

via fax: 011 57 1 444 2158 <b>Dr. Francisco Santos Calderon</b> Vice President of the Republic of Colombia	via fax: 011 57 1 560 4630/599 8961 <b>Sr. Fabio Valencia Cossio</b> Minister of the Interior and Justice, Colombia
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January 2, 2010

Dear Sirs:

We, members of the InterReligious Task Force, are once again seriously concerned for the welfare and safety of the leaders and members of indigenous communities and their families in Cauca Department. We are especially disturbed by text message death threats on December 4 to six individuals, advising them they had eight days to leave. They are: **Licifredy Arara, Yair Ortiz and Edwar Mina**, members of the La Toma Afro-descendant Community Council; **Arley González**, an independent miner; **Enrique Guetio**, a leader of the indigenous community in the Cerro Tijeras Reservation; and **Edwar Villegas**, a member of the Trade Union Congress (CUT).

These men represent groups affected by a proposal to divert a river to power the Salvajina hydroelectric plant in Cauca. They have been active in a campaign by local communities to oppose this diversion of the river, as well as large-scale gold-mining by multinational corporations in the region. The communities fear that these large scale developments will make it difficult for them to maintain their livelihood and their culture. Some of those threatened have publicized and reported threats and killings that have taken place in the region since the Salvajina hydroelectric plant was first built in the 1980s.

We wrote to Colombian officials on November 4, 2009 after a written threat, signed by the Black Eagles New Generation paramilitary group, was faxed to the Valle del Cauca office of the CUT. That threat included the names of Licifedy Arara and Edwar Villegas, who also received the threat on December 4. Since October 22, four indigenous people have been killed by armed men in the Cerro Tijeras Reservation in Suárez municipality, Cauca.

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

- take decisive action to guarantee protection of the six threatened men, in accordance with their wishes;
- order a full and impartial investigation into the death threats sent to them on December 2, 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.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
 Coordinator

cc: NOMADESC, Social Research and Action Association ~ 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 ~ via email  
 US Representatives Boccieri, Fudge, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Latta, Ryan, Space, Sutton, Wilson ~ via email

UA 293/09/Update/Colombia

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