

via fax: 011 57 1 596 0631 President Juan Manuel Santos President of the Republic of Colombia	via fax: 011 57 1 266 1003 Señor Juan Carlos Pinzón Minister of Defense of Colombia
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May 25, 2014

Dear Sirs:

We are deeply concerned about the recent death threats sent by paramilitaries to a human rights lawyer, trade union leaders, and environmental defense activists. On April 29 a written death threat declaring the following individuals “military targets” was sent to the offices of the Colombian Trade Union Congress (CUT) in Bucaramanga, the capital of Santander Department: **Leonardo Jaimes**, a human rights lawyer with the Committee of Solidarity with Political Prisoners (CSPP), trade unionists **Martha Díaz** (of ASTDEMP, Association of Public Servants of Santander) and **David Flórez** (of CUT–Santander branch) and environmental campaigners **Diego Riaño** and **Jimmy Moreno**. The threat, signed by the paramilitary group Self-Defense Forces of Colombia–Los Rastrojos–Los Urabeños Command, accuses the human rights workers of organizing peasant farmer demonstrations, which they allege are supported by guerrilla groups.

Some of these people and their family members have been threatened before. In December 2010, while Martha Díaz was president of ASTDEMP, her 17-year-old daughter was taken at gunpoint off the street in Bucaramanga, forced into a taxi cab and pushed to the floor, slapped in the face, and told by her abductor: “if your mother continues with her guerrilla activities, the consequences will be much worse.” She was pushed out of the car onto a highway about an hour later. Fortunately, she survived.

Human rights defenders and others who have challenged the impunity of members of the security forces and paramilitaries in Colombia have repeatedly been labeled as subversives by these forces. Such accusations have often been accompanied or followed by death threats and other serious human rights violations.

Because of our concern for the safety of persons named above we **strongly urge** that you

- order full and impartial investigations into these threats and the presence of paramilitaries, make the results public and bring those responsible to justice;
- implement protection measures, in strict accordance with the needs and wishes of those threatened;
- take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups and break their links with the security forces, in line with stated government commitments and recommendations made by the UN and other intergovernmental organizations.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordinator

copies: Fundación Comité de Solidaridad con los Presos Políticos/Committee of Solidarity with Political Prisoners ~ via fax
 Luis Carlos Villegas, Ambassador of Colombia to the US ~ via fax: 202.232.8643
 Kevin Whitaker, US Ambassador to Colombia ~ via fax: 011.571.275.4600
 Olivia Franken, Desk Officer for Colombia, US State Department ~ via fax: 202.647.2628
 José de Jesús Orozco Hernández, Rapporteur for Colombia, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202.458.3992
 US Senators Brown & Portman ~ via email
 US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

UA 112/14_Colombia

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