

via fax: 011 57 1 337 5890

Alvaro Uribe Vélez
President of the Republic

via fax: 011 57 1 570 2000 ext 2017

Dr. Mario Germán Iguaran Arana
Attorney General of the Republic of Colombia

via fax: 011 57 1 565 9797

Dr. Carlos Franco Echevarria
Director of the Presidential Program for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law

May 26, 2008

Dear Sirs:

We are extremely concerned for the safety and welfare of refugees and their leaders from Colombia's internal conflicts. On May 13 unknown persons riding a motorcycle shot and killed **Julio César Molina**, director of the New Dawn Humanitarian Foundation and a leader of refugees who were displaced to Ansermanueva in the Valle del Cauca Department.

Molina was shot near the Germania estate where he and his family had been living with 11 other refugee families since January 2007. Five years earlier the family had fled from rightwing paramilitaries in Vista Hermosa in Meta Department and sought land to farm in Valle del Cauca. At a ceremony on December 20, 2004, Colombian president Alvaro Uribe Vélez officially presented 20 families, including Molina's, with three estates seized from the extradited landowner Alberto Monsalve. However, the families were not able to use the land until legal issues were settled. They received threats after moving to the Germania estate. Molina tried from January 2008 until his death to get the local government to provide protection, but without success.

At his funeral in the town of Cartago on May 14, Molina was praised for his hard work for the refugees. That evening, after the funeral, the families in Germania were again threatened with death if they didn't leave the region. On May 16, men on motorcycles left death "sentences" for other refugee leaders saying they would die if they talked.

On May 16 the Bogotá office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (ACNUR) and the Office of the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights (OACNUDH) condemned Molina's murder and expressed concern for other refugee leaders in the area. The agencies indicated that Molina's killing was "connected to his reports on the misuse of lands taken from narco traffickers and turned over to displaced persons." It is also feared that "there was a connection with his work training victims about their right to reparations."

As a result of the above events and our concern for the safety of these refugees, we **strongly urge** you to:

- ensure that all measures are taken to guarantee the safety of the refugees and their leaders;
- order full and impartial investigations into the death of Julio César Molina, publish the results and bring all those responsible to justice;
- produce policy and plans, in conjunction with human rights defenders, to guarantee their safety according to the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights and Responsibilities of Individuals, Groups and Institutions to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and make these plans public.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Coordinator

cc: Dr. Volmar Antonio Perez Ortiz, National Human Rights Ombudsman ~ via fax: 011.571.640.04.91
UN High Commissioner on Human Rights, Office in Colombia ~ via fax 011-571-658-3301
Carolina Barco Isakson, Colombian Ambassador to the US ~ via fax: 202.232.8643
William Brownfield, US Ambassador to Colombia ~ via fax: 011.571.315.2197
Heather Merritt, Desk Officer for Colombia, US State Department ~ via fax: 202.647.4173
Paolo Carozza US member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202.458.3992
US Senators Brown & Voinovich and US Representatives Latta, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Regula, Ryan, Sutton, Tubbs Jones ~ via email

WNU#947 5/18/08Colombia

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