

via fax: 011 571 596 0631

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

via fax: 011 57 1 570 2000

Sr. Fiscal General
Néstor Humberto Martínez Neira
Attorney General of Colombia

May 22, 2017

Dear Sirs:

We are extremely concerned about paramilitary actions that are threatening villagers in the rural areas of Remedios, a municipality in Antioquia Department. **Ricaurte García**, a human rights defender working with CAHUCOPANA (Humanitarian Action Corporation for Coexistence and Peace of Northeast Antioquia), is being sought by paramilitaries.

A recent arson signaled a threat to residents in the hamlet of Mina Nueva, of the village of Panama Nueva in Remedios. At 5am on May 7, unidentified persons completely incinerated a local bar. Fortunately, no persons were injured. The fire did, however, destroy all goods stored in the establishment and damaged the electrical network of the village. A month ago, the owners of the establishment were awakened by a low intensity explosion, which damaged the infrastructure and an assortment of items. The owners fled the village.

Another event that has shaken the local population is the presence of paramilitaries who, with a list in hand, are searching for specific persons in the region, including **Ricaurte García** of CAHUCOPANA. It is of great concern that paramilitaries are offering reward money for information on his whereabouts. Because of this threatening situation, Ricaurte García has fled with his family; CAHUCOPANA is seeking support for their relocation.

CAHUCOPANA has seen the increase and strengthening of paramilitary structures since 2016. CAHUCOPANA has repeatedly denounced the displacement of families in the region ranging from the municipality of El Bagre to Remedios. Paramilitary groups have brought threats and attacks to the people there. The persecution of social leaders and human rights defenders is occurring in the context of a dispute for territorial control in areas which previously had a strong presence of the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia).

In light of these threats to human rights leaders and communities in the northeast of Antioquia, we **strongly urge you to**

- carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the arson in Minua Nueva on May 7, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice
- take all necessary measures to protect Ricaurte García and other CAHUCOPANA leaders and their families, in strict accordance with their wishes
- take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups, in line with stated government commitments and recommendations made by the UN and other intergovernmental organizations.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordinator

and

Christine Stonebraker-Martínez

copies: Juan Carlos Pinzón, Ambassador of Colombia to the US ~ via fax: 202.232.8643
Rebecca Daley, Human Rights Officer, US Embassy in Colombia ~ via email DaleyRS@state.gov
Colombia Desk, US State Department (attention: Ian Arzeni and Gail Morgado) ~ via email
José de Jesús Orozco Hernández, Rapporteur for Colombia and Human Rights Defenders, 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

CPT 2017/05/07

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