

via fax: 011 57 1 596 0631
Exmo. Sr. Juan Manuel Santos
 President of Colombia

via fax: 011 57 1 489 3900 ext2320
Estimado Ministro Rafael Pardo Rueda
 Labor Minister of Colombia

November 22, 2012

Dear Sirs:

We are deeply concerned for the safety of trade unionists in Valle del Cauca Department. On November 4 **Mauricio Valencia Tamayo**, President of the Bugalagrande branch of the National Union of Food Industry Workers (SINALTRAINAL), received a death threat via text message: "Guerrilla . . . disguised as trade unionist, company wrecker, either you stop bugging us and heating up the protest or we will fill you with lead. Go away . . . The text, signed "The Urabeños," was also received by SINALTRAINAL members **Wilson Alberto Riaño, Omar Rengifo, Edwin Mejía, and Julio López**. Four of the men work for Nestlé; Julio López is a former employee.

On November 7 the paramilitary groups AUC (United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia), Black Eagles and Bacrim left a flyer at the home of **Rafael Esquivel**, the former President of the Bugalagrande branch of SINALTRAINAL and a former employee of Nestlé. The flyer denounced "terrorist acts perpetrated in Valle del Cauca, demonstrations, marches against our democratic government and transnationals...organized by guerrilla groups FARC, EP, ELN show that peace does not exist and will not exist in Colombia. You will have to be exterminated, you have until first December to disappear from Valle, otherwise you will see blood running on second December *** black December *** for CUT – SINALTRAINAL." **William Escobar, Alvaro Vega, Wilson Saenz, Javier Correa, Julio Lopez, Onofre Esquivel, Alvaro Varela, Fabio Olaya, Mauricio Gomez, and Jairo Crespo** who are trade unionists from SINALTRAINAL, the Trade Union Congress (CUT) and the Union of Municipality Workers (SINTRAMUNICIPIO) were listed as "targets to exterminate." Employees of other companies who are members of SINALTRAINAL have also received repeated death threats.

Since October 22 SINALTRAINAL members have been protesting in front of Nestlé in Bugalagrande demanding that various agreements made with the company be respected. The threats described above are the latest against the union's efforts to defend and promote food workers' labor rights. Since SINALTRAINAL was founded in 1982, at least 22 members have been killed or forcibly disappeared; dozens have been attacked or threatened.

Therefore, we **strongly urge you to:**

- order a full and impartial investigation into the threats against those named above and other trade unionists under threat in Valle del Cauca, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice;
- provide protection for those threatened, in accordance with their wishes;
- take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups, in line with stated government commitments and recommendations made by the UN and other intergovernmental organizations.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Coordinator

Copies: SINALTRAINAL ~ via U.S. 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 and US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Latta, Renacci, Ryan, Sutton ~ via email

UA325/12 & Update_Colombia

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