

via fax 011 571 596 0631
Excmo. Sr. Juan Manuel Santos
 President of Colombia

via fax 011 571 266 1003
Sr. Juan Carlos Pinzón
 Defense Minister of Colombia

June 23, 2014

Dear Sirs:

We are deeply concerned about the recent harassment of **Carlos Alfredo Palacio Usuga** and **Noemi Durango Pérez**. Both individuals were preparing for the First Regional Meeting of Women of Northeast Antioquia “in defense of territory and dignity” when they were stopped and threatened by men appearing to be Colombian military.

On May 24, Carlos Alfredo Palacio Usuga was on his way to Dos Quebradas to prepare for the meeting. He encountered 15 uniformed men who forced him to kneel and pushed his head down. They took out a pistol, removed the safety, put it to his head, and interrogated him. He said he belonged to the Human Action Corporation for the Coexistence and Peace of Northeast Antioquia (CAHUCOPANA). When he said he was going to “Doña Carmen’s house,” the men responded, “We hope that’s true, because if not, things will be worse for you.”

Shortly afterwards, Noemi Durango Pérez, who was traveling by horse, encountered what would appear to be the same men. They pointed guns at her and told her to dismount and kneel down. They lifted her blouse and sweatpants and examined her body. Noticing that her hands were calloused from farm work, they said, “Those are not the hands of a housewife,” using that as an excuse to take her boots away while they asked about the guerrillas. Although they did not have official insignias and some of the men wore masks, they had the uniforms and equipment normally associated with the Colombian military.

CAHUCOPANA is an initiative of peasant farmer (campesinos) working to nonviolently defend their human rights. Government concessions to foreign investors have resulted in environmental damage and violent conflicts in the region. Christian Peacemakers Team (CPT), which works with human rights defenders in the area, made plans to accompany members of CAHUCOPANA to the Regional Meeting of Women of Northeast Antioquia.

Because of our concern for Carlos Alfredo Palacio Usuga and Noemi Durango Pérez, and because of our close association with CPT, we **strongly urge you**:

- to investigate the case and penalize those found guilty of infractions of international humanitarian law;
- as leaders of the armed forces, to act to ensure the respect of human rights in the region.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Co-Coordinator

CC: Christian Peacemaker Teams~ via email
 Luis Carlos Villegas, Ambassador of Colombia to the US ~ via fax: 202.232.8643
 Kevin Whitaker, US Ambassador 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 Hernández, Rapporteur for Colombia, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202.458.3992
 US Senators Brown & Portman
 US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

May 27 CPT_Colombia

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