

via fax: 011 57 1 337 58 90/ 342 05 92 Señor Presidente Álvaro Uribe Vélez Presidente de la Republica de Colombia	via fax: 011 57 1 266 03 51 Señor Camilo Ospina Ministerio de Defensa Nacional, Colombia
via fax: 011 57 1 570 2000 Dr. Mario German Iguaran Fiscalia General de la Nación, Colombia	

February 13, 2006

We are deeply concerned about **Hersain Talaga Ladios**, who was abducted by army-backed paramilitaries near the hamlet of Puerto Toledo in Puerto Rico municipality, Meta Department. In addition, we have serious concerns for the safety of civilians living in the area following the recent abduction and "disappearance" of at least 16 other people.

Puerto Toledo residents, including Hersain and his family, fled their homes in early January because of paramilitary violence. Returning to Puerto Toledo on January 27, paramilitaries took Hersain from the bus in front of his wife and told her: "We are going to...investigate him ... maybe in five days..we will release him; otherwise you know what will happen to him." His whereabouts remain unknown.

The paramilitary checkpoint Hersain's bus was stopped was located less than 100 meters from an army post of the Colombian Army's Second Mobile Brigade.

Conflict and massive displacement has intensified because of a large-scale military operation in the area called Plan Patriota. Both guerrilla forces and the paramilitaries (aided and protected by the government armed forces) have killed civilians there. We wrote you on January 26 about the paramilitary assassination of four peasants in Puerto Lleras and the disappearance of 12 others in the area.

As a result of our deep concern for the safety of Hersain Talaga Ladios and other members of the civilian population of Meta Department, we strongly urge you to:

- Immediately conduct a full and impartial investigation into the January 27 disappearance of Hersain Talaga Ladios, make the results public, and bring those responsible to justice;
- Explain what steps you are taking to protect the civilian population in the area;
- Conduct a full and impartial investigation into links between the Colombian armed forces and paramilitary groups in Meta
- 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: Ambassador William B Word, US Embassy in Colombia ~ via fax
 Ambassador Luis Alberto Moreno, Colombian Embassy in the US ~ via fax
 Dr. Francisco Santos, Vicepresidente de Colombia ~ via fax
 Dr. Michael Frulin, Colombia office, UN High Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax
 Dra. Maria Carolina Barco Isakson, Colombian Minister of Foreign Relations ~ via fax
 Comisión Intereclesial Justicia y Paz ~ via mail
 Heather Meritt, Colombia Desk Officer, US State Department ~ via fax
 US Senators DeWine & Voinovich ~ via email
 US Representatives Brown, Gillmor, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Regula, Ryan, Tubbs Jones ~ via email

UA 29/06 Colombia

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