

via fax 011 57 1 596 0631 Excmo. Sr. Juan Manuel Santos President of Colombia	via fax: 011 57 1 599 8961 Sr. Federico Rengifo Velez Minister of Interior and Justice of Colombia
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June 25, 2012

Dear Sirs:

We are concerned for the safety of **Ayda Quilcue**, a former leader of the Cauca Department Indigenous Regional Council (CRIC), who received a death threat via SMS text to her mobile telephone on June 20.

We are also concerned for members of the **Inter-Church Commission of Justice and Peace (CIJP)**, a human rights organization that supports civilian communities in conflict regions. Many of their members have been killed, tortured or forced to flee from their homes by the security forces and paramilitary groups. Their communications team also received a threat via text message on June 20.

This death threat against the CIJP follows a series of incidents in which members of the organization have been intimidated, harassed, followed and subject to surveillance by unknown individuals. The CIJP has been receiving protection measures from the government. What is especially disturbing is that the telephone which received the message has been provided by (and belongs to) the National Protection Unit of the Ministry of Interior. The CIJP has formally expressed concern on several occasions and requested meetings with the relevant authorities regarding the lack of proper implementation and inadequacy of the protection measures granted.

The text messages of June 20 also mentioned other human rights organizations and trade unions, accusing them of being members of guerrilla groups and threatening them with death. Specifically mentioned were the Social Research and Action Association (NOMADESC), Association for Integral Social Development (ECATE), Permanent Human Rights Committee (CPDH), National Movement of Victims of State Crimes (MOVICE), and Trade Union Congress (CUT). The Inter-Church Commission of Justice and Peace, CRIC and these other groups work with Afro-descendant and indigenous communities in the departments of Cauca and Valle de Cauca.

We have previously written several letters to Colombian officials asking for protection of Ayda Quilcue, members of CRIC and members of the Inter-Church Commission of Justice and Peace. Because we believe all those named above are in danger, we **strongly urge** that you

- take appropriate measures to protect members of the organizations mentioned in the death threats, in strict accordance with their wishes;
- order a full and impartial investigation into these death threats and all the previous incidents, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- fulfill your obligations regarding the protections of human rights defenders as specified in the 1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Coordinator

Copies: Comision Intereclesial de Justicia y Paz ~ via fax 011 57 1 346 3613
 Gabriel Silva Luján, Colombian Ambassador to the US ~ via fax: 202.232.8643
 P. Michael McKinley, US Ambassador to Colombia ~ via fax: 011.571.275.4600
 Terry Steers-Gonzalez, Senior Desk Officer for Colombia, US State Department ~ via fax: 202.647.4173
 José de Jesús Orozco Henríquez, Rapporteur for Colombia, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202.458.3992
 US Senators Brown & Portman and 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: