

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. Guillermo Mendoza Diago Acting Attorney General of Colombia
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August 12, 2010

Dear Sirs:

We condemn the assassination of miner **Alex Gonzales** and an unidentified person in the village of Tamboral, part of the municipality of Suarez, in Cauca Department. Threats and assassinations of miners and community leaders are rooted in defense of ancestral lands. Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities in La Toma (Suarez municipality) are trying to defend their land against the forced eviction—scheduled for August 18—that was ordered by the Colombian government. The families of La Toma village have been inhabitants of their territory since 1636.

Between April and June, armed groups have assassinated thirteen miners in the municipalities of Suarez and Buenos Aires. We are concerned about threats to others. For instance, on July 25, two people were seen surveilling the home of La Toma Community Council leader **Lisifrey Ararat**. Black Eagles Paramilitaries have named Ararat and other leaders as “military targets.”

Paramilitary groups are carrying out these threats and assassinations. However, community residents are convinced that multinational corporations—looking to mine vast gold deposits—are behind the threats, offering incentives for paramilitary groups to operate in the region and scare away all opposition.

On June 2 we wrote to you and urged you to stop the order to evacuate the residents of La Toma, begin negotiations with the Community Council, and to revoke the 35 mining licenses that have been granted by the Colombian Institute of Geology and Mining (INGEOMINAS). The concessions for mining exploitation given to foreigners in this territory are in violation of the rights to consultation and consent as prescribed by International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention 169, Arts. 6-7; Colombia’s own Law 70 of 1993, as well as the Colombian Constitutional Court Order 005 of 2009. Despite the affirmations of the government that the mining licenses will be reviewed and the environmental licenses would be revoked, the Community Council of La Toma does not have any formal document that demonstrates the will of putting these affirmations into effect.

Because of our deep concern for the welfare and safety of all families in Suarez municipality and particularly those facing eviction in La Toma, **we strongly urge that you:**

- Stop the forced eviction of La Toma that is scheduled for August 18;
- publicly denounce these threats and assassinations and state publicly which actions you will take to bring those responsible to justice;
- take action to protect community leaders such as Lisifrey Ararat, in accordance with their wishes;
- revoke the 35 mining licenses, particularly the concession BFC 021 given to Hector Jesus Sarria;
- respect the regulations of ILO Convention 169, Law 70 of 1993, Auto 005 of 2009, the National Constitution, and the various international laws regarding the right to free and informed consent on all mining issues.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai, Coordinator

cc: Sr. Jaime Bermudez, Minister of Foreign Affairs – via fax: 011 57 1 381 47 21
 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, Senior Desk Officer for Colombia, US State Dept – via fax 202.647.2628
 Dinah Shelton, US member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights – via fax: 202.458.6002
 Rodrigo Escobar Gil, Colombia member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights – via fax: 202.458.6002
 Christian Salazar Volkman, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Colombia – via fax: 011.571.658.3301
 US Senators Brown & Voinovich and US Representatives Bocchieri, Fudge, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Latta, Ryan, Space, Sutton, Wilson ~ via email

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