

via fax: 011 57 1 337 5890/342 0592 Sr. Alvaro Uribe Velez President of Colombia	via fax: 011 57 1 570 2000 Dr. Mario German Iguaran Arana Attorney General of Colombia
via fax: 011 57 1 266 03 51 Sr. Juan Manuel Santos Minister of National Defense of Colombia	

July 1, 2008

Dear Sirs:

We are extremely concerned for the Afro-descendant communities of the Naya River basin, located between the Departments of Cauca and Valle Del Cauca. The following incidents demonstrate that paramilitary groups, which supposedly have been demobilized in a government-sponsored process, are still active and a threat to the lives of these communities.

- Apr. 1, 2008 – paramilitaries threatened to kill three members of the non-governmental organization Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission (Justicia y Paz), and a member of the Naya River basin Community Council, who have been helping Afro-descendant communities in the area to secure land ownership.
- Apr. 1 to Apr. 20 - Soldiers from the Second Mobile Brigade (Brigada Movil 2) and the High Mountain Battalion (Batallon de Alta Montaña) were camped in the hamlet of San Bartolo in the Naya River basin, telling people that paramilitary groups were returning to the area. After they left on Apr. 20, paramilitary graffiti was found in their encampment areas.
- May 5 – Members of the armed forces were seen fraternizing with four paramilitaries who may not have been demobilized.
- May 21, May 28, June 6 - outsiders were seen in the community trying to procure land from community members.

Past paramilitary incursions in the area have resulted in killings and forced disappearances, causing extreme concern among the local population. These Afro-descendant community members are often drawn into the armed conflict against their will. New threats suggest that the Colombian authorities have failed to take decisive action to safeguard the Afro-descendant communities living in the Naya River basin.

We therefore **strongly urge** that you

- ensure that all the communities and organizations in the Naya River basin are protected, in accordance with their own wishes;
- order full and impartial investigations into the threats described above and take decisive action, in line with repeated UN recommendations, to confront and dismantle paramilitary groups and investigate and break their links with the security forces.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Coordinator

cc: Justicia Y Paz Intereclesial ~ via US mail
 Dr. Volmar Antonio Pérez Ortiz, Colombia Human Rights Ombudsman ~ via fax: 011 57 1 640 04 91
 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
 Heather Merritt, Desk Officer for Colombia, US State Department ~ via fax: 202.647.4173
 Javier Hernández Valencia, 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 ~ via email
 US Representatives Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Latta, Regula, Ryan, Sutton, Tubbs Jones ~ via email

UA179/08 Colombia

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