

IRTF

InterReligious Task Force on Central America

3606 Bridge Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio 44113
tel: 216.961.0003 fax: 216.961.0002 e-mail: irtf@igc.org

via fax: 011 571 560 4630 Sr. Carlos Holguín Sardi Minister of Interior and Justice of Colombia	via fax: 011 571 566 2064 Dr. Carlos Franco Director of Human Rights Programs of Colombia
--	--

November 15, 2009

Dear Sirs:

We are extremely concerned for the lives of university students and human rights activists in Barranquilla, Atlántico Department, who have recently received death threats. They are law students **Henry Molina, Victoria Cañas**; law graduates **Edwin García, Yulisa Pereira**; philosophy students **Fernando Martes, Claudia López**; sociology students **Carlos Julio Escobar, Nevis Niño**; economy students **Carlos de la Hoz, Jhoan Mendoza**; engineering student **James Padilla**; and human rights activist **Maria Cedeño**.

Not only have these individuals been threatened, but a “war” against student organizations has been declared by a group that claims to be a re-armed wing of United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC), the largest paramilitary organization in Colombia. The students are being falsely identified as members of the two largest insurgent groups in Colombia: Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia/People’s Army (FARC/EP) and the National Liberation Army (ELN). Some of the students have been displaced to other cities for their security, thus forcing them to end their studies.

We **strongly urge** that you:

- provide protection for the individuals named above;
- thoroughly investigate the threats and arrest the perpetrators;
- prohibit paramilitary groups from access to the campus of the University of the Atlantic in Barranquilla.

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 ~ via email
US Representatives Boccieri, Fudge, Kaptur, Kucinich, Latta, LaTourette, Ryan, Space, Sutton, Wilson ~ via email

CLR118/09/Colombia

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