



InterReligious Task Force on Central America

3606 Bridge Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio 44113
tel: 216.961.0003 fax: 216.961.0002 e-mail: irtf@igc.org

via fax: 011 593 2 258 1030

Dr. Oswaldo Molestina Zavala

Minister of the Interior & Justice, Ecuador

via fax: 011 593 2 255 8565

Dra. Cecilia Armas Tobar

Acting Attorney General, Ecuador

September 26, 2005

Dear Sir/Madam:

We are concerned for the safety of Colombian human rights defender **Lina Maria Espinoza Villegas**, who has been helping communities involved in protests against oil companies operating in Ecuador's Northern Amazon region. Lina is a missionary working in the city of El Coca in Orellana province. Between August 24 and August 28 she received anonymous telephone death threats. We fear that her life may be in danger.

In mid-August ten days of strikes and demonstrations began in Orellana and Sucumbios provinces. Local communities were demanding that a greater proportion of oil revenues be spent on building roads, schools and hospitals in the areas where the transnational oil companies are operating. During the protests, Maria Espinoza Villegas visited these communities to tell the inhabitants of their rights and document allegations of human rights violations by the police and the armed forces in Orellana. Maria Espinoza Villegas also took part as an observer in the negotiations between the communities and the authorities that finally resulted in an agreement that was signed on August 25.

We urge you to:

- order a prompt and effective investigation into the death threats, make the findings public and bring those responsible to justice;
- guarantee the safety of Lina Maria Espinoza Villegas, according to her wishes;
- adhere to your obligations regarding the protection of human rights defenders, as laid out in the UN Human Rights Defenders Declaration, and the Organization of American States resolution on human rights defenders of June 2004.

Thank you for your prompt attention.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Coordinator

cc: Comisión Ecuánica de Derechos Humanos (CEDHU) ~ 011 593 2 258 9272
Centro de Documentación en Derechos Humanos ~ 011 593 2 254 3845
Acting Ambassador of Ecuador to the US ~ 1 202 667 3482
Luis Alberto Moreno, Colombian Ambassador to the US ~ via fax: 1 202 232 8643
William B Wood, US Ambassador to Colombia ~ via fax: 011-571-315-2197
Heather Merritt, Desk Officer for Colombia, US State Dept ~ via fax: 202.647.2628
U.S. Senators DeWine and Voinovich ~ via email
U.S. Representatives Brown, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Ryan, Tubbs Jones ~ via email

UA 232/05 Ecuador

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