

via fax: 011 57 1 570 2000 Dr. Luis Camilo Osorio Fiscal General de la Nacion/Attorney General	Fax: 011 57 1 337 5890/342 0592 Senor Presidente Alvaro Uribe Velez Presidente de la Republica de COLOMBIA
via fax: 1 202 232 8643 Ambassador Luis Alberto Moreno Embassy of Colombia, Washington, DC	Via fax: 011-571-315-2197 William B Wood US Ambassador to Colombia

June 22, 2005

We are deeply concerned for the safety and welfare of **Miguel Alberto Fernández Orozco**, a labor activist and President of the Cauca Teachers Union, who has received at least four death threats this month. Miguel recently returned to Colombia after spending several months working with Eastern Massachusetts Jobs with Justice through a program that hosts Colombian trade unionists who have been targeted for death by paramilitary groups.

The threats are presumably from paramilitary groups tied to the Colombian government that seek to eradicate any kind of opposition to their power. Union leaders are perceived as dissidents, and are murdered, detained, and tortured on a regular basis. **More labor activists have been assassinated in Colombia than all other countries combined (more than 4,000 since 1986)**, making it the most dangerous place to form a union in the world.

As adamant defenders of human rights, we are troubled by the efforts of the Colombian government to stifle political dissent and union organizing. Union activists have been wrongfully accused of working with the guerrilla movement, and the government has used these accusations as flawed justifications for violence. Such is the case with Miguel Fernandez. He and his family should be able to live and work free from threats and violence. His right to organize free from any form of intimidation is a **right that is protected by the constitution of Colombia**.

Because of our concern for the safety of **Miguel Alberto Fernandez Orozco**, his family and all members of all unions in Colombia, we strongly urge you to:

- Do all in your power to protect Miguel Fernández, his family and his co-workers, thus allowing them to continue their legitimate and important work in safety;
- Immediately conduct a full and impartial investigation into death threats against Miguel Fernández and his family, make the results public and bring those responsible to justice;
- Investigate all threats against union members and organizers, bring those responsible to justice, and initiate a meaningful dialogue with union members to determine how to protect them from attack;

We and other organizations dedicated to workers' rights will continue to closely monitor **Miguel Fernandez's** situation. We thank you for your prompt attention in this important matter.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai, Coordinator

copies: Heather Merritt, Desk Officer for Colombia, US State Dept ~ via fax: 202.647.2628
 US Senators DeWine & Voinovich ~ via email
 US Representatives Brown, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Ryan, Tubbs Jones ~ via email

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