

via fax: 011 57 1 337 58 90/ 342 05 92 Sr. Álvaro Uribe Vélez President of the Republic de Colombia	via fax: 011 57 1 337 46 67 Dr. Carlos Franco Director of Human Rights Programs of Colombia
via fax: 011 57 1 565 76 82 Dr. Francisco Santos Calderon Vice-president of the Republic of Colombia	via fax: 011 57 1 342 97 23 Dr. Edgardo José Maya Villazón Procuraduría General of Colombia

December 13, 2007

Dear Sirs:

We, members of the InterReligious Task Force, are seriously concerned for the safety and welfare of members of the displaced Wayuu community of **Bahía Portete** in the Alta Guajira region of La Guajira, the far northeastern Caribbean coastal department of Colombia. On November 23, the paramilitary group **Contra insurgencia Wayuu**, under command of "Pablo," killed **Chichi Epinayu**, age 35, and kidnapped **Julian Epinayu**, age 68, whose fate is not yet known. A third victim, **Masparray Epinayu**, survived, although he is in serious condition with bullet wounds.

This is the most recent example of the ongoing victimization of the Wayuu people. On November 8, a mercenary, Jorge, age 40, confessed in a public hearing in Barranquilla, in coastal Atlántico Department, that his team committed five massacres, including the Bahia Portete Massacre that took the lives of 12 indigenous Wayuu in April 2004. He told how the massacre had been planned in collaboration with a member of the Cartagena Battalion. His confession confirms that the activities of the paramilitaries throughout the Atlantic coast are at the service of multinational companies and national monopolies that have appropriated lands and ports for the development of their economic projects. The region's economy is dominated by the largest open pit coal mine in the world, El Cerrejon Zona Norte, whose construction and operations have resulted in the displacement of hundreds of Wayuu and Afro-Colombian families.

The Wayuu community of Bahia Portete has been denouncing these acts for years through their community spokespeople whom the paramilitaries, the government and multinational companies accuse of being collaborators in the insurgency, kidnapers and thieves.

As a result of our concern for the safety and welfare of the Wayuu people, specifically those in the Bahía Portete community in Alta Guajira, we strongly urge you to:

- form a commission consisting of the Defensoría del Pueblo, the Attorney General of Colombia, representatives of the Organization of American States (OAS), the National Commission on Reparation and Reconciliation (CNRR), United Nations (UN) and the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (ONIC), to go to the area, investigate the killings and report publicly on its findings;
- take effective action, as deemed appropriate to members of the Bahía Portete community, to protect them and ensure that they can safely live on their legitimate ancestral lands;
- take decisive action, in line with repeated UN recommendations, to confront and dismantle paramilitary groups operating in the region and to break their links with the security forces.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan-Szittai
Coordinator

cc: Organización Wayuu Munsurat ~ via email
Dr. Mario German Iguarán, Attorney General of Colombia ~ via fax: 011 57 1 570 2000
Dr. Volmar Antonio Pérez Ortiz, Defensoría del Pueblo ~ via fax 011 57 1 640 0491
Dr. Marcelo Castro Fox, Permanent Representative of the Internacional Labor Organization to Colombia ~ via email
Dr. Javier Gutierrez Pemberthy, President of ECOPETROL, S.A. ~ via email
Carolina Barco Isakson, Colombian Ambassador to the US ~ via fax: 202.232.8643
Ambassador William Brownfield, US Ambassador to Colombia ~ via fax: 011.571.315.2197
Heather Merritt, Desk Officer for Colombia, US State Department ~ via fax: 202.647.4173
Dr. Michael Frulin, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Colombia office ~ via fax: 011-571. 658-3300
Paolo Carozza US member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202.458.3992
US Senators Brown & Voinovich and US Representatives Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Regula, Ryan, Sutton, 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: