

via fax: 011 57 1 337 58 90/ 342 05 92 Senor Presidente Alvaro Uribe Velez Presidente de la Republica de Colombia	via fax: 011 57 1 560 4630 Sr. Sabas Pretelt de la Vega Ministro del Interior y de Justicia de Colombia
via fax: 011 57 1 570 2000 Dr. Luis Camilo Osorio Fiscalia General de la Nación, Colombia	

May 31, 2005

Dear Sirs:

We, members of the InterReligious Task Force, are deeply concerned for the safety and welfare of **Soraya Gutierrez Arguello**, President of the non-governmental human rights organization Corporación Colectivo de Abogados 'Jose Alvear Restrepo' (José Alvear Restrepo Lawyers' Collective), who has received a death threat. When Soraya Gutierrez Arguello arrived home in Bogotá on May 13, a security guard gave her a suspicious package that had been delivered by a courier company. Fearing a letter-bomb, she asked the police to open the package. They found a decapitated doll cut into pieces with a cross drawn on it. Parts of the doll's body had been burnt and red nail varnish had been painted on its body to look like blood. A handwritten death threat warned: "You have a nice family look after it and do not sacrifice it."

El Tiempo, the national newspaper, ran an advertisement the same day, purporting to be from the José Alvear Restrepo Lawyers' Collective. It called for lawyers, psychologists, sociologists, other professionals and students seeking jobs to contact the organization for immediate employment. Members of the Collective say this is an implicit threat; it suggested that there will soon be vacancies in the organization. El Tiempo ran another advertisement the following day; it solicited security guards for the organization, giving a meeting time and place for prospective candidates – a time and place that coincided with a meeting between the organization and victims of human rights violations. The organization was not involved in placing either ad. These facts make clear that the organization is under close surveillance.

As a result of our concern for the safety of Soraya Gutierrez Arguello, her family and other members of the José Alvear Restrepo Lawyers' Collective, we strongly urge you to:

- Take effective action to **protect Soraya Gutierrez Arguello, her family and other members of the organization**, as they have requested, thus allowing them to continue in safety their legitimate and important work in defense of human rights;
- Immediately **conduct a full and impartial investigation into this death threat** and the other threats against the organization, make the results public and bring those responsible to justice;
- **Investigate all threats against human rights defenders**, bring those responsible to justice, and initiate a meaningful dialogue with human rights defenders to determine how to protect them from attack;
- Fully implement the principles of the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

Thank you for your prompt attention.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai, Coordinator

cc: 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
Corporación Colectivo de Abogados 'José Alvear Restrepo' ~ via US mail
U.S. Senators DeWine and Voinovich ~ via fax, email
U.S. Representatives Brown, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Ryan, Tubbs Jones ~ via fax, email

UA 125/05 Colombia

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