support to Colombia, across a range of issues from rural development to climate change, helps improve the socio-economic conditions in Colombia's rural areas, creating an environment where it is easier to guarantee human rights.

Our Embassy continues to raise specific threats with the relevant state actors in Colombia, and will follow up on the threats you mention in your letter.

We are proud to hold the pen on the Colombian peace process at the United Nations Security Council. We value the UN's presence in Colombia and the work done by the High Commissioner for Human Rights (HCHR). Given the Colombian government's recent request of an extension of the UN's Verification Mission, we hope that they will also extend the HCHR's mandate. The decision and request can only be made by the Colombian government, but our Embassy in Bogotá will make clear to the Foreign Ministry that the United Kingdom supports an extension.

Yours sincerely
Christopher Pincher

RT HON CHRISTOPHER PINCHER MP