

via fax 011 57 1 566 2071 Sr. Alvaro Uribe Velez President of the Republic of Colombia	via fax: 011 57 1 222 1874 Sr. Jorge Alberto Uribe Echavarria Minister of Defense, Colombia
--	---

December 15, 2004

Dear Sirs:

We, members of the InterReligious Task Force, are extremely concerned for the safety and well-being of African descendant people in the Department of Chocó, especially those located in the Atrato and San Juan regions. We are outraged at the increasing violence in Chocó during the past few weeks and the great risk faced by the people of the Atrato and San Juan regions. Fighting has displaced 800 residents of Bebedó, a village in Chocó. Recent reports from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Consultancy for Human Rights and Displacement (CODHES) indicate that paramilitary forces, FARC and ELN guerillas are increasing their presence in the middle Atrato and San Juan regions. Rural communities are vulnerable and have been left unprotected by the removal of Colombian security forces in November.

We remind you of the cruel May 2002 Bojayá massacre of 119 Afro-Colombians who were killed while seeking refuge in a church as guerrilla and paramilitary forces battled around them. Our fear is that without government action this horrible violence could happen again in the Afro-Colombian territories of the Middle San Juan and Atrato.

**We therefore urge you and your government to take immediate action to protect the Afro-Colombian communities of the Chocó.**

Thank you for your attention to this most serious matter. Please advise us as to the steps you have taken to address our concerns.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
 Coordinator

cc: Luis Alberto Moreno, Colombian Ambassador to the US ~ via fax: 1 202 232 8643  
 William B Wood, US Ambassador to Colombia ~ via fax: fax: 011-571-315-2197  
 Charles Barclay, Desk Officer for Colombia, US State Dept ~ via fax: 202.647.2628  
 Senator George Voinovich, US Senate ~ via email: [Daniel\\_knezevic@voinovich.senate.gov](mailto:Daniel_knezevic@voinovich.senate.gov)  
 Rep. Dennis J. Kucinich, US House of Representatives ~ via email: [Samantha.spinney@mail.house.gov](mailto:Samantha.spinney@mail.house.gov)  
 Rep. Marcy Kaptur, US House of Representatives ~ via fax: Jennifer Goedke 202.225.7711  
 Rep. Steve LaTourette, US House of Representatives ~ via email: [kate.ostrander@mail.house.gov](mailto:kate.ostrander@mail.house.gov)  
 Rep. Tim Ryan, US House of Representatives ~ via email: [john.Stephan@mail.house.gov](mailto:john.Stephan@mail.house.gov)  
 Rep. Stephanie Tubbs Jones, US House of Representatives ~ via email: [tannaz.haddadi@mail.house.gov](mailto:tannaz.haddadi@mail.house.gov)

CSN Chocó Colombia

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