

via fax: 011 57 1 337 5890 <b>Sr. Juan Manuel Santos</b> President of the Republic of Colombia	via fax: 011 57 1 599 8961 <b>Señor Germán Vargas Lleras</b> Minister of Interior and Justice of Colombia
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March 11, 2011

Dear Sirs:

We are extremely disturbed by the death threats to SINALTRAINAL (food and beverage workers union) members **Rafael Esquivel, Fredy Sepúlveda, Álvaro Varela** and **Martín Agudelo** in Bugalagrande, Valle del Cauca Department, as well as other community leaders.

On February 16, at an event to raise awareness about the victims of paramilitaries in Bugalagrande, the paramilitary group Popular Revolutionary Antiterrorist Army of Colombia (AU-ERPAC) distributed flyers accusing local trade unions and human rights organizations of being guerrillas and threatening to kill them. The message was: "We warn you guerrillas of the FARC and ELN linked to SINALTRAINAL, SINTRAMUNICIPIO, ACACEVA and other NGOS your time has come ... You are not going to save yourself **Rafael Esquivel, Fredy Sepúlveda, Álvaro Varela** and **Martín Agudelo...**"

The flyer explicitly threatened three organizations and nine community leaders. The Peasant Farmer Association of the Center of Valle (ACACEVA) was named, although its members previously disbanded it because of paramilitary violence. Some of its previous members are now part of the Association for the Integral Social Development (ECATE), which works with victims of paramilitary violence; they have received intimidating phone calls in recent months.

We are disturbed by the continuing repression against trade unions and human rights organizations. We have written at least 15 letters to Colombian officials over the past several years because of threats to SINALTRAINAL members. In our letter of March 14, 2004, we addressed a threat to a leader of SINTRAMUNICIPIO (the municipal workers union, now known as SINTRAENTEDDIMCCOL) in Bugalagrande.

We are distressed that, despite a supposed government-sponsored demobilization of paramilitary groups, that threats and assassinations of trade union members continues at an alarming rate. In 2010, 51 members of trade unions were killed in Colombia, a country with one of the highest rates of killings of trade unionists.

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

- order a full and impartial investigation into the death threats against members of SINALTRAINAL, SINTRAENTEDDIMCCOL and ECATE described above, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- provide protection for those threatened, as agreed upon with the victims in danger;
- take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai, Coordinator

copies: SINALTRAINAL ~ via US mail

Gabriel Silva Luján, Colombian Ambassador to the US ~ via fax: 202.232.8643

P. Michael McKinley, US Ambassador to Colombia ~ via fax: 011.571.315.2197

Terry Steers-Gonzalez, Senior Desk Officer for Colombia, US State Department ~ via fax: 202.647.4173

Dinah Shelton, US member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202.458.3992

Rodrigo Escobar Gil, Colombia member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202.458.3992

US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Latta, Renacci, Ryan, Sutton ~ via email

UA\_52/11\_Colombia\_5<sup>th</sup> letter March

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