

via FAX: 011 57 1 596 0631
Excmo. Sr. Juan Manuel Santos
 President of the Republic of Colombia

via FAX: 011 57 1 266 1003
Sr. Juan Carlos Pinzon
 Minister of Defense of Colombia

August 15, 2013

Dear Sirs:

We are extremely concerned for the safety of **Faiver Chimonja** and **Manuel Garzon** of the NGO Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission (CIJP) and **for the leaders of Curvaradó and Jiguamiandó River Basin communities in the Department of Chocó.**

Faiver Chimonja has been living for at least two years with the communities who have returned to the Curvaradó River Basin. He escaped being killed on August 2 and 3 when he changed his arrangements after the CIJP learned from a witness to discussions between businessmen and paramilitaries of a plan to kill him while he was travelling to Apartadocito and Llano Rico in the Curvaradó River Basin

On August 1 Manuel Garzon, a lawyer from the CIJP, left the office in Bogotá on his bicycle and was followed by another bicyclist who told him, "Stay quiet with what you are doing." Paramilitaries are known to keep human rights defenders under surveillance before attempting to kill them.

Manuel Garzon represented the communities of the Curvaradó and Jiguamiandó River Basin in a case in which a judge ruled on July 30 against two businessmen linked to the African palm industry that is responsible for the forced displacement of the communities. The men, who had been acting together with paramilitaries, were sentenced to 125 months in prison. On June 25, a witness told the CIJP that the businessmen were neither prepared to go to prison nor to return the land, and that there would be a massacre if they were convicted. They would kill not only the leaders of the communities of the Curvaradó and Jiguamiandó River Basin, but also the members of the CIJP.

The Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission has supported efforts by Afro-descendant and Indigenous communities in and around the Curvaradó and Jiguamiandó River Basins to reclaim their lands. Paramilitaries have occupied the land of some Afro-descendant communities and have attempted to force them to grow African palm, a cash crop. (Despite the heavy presence of Colombia security forces, paramilitaries operate freely in the area.) Powerful mining interests are also trying to develop operations in these areas.

This is our eighth letter to officials in Colombia in the past two years regarding threats to community leaders in the Curvaradó and Jiguamiandó River Basins and to staff and members of CIJP. The incidents described above are evidence of continuing threats. We **strongly urge you to**

- order a full and impartial investigation into the attempt to kill Faiver Chimonja, the threat against Manuel Garzon and others, publish the results and bring all those responsible to justice;
- dismantle paramilitary groups and break their links with the security forces, in line with repeated United Nations human rights recommendations;
- fulfill your obligations to ensure that human rights defenders can carry out their work without fear, in accord with the 1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

Sincerely,

Christine Stonebraker
 Co-Coordinator

cc: Comision Intereclesial Justicia y Paz ~ via fax: 011-571-346 36 13
 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

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