

via email: fsantos@presidencia.gov.co Dr. Francisco Santos Vice-president of the Republic, Colombia	via fax: 011-571-658-3300 Dr. Michael Frulin, Director High Commission on Human Rights, Colombia office
via fax: 011-57-340-7326 Dr. Carlos Rodado Noriega Governor of Atlántido Department, Colombia	

March 15, 2005

Dear Sirs:

We are deeply concerned about reports of the harassment and stigmatization of members of the National Association of the Displaced (ANDESCOL), Atlantic Section, by some public functionaries reported to be members of intelligence organizations. On February 15, at 11:00 a.m., two men on a motorcycle without license plates who were said to be members of the SIJIN (federal agents), stopped and accosted **Leyda Ariza**, treasurer of the Board of Directors of ANDESCOL. The men questioned her about ANDESCOL board members **Juan Domínguez, Juan Ariza, Jaime Correa, Ismael Maestre, Anton Castro, and Mauricio Avilez**. The two men told Leyda Ariza that the ANDESCOL headquarters was a "Stewpot for the FARC.

We are appalled that the government links independent human rights groups to the rebel groups FARC and ELN in order to discredit and harass them.

On June 10, 2004, **Mauricio Avilez** was detained and jailed, accused of belonging to the FARC. Four months later he was set free. The government never pressed charges nor have they dropped the case. Today Mauricio Avilez is living outside of the city, for his own protection.

As a result of these reports and our grave concerns, we strongly urge the government of Colombia and the local authorities in the Department of Atlántico to:

- Guarantee freedom of activity among the displaced and members of the Board of Directors of ANDESCOL, Atlantic Section.
- Take all necessary measures to protect the lives of the members of the Board of Directors of ANDESCOL and the human rights defenders of human rights who accompany them

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Coordinator

copies: Luis Alberto Moreno, Colombian Ambassador to the US ~ via fax: 1 202 232 8643
 William B Wood, US Ambassador to Colombia ~ via fax: 011-571-315-2197
 Charles Barclay, Desk Officer for Colombia, US State Dept ~ via fax: 202.647.2628
 U.S. Senators DeWine and Voinovich ~ via fax, email
 U.S. Representatives Brown, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Ryan, Tubbs Jones ~ via fax, email

2005/03/06-ANDESCOL_Colombia

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