

via Fax: 011 57 1 596 0631 Sr. Juan Manuel Santos President of the Republic of Colombia	via Fax: 011 57 1 283 9876 Sr. Juan Fernando Cristo Minister of Interior of Colombia
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August 13, 2015

Dear Sirs:

We are deeply concerned about two recent threats to **Iván Madero Vergel**, Director of The Regional Corporation for the Defense of Human Rights (CREDHOS), in Barrancabermeja, Santander.

On June 23, the secretary of CREDHOS received a threatening phone call in which the caller, apparently referring to CREDHOS president, Iván Madero Vergel, stated "tell that son-of-a-bitch he is going to die." On June 25, an anonymous caller told the CREDHOS secretary, "Tell that son-of-a-bitch he should stop getting involved in investigations which have nothing to do with him; we are going to burn his ass."

CREDHOS is a regional human rights organization campaigning for justice in response to human rights violations in Barrancabermeja and the Magdalena Medio region. Their members have repeatedly faced death threats. David Ravelo Crespo, a member of CREDHOS accused of ties to guerrilla groups has been detained since September 2010, accused of a murder he did not commit. CREDHOS has played a key role in campaigning for justice in cases of human rights violations committed by paramilitaries operating in collusion with the security forces. Human rights organizations believe that the case against David Ravelo and threats to Iván Madero Vergel are part of an effort to discredit and silence CREDHOS.

Over recent months CREDHOS has actively denounced the ongoing and strengthening presence of paramilitary groups operating in Barrancabermeja. These groups have been responsible for numerous killings in the city. Currently, the paramilitary group known as Los Urabeños Gaitanistas has a dominant presence in many parts of the city.

Because we believe the life of Iván Madero Vergel is in danger we **strongly urge** that you

- order full and impartial investigations into the threats described above and take all necessary measures to guarantee the safety of Iván Madero Vergel and other members of CREDHOS in accordance with their wishes;
- fulfill your obligation to protect human rights defenders, as set out in the 1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders;
- dismantle paramilitary groups and break any links with the security forces in line with repeated United Nations recommendations.

Sincerely,

Christine Stonebraker-Martinez
Co-Coordinator

cc: CREDHOS ~ via U.S. mail
Luis Carlos Villegas, Ambassador of Colombia to the US ~ via fax: 202.232.8643
Adam Lenert, Human Rights Officer, US Embassy in Colombia ~ via email
Tabatha Fairclough, Desk Officer for Colombia, US State Department ~ via email
José de Jesús Orozco Hernández, Rapporteur for Colombia, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202.458.3650
US Senators Brown & Portman and 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: