

Via Fax: 011 57 1 596 0631 <b>Sr. Juan Manuel Santos</b> President of the Republic of Colombia	Via fax: 011 57 1 599 8961 <b>Sr. Germán Vargas Lieras</b> Minister of Interior and Justice of Colombia
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May 3, 2011

Dear Sirs:

We are extremely concerned for the safety of **Zoraida Hernández**, president of *Corporación Sembrar*, a human rights organization in Bogotá, and other members of this organization. On April 14 two men tried to force entry into her third-floor apartment from the balcony. They fled when she and her husband began to shout for help.

Zoraida Hernández, who is also a spokesperson for the National Movement of Victims of State Crimes (MOVICE), has recently been speaking publicly about the restitution of lands stolen by paramilitary groups, acting either alone or in collusion with the security forces. She has also publicly criticized aspects of the government's proposed victims' law and the privileges given to members of the armed forces suspected of human rights violations. (We have written at least eight letters over the past three years urging Colombian officials to investigate threats against MOVICE members; the most recent letter was April 6, 2011.)

A previous threat to *Corporación Sembrar* occurred on November 5, 2010 when two armed men came to a hotel in the municipality of Buenaventura, Valle del Cauca Department, looking for Cenia Serna, secretary general of the organization. The next day they came looking for her at a new location where she was staying.

The incident in Zoraida Hernández's building came a few weeks after *Corporación Sembrar* had withdrawn from the government's protection program, arguing that the measures provided were inadequate. The government had agreed to meet *Corporación Sembrar* before March 15 to discuss security measures, but recent information indicates that a meeting has yet to take place.

Therefore, we **strongly urge** you to

- guarantee the safety of Zoraida Hernández, her family, and others working with *Corporación Sembrar*, in strict accordance with their wishes;
- order a full and impartial investigation into the attempted break-in at the Hernández apartment, make the results public, and bring those responsible to account;
- fulfill your obligations regarding the protection of human rights defenders, as laid out in the 1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
 Coordinator

cc: Corporación Sembrar ~ via US mail  
 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 that you take action on this matter as indicated in this letter:**