

IRTF

InterReligious Task Force on Central America

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via fax 011 57 1 337 5890
Excmo. Sr. Juan Manuel Santos
President of Colombia

via email: Andres.villamizar@mininterior.gov.co
Estimado Sr. Andrés Villamizar
Director of National Protection Unit of Ministry of Interior of Colombia

June 12, 2012

Dear Sirs:

We are extremely outraged at the death threats to human rights defenders **Franklin Torres**, **Pedro Geney**, and **Ingrid Vergara**, members of the Sucre Department branch of the National Movement of Victims of State Crimes (MOVICE) and to **Jeison Pava**, a lawyer from the Permanent Human Rights Committee (CPDH). They have been supporting peasant farmer communities in Sucre Department in the land restitution process. On May 8 they received an emailed death threat which included their four names, sent in the name of an undertaker offering a deal to buy four coffins for the price of two.

We are also concerned for **Juan David Diaz Chamorro**, a MOVICE member in Sincelejo (capital of Sucre Department). On June 1 a death threat by a paramilitary group was left at his home. The death threat also referred to other human rights defenders campaigning for land restitution.

In April there were more acts of intimidation against MOVICE members.

On April 28, MOVICE member **Hermés Verbel Rocha**, whose family has been campaigning about human rights violations committed by paramilitaries, was on the terrace of his daughter's house in Sucre when one of two men who rode up on a motorcycle approached him with a gun. The two men left when Hermés Verbel Rocha ran into the house. (Hermés Verbel Rocha's brother, Eder Verbel Rocha, was killed by paramilitaries on March 23, 2011.)

On April 29, **Rosa Amelia Hernández**, a MOVICE community leader in Córdoba Department, found a bullet on the doorstep of her home two days after she represented victims at a meeting about land restitution.

We have been writing letters to Colombian officials for the past five years (seven letters over the past year alone) urging protection for MOVICE members and investigations into the human rights crimes perpetrated against them. Because we believe all those named above are in danger, we **again strongly urge** that you

- guarantee the safety of Franklin Torres, Pedro Geney, Ingrid Vergara, Jeison Pava, Juan David Diaz Chamorro, Hermés Verbel Rocha and Rosa Amelia Hernández, in strict accordance with their wishes;
- order full and impartial investigations into the death threats against those named above and into the attempted assassination of Hermés Verbel Rocha, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai,
Coordinator

Copies: MOVICE ~ 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: 011.571.275.4600
Terry Steers-Gonzalez, Senior Desk Officer for Colombia, US State Department ~ via fax: 202.647.4173
José de Jesús Orozco Henríquez, Rapporteur for Colombia, 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 141/12_Colombia

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