

<p>Via fax: 011 57 1 337 5890  <b>Juan Manuel Santos</b>          President of the Republic of Colombia</p>	<p>Via fax: 011 571 562 7822/7836  <b>Angela Maria Holguin</b>          Minister of Foreign Affairs of Colombia</p>
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October 2, 2010

Dear Sir and Madam:

We continue to be very concerned about the Afro-descendant communities living in the Collective Land Titles of Calima and San Juan in Valle del Cauca Department. Paramilitary groups calling themselves *Los Rastrojos* or *Águilas Negras* (Black Eagles) have stated that they aim to take control of the area in October. At least two people from these communities, including **Juan Bautista Murillo and Edwin Pedroza**, have been killed since July.

On August 31, the human rights organization Inter-Church Commission of Justice and Peace (*Comisión Intereclesial de Justicia y Paz*), which accompanies these and other Afro-descendent communities, received reports that paramilitaries had threatened to kill local residents who reported the killings. They also warned residents not to provide information to *Justicia y Paz* and to stop attending human rights training workshops that they provide. Earlier in August, paramilitaries circulated a written death threat which declared *Justicia y Paz* and a priest working in the area as "military targets" and ordered them to leave the region.

On 8 September, *Justicia y Paz* worker, **Danilo Rueda**, was approached by two men on a motorbike while waiting for a taxi on a street in Bogotá. The driver grazed Danilo Rueda with the side mirror of the motorbike, and the passenger said: "This is a warning for getting mixed up in things you shouldn't."

These incidents are further evidence of repeated death threats, killings and forced displacement that Afro-descendant communities living in departments bordering the Pacific have faced at the hands of paramilitaries, either acting alone or with the collusion of the security forces, who accuse them of being guerrilla collaborators.

Our concern for the safety of *Justicia y Paz* has increased recently because of repeated statements in the media accusing them of collaborating with the guerrilla organization FARC in an apparent attempt on the life of **Germán Marmolejo** on August 31. Germán Marmolejo has been involved in efforts to develop African Palm plantations and other economic interests on lands claimed by Afro-descendant communities which *Justicia y Paz* accompany. In the past, those labeled as guerrilla collaborators have been threatened and killed by the security forces and by paramilitary groups.

In light of the above information, we **strongly urge** that you

- guarantee the safety of members of the Collective Land Titles of Calima and San Juan and of *Justicia y Paz* through measures deemed appropriate by those under threat;
- conduct a full and impartial investigation into the threats and killings and bring those responsible to justice;
- order a full and impartial investigation by the national office of the Attorney General in Bogotá into the reported attempt on the life of Germán Marmolejo;
- take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups, in line with stated government commitments and recommendations made by the UN and other intergovernmental organizations.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
 Coordinator

cc: Comisión Intereclesial de Justicia y Paz ~ via US mail  
 Carolina Barco Isakson, Ambassador of Colombia to the US ~ via fax  
 William Brownfield, US Ambassador to Colombia ~ via fax  
 Terry Steers-Gonzalez, US State Dept., Senior Desk Officer for Colombia ~ via fax  
 Dinah Shelton, US member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax  
 Rodrigo Escobar Gil, Colombia member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax  
 Christian Salazar Volkmann, UNHCR-Colombia ~ via fax  
 US Senators Brown & Voinovich and US Representatives Boccieri, Fudge, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Latta, Ryan, Space, Sutton, Wilson ~ via email

UA201/10/Colombia

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