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| via fax: 011 57 1 599 0631 Sr. Presidente Juan Manuel Santos President of Colombia | via US mail Sra. Viviane Morales Attorney General of Colombia |
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August 1, 2011

Dear President Santos and Attorney General Morales:

We, members of the InterReligious Task Force on Central America, are concerned for the safety of **Jose Santos Caicedo** and **Armando Caracas Carabali**, leaders of the Afro-Colombian human rights organization Proceso de Comunidades Negras en Colombia (PCN), and for the safety of and **Anibal Vega**, the legal representative of the community council of La Toma, Suarez Municipality in Cauca Department. PCN is an umbrella organization of grassroots Afro-Colombian organizations seeking to defend territorial, cultural and human rights of Afro-descendant Colombians.

On July 15, Jose Santos Caicedo and Armando Caracas Carabal received a text message saying: "You know that everything has a price, but you have to pay with blood. "Armando Caracas Carabali has also been receiving threats on the phone since July 7. In addition, Anibal Vega, the legal representative, was told in a phone call on July 15: "... you of the community council...One has to remove the stones...so that they don't get in the way."

Two days before the threats, 60 community leaders from the council of La Toma met with owners of the land on which four bulldozers digging for gold have been present since June, and planned a meeting with the owners of the bulldozers. Afro-descendant communities in Suarez are opposing the development of industrial gold mining by outside economic interests, which they consider will have a negative impact on their livelihoods and environment. Members of the community council of La Toma and PCN have been campaigning against the presence of bulldozers in La Toma. The previously blocked two bulldozers that had been in the area since May 2011.

Since 2006 we have written several times to Colombian officials about our concerns over the threats to members of PCN, specifically threats occurring in October and November of that year. Last year we wrote about the assassination of miner Alex Gonzales in Suarez, as well as the threatened evacuation of the residents of La Toma.

Because of our deep concern for the safety of **Jose Santos Caicedo**, **Armando Caracas Carabali**, and **Anibal Vega**, and other threatened members of PCN and the community of La Toma, **we strongly urge** you to:

- ✓ ensure that measures be taken to protect those threatened, according to their wishes,
- ✓ order full and impartial investigations into the threats, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice;
- ✓ guarantee the right to free prior informed consent and consultation of the Afro-descendant community of La Toma, in line with the 1989 International Labour Organization's Convention No.169 & Colombian jurisprudence

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Coordinator

copies: Procesos de Comunidades Negras ~ 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: 011.571.315.0811
 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 that you take action on this matter as indicated in this letter: