



InterReligious Task Force on Central America

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via fax: 011 571 337 5890 Señor Presidente Alvaro Uribe Velez Presidente de la Republica, Colombia	via fax: 011 571 266 03 51 Sr. Camilo Ospina Ministro de Defensa Nacional, Colombia
via fax: 011 57 1 560 4630 Dr. Sabas Pretelt de la Vega Minister of Interior, Colombia	

February 14, 2006

Dear Sirs:

We are concerned for the safety of **Nueva Vida and Nueva Esperanza de Dios**, self-declared humanitarian zones in the Cacarica River Basin in Riosucio Municipality, Chocó Department. These mostly Afro-descendent civilians want all armed actors to stay out of their communities.

Army-backed paramilitaries are threatening an imminent attack against them, to be launched from a paramilitary base in the La Balsa area of the Cacarica River Basin. Although Amnesty International has received numerous reports of this base, and although authorities have been informed of its existence, no action appears to have been taken by the security forces to confront these paramilitaries.

We wrote to Colombian officials in April 2005 when 300 paramilitaries were seen at the Cacarica River Basin; they said they were preparing to attack the humanitarian zones. It appears that the Army 17th Brigade and the paramilitaries are collaborating to displace civilians in Chocó Department.

We urge you to:

- Take all measures that the Nueva Vida and Nueva Esperanza de Dios communities themselves deem appropriate in order to guarantee their safety;
- Take decisive action to confront and dismantle paramilitary groups operating in the area and to break their links with the security forces, in line with repeated UN recommendations.

Thank you for your prompt attention.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Coordinator

CC: Luis Alberto Moreno, Colombian Ambassador to the US ~ via fax
William B Wood US Ambassador to Colombia ~ via fax
Heather Merritt, Desk Officer for Colombia, US State Department ~ via fax
Dr. Francisco Santos, Vice-President of Colombia ~ via fax
Dr. Michael Frulin, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Colombia office ~ via fax
Dr. Mario German Iguaran, Attorney General ~ via fax
Dra. Maria Carolina Barco Isakson, Minister of Foreign Affairs ~ via fax
US Senators DeWine & Voinovich ~ via email
US Representatives Brown, Gillmor, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Regula, Ryan, Tubbs Jones ~ via email

UA 85/05 Colombia

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