

via fax: 011 57 1 596 0631/ 337 5690/ 342 0592 Excmo. Sr. Juan Manuel Santos President of the Republic of Colombia	via fax: 011 57 1 570 2091/2000 ext 2023 Estimado Sr. Eduardo Montealegre Attorney General of the Republic of Colombia
via Fax: 011 571 489 3900/ 489 3100 Estimado Sr. Rafael Pardo Rueda Minister of Labor of the Republic of Colombia	

December 14, 2012

Dear Sirs:

We are saddened and horrified at the assassination of labor leader, **Milton Enrique Rivas Parra**, in Puerto Gaitán, Meta Department. On December 11 two unidentified men on a motorcycle gunned him down with seventeen bullets. Rivas was a leader in the Meta section of the Workers' Labor Union of the Petroleum Industry (USO) and a leader of the Villa Ortiz Community Action Council, a local grassroots organization. He had been receiving death threats, which he first reported to Colombian prosecutors on August 25.

The USO has been carrying out an organizing drive for a year at several companies, including the Canadian-Colombian multinational, Pacific Rubiales. Rivas was organizing at Termotécnica Coindustrial, S. A., a subcontractor for Cepcolsa, the Colombian subsidiary of the Spanish petrochemical company CEPESA (Compañía Española de Petróleos). Negotiations between the company and the union were held in November; the newly formed European industrial union federation, industriALL, joined with the USO negotiating committee as a demonstration of international support. The talks broke off on November 24 without an agreement.

The Meta police claimed that Rivas may have quit the union a month before his death and may have been involved in an argument with another union member on December 10. Labor leaders dismissed the implication that Rivas' murder resulted from disputes within the union, noting that 2,500 labor leaders and activists have been killed over the past two decades, primarily by rightwing forces. On December 14 the USO wrote: "The workers and leaders of the USO unanimously reject the accusations by the police and warn that they will file complaints with the relevant national and international organizations, where they will present recordings in which members of the ESMAD [the police force's Mobile Anti-Riot Squad] announce that they will murder the participants in the protest against Termotecnica."

We **strongly urge** that you

- carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the assassination of Milton Enrique Rivas Parra, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice;
- take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of members of USO, especially those on strike at Termotécnica;
- investigate whether members of ESMAD have threatened to kill the strikers;
- guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Colombia, including labor organizers, are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Coordinator

CC: 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
 Mary Brett Rogers-Springs, 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
 12/11_Weekly News Update_Colombia

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