

via fax: 011 57 1 337 58 90/ 342 05 92 Presidente Álvaro Uribe Vélez President of the Republic de Colombia	via fax: 011 57 1 266 0351 Dr. Juan Manuel Santos Arana Minister of Defense, Colombia
via fax: 011 57 1 570 Dr. Mario German Iguaran Attorney General, Colombia	

September 3, 2008

Dear Sirs:

We are horrified at the **threatened genocide of Colombia's indigenous peoples** that has escalated recently by the email received by the Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca Department (CRIC) in northern Cauca Department on August 11, which announces the government's strategy to destabilize the unity of indigenous Afro-Colombian and peasant communities. It refers to the CRIC as ringleaders and guerrillas and states that from August 11 onward they will be found dead and disappeared. It states that it wishes the cities of Popayan, Cali and Bogotá to be free of indigenous people and that they will not allow the indigenous population to surpass 1 million in Colombia [there are 1.4 million according to the 2005 census].

The email text, which covers itself by claiming to be from an anti-indigenous *campesino* group, uses the national government's language that blames the indigenous population for the failure of land policies and the lack of agrarian reform in Colombia. Clearly showing the paramilitary essence of the threat, the authors say that they have the indigenous population surrounded by intelligence members of their group and have prepared teams and logistics support. They call for a process of military occupation and extermination of CRIC members and the indigenous population of Cauca. To justify this, they refer to comments by the commander of the Third Brigade of the Colombian Army, in which he alleged links between the 6th front of the FARC and officials from the administration of Toribio municipality.

President Alvaro Uribe's opposition to the indigenous communities' struggles for their rights is well-known. In March 2008, during a speech in Popayan, the capital of Cauca, he offered to reward those who would help to break the unity of the indigenous community by acting as informants on the leaders trying to reclaim ancestral lands to which they are entitled by the 1991 political constitution. In addition, institutional spokespersons have consistently reiterated the message that the indigenous population benefits from state guarantees to the detriment of the rights of other sectors of society.

Because of our concern for the safety of indigenous and Afro-descendant communities in Cauca, we **strongly urge** that you

- take concerted action to uncover the true origins of the genocide threats against the indigenous communities in Cauca, make the results public and bring those responsible to justice;
- respect the rights of these indigenous communities to their ancestral lands and end the apparent collusion between the government, landowners and paramilitaries.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Coordinator

cc: CRIC (Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca) ~ 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 and US Representatives Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Latta, Regula, Ryan, Sutton ~ via email

Aug 20/ColombiaSolidarity/Colombia

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