

via fax: 011 57 1 596 0631

Excmo. Sr. Juan Manuel Santos
President of the Republic of Colombia

via fax: 011 57 1 283 9876

Sr. Aurelio Iragorri Valencia
Minister of the Interior of Colombia

July 4, 2014

Dear Sirs:

We are very concerned for the safety of **José Onofre Esquivel Luna**, Vice-President of the Bugalagrande branch of the National Union of Food Industry Workers (SINALTRAINAL) in Valle del Cauca Department. On June 16, while traveling in a car in Medellín, Antioquia Department, he was shot at by two men on motorbikes. He escaped injury. His bodyguards (assigned to him by the National Protection Unit) killed one of the assailants and injured the other, who is now detained. A passing bus driver was also injured.

SINALTRAINAL represents workers in the Nestlé plant in Bugalagrande. José Onofre Esquivel Luna, who also works for Nestlé, was traveling to Medellín to attend a meeting of SINALTRAINAL leaders from different regions in Colombia which was to begin on June 17. Due to safety concerns, the meeting was suspended following the attack.

José Onofre Esquivel Luna has received previous death threats, including one from the paramilitary group Los Urabeños on November 8, 2013, a day before the assassination of Oscar López Triviño, another member of SINALTRAINAL and Nestle worker in Bugalagrande (cf our letter of November 23, 2013). Since its beginning in 1982, SINALTRAINAL's involvement in labor disputes, often with large multinational companies, has been accompanied by threats and attacks from paramilitaries acting either alone or in collusion with Colombian security forces. More than 20 members have been killed; 13 had worked for Nestle. Although Nestlé has previously denied any link to paramilitary violence, they do have a duty to assist the authorities in achieving justice for their employees.

We have written more than 20 letters since 2002 to officials in Colombia calling for investigations into threats, assaults and assassinations of SINALTRAINAL members. Because SINALTRAINAL members continue to face death threats, we **strongly urge** that you

- order a full and impartial investigation into the attack against José Onofre Esquivel Luna, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- dismantle paramilitary groups and break their links with the security forces, in line with repeated UN recommendations.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordinator

copies: SINALTRAINAL ~ via US mail
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 Jesus Orozco Hernández, Rapporteur for Colombia, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202.458.3992
US Senators Brown & Portman
US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

UA 310/13 Update_Colombia

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