

via fax: 011 571 596 0631

Excmo. Sr. Juan Manuel Santos
President of the Republic of Colombia

via fax: 011 57 1 570 2000

Sr. Fiscal General Eduardo Montealegre
Attorney General of Colombia

September 26, 2016

Dear Sirs:

We are outraged to learn of the attempted assassination of **Alexander Castro**, a leader of the Petroleum Workers Union (USO) in Barrancabermeja, Santander Department, site of the largest oil refinery in Colombia.

On September 13, a group of armed men intercepted the vehicle used by Castro while he was driving to a meeting with workers from the Erazo Valencia oil company. The men shot six times at his vehicle. Fortunately, because he was traveling in a bullet-proof car, he escaped unharmed.

USO had advised Ecopetrol, the national oil company which contracts with Erazo Valencia, that paramilitaries were present in the area, but the company took no appropriate action to ensure the safety of the workers.

USO trade unionists have been repeatedly threatened and have been the victims of extrajudicial executions and enforced disappearances committed by paramilitary forces, at times acting in collusion with the government security forces. Alexander Castro had already survived two previous assassination attempts. In both cases, those responsible were never located by authorities.

A press release from USO states that other union members, including **Rodolfo Vecino** and **Jhon Alexander Rodríguez**, have received death threats this month.

In light of these threats, we strongly urge that you:

- protect USO members who are being threatened, in accordance with their wishes
- ensure the free exercise of the rights of freedom of association
- take measures to dismantle paramilitaries and other criminal groups who are victimizing labor leaders

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai and Christine Stonebraker-Martínez
Co-Coordinators

copies: Juan Carlos Pinzón, Ambassador of Colombia to the US ~ via fax: 202.232.8643
Andy O'Neal, Human Rights Officer, US Embassy in Colombia ~ via email onealRA@state.gov
John Brandt, Desk Officer for Colombia, US State Department ~ via email
José de Jesús Orozco Hernández, Rapporteur for Colombia, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202.458.3650
Paul Vannuchi, Rapporteur for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202.458.3650
US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

Justice for Colombia_9/15/2016_Colombia

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