

via fax: 011 571 596 0631 <b>Excmo. Sr. Presidente Santos</b> Presidente Juan Manuel Santos	via fax: 011 571 266 1003 <b>Sr. Ministro Pinzón</b> Señor Juan Carlos Pinzón
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September 26, 2013

Dear Sirs:

We, members of the InterReligious Task Force, are deeply concerned over the imminent threat of forced displacement and killing in the **Cacarica River Basin of Afro-descendant communities** (Ríosucio Municipality, Department of Chocó), especially for the lives of their leaders who have a history of being labeled “guerillas” (i.e., military targets) for their human rights work.

Paramilitaries have stated that they are in possession of a list of community leaders who they label as guerrilla collaborators. Those labeled as guerrilla collaborators in Colombia by the security forces or paramilitaries have frequently been the target of human rights violations including extrajudicial executions, enforced disappearance, enforced displacement and threats.

On 9 September paramilitaries entered the Cacarica River Basin through an area known as Puente América. Usually there is an army checkpoint, but this day the checkpoint had been removed. On September 12, paramilitaries reached the areas of Bijao, El Limón, and the two areas Nueva Vida and Nueva Esperanza en Dios, known as Humanitarian Zones.

Collusion between Colombian security forces and paramilitary forces in the Cacarica River Basin is well-documented; it has gone all the way to the Inter-American Court on Human Rights. In February 1997 as part of “Operation Génesis” coordinated by the XVII Brigade, paramilitaries forcibly displaced over 3,000 Afro-descendant community members. They began resettling the area in the early 2000s but have continued to face death threats and other human rights violations. The paramilitary operations come also at a time when the Afro-descendant population is defending their rights against economic interest related to extractive industries and infrastructure projects.

Because of our concern over the paramilitary movements into the Cacarica River Basin and the threats against the Afro-descendant communities and their leaders, we urgently call upon your humanity and integrity to take the following actions:

- ⤴ Implement protection measures in strict accordance with the wishes of those threatened, and order full and impartial investigations into these threats and the presence of paramilitaries; and
- ⤴ Take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups and break their links with the security forces, in line with stated government commitments and recommendations made by the UN and other intergovernmental organizations.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
Co-Coordinator

copies: 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

UA 247\_13 Colombia

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