

via fax: 011 57 1 337 58 90/ 342 05 92 <b>Señor Presidente Álvaro Uribe Vélez</b> Presidente de la República de Colombia	via fax: 011 57 1 565 76 82 <b>Dr. Francisco Santos Calderon</b> Vice-president of the Republic, Colombia
via fax: 011 57 1 570 2000 <b>Dr. Mario Germán Iguaran Arana</b> Fiscalía General de la Nación, Colombia	

February 26, 2008

Dear Sirs:

We, members of the InterReligious Task Force, are seriously concerned for the safety and welfare of members of the indigenous communities in the high Bojayá region of Colombia, where 2,000 people are on the verge of being displaced. According to reports we have received from the ASOOREWA (Association of Indigenous Councils of Embera, Wounaan, Katio, Chami and Tulein in the Department of Chocó) and the Committee for Life, Justice and Peace of the Catholic Diocese of Quibdó, a serious condition of hunger and child malnutrition is occurring in the indigenous communities in the area, along with the imminent threat of massive displacement.

On January 17 at about 11:00 a.m., four helicopters from the Colombian Army simultaneously arrived in the indigenous communities of Salinas and Chanó. The soldiers invaded the communities, occupying such buildings as the schools and the dairies. They prevented free movement in the territory. They used dynamite to destroy the fishing resources. The soldiers tried to recruit the children and youth as informants.

The communities that are most affected by this chaotic situation of confinement in the traditional territory are: Chanó, with 110 families and 604 inhabitants; Mojaudo, with 30 families and 205 inhabitants; Nuevo Olivo, with 32 families and 165 inhabitants; Santalucia Pogue, with 40 families and 220 inhabitants; Salinas, with 42 families and 249 inhabitants; and Nambua, with 12 families and 71 inhabitants.

A statement by indigenous community leaders says: "We want to continue building a future in our lands without being displaced by any armed force, either guerrilla or legal public force in Colombia. For this, we declare ourselves in permanent cultural resistance to safeguard our unity, territory, culture, autonomy, and our own government..."

We strongly protest these continuing attacks on the indigenous communities in this area and we call upon you to:

- respect and uphold the laws of indigenous legislation;
- end human rights violations these communities;
- respect the traditional methods of production practiced by the indigenous peoples;
- permit the indigenous people to exercise their own autonomy in their own territory;
- end the presence of forces in indigenous territories that provoke violence in their land;
- stop all interference in the organizing processes of these indigenous communities.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
 Coordinator

Copies: Carolina Barco Isakson, Colombian Ambassador to the US ~ via fax: 202.232.8643  
 William Brownfield, US Ambassador to Colombia ~ via fax: 011.571.315.2197  
 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 Latta, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Regula, Ryan, Sutton, Tubbs Jones ~ via email  
 2008/02/04-High Bpyajá Region - Colombia

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