

via fax: 011 57 1 596 0631 Excmo. Sr. Juan Manuel Santos President of Colombia	via fax: 011 57 1 570 2091 or 011 57 1 570 2000 ext 2023 Sr. Eduardo Montealegre Attorney General of Colombia
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December 21, 2013

Dear Sirs:

We are deeply concerned for the safety of **Iván Madero Vergel and other members of CREDHOS** (Regional Corporation for the Protection of Human Rights) in Barrancabermeja in Santander Department. In the early hours of November 22, Iván Madero Vergel heard an unknown individual knocking at the door and ringing the office telephone for about 25 minutes. He called a security guard assigned to Abelardo Sánchez Serrano, another CREDHOS member, and attempted to conceal himself.

He heard several men shouting inside the building as security personnel arrived several minutes later. They were soon joined by the police. One person was arrested, but a number of laptop computers with valuable information were stolen and roof tiles were damaged. It is thought that the perpetrators were aware of Iván Madero Vergel's presence inside the building.

On November 25 and 26 between 9am and 3pm, several men, believed to be paramilitary operatives responsible for monitoring the CREDHOS offices, were seen watching its headquarters. CREDHOS has received information from trusted sources about **paramilitary plans to assassinate Abelardo Sánchez Serrano and Iván Madero Vergel**.

CREDHOS provides training and education on human rights issues and International Humanitarian Law. It collects complaints regarding human rights violations by paramilitary groups and members of the security forces. On December 7, 2012, David Rabelo Crespo, Secretary-General of CREDHOS, was sentenced to 18 years in prison for the murder of a town official who was killed in 1991. These accusations were brought against him by a former member of a paramilitary group (cf our letters of Apr 5 and Dec 12, 2012). The trial hearings were marked by numerous irregularities on the part of the prosecution, including false and contradictory testimonies by prosecution witnesses. Because he was sentenced solely for his peaceful and legitimate human rights activities, we urge that the verdict be reversed and David Rabelo Crespo set free.

Since 2008, we have written you six letters concerning death threats to CREDHOS staff members, including Abelardo Sánchez Serrano. We **strongly urge you to**

- carry out a thorough, impartial and immediate investigation into the incident at CREDHOS headquarters described above, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice;
- take all necessary measures to guarantee the security of Iván Madero Vergel and all members of CREDHOS; and
- guarantee that human rights defenders in Colombia can carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai, Co-Coordinator

Copies: First Secretary for Human Rights and Minorities, Embassy of Colombia to the US ~ via fax: 202.232.8643
Andrew Bowen, Interim Deputy Chief of Mission, US Embassy to Colombia ~ via fax: 011.571.275.4600
Olivia Franken, 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

Frontline_Colombia

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