

Via Fax: 011 57 1 596 0631 <b>President Juan Manuel Santos</b> President of the Republic of Colombia	via fax: 011 57 1 242 7400 ext 2351 <b>German Vargas Lleras</b> Minister of the Interior of Colombia
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December 1, 2011

Dear Sirs:

We are deeply troubled to learn about the attacks on **Jackeline Rojas Castañeda**, a leader of the Popular Women's Organization (OFP), and her 15-year-old daughter, **Mayra Rojas Vargas**, in Barrancabermeja, Santander Department. At 9 pm on November 9, an armed man and woman with covered faces forcibly entered their home, held both persons at gunpoint in separate rooms and told Jackeline Rojas that they would kill her daughter if she screamed or tried to call for help. (Because Mayra has Down Syndrome, it is difficult to control her screams or other verbal outbursts.) They demanded information about the location of her son, William Andres Corzo Rojas, and her husband, Juan Carlos Galvis, a director of the National Trade Union of Food and Beverage Workers (SINALTRAINAL) and a member of the executive committee of the Santander Department branch of the Trade Union Congress (CUT). Jackeline Rojas was tied up and gagged. They sprayed red paint on her body, clothes, walls, and photos of Juan Carlos Galvis. They stole two laptops, USB sticks, mobile phones and documents containing information about Juan Carlos Galvis' work.

When Jackeline Rojas' son William arrived and found his mother gagged, he called the police who came to the site and informed Captain Ochoa of the National Police who promised to send more police and enhance security measures, but he never arrived.

On November 10, when Jackeline Rojas reported the attack at the Attorney General's Office, her complaint was not initially admitted after staff claimed she had invented the attack. This is similar to a previous response to her husband when he reported an unsuccessful assassination attempt against him to the state authorities. They initiated a criminal prosecution against him for false accusation. We believe this is part of a strategy to hide the persecution of union leaders and families.

Because we believe the lives of Jackeline Rojas Castañeda, Juan Carlos Galvis and their family are in danger, **we strongly urge** that you

- provide protection measures to guarantee their safety, in line with their wishes;
- launch a full and impartial investigation into the recent attacks, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- fulfill your obligations regarding the protections of human rights defenders as specified in the 1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
 Coordinator

CC: Organizacion Femenina Popular ~ via email  
 SINALTRAINAL ~ via US mail  
 CPT: Christian Peacemaker Team-Colombia ~ via email  
 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

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