

via fax: 011 57 1 596 0631

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

via fax: 011 57 1 2839876

**Sr. Fernando Carillo Florez**  
Minister of the Interior of Colombia

August 11, 2013

Dear Sirs:

We are deeply disturbed by death threats to **Juan Carlos Galvis**, a leader of the National Trade Union of Food and Beverage Workers (SINALTRAINAL) in Barrancabermeja in Santander Department, to two of his children and to the lesbian and gay community of Barrancabermeja.

On July 11 an envelope addressed to "Coca-Cola Trade Union Barrancabermeja" was left at the home of a human rights defender working for the non-governmental coalition Space of Human Rights Workers in Barrancabermeja (ETTDH). SINALTRAINAL, which represents workers at the Coca-Cola bottling plant, is a member of ETTDH. Later that day, in a meeting of ETTDH member organizations, the human rights defender gave the envelope to Juan Carlos Galvis. It contained photos of two of his children and a death threat bearing the logo of a paramilitary group calling itself the "Anti-Restitution Army Medio Magdalena" which asked, "Do you know where your children are?" The message named Juan Carlos Galvis's daughter and son and gave him 24 hours to leave the city. The message said the paramilitaries were going to kill "gay people" in the city, including Juan Galvis' son.

On July 5 SINALTRAINAL and other members of ETTDH had supported a march organized by the LGBTI activists of Barrancabermeja, who are also members of ETTDH. A similar march in 2012 attracted paramilitary death threats against the LGBTI community (cf our letter of July 11, 2012).

Juan Carlos Galvis had left Barrancabermeja following previous assassination attempts on his life and attacks in his home on his wife and teenage daughter (cf our letter of Dec 11 2011). He was recently back in the city on an election campaign for the Trade Union Congress (CUT), of which he is an executive committee member.

We have written more than 15 letters to Colombian officials over the past several years because of threats to SINALTRAINAL members. Since its creation in 1982, at least 22 SINALTRAINAL members have been killed or forcibly disappeared; dozens have been attacked and threatened.

These threats are further examples of continuing persecution of union leaders, the LGBTI community and their families. Therefore we **strongly urge you** to:

- provide Juan Carlos Galvis, his family, SINALTRAINAL and the LGBTI movement with effective protection, according to their wishes;
- order full and impartial investigations into the threats; publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- 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

copies: SINALTRAINAL ~ via US mail  
 First Secretary for Human Rights and Minorities, Embassy of Colombia to the US ~ via fax: 202.232.8643  
 P. Michael McKinley, US Ambassador to Colombia ~ via fax: 011.571.275.4600  
 Mary Brett Rogers-Springs, Senior Desk Officer for Colombia, US State Department ~ via fax: 202.647.2628  
 José de Jesús Orozco Henríquez, Rapporteur for Colombia, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202.458.3992  
 US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, 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:**