

Via fax: 011 57 1 596 0631 Sr. Juan Manuel Santos President of the Republic of Colombia	Via fax: 011 57 1 599 8961 Sr. Germán Vargas Lleras Minister of the Interior and Justice of Colombia
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December 16, 2010

Dear Sirs:

Last month we wrote you about our concern regarding threats to **William Cristancho Duarte**, a human rights lawyer from Corporación Compromiso. Now his life is in even more danger. On December 10 he survived an attempt on his life by a gunman.

The shooting happened when William Cristancho Duarte was traveling by car to the Palogordo prison in the municipality of Girón, Santander Department. At 6:40am, as the car approached the Bahondo area on the outskirts of Girón, an unidentified gunman fired two shots. At least one bullet went through the rear window.

William Cristancho Duarte has been working on the cases of extrajudicial executions of civilians during military operations in Santander Department, some falsely presented by the military as “guerrillas killed in combat” (i.e. “false positives”):

- June 11, 2002: Heriberto Portilla Maldonado and Orlando Maldonado Arias (killed in front of his wife and six children) in California municipality
- October 19, 2007: Julio César Cardozo Quiñónez and José del Carmen Barbosa Patiño, two local peasant farmers, in the Chucuri-San Isidoro area of Piedecuesta municipality
- April 10, 2008: brothers Teodolindo and Ovidio Murcia Ballén, handed over to the military by paramilitaries in the Tagual area of Landázuri municipality.

Because we believe that the lives of William Cristancho Duarte and the witness to the October 19, 2007 killings are in danger (as outlined in our letter to you on November 23), we **strongly urge you to take the following actions**:

- ensure protection measures for William Cristancho Duarte and the witness as agreed to by them;
- conduct a full and impartial investigation into the threats against them, the attempted murder of William Cristancho, and prosecute those responsible;
- take decisive action to end extrajudicial executions and guarantee, in line with repeated United Nations human rights recommendations, the protection of those campaigning for justice;
- 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.

We look forward to hearing from you what protective measures you are taking on behalf of the victims.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai, Coordinator

cc: Corporación Compromiso (NGO) ~ via US mail
 Gabriel Silva, Colombian Ambassador to the US ~ via fax: 202.232.8643
 William Brownfield, US Ambassador to Colombia ~ via fax: 011.571.315.2197
 Terry Steers-Gonzalez, Senior Desk Officer for Colombia, US State Department ~ via fax: 202.647.2628
 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

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