

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 0351 Dr. Juan Manuel Santos Arana Minister of Defense, Colombia
via fax: 011 57 1 570 2000 Dr. Mario German Iguaran Arana Attorney General, Colombia	Via fax: 011 57 1 640 0491/691 5500 Dr. Volmar Antonio Pérez Ortiz National Human Rights Ombudsman

February 6, 2009

Dear Sirs:

We are deeply concerned about the safety of **Yury Neira** after an assassination attempt on January 17. Yury Neira is coordinator of the Salmón Cultural Center in Bogotá and a member of the Victims' Movement Against State Crimes, which is backed by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

On January 16, the Salmón Cultural Center was illegally raided by the Department of Administrative Security (DAS) with 25 heavily armed officials, who arrived in eight vehicles, including an anti-explosive car. They broke down the doors and began the illegal raid: there were no officials from the Human Rights Ombudsman's office and there was no warrant to conduct a search of the premises. Six hours later, the DAS officials left without having found any illegal material or evidence. The next day, two hired assassins tried to kill Yury Neira at the gates of Salmón Cultural Center.

These are the latest harassment and murder attempts against Yury Neira because of his demands for justice in the case of his son, Nicolás Neira, who died in a hospital in May 2005, two days after he was beaten during the May Day march by the Anti-Disturbance Riot Police (ESMAD). Doctors noted a number of skull fractures, including one that was 26 centimeters long, revealing the savagery with which he was beaten. A foreign reporter covering the march captured the moment on film, but the evidence has not been used. The reporter was threatened and had to leave the country.

Initially the police declared that Nicolás died because he was stampeded by protestors, but the Inspector General's office has since recognized that he was killed at the hands of state agents. Still, his case remains in impunity. Since the murder of his son, Yury Neira has been the victim of two attempts against his life, four arbitrary arrests, continuous harassment, threats, stigmatization, police abuse and raids.

In light of the on-going threats against Yury Neira since 2005, **we strongly urge that you:**

- open the pertinent disciplinary investigations against the DAS and the Fiscal 304 for the criminalization of Salmón Cultural and its members, as well as for the irregularities that occurred during the raid;
- investigate the facts, and prosecute (by trial and sentencing) those responsible for the aggression committed against Yury Neira on January 17;
- ensure protection for Yury Neira as well as for all members of the Victims' Movement Against State Crimes;
- complete the investigation of Nicolás Neira's case, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai, Coordinator

cc: 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
 Nan N. Fife, 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 Boccheri, Fudge, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Latta, Ryan, Sutton, Wilson ~ via email

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