

via fax: 011 57 1 337 58 90/ 342 05 92 Señor Presidente Álvaro Uribe Vélez President of the Republic of Colombia	via fax: 011 57 1 565 76 82 Dr. Francisco Santos Calderon Vice-President of Colombia
via fax: 011 57 1 570 Dr. Mario Germán Iguaran Arana Attorney General of Colombia	

October 1, 2007

We, members of the InterReligious Task Force, are seriously concerned for the safety of human rights defender and activist, **José Manuel Gómez**, his family, and other staff of the human rights group Comité Permanente por los Derechos Humanos (**CPDH**). On September 11, José Manuel Gómez, a member of CDPH, received an email death threat signed by the army-backed paramilitary group Black Eagles (Aguilas Negras). The message read: "Terrorists like you deserve death; don't think that shielding yourself in an NGO is going to save you. . . We declare you to be a military target and we will be carrying out our threat." This is the latest in a series of threats he has received in the last two years.

In March 2005, when he worked for the CDPH branch in the city of Barranquilla (Atlántico Department), a man approached him saying he was a member of the Anti-Kidnapping United Action Groups (GAULA), a joint security force unit which, in Atlántico, is attached to the army's II Brigade. This man asked him to provide information and showed him a list of human rights activists in the city of Barranquilla. José Manuel Gómez refused to cooperate.

On January 12, 2006, a man who had refused to give false information to the GAULA against José Manuel and other human rights workers in Barranquilla survived a murder attempt, but two acquaintances were shot dead. On July 19, 2006, José Manuel received email death threats from paramilitaries. In March 2006, his name was found on a death list of human rights activists on a computer in the possession of a paramilitary leader belonging to the Northern Block of the supposedly demobilized United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC). Because of these death threats, José Manuel left Barranquilla.

As a result of our concern for the safety of José Manuel Gómez and the members of CDPH following the death threats, **we strongly urge** you to:

- take immediate action to protect José Manuel Gómez, his family and other members of (CPDH), in accordance with their wishes;
- immediately order full and impartial investigations into the death threats against José Manuel Gómez, publish the results, and bring all those responsible to justice;
- take decisive action to confront and dismantle paramilitary groups operating in the region and to break their links with the security forces, in line with repeated UN recommendations;
- produce policy and plans, in conjunction with human rights defenders, to guarantee their safety according to the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights and Responsibilities of Individuals, Groups and Institutions to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and make these plans public.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai, Coordinator

cc: Comité Permanente por la Defensa de los DH (CPDH) ~ via US mail
 Carolina Barco Isakson, Colombian Ambassador to the US ~ via fax
 William Brownfield, US Ambassador to Colombia ~ via fax
 Heather Merritt, Desk Officer for Colombia, US State Department ~ via fax
 Paolo Carozza US member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights~ fax
 US Senators Brown & Voinovich; US Representatives Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Regula, Ryan, Sutton, Tubbs Jones ~ via email

UA251/07 Colombia

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