

via fax: 011 57 1 266 0351 Dr. Gabriel Silva Minister of Defense of Colombia	via fax: 011 57 1 414 91 08 Sr. Guillermo Mendoza Diago Attorney General of Colombia
via fax: 011 57 1 381 47 21 Sr. Jaime Bermudez Minister of Foreign Affairs of Colombia	

November 16, 2009

Dear Sirs:

We are gravely concerned for the safety of **John Smith Porras Bernal**, who received a death threat passed under the door of his apartment on November 2. We fear this is an attempt to stop him and his mother, Luz Marina Porras Bernal, from campaigning for justice in the death of his brother, Fair Leonardo Porras Bernal, who was killed in January 2008. The family lives in Soacha, just outside Bogotá.

Fair Leonardo Porras Bernal was last seen on January 8, 2008. On September 16 his mother was told that his body had been found in a mass grave in Norte de Santander Department. The army claimed that he had been a member of an illegal armed group and had died in combat on January 12. An investigation by the Attorney General's office showed that the army had killed him, together with a number of other young men from Soacha who had been lured from their homes by false promises which included work in another city. The truth is they were taken to be killed by the army, who would present them as guerrillas killed in combat.

Luz Marina Porras Bernal has joined other mothers from Soacha whose sons have been killed by the army. These killings of dozens of young men from Soacha forced the government to acknowledge, in 2008, that the security forces were responsible for extrajudicial executions. In October 2008, the scale of the scandal led to the dismissal of 27 army officers, including three generals, and in November 2008, forced the resignation of the head of the army, General Mario Montoya, who had been linked to human rights violations.

In light of these facts, we **strongly** urge that you:

- order full and impartial investigations into the threats received by John Smith Porras Bernal, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- take decisive action to guarantee the safety of John Smith Porras, his mother Luz Marina Porras Bernal and other relatives of victims of extrajudicial executions, in accordance with the wishes of those in danger;
- order full and impartial investigations into the allegations of extrajudicial executions by the army, 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 ~ via email
US Representatives Boccieri, Fudge, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Latta, Ryan, Space, Sutton, Wilson ~ via email

UA/299/09Colombia

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