

via fax: 011 57 1 342 0592 Señor Presidente Álvaro Uribe Vélez President of the Republic of Colombia	via fax: 011 57 1 570 2000 ext 2017 Dr. Mario Germán Iguaran Arana Attorney General of the Republic of Colombia
via fax: 011 57 1 337 565 7682 Dr. Francisco Santos Calderon Vice-President of the Republic of Colombia	

August 16, 2008

Dear Sirs:

We, members of the InterReligious Task Force, are extremely concerned for the safety and well-being of **Liliana Obando**, representative of the Agricultural Workers Union Federation (FENSUAGRO). On August 8, she was arrested and detained by Colombian government forces. The arrest was carried out in her apartment in front of her distraught mother and children.

Ms. Obando has been detained on charges of "rebellion" against the state, a catch-all charge that has been regularly used to imprison—for long periods and without trial—those who speak out against the government. "Rebellion" also allows the regime to smear those accused of it as being "terrorists" and helps to delegitimize their work.

In visits to other countries, Ms. Obando has impressed audiences with her commitment to her work with peasant associations as a member of the FENSUAGRO. She has publicly described the challenges presented by state-sponsored violence (including the extreme violence used by paramilitary forces), but at no time has she called for anything but a peaceful solution to the social conflict in her homeland. She must now defend herself against extremely serious charges of rebellion and managing resources to aid terrorism.

Before her arrest, the attorney general had announced publicly that Ms. Obando, along with eleven other critics of the government's human rights record, was under investigation for links to the FARC guerrilla organization.

The "evidence" in Ms. Obando's case is said to have been found on a laptop and other electronic equipment captured by the Colombian armed forces when they invaded Ecuadorean territory in March of this year. The equipment is said to have belonged to Commander Raúl Reyes of the FARC, who was killed in the attack. The credibility of the "evidence" is widely questioned. INTERPOL cannot vouch for its integrity and notes that it has been manipulated by the Colombian authorities.

Because of our great concern for the safety and welfare of Liliana Obando and other trade unionists and social activists, we strongly urge you to:

- Immediately release from custody Liliana Obando, drop all of the false charges against her, and guarantee her safety, in accordance with her wishes

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Coordinator

cc: Peace & Justice for Colombia ~ via email
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

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