

via fax: 011 57 1 565 7682 <b>Dr. Francisco Santos Calderon</b> Vice-president of the Republic of Colombia	via fax: 011 57 1 337 5890 / 342 0592 <b>Señor Presidente Alvaro Uribe Velez</b> President of the Republic of Colombia
via fax: 011 57 1 570 2000 ex.2017 <b>Dr. Mario German Iguaran Arana</b> Attorney General of Colombia	

November 11, 2007

Dear Sirs:

We are extremely concerned about threats on the life of **Oscar Maussa**, leader of the **Blanquicet Farm Workers' Cooperative (COOTRAGROBLAN) in Antioquia Department**. On October 5, six gunmen in military uniforms, who said they were paramilitaries, took up positions next to the La Esperanza Farm in Blanquicet. They searched vehicles leaving the farm and asked the drivers to take them to various other places along the road. On October 6, a man told a COOTRAGROBLAN member that the leader of the paramilitary group operating in the area was looking for Oscar Maussa in order to kill him.

COOTRAGROBLAN was set up by workers from La Esperanza farm to work towards an improvement of their livelihoods; they were forced to flee the farm after paramilitaries occupied it in 1996. In June 2005 the Colombian judicial authorities issued a resolution calling for the La Esperanza farm to be returned to its rightful owners, the members of COOTRAGROBLAN. In 2006 the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) urged the Colombian government to protect Oscar Maussa and his family, as well as three other families that are part of COOTRAGROBLAN. Oscar Maussa has also submitted complaints of paramilitary activity to the authorities. He sought help from IACHR In March 2007.

COOTRAGROBLAN members started to return to La Esperanza in June 2007, despite reports that army-backed paramilitaries under the name Black Eagles (Aguilas Negras) were still operating in the area. Although Oscar Maussa has reportedly fled the area, we believe that he and other members of the workers' cooperative are in grave danger because paramilitaries operate freely—despite a heavy military presence in the region. Over the last year, people who have sought to reclaim lands from paramilitaries have been threatened or even killed.

Because of the brutal violence that is affecting not only Oscar Maussa but millions of civilians caught in the middle of this conflict, **we strongly urge you to take the following actions:**

- order full and impartial investigations into the threat to Oscar Maussa, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- take all measures necessary, as deemed appropriate by the community themselves, to guarantee the safety of the members of COOTRAGROBLAN Farm Workers' Cooperative, and to guarantee them a safe return to La Esperanza farm;
- take decisive action, in line with repeated UN recommendations, to confront and dismantle paramilitary groups operating in the region and to break their links with the security forces.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai, Coordinator

Copies: Justicia y Paz Intereclesial via US mail  
 Carolina Barco Iskson, Colombian Ambassador to the US ~ via fax: 202.232.8643  
 Ambassador William Brownfield, US Ambassador to Colombia ~ via fax: 011.571.315.2197  
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 Paolo Carozza US member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202.458.3992  
 US Senators Brown & Voinovich and US Representatives Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Regula, Ryan, Tubbs Jones ~ via email

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