

via fax 011 57 1 596 0631
Señor Juan Manuel Santos
 President of the Republic of Colombia

via fax 011 57 1 599 8961
Señor Germán Vargas Lleras
 Minister of Interior and Justice of Colombia

May 1, 2011

Dear Sirs:

We are extremely concerned for the safety and well-being of environmentalists **Hildebrando Vélez** and **Sandra Viviana Cuellar Gallego** in Cali, Valle del Cauca. Sandra Viviana went missing in Cali on February 17. We fear that she has been forcibly disappeared (cf our letter of Feb. 26, 2011). Hildebrando Vélez has played a leading role in campaigning to establish her whereabouts.

Sandra Viviana Cuellar Gallego, the director of the nongovernmental organization *Surviviendo*, was last seen on February 15. Fifteen days earlier, she had been developing an environmental management plan with the local community for the municipality of Yumbo, Valle del Cauca. She also had been working with the Yanocona indigenous people on the Cauca River to ensure the protection of the river.

On the evening of April 9, when Hildebrando Vélez returned to his house in Cali, which is the registered headquarters of *Surviviendo*, he found that his computer's hard drive, his mobile telephone and a USB memory stick had been stolen. The stolen equipment contained information on the disappearance of Sandra Viviana. Prior to this theft, Hildebrando Vélez had received a number of death threats on his mobile telephone. He has reported these threats to GAULA, the anti-kidnapping and extortion unit of the security forces.

Based on these facts, **we urge that you**

- undertake full and impartial investigations into the threats against Hildebrando Vélez and the theft of equipment from his home, make the results public, and bring those responsible to justice;
- order a full and impartial investigation into the possible enforced disappearance of Sandra Viviana Cuellar Gallego, guarantee her safety, publish the results of this investigation and bring those responsible to justice.

We are very aware that persons working on environmental protection have been threatened, forcibly disappeared and killed for their work. We remind you that you have not only the power but also the obligation, as laid out in the 1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, to protect these human rights defenders. We strongly urge you to do so.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Coordinator

cc: Viviane Morales, Attorney General of Colombia ~ via fax: 011.57.1.570.2091
 Gabriel Silva Luján, Colombian Ambassador to the US ~ via fax: 202.232.8643
 P. Michael McKinley, US Ambassador to Colombia ~ via fax: 011.571.315.2197
 Terry Steers-Gonzalez, Senior Desk Officer for Colombia, US State Department ~ via fax: 202.647.2628
 Dinah Shelton, US member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202.458.3650
 Rodrigo Escobar Gil, Colombia member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202.458.3650
 US Senators Brown and Portman ~via email
 US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Latta, Renacci, 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: