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| via fax: 001 57 1 596 0631<br><b>Excmo. Sr. Juan Manuel Santos</b><br>President of Colombia | via fax: 001 57 1 570 2091<br><b>Estimado Sr. Eduardo Montealegre</b><br>Attorney General of Colombia |
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January 23, 2014

Dear Sirs:

We are writing to express our deep concern about death threats to human rights defenders **Iván Madero Vergel, Lilia Peña Silva** and **Melkin Castrillón** in Barrancabermeja in Santander Department. On January 9 the following disturbing events occurred:

- Iván Madero Vergel, President of the Regional Corporation for Defending Human Rights (CREDHOS), received a telephone death threat and a warning that his family's whereabouts were known;
- the secretary of CREDHOS received a threatening telephone call for Iván Madero Vergel, informing him that he had 48 hours to leave and that the location of his family had been identified;
- Lilia Peña Silva, a member of the Regional Association of Victims of the State of Magdalena Medio (ASORVIMM), received a death threat against her and other members of ASORVIMM, and against Melkin Castrillón, a member of the Campesino Association of the Valle del Río Cimitarra (ACVC);
- a manila envelope, found at the offices of ASORVIMM, contained a bullet and a pamphlet which said, "Death to the guerrillas disguised as victims Asorvin Melqun Lilia."

CREDHOS, ASORVIMM AND ACVC are organizations that work in Barrancabermeja and the surrounding region of Magdalena Medio, responding to the needs of the victims of the armed conflict in Colombia. The incidents against them described above are not isolated ones. During February and March 2013, Melkin Castrillón and Lilia Peña Silva were subjected to text message death threats, including one threat of having a grenade thrown into their house. On November 27 there was a break-in at the offices of CREDHOS as well as intimidation of its members outside the office (cf our letter of December 11, 2013).

Because we believe that the incidents reported above are part of a pattern of harassment against human rights defenders for their legitimate work in denouncing increased paramilitary activities and the actions of state security forces in the Magdalena Medio region, we **strongly urge** that you

- carry out a thorough, impartial and immediate investigation into the death threats described above, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice;
- take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological well-being of the human rights defenders, their families and colleagues;
- combat stigmatization against all human rights defenders so that they are able to carry out their legitimate activities without fear of intimidation.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
Co-Coordinator

CC: Daniel Pedraza, First Secretary for Human Rights and Minorities, Embassy of Colombia to the US ~ via fax: 202.232.8643  
Andrew Bowen, Interim Deputy Chief of Mission, US Embassy in Colombia ~ via fax: 011.571.275.4600  
Olivia Franken, Desk Officer for Colombia, US State Department ~ via fax: 202.647.2628  
Rapporteur for Colombia, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax 202.458.3650  
US Senators Brown & Portman ~ via email  
US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

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