

via fax: 011 57 1 337 58 90/ 342 05 92 Presidente Álvaro Uribe Vélez , President of the Republic of Colombia	via fax: 011 57 1 266 1003 Dr. Juan Manuel Santos , Minister of Defense of Colombia
via fax: 011 57 1 570 2000 Dr. Mario German Iguaran Arana , Attorney General of Colombia	

October 12, 2008

Dear Sirs:

We are deeply concerned for the welfare and safety of the following people: **Rodolfo Vecino Acevedo**, **Rafael Cabarcas**, **Nelson Berrio**, **Hernando Hernandez**, all members of the Oil Worker's Union (USO - Sindical Obrera de la Industria del Petroleo); **Domingo Tovar**, member of the Trade Union Congress (CUT - Central Unitaria de Trabajadores.); and **Lenin Fernandez**, student leader in the Department of Cesar. On September 18, the USO received an e-mail death threat from the paramilitary group, The Carlos Castaño is Still Alive Eagles (CCV - Aguilas Carlos Castaño Vive), which warned, "we are reminding you about the death sentences for those...guerrillas who still continue screwing around." The email accuses the six men of making up the political wing of the National Liberation Army (Ejercito de Liberacion Nacional, ELN), and informs them that they will "all fall little by little, which they deserve for being guerrillas." In addition, Domingo Tovar from CUT was threatened and the CUT was labeled "the birthplace of terrorists." Lenin Fernandez was also "sentenced to death."

These threats are a continuation of other recent threats against trade union members, including the following:

- On September 1 the offices of USO in Cartagena received a telephone call asking for Rodolfo Vecino Acevedo and Rafael Cabarcas. The caller warned that, "they knew that this pair...were in the city and they wanted to kill them."
- On September 9 two funeral wreaths were sent to USO's offices in Cartagena with messages of condolence for Rodolfo Vecino Acevedo, who was in Cartagena at the time. Later, two different funeral parlors informed USO's offices that they had more funeral wreaths to send at the request of an unidentified female caller. In December 2007, a similar funeral wreath and 'message of condolence' naming Rodolfo Vecino Acevedo had been sent to USO's offices in Barrancabermeja, Santander.
- Other death threats have been received by USO, Rodolfo Vecino Acevedo and Rafael Cabarca after the May Day marches on May 1 and June 18, 2008 (from Aguillas Negras Unidas), on August 31, 2007, and in 2005 (from the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia, AUC).

Rodolfo Vecino Acevedo, his family and other members of USO continue to be at risk even though The Inter-American Court of Human Rights of the Organization of American States has called on the Colombian authorities to take measures to guarantee their safety.

Therefore, we **strongly urge** that you:

- guarantee the safety of Rodolfo Vecino Acevedo, Rafael Cabarcas, Nelson Berrio, Hernando Hernandez and other members of USO, as well as Domingo Tovar and Lenin Fernandez, using all measures deemed appropriate by them;
- order a full and impartial investigation into the threats, make the results public and bring those responsible to justice;
- confront and dismantle paramilitary groups, investigate and break their links with the security forces, in line with UN recommendations;
- immediately produce policy and plans to guarantee the safety of those named above, according to the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights and Responsibilities of Individuals, Groups and Institutions to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and make these plans public.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Coordinator

cc: USO NACIONAL Calle 38 No. 13-37 Of. 302, Bogota, COLOMBIA ~ via US 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
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 ~ via email

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