

via fax: 011 57 1 565 768  
**Dr. Franciso Santos**  
 Vice -President of Colombia

via fax: 571. 658-3300  
**Dr. Michael Frulin**  
 Director of the Office of Human Rights Commission

April 21, 2007

Dear Sirs:

We are extremely concerned about the current humanitarian crisis affecting **Afro-Colombian communities in the Tapaje River area in the municipality of El Charco, Nariño**. We understand that this crisis is due to recent combat operations between the Colombian Naval Forces of the Pacific, paramilitaries, and the Revolutionary Armed forces of Colombia (FARC). We are aware that between January and early March, approximately 8,335 people were displaced by the instability caused by public security problems.

The recent displacement of 4,222 people in El Charco and La Tola, 47% of whom are children, calls authorities to take action. Some communities are being confined and are unable to flee the area due to restriction of movement by armed groups. Other communities are facing internal displacement within the territories – a situation which demands contingency plans to prevent more massive displacements. We are also very concerned about the effect of the six most recent aerial fumigations which have further contributed to the crisis.

**We therefore urge you to**

- Immediately intervene in this matter to ensure that the rights of internally displaced Afro-Colombians are respected and that they have access to food, medicine, shelter and humanitarian assistance;
- Enable Colombian civilian institutions to go to the affected areas and establish their presence, so as to ensure that civilians and internally displaced persons (IDPs) are protected and assisted;
- Urge the Colombian armed forces to respect the rights of Afro-Colombian communities in accordance with international law;
- Work with the United Nations and international organizations to implement a humanitarian and human rights plan in this area of the country that addresses the needs of Afro-Colombian rural and urban communities.

Thank you for your prompt attention.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
 Coordinator

Copies: Carolina Barco Isakson, 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  
 Paolo Carozza, US member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax  
 U.S. Senators Brown and Voinovich ~ via email  
 U.S. Representatives Gillmor, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Regula, Ryan, Sutton, Tubbs Jones ~ via email

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