

via fax: 011 57 1 337 58 90/ 342 05 92 President Alvaro Uribe Velez President de la Republic of Colombia	via fax: 011 57 1 560 46 30 Sr. Carlos Holguín Sardi Minister of the Interior and Justice of Colombia
via fax: 011 57 1 570 2000 Dr. Mario German Iguaran Arana Attorney General of Colombia	

July 14, 2007

Dear Sirs:

We are seriously concerned for the safety of the **staff of Corporación Jurídica Yira Castro**, a non-governmental human rights organization in Bogotá, **and for those victims supported by the organization**. On June 22, unknown intruders broke into the office and stole video equipment and five computer hard drives and a laptop containing information about the organization's work. The intruders ignored cash and check books but searched paper files containing information on cases of displacement, taking two: one about people displaced by a mining project, the other about people displaced by an energy company.

In the days leading up to the break-in the organization's staff found themselves being watched on their way to and from work. The government security forces or their paramilitary allies have regularly kept human rights defenders under surveillance in this way before attacking them. We suspect the break-in may have been politically motivated because this organization provides legal help to people forced to flee their homes because of Colombia's long-running internal armed conflict.

This is the third break-in at the office of a non- governmental human rights organization in less than a month. On June 4 we wrote to you expressing our dismay and concern about the break-in and theft at the Bogota offices of the US-based NGO Fellowship of Reconciliation. On June 14, two computers were stolen in another break-in at the offices of Justapaz.

As a result of our concern for the safety of the people associated with the **Corporación Jurídica Yira Castro**, the **Fellowship of Reconciliation** and **Justapaz**, we strongly urge you to:

- take effective action, as deemed appropriate by the members of these organizations, to protect them so they may continue their legitimate and important work in the defense of human rights without fear of intimidation;
- immediately order full and impartial investigations into these break-ins, make the results public, and bring those responsible to justice;
- produce policy and plans, in conjunction with human rights defenders, to guarantee their safety according to the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights and Responsibilities of Individuals, Groups and Institutions to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and make these plans public.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Coordinator

copies: Corporacion Juridica Yira Castro ~ mail
 Carolina Barco Isakson, Colombian Ambassador to the US ~ via fax
 William Brownfield, 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, Organization of American States ~ 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: