

March 2020

COLOMBIA: Speak up for water defenders under attack

Isabel Zuleta cares deeply about the Cauca River and all the life it sustains in her homeland of Colombia.

The river used to be full of fish. It provided both food and income for many families who rely on fishing to survive.

But that all changed when the government approved the construction of a huge dam. The dam turned a running river into a pool of still water to create electricity.

The dam stopped fish from swimming up the river to lay their eggs and reproduce. It upset the ecology of the river which means it changed how the plants and organisms relate to the river. The dam affected all the life that depends on a running river.

Isabel joined with other people in a movement called Ríos Vivos, which is Spanish for 'Living Rivers'.

Together, they started speaking out against the dam. They organized

rallies and campaigns to defend their right to a healthy environment.

Doing so takes courage. Leaders of Ríos Vivos have been killed. So have their relatives.

Others, like Isabel, are under attack. Recently, she got messages saying that she and other river defenders would be killed if they do not stop speaking out against the dam.

Isabel visited Canada last year. She told us that messages of concern from people in Canada about river defenders in Colombia are incredibly

important. Writing letters to the government can help to protect lives.

Please share your worry about the safety of Isabel and other river defenders with Colombia's ambassador in Canada. Your letter could be a lifesaver.



Isabel Zuleta via wikidata.org



A fisher on the Cauca River throws his net
Photo credit: Ríos Vivos via
<https://riosvivoscolombia.org/en/>

WHAT CAN I DO?



Write a short, polite letter to Colombia's Ambassador. He represents the government of Colombia in Canada and communicates constantly with officials who make decisions in Colombia.

- Start your letter with Dear Ambassador.
- Then tell him something about yourself to make your message unique.
- Tell the Ambassador how worried you are about the safety of Isabel Zuleta and all the water defenders of the Ríos Vivos Movement because of the threats, attacks and killings that have taken place.
- Request concrete action to protect them from harm.
- You may also ask for guarantees that the government will protect the right to a healthy environment for everyone in Colombia.

WHERE DO I SEND MY MESSAGE?

His Excellency Federico Eduardo Hoyos Salazar
Ambassador for Colombia
360 Albert Street, Suite 1002
Ottawa, Ontario K1R 7X7

Postage: 92¢
Fax: 613 230 4416
E-mail: ecanada@cancilleria.gov.co



WHAT ELSE CAN I DO?

Create a card or a picture and write on it: **Desde Canadá, solidaridad con los defensores de Ríos Vivos** (This is Spanish for 'In Canada, solidarity with the defenders of Rios Vivos). You could add **¡Ríos para la vida!** ('Rivers for Life!' is a slogan of the Ríos Vivos Movement). Add your name and community.

Send us what you create. We will deliver it to Isabel Zuleta so that she and other river defenders know they have support in Canada.

Isabel Zuleta
c/o Amnesty International
3-1992 Yonge Street
Toronto, Ontario M4S 1Z7



Here are some members of the Movement.
Photo credit: riosvivoscolombia.org

If you have not received this Lifesaver directly from Amnesty International's Toronto office and would like future actions, reach us at the contact information in the header. There is no cost.