

via fax: 011 57 1 337 5890

**Sr. Alvaro Uribe Velez**

President of the Republic of Colombia

via fax: 011-571-570-2000 (ext 2017)

**Dr. Guillermo Mendoza Diago**

Acting Attorney General of the Republic of Colombia

May 24, 2010

Dear Sirs:

We, members of the InterReligious Task Force, are seriously concerned for the welfare and safety of teachers in the Caribbean coastal Department of Córdoba and adjacent Antioquia Department. Since January 28, at least four teachers have been assassinated in Córdoba:

- On **January 28, Overto Beltran Narvaez**, a teacher at Julio Cesar Miranda Educational Institute in San Antero municipality, was riddled with bullets 800 meters from the school.
- On **February 3, Rigoberto Polo Contreras**, teacher at Educational Institute of El Porvenir in Tuchin municipality, was riddled with bullets at 6:45 a.m. on the side of the road near the school.
- On **April 21**, after being missing for two days, the body of **Elkin Eduardo Gonzalez** was found with bullet holes in the lower region of the Manso River, a rural zone of Tierralta municipality.
- On **April 25, Benito Díaz Alvarez** was found with his throat slit in his home in San Bernardo del Viento.

All these teachers were affiliated with the Teachers' Association of Córdoba (ADEMACOR). The Central Workers' Union of Colombia (CUT), together with its Colombian affiliates, General Labor Confederation (CGT) and Colombian Workers Confederation (CTC), have strongly condemned these murders, as well as the constant threats against the leaders and headquarters of the Teachers' Association of Antioquia (ADIDA).

The president of ADIDA, **Over Dorado Cardona**, was also the victim of an armed attack but fortunately escaped unharmed. During April alone, in addition to the attempt on the life of the ADIDA president, two of its members were murdered and 59 teachers were threatened and harassed during a march on April 15, at which an official from the Criminal Investigations Department (SIJIN) filmed a speech delivered by Over Dorado Cardona.

We repeat the words of International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) General Secretary Guy Ryder; "The deep-rooted violence against trade unionists in Colombia is unacceptable. Respect for workers' fundamental rights is central to the construction of a fair society."

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

- conduct a full and impartial investigation into the assassinations of the teachers in Córdoba, make the results public, and bring those responsible to justice;
- ensure that all teachers in all Colombian departments are protected and safe from outside threats;
- guarantee no victimization of union workers.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
 Coordinator

cc: Carolina Barco Isakson, Colombian Ambassador to the US ~ via fax: 202.232.8643  
 Carolyn Cooley, Human Rights Director, US Embassy in Colombia ~ via fax: 011.571.315.2197  
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 Dinah Shelton, US member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202.458.3650  
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 Christian Salazar Volkmann, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Colombia office ~ via fax: 011.571. 658.3301  
 US Senators Brown & Voinovich and US Representatives Boccieri, Fudge, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Latta, Ryan, Space, 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:**