

IRTF

InterReligious Task Force on Central America

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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. German Vargas Lleras Minister of Interior of Colombia
via fax: 011 57 1 599 8961 Sr Juan Camilo Restrepo Minister of Agriculture, Colombia	

March 16, 2012

Dear Sirs:

We are extremely concerned for the safety of staff and members of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) who have received death threats from paramilitary groups. On February 27 the paramilitary organization Los Rastrojos Urban Commands delivered a death threat to the office of the **José Alvear Restrepo Lawyers' Collective (CCAJAR)** in Bogotá. It named three national NGOs as well as trade unionists and NGOs from Antioquia Department, Tolima Department and Valle del Cauca Department, declaring them military targets. The threat made explicit reference to the intelligence work that had been undertaken against these organizations: "surveillance and infiltration and extraction of information from politicians, human rights organizations, trade unionists and displaced people." **CCAJAR, the Political Prisoners Solidarity Committee (CSPP), and Movement of Victims of State-Sponsored Crimes (MOVICE)** have all been subject to illegal surveillance and threats coordinated by the government's Civilian Security Department (DAS) which had a long history of working in collusion with paramilitary groups.

On February 28 the Black Eagles Capital Bloc sent threats to the following NGOs based in Bogotá, accusing them of being guerrillas: **Casa de La Mujer, Ruta Pacifica de las Mujeres, National Foundation Defending Human Rights of Women (FUNDHEFEM), Sisma Women's Corporation, Afro Women's Association for Peace (AFROMUPAZ), the Corporation Nuevo Arco Iris, the Consultancy for Human Rights and Displacement (CODHES) and MOVICE.** The paramilitaries told them to "stop making trouble with the issue of the land restitution...everyone working on this will be killed by us...we are giving you 30 days to leave the city." Some, including women's rights NGOs, have been declared military targets. The threat also mentioned twelve women and three men, most of whom work on women's human rights issues.

These threats came a week before a national demonstration organized by MOVICE. They are the latest of repeated threats by paramilitaries against women's rights organizations and those campaigning for the restitution of stolen lands. In order to fulfill the state's obligations regarding the protection of human rights defenders, **we strongly urge you to:**

- order full and impartial investigations into the death threats against the organizations and individuals named above, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups and break their links with the security forces

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: 011.571.315.2197
Terry Steers-Gonzalez, Senior Desk Officer for Colombia, US State Department ~ via fax: 202.647.4173
Dinah Shelton, Chair, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202.458.3992
Rodrigo Escobar Gil, Second Vice-Chair, 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: