

via fax: 011 57 1 337 5890

Señor Presidente Álvaro Uribe Vélez

President of the Republic of Colombia

via fax: 011 57 7 633 98 89

Sr. Horacio Serpa Uribe

Governor of Santander Department, Colombia

via fax: 011 57 1 570 2000 ext 2017

Dr. Mario Germán Iguaran Arana

Attorney General of the Republic of Colombia

July 14, 2008

Dear Sirs:

We, members of the InterReligious Task Force, are extremely concerned for the safety of trade unionists and social activists living or working in the city of Bucaramanga, Santander Department, who have been threatened with death by the army-backed paramilitary group "Black Eagles" (*Aguilas Negras*).

On June 11 a man on a motorbike stopped in front of the house of **Cesar Tamayo**, president of the peasant farmers' trade union, Agrarian Association of Santander. When Tamayo's 11-year-old son answered the door, the man, his face hidden by his helmet, handed him an envelope containing an announcement of the death of Cesar Tamayo and those named below:

- **Cesar Plazas, David Florez, Nohora Villamizar, and Fernando Porras**, all members of the Santander branch of the Trade Union Congress (*Central Unitaria de Trabajadores*);
- **Javier Correa**, member of the National Union of Food Industry Workers (*SINALTRAINAL*);
- **Martha Cecilia Díaz**, president of the Public Services Workers' Union of Santander (*Asociación Santandereana de Servidores Públicos*);
- **William Rivera, Gustavo Mendoza, and Carolina Rubio**, all members of the non-governmental human rights organization Committee of Solidarity for Political Prisoners (*Fundación Comité de Solidaridad con los Presos Políticos*).

The note, signed by the Black Eagles, had a cross beside each name, declared them to be military targets, accused them of being guerrillas and of promoting anti-patriotic marches. It also read, "a Colombia free of guerrillas, YES! NGOs, defenders of narco-guerrillas, NO! RIP!"

On June 19, unknown men left a death threat signed by the Black Eagles at the housing complex where trade unionist **Belcy Rincon** (of *SINTRACLINICAS* health care workers union) lives in Floridablanca, Santander. The letter accused the union of being "a burrow of guerrillas" and said that union members would soon be "exterminated like cockroaches."

Because of our great concern for the safety of these trade unionists and social activists in the department of Santander, we strongly urge you to:

- ensure that all measures deemed appropriate by the individuals and organizations named in the threats received on June 11 and 19 are taken to guarantee their safety;
- order full and impartial investigations into those death threats, publish the results and bring all those responsible to justice;
- take decisive action, in line with repeated UN recommendations, to confront and dismantle paramilitary groups operating in the region and investigate and break their links with the security forces;

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai, Coordinator

cc: Fundación Comité de Solidaridad con los Presos Políticos, Calle 26, No. 4 A-45, Piso 12, torre KLM Bogotá, Colombia ~ via mail

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 and US Representatives Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Latta, Regula, Ryan, Sutton, Tubbs Jones ~ via email

UA 180/08 Colombia

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