

via fax: 011 57 1 337 58 90 Presidente Álvaro Uribe Vélez , President of the Republica of Colombia	via fax: 011 57 1 266 1003 Dr. Juan Manuel Santos , Minister of Defense, Colombia
via fax: 011 57 1 570 2000 ext 2017 Dr. Mario German Iguaran Arana , Attorney General, Colombia	

November 2, 2008

Dear Sirs:

We are deeply disturbed over the recent killing of **Walberto Hoyos Rivas**, a leader of the Afro-descendant community in the Curvarado region of Chocó Department, by members of the Black Eagles paramilitary group. We are also seriously concerned for the safety of others in that community, members of the Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission (JustaPaz) and other organizations living with the community in the Curvarado/Jiguiamando river basin.

Walberto Hoyos Rivas had been the target of death threats and attacks by paramilitaries because of his community leadership in defending human rights, including protection of the collective land rights of the Afro-descendant communities of Curvarado. He was also a witness in the 2005 forced disappearance of the Curvarado Afro-descendant leader Orlando Valencia by paramilitaries operating in coordination with the security forces; Valencia was later found dead. Since January 2003, Walberto Hoyos Rivas has received protection given by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and, since July 2008, from the Ministry of Interior and Justice.

On October 14, Walberto Hoyos Rivas received notification from a court in Antioquia to give testimony regarding the Valencia disappearance and killing. That day he was shot dead by two paramilitaries shortly after leaving a community meeting in the Cano Manso humanitarian zone of the Curvarado region. After shooting him several times, the paramilitaries left and then returned, shooting him again in the face and neck before fleeing on motorcycles with the number plates removed. They also took away the mobile telephones community members used to alert authorities in emergencies.

In our letter to Colombian officials on September 2, 2008, we alerted you to paramilitaries' threats to members of JustaPaz in the Curvarado/Jiguamiando region. JustaPaz has been working with the local Afro-descendant community to protect their collective land rights (recognized by the Colombian government in 2000) against the expansion of illegal plantations by local palm oil companies. We have previously written to Colombian officials about intimidation, threats and assassinations of human rights defenders in this region.

We light of the assassination of Walberto Hoyos Rivas, we **strongly urge** that you:

- order a full and impartial investigation into the killing of Walberto Hoyos Rivas, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice;
- guarantee the safety of members of the Afro-descendant community living in the Curvarado/Jiguamiando region, members of the Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission (JustaPaz) and other organizations living with them;
- ensure that the Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission and other organizations working in the Curvarado/Jiguamiando region can carry out their legitimate and important work for the defense of human rights;
- immediately take decisive action to confront and dismantle paramilitary groups, investigate and break their links with the security forces, in line with stated UN recommendations.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Coordinator

cc: Comision Intereclesial Justicia y Paz ~ 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
 Susan Sanford, 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

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