

via fax: 011-571-565-9797 / cefranco@presidencia.gov.co

Señor Carlos Franco, Director of Human Rights Program, Vice-Presidency of Colombia

October 17, 2005

Dear Mr. Franco:

We are extremely concerned about the **forced disappearance of ORLANDO VALENCIA** on October 15, 2005 by paramilitary forces in the Curvaradó region of Chocó Department.

Valencia is a community leader from Jiguamiandó, a self-declared "peace community" that has suffered over 20 paramilitary incursions and is working to save their titled lands from being appropriated for the agri-business of African oil palm. Valencia had been invited to "Partnering for Peace: Colombian and North American Communities in Solidarity," a conference to be held in Chicago, USA, October 21-23, 2005. He was denied a travel visa by the US government on October 13, despite a letter from the US Embassy verifying the conference invitation. Orlando Valencia is covered by provisional measures of the OAS Inter-American Court of Human Rights.

On October 15 the Bajirá police detained Valencia (along with nine peasants and companions from Justicia y Paz and PASC, a Canadian member of the Interchurch Commission of Justice & Peace) as they were traveling to an assembly of the Curvaradó Community Council in Despensa Média. The police ordered Valencia and the companions into the police vehicle; Captain Cabrera ordered the others to follow. Close to the site a white truck was visible with three known paramilitaries, among them an Afro-Colombian known as Dimas.

After interrogation, the police released the companions at about 11:30. By 12:30, all the peasants, including Orlando, had been freed and proceeded toward the home of Enrique Petro, who was part of the group. Before entering the house, Orlando was approached by two paramilitaries who had followed the group by motor cycle. At gunpoint, they took Valencia and left toward the town of Chigorodó. His whereabouts are unknown.

With urge that you

- Assure that the special mission of the Organization of American States (OAS) in Colombia have full access to locate Orlando Valencia
- Return Orlando Valencia alive and into the custody of the OAS.
- Comply with recommendations of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, which have been systematically neglected since March 15.

Thanking you for your prompt attention. Any delay puts Orlando Valencia's life at greater risk.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai, Coordinator

cc: Luis Alberto Moreno, Colombian Ambassador to the US ~ via fax: 1 202 232 8643
 Dr. Francisco Santos Calderon, Vice-President of Colombia ~ via fax: :011 57 1565 7682
 Carolina Barco, Colombian Foreign Minister ~ via fax: 011 571 341 6777
 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

CRLN_Colombia

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