

Public Statement

The Cuero Sinisterra family expresses dissatisfaction with the latest developments concerning the case of our father **BERNARDO CUERO BRAVO**, who was killed on 7 June 2017, for his human rights defense work for Afro-Colombian communities and the victims of the armed conflict.

His murder occurred in the municipality of Malambo in Atlántico, a territory in which he served as a representative of Afrodes Atlántico, a member of the Atlántico Victims Working Group, as well as the chairman of the community action board (*junta de acción*) of the Villa Esperanza neighborhood of Malambo – where he was killed. In this statement we want to express our sadness, pain and helplessness, by the unfair decision of the Single Specialized Criminal Court of Barranquilla (***Juzgado Unico Penal Especializado de Barranquilla***). The Judge from this court decided on June 2, 2020, that due to “expirations of terms” – a feature of the Colombian legal system in which those being accused of a crime can be freed from detention while they await trial if the Court hasn’t received a written accusation in a hearing – the alleged material author of the murder of our father, Mr. **VÍCTOR CARLOS MERIÑO PEREIRA**, was set free. As the children of Bernardo Cuero Bravo, we do not understand the reasons behind this situation, and as such, we decided to publish this statement so that the Government of Colombia and its judicial branch can provide us with information on why this decision was made.

- 1- We request that the Attorney General’s Office, as the prosecutor, publicly announce if the evidence in this case was insufficient to prevent our father’s death from being left in impunity.
- 2- We request that the Single Specialized Criminal Court of Barranquilla explain the reasons as to why the hearings that would have sentenced Mr. Víctor Carlos Meriño were not held. Instead, the court favored granting him liberty through expiration of terms.

Today, Bernardo’s three children, are far from our country as victims of this situation. We suffer the consequences of being children of a social leader. Our father’s mistake, like that of other social leaders who have been killed, was to work relentlessly to contribute to a stable and lasting peace for our country. We strive for our country to be a place where the most vulnerable, like Afro-Colombian communities and victims of the armed conflict, can effectively enjoy our rights.

#JUSTICIAXBERNARDO
Justice for Bernardo