

via fax: 011 57 1 337 5890/342 0592 Sr. Alvaro Uribe Velez Presidente de la Republica de Colombia	via fax: 011 571 640 04 91 Dr. Volmar Antonio Pérez Ortiz Defensoría del Pueblo de Colombia
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October 14, 2006

Dear Sirs:

We are deeply concerned about the recent discovery of an Attorney General's report and assassination plot targeting 13 human rights defenders in Cali Department, including **Berenice Celeyta Alayon** and **Senator Alexander López Maya**. The report's accusation that they are part of a narco-terrorist network and have ties to illegal guerrilla organizations is totally false. Rather, they are doing work that is vital to protecting the human rights of economically disadvantaged and vulnerable Colombians.

The latest plans to harm Ms. Celeyta, Senator López, and the 11 other human rights defenders seem to follow the pattern of Operation Dragon, a plot to kill 175 human rights defenders that was discovered in 2004 and involved named Colombian military officers. We are dismayed that, after two years, no one has been prosecuted for orchestrating Operation Dragon, despite the existence of clear evidence linking members of the military to plans to kill human rights defenders. We are further dismayed that Operation Dragon apparently involves officials at the Attorney General's Office and the Interior Ministry's Protection Program.

We remind you that the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which Colombia has ratified, protects human rights defenders' right to freedom of expression. Where that right is breached by acts of intimidation, the ICCPR also obliges state parties to investigate those violations. The 1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders also requires States to protect human rights defenders against attacks or threats. Moreover, it calls upon state parties to conduct exhaustive and impartial investigations into allegations of human rights violations.

Therefore, **we strongly urge you to**

- publicly declare that human rights defenders such as Ms. Celeyta and Senator López are not terrorists but instead perform valuable human rights work;
- provide the 13 threatened human rights defenders with adequate protection to guarantee their security, integrity, and ability to perform their work in an unimpeded manner;
- conduct exhaustive, impartial, and public investigations into those responsible for Operation Dragon and the recent Attorney General's report and effectively prosecute those individuals.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Coordinator

Copies: Carolina Barco Iskson, Colombian Ambassador to the US ~ via fax
William B Wood US Ambassador to Colombia ~ via fax
Heather Merritt, Desk Officer for Colombia, US State Department ~ via fax
Paolo Carozza, US member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights~ fax: (202)458-3992
U.S. Senators DeWine and Voinovich ~ via email
U.S. Representatives Brown, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Ryan, Tubbs Jones ~ via email

Human Rights First.org

The following people hereby urge you to take action on this matter as indicated in this letter: