

via fax: 01 157 1 596 0631 Excmo. Sr. Juan Manuel Santos President of the Republic of Colombia	via fax: 011 57 1 570 2000 Sr. Eduardo Montealegre Attorney General of Colombia
via fax: 011 57 1 283 9876 Sr. Fernando Carrillo Flórez Minister of Interior of Colombia	

August 12, 2013

Dear Sirs:

We are very concerned for the safety of **Héctor Sánchez**, union leader from the Oil Workers' Trade Union (USO) in the city of Puerto Gaitan in Meta Department. On July 16, a death threat was left at his home. It read, "our condolences for the loss of your wife and son, do not leave [your son] without a father and widow or do not become a widower."

On July 13 and 14, Héctor Sánchez had been organizing meetings and participated as a witness in an "Oil Hearing" at which trade unionists, indigenous people and peasant farmers spoke about human rights abuses arising from the extractive industry. This meeting is to be followed in August by a mock trial of oil companies.

On July 20, laptop and desktop computers and audio and video recordings were stolen from the office in Bogotá of the NGO Network of Brotherhood and Solidarity with Colombia (REDHER). Money was not taken from a drawer that the intruders searched. REDHER, one of the supporters of preparations for the mock trial, had been documenting the hearing in Puerto Gaitan. The websites of REDHER, Political Prisoners Solidarity Committee (CSPP) and other organizations supporting the mock trial were hacked.

USO trade unionists have been repeatedly threatened and have been the victims of extrajudicial executions and enforced disappearances, committed by paramilitary forces, at times acting in collusion with the security forces. In December 2012 USO leader Milton Parra was assassinated the day he received a death threat (cf our letter of Dec 11 2012).

We therefore **strongly urge** that you

- provide protection for those threatened, as described above, according to their wishes;
- order a full and impartial investigation into the death threat against Héctor Sánchez and his family and the theft at the office of REDHER, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Coordinator

CC: 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 ~ via email
 US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

UA 191/13 Colombia

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