

via fax: 011 571 566 20 71 Señor Presidente Alvaro Uribe Velez Presidente de la Republica de Colombia	via fax: 011 57 1 414 9108 Dr. Mario German Iguaran Arana Attorney General, Colombia
via fax: 011-571-640-0491 Sr. Volmar Antonio Perez Ortiz Human Rights Ombudsman, Colombia	via fax: 011 57 1 560 4630 Dr. Carlos Holguin Sardi Minister of Interior and Justice, Colombia

February 14, 2007

Dear Sirs:

We are extremely saddened and angered to learn of the murder on January 31 of **Yolanda Izquierdo** in the city of Monteria, capital of Córdoba Department. Ms. Izquierdo was a leader of the Organizacion Popular de Vivienda (OPV, People's Housing Organization) in Córdoba. Working to recover lands taken from peasant families, she had recently been seeking to obtain the certificates, maps and deeds which would show that she and at least 700 other persons were forced by the paramilitaries to sell their lands and abandon the area.

She had worked effectively to obtain housing for numerous families displaced by paramilitary forces from lands where they had lived and worked. The lands had been provided to them by the Fundación para la Paz de Córdoba in 1990. However, after 1990, paramilitaries forced many peasant families to abandon their lands or sell them for a pittance, taking over the lands for themselves. Yolanda Izquierdo had courageously led a peasant movement to return to the lands and reclaim them from the paramilitaries in keeping with the Justice and Peace Law for paramilitary demobilization, which requires the return of lands obtained by force and threats of the paramilitaries to their rightful owners. As a part of her campaign to see that justice was done for the members of the OVP, Yolanda was one of the two leaders of a delegation of victims who attended a hearing at which testimony concerning the activities of the paramilitaries in Córdoba was given by Salvatore Mancuso, a long-time leader of the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC), the principal illegal paramilitary organization in the in the region.

We strongly urge you to

- investigate this heinous murder and bring those responsible to justice;
- protect the OPV and its leaders and acknowledge their right to return to the lands they were forced to surrender, thereby demonstrating that paramilitary demobilization is effectively happening;
- effectively protect those witnesses who, like Yolanda Izquierdo, wish to participate in the hearings at which paramilitary leaders are testifying about their illegal actions.

Thank you for your prompt attention.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Coordinator

Copies: Carolina Barco Isakson, Colombian Ambassador to the US ~ via fax: 1 202 232 8643
 William B Wood, US Ambassador to Colombia ~ via fax: 011-571-315-2197
 Heather Merritt, Desk Officer for Colombia, US State Dept ~ via fax: 202.647.2628
 Paolo Carozza, US member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: (202)458-3992
 U.S. Senators Brown and Voinovich ~ via email
 U.S. Representatives Gillmor, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Regula, Ryan, Sutton, Tubbs Jones ~ via email

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