

Via Fax: 011 57 1 596 0631 <b>Sr. Presidente Juan Manuel Santos</b> President of Colombia	Via Fax: 011 57 1 599 8961 <b>Sr. German Vargas Lleras</b> Minister of Interior and Justice of Colombia
Via Fax: 011 57 1 286 2649 <b>Sr. Juan Camilo Restrepo</b> Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of Colombia	

June 8, 2011

Dear Sirs:

We are deeply concerned for the safety of Afro-descendant and indigenous communities in the Curvaradó and Jiguamiandó River Basins, Chocó Department, especially Caracoli community leaders, **Sixta Tulia Pérez, Blanca Rebolledo** and **Lina Rosa Garcia**, who are being threatened and harassed by paramilitaries. On May 5, eleven paramilitaries surrounded Sixta Tulia Pérez and Blanca Rebolledo, tried to rip off their clothes, grabbed a child who was with them, and hit Sixta Tulia Pérez with a whip. They told them: "This is a warning ... the boss has money to order the government what to do...to get you out of here." Later that day the same paramilitaries threatened women leaders in front of soldiers of the XVII Army Brigade, who did not react when asked to help.

On May 7, when the same perpetrators again tried to surround Blanca Rebolledo, she ran away and sought refuge with community leader Liria Rosa García. The paramilitaries then threatened to cut-off Liria Rosa's head.

Just prior to these incidents, approximately 150 paramilitaries set up camp as a base of operations in Curvaradó River Basin. In spite of a heavy military presence by the XVII Army Brigade, no apparent attempt has been made by the military to confront the paramilitaries.

On May 4, as **Albeiro Jumi**, the secretary of the governor of the indigenous community of Alto Guayabal, was traveling to the town of Mutatá, Antioquia Department, a police officer accused him of being a guerrilla. Alto Guayabal is part of the Urada-Jiguamiandó Indigenous Reservation (*resguardo*) located next to the Afro-descendant area of Jiguamiandó. Members of the *resguardo* have recently been accused of being "guerrillas and . . . informers" by soldiers of the XVII Army Brigade. We fear that these accusations, during this time of a large-scale paramilitary presence, could encourage physical attacks on members of the *resguardo* who have opposed the development of international mining interests in the area and the occupation of their lands by growers of African palm trees (for palm oil). Since the late 1990s residents have been subject to repeated death threats and several have been killed (cf letters of 5/13/10 and 10/2/10).

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

- guarantee the safety of the Afro-descendant and indigenous communities of Curvaradó, Jiguamiandó and the *Resguardo* of Urada-Jiguamiandó, by measures deemed appropriate by those under threat;
- demand a full and impartial investigation into the death threats and harassment detailed above and bring those responsible to justice;
- take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups and break their links with the security forces, in line with stated commitments of the Colombian government and recommendations made by the UN.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai, Coordinator

CC: Gabriel Silva Luján, Colombian Ambassador to the US ~ via fax: 202.232.8643  
 P. Michael McKinley, US Ambassador to Colombia ~via fax: 011.571.315.0811  
 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 and Portman and US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Latta, Renacci, Ryan, Sutton ~ via email

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