

# IRTF

Inter Religious Task Force on Central America

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via fax 011 57 1 342 0592 / 337 58 90 Sr. Alvaro Uribe Velez President, Republic of Colombia	via fax: 011 57 1565 7682 Sr. Francisco Santos Vice-President, Republic of Colombia
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November 12, 2005

Dear Sirs:

We are deeply concerned for the health of members of USO, the oil workers' union, who have been on a hunger strike since October 20 because of continued attempts by the Colombian government to privatize the state oil company ECOPETROL. Jorge Ortega, USO President, is in the early stages of kidney failure and requires urgent medical intervention to prevent further deterioration of his condition. Edward Mojica of the USO Commission for Peace and Human Rights remains in the Bocagrande hospital under constant medical supervision.

Members of USO were forced to initiate the hunger strike in Cartagena on October 20 because of government intransigence and failure to fulfill previous agreements with the trade union. ECOPETROL, the state's most profitable asset, should be used as a source of social development and peace in the country. Privatizing the company will continue the poverty and misery of the majority of the Colombian people.

We support the struggle of members of USO and we call on the Colombian government to immediately comply with the agreements which they signed on May 26, 2004 to maintain ECOPETROL as a state-owned company.

We therefore **urge that you**

- Immediately open a dialogue with USO and other social organizations in Cartagena on the future of Cartagena Oil Refinery;
- Guarantee the security for all those on the hunger strike and for their supporters;
- Ensure that all necessary medical attention is given to those on the hunger strike.

Thank you for your prompt attention.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
Coordinator

Copies: 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, La Tourette, Ryan, Tubbs Jones ~ via email

CSN\_Colombia

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