

<p>via fax 011 57 1 596 0631 Excmo. Señor Juan Manuel Santos President of Colombia</p>	<p>via email: contactovicepresidencia@presidencia.gov.co Señor Angelino Garzón Vice-President of Colombia</p>
<p>via Fax: 011 571 266 0351 Dr. Juan Carlos Pinzón Minister of Defense of Colombia</p>	<p>via email: atencionalusuario@reclutamiento.mil.co Sr. Juan Carlos Mejía Gutiérrez Director of Recruitment and Reserves</p>
<p>via email: defensoria@defensoria.org.co Dr. Jorge Armando Otálora Human Rights Ombudsman</p>	<p>via US mail ASPC Battalion 28 "BOCHICA" Barrio Mateo Kilometro 1 vía Villavicencio Puerto Carreño, Vichada</p>

June 13, 2013

Dear Sirs:

We are very concerned about conscientious objector **Jhonatan David Vargas Becerra**, age 18, who is a youth leader from the Central Foursquare Christian Church of Barrancabermeja in Santander Department. On March 16 when he went to the 34th Battallion of Barrancabermeja to establish his military status as a Conscientious Objector (C.O.), he was enlisted against his will, even though he stated that, for reasons of conscience, he could not provide military service. He was sent to a military district of Tolima and later transferred to the 28 ASCP Bochica Battallion in Puerto Carreño in Vichada Department.

Jhonatan David continues to refuse allegiance because of his faith. The Colombian Constitutional Court established in Sentence C-728 of 2009 that conscientious objection to mandatory military service is a fundamental right, in accordance with international norms and treaties on conscientious objection. Yet the Colombian military does not respect this and does not guarantee this right. The Bochica Batallion officers make fun of Jhonatan David for being a Christian and have threatened to court martial him for insubordination and disobedience.

Jhonatan has begun his theological and secular studies, has finished leadership studies and has maintained a clear stance of rejecting all forms of violence. This has been certified by General Pastor Superior Abigail Mlacker and other members of his church. Jhonatan's family also give testimony to his deep, fixed and sincere convictions.

We are very concerned for Jhonatan's mental and psychological health because he has been consistently verbally mistreated. Therefore we **strongly urge** that you

- protect the fundamental right to conscientious objection to military service as established in Sentence C-728 of 2009; and
- release Jhonatan David Vargas Becerra, grant him the status of Conscientious Objector, and ensure his immediate return to his family in Barrancabermeja.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Coordinator

copies: Justapaz ~ via email
 Gabriel Silva Luján, Colombian Ambassador to the US ~ via fax: 202.232.8643
 P. Michael McKinley, US Ambassador to Colombia ~ via fax: 011.571.275.4600
 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, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

Justapaz 5/17/13_Colombia

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