

via fax: 011 57 1 337 58 90/ 342 05 92 Senor Presidente Alvaro Uribe Velez President of the Republic, Colombia	via fax: 011 57 1 560 9946 Dr. Luis Carlos Restrepo High Commissioner for Peace, Colombia
via fax: 011 57 1 570 2000 Dr. Mario German Iguaran Attorney General, Colombia	

December 15, 2005

We are deeply concerned about the **murders of at least 22 peasant farmers** by army-backed paramilitaries on December 4 and 5 in the municipality of Curumani, Cesar Department. Approximately 200 gunmen, who said they were members of the paramilitary group Bloque Norte (North Bloc), entered the communities of La Más Verde and Nuevo Horizonte in the Santa Isabel area of Curumani. They abducted at least 22 civilians, whom they tortured and then killed by either stabbing or shooting them.

Among the first bodies to be identified were peasant farmers **Carlos Julio Hernández Triana, Elidez Ramírez Piñeda** and **Hector Julio Manzano**. Theirs and two other unidentified bodies were taken to Curumani. The bodies of 17 people were left abandoned in La Más Verde y Nuevo Horizonte for at least five days.

On December 12, AUC paramilitary leader Rodrigo Tovar Pupo, known as "Jorge Cuarenta," accused MINGA of being a "guerrilla organization." This labeling, broadcast on national radio and published in newspapers, is tantamount to a death threat.

The Curumani area is heavily militarized, but the security forces made no apparent effort to confront the paramilitaries, who had been there two days. This raises still greater concern for the safety of the civilian population. As early as October, the Office of the Defensoria del Pueblo had reportedly issued an alert warning of a paramilitary threat to attack communities in this area.

Despite its involvement in a government-sponsored demobilization process, the Bloque Norte has been implicated in other serious human rights violations, including the December 25, 2004 massacre of 9 peasant farmers in the area.

Because of our deep concern for the safety of the civilian population of the municipality of Curumani, we strongly urge you to:

- Immediately conduct a full and impartial investigation into the December 4 and 5 killings in Curumani, make the results public, and bring those responsible to justice;
- Reveal what steps you are taking to protect the civilian population in the area;
- Conduct a full and impartial investigation into links between the security forces and paramilitary groups in the department of Cesar, make the results public and bring to justice those responsible for supporting and participating in such groups;
- 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: MINGA - via U.S. mail – Calle 19 # 5-88, oficina 1203 – Bogota, Colombia
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, Gillmor, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Regula, 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: