

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

via fax: 011 57 1 266 1003  
**Sr. Juan Carlos Pinzón**  
 Defense Minister of Colombia

July 1, 2014

Dear Sirs:

We are concerned for the safety of human rights defenders and the 297 families of the Humanitarian Zone of Puente Nayero in the port city of Buenaventura, Valle del Cauca Department. Despite the presence of Colombian government security forces in the area, they are being threatened by paramilitaries. Thousands of families have been forcibly displaced over the years by large-scale infrastructure projects being developed in Buenaventura.

On May 27 Humanitarian Zone-Puente Nayero community leader **Doris Valenzuela** was informed of threats made by paramilitaries to “dismember” her and her 16-year-old son **Christian David Aragón**. On the same day she also received four threatening phone calls. Doris Valenzuela has been working to prevent paramilitaries from forcibly recruiting children, including her son.

Other abuses have been reported. A seven-year-old child was threatened with death for allegedly informing police of the whereabouts of weapons stashed by paramilitaries close to the Humanitarian Zone. On May 18, **José Miller Sinisterra**, who had been speaking with community leaders, was shot at by paramilitaries just outside the Humanitarian Zone.

Paramilitaries have also been repeatedly entering the Humanitarian Zone and threatening residents because of their attempt to create a safe place. Some residents have been forcibly displaced from the Humanitarian Zone as a result of the threats. The Humanitarian Zone of Puente Nayero in the Barrio La Playita was created on April 13, 2014, in a public event with the participation of representatives from the Catholic Church, as well as local, national and international human rights organizations. Immediately before and after the creation of the Humanitarian Zone, members of the Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission, which accompanies the community, were threatened (cf our letter of May 23, 2014).

Because of the ongoing conflict and potential violence, **we strongly urge** that you

- provide safety measures for Doris Valenzuela, Christian David Aragón, José Miller Sinisterra and the 297 families of the Humanitarian Zone of Puente Nayero in Buenaventura, as well as those accompanying them, in accordance with their wishes;
- order a full and impartial investigation into paramilitary threats against the human right defenders and inhabitants of Buenaventura, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice;
- take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups and break their links with the security forces, in line with repeated UN recommendations.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
 Co-Coordinator

copies: Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission / Comisión Intereclesial Justicia y Paz ~ via fax  
 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 Jesus Orozco Hernández, Rapporteur for Colombia, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202.458.3992  
 US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

UA 104/14update\_Colombia

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