

via fax: 011 57 1 596 0631
Sr. Juan Manuel Santos
 President of Colombia

via fax: 011 57 1 242 7400, ext. 2351
Sr. German Vargas Lleras
 Minister of the Interior of Colombia

February 1, 2012

Dear Sirs:

We are deeply concerned for the safety of human rights defender **Orlando Verbel Rocha** of San Onofre Municipality, Sucre Department, who has been threatened through the daughter of his deceased brother, Eder Verbel Rocha, killed by paramilitaries in 2011. On January 16, the adopted daughter of Eder Verbel Rocha and her two younger sisters were riding a bicycle in the park when a man approached and told her: "You are never going to find the culprits of Eder's death; those who are detained are going to be released, by whatever means necessary. Orlando got away that time but do not think that he is safe now."

On March 23, 2011, when brothers Orlando Enrique Verbel Rocha and Eder Verbel Rocha (and the son of Eder) were on a motorcycle on their way home from work, two armed paramilitaries shot at them, beat them with their rifles, and kicked them. Eder Verbel Rocha was fatally wounded. **Orlando Verbel Rocha** and the child fled and informed some nearby soldiers of the Marine Infantry (cf our letter of Apr 14, 2011). Two allegedly responsible paramilitaries remain in detention pending trial. However, further investigations into who ordered these killings have not produced any results.

The Verbel Rocha family has belonged to the Sucre branch of the National Movement of Victims of State Crimes (MOVICE) since 2006. The family believes they are facing retaliation from paramilitaries because of a pit they found in December 2011 that police say might have been a mass grave. The family is also facing threats to force them to leave their land.

This is the seventh letter concerning MOVICE victims that we have written to you over the past year, the most recent on January 2, 2012. Because we believe Orlando Verbel Rocha, his family and other members of MOVICE members are in danger, we **again strongly urge** that you

- ✓ take immediate steps to protect them, in accordance with their wishes;
- ✓ order a full and impartial investigation into the killing of Eder Verbel Rocha and previous attacks on the Verbel Rocha family, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- ✓ take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups and break their links with security forces, in line with government commitments and recommendations made by the UN and other intergovernmental organizations.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Coordinator

cc: MOVICE ~ 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: 202.647.4173
 Dinah Shelton, US member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202.458.3992
 Rodrigo Escobar Gil, Colombia member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202.458.3992
 US Senators Brown & 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: