

Fax: 011 57 1 599 8013 Sr. Fabio Valencia Cossio Minister of the Interior and Justice of Colombia	Fax: 011 57 1 381 47 21 Sr. Jaime Bermudez Minister of Foreign Affairs of Colombia
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May 13, 2010

Dear Sirs:

We are very concerned for the safety of **Father Javier Giraldo** and other members of the Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission, a Colombian human rights nongovernmental organization, who are in danger following the appearance of threatening graffiti in Bogotá.

On the morning of April 22, graffiti appeared on a number of walls in central Bogotá accusing members of the Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission of being terrorists. Other graffiti called for the death of Father Javier Giraldo, a Jesuit priest and a member of the Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission who also oversees a database of human rights violations reported around Colombia. Some of the graffiti messages state: "Against the Marxist priest—national action." It is thought that this refers either to Father Javier Giraldo or to **Father Alberto Franco**, another priest who is also the lawyer representing the Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission. Both men are high-profile human rights defenders in Colombia.

The Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission campaigns on behalf of civilian communities in conflict regions in Colombia, whose members have been killed, tortured or forced to flee from their homes by the security forces and paramilitary groups. They have been supporting the cause of the Afro-descendant and indigenous communities living in and around the Curvarado and Jiguamiando River Basins in Chocó Department, where paramilitaries have occupied the land of some Afro-descendent communities and have attempted to force them to grow plantations of African Palm, a cash crop used in products ranging from cooking oil to soap. Powerful mining interests are also trying to develop operations there.

Because of their human rights work with these communities and on important cases of impunity against senior members of the security forces, the Commission has been the target of death threats and attacks for several years. Because of these death threats, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights has called on Colombia to protect members of the Commission.

Because of these continuing threats, we **strongly urge you to:**

- conduct a full and impartial investigation into the threats and bring to justice those responsible for ordering and writing them;
- provide effective protection to those individuals affected who request it, and in strict accordance with their wishes and the protection measures granted by the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights of the Organization of the American States;
- fulfill your obligations to ensure that human rights defenders can carry out their work without fear, as laid out in the 1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai, Coordinator

CC: Dr. Guillermo Mendoza Diago, Acting Attorney General ~ via fax: 011.571.570.2000
 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: 202.647.2628
 Christian Salazar Volkman, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Colombia office ~ via fax: 011.571.658.3301
 Dinah Shelton, US member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202.458.3650
 Rodrigo Escobar Gil, Colombia member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202.458.3650
 US Senators Brown & Voinovich and US Representatives Boccheri, Fudge, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Latta, Ryan, Space, Sutton, Wilson ~ via email

UA103/10_Colombia

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