

via fax 011 57 1 596 0631

Excmo Sr. Juan Manuel Santos
President of the Republic of Colombia

via fax: 011 57 1 283 9876

Estimado Sr. Federico Renjifo Vélez
Minister of the Interior of Colombia

August 26, 2012

Dear Sirs:

We are concerned for the safety of the following persons in Barrancabermeja, Santander Department, who have received death threats: **LGBT activist Ovidio Nieto Jaraba** of People in Action; **William Mendoza**, President of the Barrancabermeja branch of the Colombian Union of Food Industry Workers (SINALTRAINAL); **Himad Abdala Choser**, a local human rights defender; and members of the Regional Human Rights Corporation (CREDHOS), the Association of Victims of State Crimes in Magdalena Medio Region (ASORVIMM), the Peasant Farmer Association of the Cimitarra River Valley (ACVC) and the Association of Displaced People Settled in the Municipality of Barrancabermeja (ASODESAMUBA).

On July 27 the local LGBT community organized its first march in the municipality of Barrancabermeja for the respect and recognition of the LGBT community. Organizers and their supporters have since been threatened. Ovidio Nieto Jaraba received several threatening phone messages. On August 14 an envelope with a bullet cartridge and a flyer with a death threat was found in Himad Abdala Choser's home. The flyer also threatened CREDHOS, ASORVIMM, People in Action, SINALTRAINAL, ACVC and ASODESMUBA.

On August 18, the paramilitary group "Rastrojos Comandos Urbanos" left a leaflet at the office of People in Action containing death threats against the individuals and local organizations named above. It accused them of "provoking and organizing protest marches" and supporting guerrillas and stated that "there will be no more threats but actions...we are regaining the control of all entities."

Because of these threatening actions, we **strongly urge** that you

- ensure the authorities protect all individuals and organizations mentioned above, in line with their wishes;
- conduct full and impartial investigations into the death threats, 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, to which Colombia is a state party; and
- immediately dismantle paramilitary groups and break their links with the security forces, in line with stated government commitments and recommendations made by the UN and other intergovernmental organizations.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Coordinator

cc: People in Action ~ 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
Mary Brett Rogers-Springs, Senior Desk Officer for Colombia, US State Department ~ via fax: 202.647.2628
José de Jesús Orozco Henríquez, Rapporteur for Colombia, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202.458.3992
US Senators Brown & Portman ~ via email
US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Latta, Renacci, Ryan, Sutton ~ via email

UA 252/12_Colombia

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