

via fax: 011 57 1 337 58 90 Presidente Álvaro Uribe Vélez President of the Republic of Colombia	via fax: 011 57 1 565 7682 Dr. Francisco Santos Calderon Vice President of the Republic of Colombia
via fax: 011 57 1 570 2000 Dr. Mario German Iguaran Arana Attorney General of Colombia	

March 1, 2009

Dear Sirs:

We, members of the InterReligious Task Force, are deeply concerned for the safety of seven human rights organizations and trade unions working in the city of Bucaramanga, Department of Santander, whose members have been threatened by the paramilitary group Bucaramanga Metropolitan Bloc of the New Generation of Black Eagles.

On January 27, a written death threat signed by the Black Eagles was delivered by courier to the Bucaramanga office of the women's human rights group Organizacion Femenina Popular (**OFP**). It named seven human rights organizations and trade unions working in Bucaramanga: **Asapaz**, **Guayacan**, the Association of the Families of the Detained/Disappeared (**ASFADDES**), the oil workers' union (**USO**), the Committee of Solidarity for Political Prisoners (**CSPP**) and the Trade Union Congress (**CUT**). Similar threats were received by the CSPP's office on January 28 and by the Bucaramanga office of ASFADDES on February 2.

The threat claimed to be "a posthumous message to those who encourage the commemoration of the cleansing carried out by the AUC in Barrancabermeja...[if you] carry on doing stupid things you will have the same future." The seven organizations named in the threat had taken part in a vigil on January 23 commemorating the Barrancabermeja massacre of May 1998 in which 30 civilians lost their lives at the hands of paramilitaries. During the vigil, the organizations called for political action to provide truth, justice and reparation to the relatives of the victims. On the same day, the remains of five of the victims exhumed from mass graves were handed over to their relatives in Bucaramanga.

These are the latest in ongoing threats against trade unions working in Bucaramanga, especially SINALTRAINAL, about which we have sent you many letters, the most recent on July 14, 2008. Since 1992 we have sent you nine letters about our concern for the safety of OFP members and their defenders, the most recent on July 16, 2008.

Again, **we strongly urge** that you:

- take effective action to protect members of human rights organizations and trade unions working in Bucaramanga, who have received death threats signed by a paramilitary group;
- order full and impartial investigations into the threats, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups, in line with stated government commitments and recommendations made by the UN and other intergovernmental organizations;
- produce policy and plans, in conjunction with human rights defenders, to guarantee their safety according to the principles of the UN Declaration on the Rights and Responsibilities of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and make these plans public.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Coordinator

cc: ASFADDES Association of the Families of the Detained/Disappeared ~ via US mail
 OFP Organizacion Femenina Popular ~ via US mail
 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
 Nan N. Fife, Desk Officer for Colombia, US State Department ~ via fax: 202.647.4173
 Javier Hernández Valencia, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Colombia office ~ via fax: 011-571. 658-3300
 Paolo Carozza, US member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202.458.3992
 US Senators Brown & Voinovich and US Representatives Bocchieri, Fudge, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Latta, Ryan, Sutton, Wilson ~ via email

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