

via fax: 011 57 1 337 58 90/ 342 05 92 Señor Presidente Alvaro Uribe Velez President of Colombia	via fax: 011 57 1 560 4630 Señor Sabas Pretelt de la Vega Minister of the Interior and Justice, Colombia
via fax: 011 57 1 414 9108 Dr. Mario German Iguaran Attorney General, Colombia	

July 3, 2006

Dear Sirs:

We are deeply concerned for the safety **Alvaro Mercado**, a leader of SINTRAMINERGETICA, the National Mining and Energy Workers' Union. He and other workers are currently on strike against the Drummond coal mining company in the northeast of Colombia.

On June 13 gunmen, believed to be army-backed paramilitaries, attempted to shoot Alvaro Mercado as he was entering his house in Valledupar, Cesar Department. Police arrested the gunmen and handed them over to the Attorney General's office, but all were released. Later that day, witnesses saw men they recognized as paramilitaries going to the house of SINTRAMINERGETICA activist **Estivenson Avila** in Valledupar. When they did not find him there they left.

Since March, SINTRAMINERGETICA trade unionists have been negotiating work improvements with Drummond; they have been targeted with threats since. On March 25 SINTRAMINERGETICA activist Harvey Jovanny Morales Guevara was killed by gunmen in Santa Marta, Atlantico Dept. On May 1, after a march in La Loma, Cesar Department, gunmen in several vehicles followed the vehicle that carried the president of the Chiriguana branch of SINTRAMINERGETICA, Raul Sosa Avellaneda. On June 6 and 8, witnesses saw more men they thought were paramilitaries searching for SINTRAMINERGETICA branch leader **Ruben Morron** at his home in Barranquilla, Atlantico Dept.

All these incidents clarify our deep concern for the safety of Alvaro Mercado, Estivenson Avila, Ruben Morron and other SINTRAMINERGETICA members involved in strike action. Therefore, we strongly urge you to:

- take immediate and effective action, deemed appropriate by the SINTRAMINERGETICA members themselves, to protect them so they may continue their legitimate trade union activities;
- conduct a full and impartial investigation into the attempt on Alvaro Mercado's life and the possible attempts to kill Estivenson Avila and Ruben Morron, make the results public and bring to justice those responsible.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Coordinator

cc: Andres Pastrana, Colombian Ambassador to the US ~ via fax
 William B Wood US Ambassador to Colombia ~ via fax
 Heather Merritt, Desk Officer for Colombia, US State Department ~ via fax
 Dr. Francisco Santos, Vice-President of Colombia ~ via fax
 US Senators DeWine & Voinovich ~ via email
 US Representatives Brown, Gillmor, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Regula, Ryan, 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: