

via fax: 011 57 1 337 58 90/ 342 05 92 Senor Presidente Alvaro Uribe Velez Presidente de la Republica de Colombia	via fax: 011 57 1 560 9946 Dr. Francisco Santos Calderon Vicepresidente de la Republica de Colombia
via fax: 011 57 1 570 2000 ext. 2017 Dr. Mario German Iguaran Fiscalia General/Attorney General, Colombia	via fax: 011 57 1 336 8007 Sr. Diego Palacio Betancur Ministerio de Proteccion Social de Colombia

October 12, 2005

Dear Sirs:

We are concerned about death threats by army-backed paramilitaries against trade union leader **Samuel Morales**, president of the Arauca Department branch of CUT (Colombia Trade Union Confederation) and his sisters **Matilde, Omayra and Gladys Morales**.

On September 21, a man who indentified himself as AUC (Self-Defense Group of Colombia) phoned and told the school secretary that Gladys, Omayra and Matilde Morales are military targets and had 72 hours to leave Arauca Department and that Samuel Morales has outstanding debts to pay the AUC. Another call was made to Omayra Morales' house that evening by a man who repeated the threats. In the past few weeks the sisters have been held up repeatedly at military checkpoints for many hours. Police officers have pressured the director of a local hospital to dismiss Samuel's wife simply because she is married to Samuel Morales.

Samuel Morales has been in custody since he was arrested on August 5, 2004 by soldiers from the XVIII Brigade, on charges of being a guerrilla. Six hours earlier, soldiers from the same unit had forced three other trade unionists from a house in the Arauca hamlet of Caño Seco and shot them in the back.

The army claimed that the three had been members of a guerrilla group who opened fire on troops. We wrote to Colombian officials August 13, 2004, demanding a Verification Commission. Investigations revealed that the army allegations were not true. In July 2005 four soldiers and a civilian were charged with killing the three trade unionists, but Samuel Morales has remained in custody. On January 3, 2005 he was charged with "rebellion." If a court finds that there is no valid evidence against people charged in this way, paramilitaries may kill them when they are released.

We believe the arrest of Samuel Morales and harassment of his family are part of security forces' strategy to undermine the work of trade unionists and human rights defenders in Arauca. We strongly urge you to:

- Immediately conduct a full and impartial investigation into the telephone death threats received by the Morales sisters on September 21, make the results public, and bring those responsible to justice;
- Conduct a full and impartial investigation into links between the security forces and paramilitary groups, make the results public and bring those responsible for supporting and participating in such groups to justice;
- Take any action deemed appropriate by the Morales family to guarantee their safety;
- Immediately act to dismantle paramilitary groups, in line with stated government commitments and recommendations made by the UN and other intergovernmental organizations.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Coordinator

cc: Dr. Michael Frulin, Director of Colombia Human Rights Office ~via fax: 011-571-658-3300
 Luis Alberto Moreno, 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
 U.S. Senators DeWine and Voinovich ~ via email
 U.S. Representatives Brown, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, 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: