

More Than 130 Organizations and Networks from Europe, the United States, and Latin America Support the Human Rights Defenders of the Inter-Church Commission of Justice and Peace

February 18, 2013

The signatories to this statement would like to reaffirm our support for the human rights defenders of the Inter-Church Commission of Justice and Peace (*Comisión Intereclesial de Justicia y Paz*, CIJP) in the context of increased attacks that threaten their lives and attempt to undermine their legitimate and essential work for democracy and peace in Colombia.

In the last three months, the defamation and surveillance of members of CIJP, specifically Father Alberto Franco, Mr. Danilo Rueda, and Mr. Abilio Pena, has intensified. The risk analyses carried out by the Colombian government found that 18 members of CIJP that work in Bogotá, Putumayo, Meta, Valle, Cauca, Chocó, and the Caribbean Coast are under “extraordinary risk.” On February 13, the windshield of an armored car belonging to Father Franco was shot three times while it was parked in front of his home. According to a preliminary report by the SIJIN, the firearm used had a silencer. Father Franco denounced various incidents of the surveillance of his home throughout 2012 and more recently on February 4, 11, and 13 of 2013.

We consider these threats to be a direct result of CIJP’s work on land restitution and their efforts to expose state, military, and business responsibility in illegal land grabs, threats, and the violation of human rights before national and international courts. The most recent threats occurred days after Father Franco informed the press that officials of ex-President Alvaro Uribe’s government were involved in the displacement and illegal occupation of the collective territories of Curvaradó and Jiguamiandó. That same week, there was a hearing on the case of Marino López and others in Cacarica before the Inter-American Human Rights Court.

We have observed that the Afro-descendant, indigenous, and *campesino* communities that CIJP accompanies are also attacked for defending their land rights. In December 2012, we received first-hand information of the presence of many uniformed and armed paramilitaries in Curvaradó, in addition to the threat of an imminent massacre. On various occasions, we have expressed our concern regarding the attacks and threats against María Ligia Chavera y Enrique Petro, two emblematic leaders in the land restitution process in Curvaradó.

We are very concerned with the way that representatives of the Colombian government attempted to delegitimize victims’ testimonies of the mass displacement in Cacarica caused by Operation “Genesis” in 1997 and aggressively intimidate them. These actions exposed the witnesses and victims to retaliations, re-victimizing them once again. We are also aware that stigmatizations by people close to the business sectors that benefitted from the displacement have intensified against Liliana Ávila and Danilo Rueda, the legal representatives of CAVIDA Cacarica before the Inter-American Court. They allege that Ms. Avila and Mr. Rueda are manipulating the victims to accuse the military and

paramilitaries. In this case, the Colombian judicial system sentenced retired General Rito Alejo del Rio, the Commander of the 17th Brigade of the Colombian Army between 1996 and 1997, for his responsibility in the murder of Marino López during Operation “Genesis.”

The signatories know the people and history of the communities in Cacarica associated with CAVIDA, in addition to the communities of Curvarado and Jiguamiando, who are reclaiming their lands. We have supported their efforts for a dignified return to their territory and under secure conditions. In a symbol of their commitment to peace, these communities have mobilized to present the government with productive and non-violent initiatives in the context of the negotiations with the FARC-EP guerrilla group.

Therefore, we recommend that the Colombian government:

1. Double its efforts to guarantee the protection of the human rights defenders of CIJP, and, in particular, carry out risk analyses when lacking; also, implement the protection schemes required since April 2012 that have not been implemented, with special attention to their residences;
2. Guarantee the security of land restitution leaders, such as Maria Ligía Chaverra and Enrique Petro of Curvaradó and Jiguamiandó as well as other threatened leaders;
3. Guarantee the security of witnesses searching for truth, justice, and reparations, such as the case of the representatives of CAVIDA (Bernardo Vivas, Sofía Roa and Rosalba Córdoba)
4. Decidedly advance in the struggle against the structural causes of the attacks against human rights defenders, such as impunity and the continued existence of paramilitary groups;
5. Carry out investigations to identify and sanction the material and intellectual authors behind the threats and attacks against human rights defenders, especially in the recent attack against Father Franco and the stigmatization of Liliana Avila and Danilo Rueda.

We recommend that the European Union, its member states, Switzerland, and Norway:

1. Do everything possible to raise the visibility for the international support for CIJP and the land restitution leaders within the context of the guidelines of the European Union for human rights defenders;
2. Express concern for the protection of these human rights defenders in meetings and interactions with the Colombian government by discussing the issues raised in this statement;
3. Make public statements on the gravity of the situation for human rights defenders asking the Colombian government to comply with its responsibility to ensure their safety.

SINCERELY:

European Organizations and Networks

Action pro Colombia (Germany)
AG Gerechtigkeit, Frieden und Bewahrung der Schöpfung der Deutschen
Franziskanerprovinz (Comisión Justicia, Paz, y Integridad de la Creación de los
Franciscanos – Germany)
Aktion Friedensdorf (Germany)
Arlac (Belgium)
ASK! Arbeitsgruppe Schweiz – Kolumbien (Switzerland)
Broederlijk Delen (Belgium)
Christian Aid (UK and Ireland)
Centro de Derechos Humanos de Nuremberg (Germany)
Colombia Solidarity Campaign (UK)
Comité Cristiano de Solidaridad con Latinoamérica
Comité Oscar Romero de Valladolid (Spain)
Comité Oscar Romero de Madrid (Spain)
Conexx Europe (Belgium)
Consejería en Proyectos PCS
Coordinadora Estatal de los Comités Oscar Romero (Spain)
Coordinación Valenciana de Solidaridad con Colombia (Cedsala, CEPS, CEAR PV,
Entreiguals-Valencia, Colectivo Sur Cacarica e Intersindical Valenciana)
Ecologistas en Acción (Spain)
FDCL - Centro de Investigación y Documentación Chile-América Latina (Germany)
Federación de Asociaciones de Defensa y Promoción de los Derechos Humanos (Spain)
con Estatuto consultivo ante el ECOSOC de Naciones Unidas, conformada por
13 Organizaciones Miembros:
Asociación para las Naciones Unidas en España (ANUE)
Asociación Pro Derechos Humanos de España (APDHE)
Asociación para la Defensa de la Libertad Religiosa (ADLR)
Comisión Española de Ayuda al Refugiado (CEAR)
Instituto de Estudios Políticos para América Latina y África (IEPALA)
Justicia y Paz
Liga Española Pro Derechos Humanos
Movimiento por la Paz (MPDL)
Paz y Cooperación
Fundación Mundubat
UNESCO Etxea
Plataforma de Mujeres Artistas contra la Violencia de Género
Coordinadora Estatal de Asociaciones Solidarias con el Sáhara (CEAS-Sáhara)
Iniciativa Solidaria Internacionalista – Burgos (Spain)
InspirAction (Spain)
Kolko - Menschenrechte für Kolumbien (Germany)
Misereor (Germany)
El Observatorio para la Protección de los Defensores de Derechos Humanos, programa
conjunto de la Organización Mundial Contra la Tortura (OMCT) y de la Federación
Internacional de Derechos Humanos (FIDH)

OIDHACO – International Office for Human Rights Action on Colombia– a network with more than 30 European organizations

Plataforma Justicia por Colombia (Spain)

Red Europea de Comités Oscar Romero (Belgium)

SOLdePaz Pachakuti (Spain)

SweFOR (Sweden)

Taula catalana per la pau i els DDHH a Colòmbia (Spain)

Terre des Hommes - Apoyo a la Niñez (Germany)

The Caravan of Lawyers (UK)

The Lutheran World Federation

Organizations from the United States

AfroColombia NY

Colombia Land Rights Monitor

Comité de La Justicia con La Paz de Las Hermanas de la Providencia de St. Mary-of-the Woods, IN.

International Rights Advocates

Latin America Working Group

PCN Internacional

SOA Watch

United Church of Christ Justice and Witness Ministries

United Steelworkers, AFL-CIO

US Office on Colombia

Washington Office on Latin America WOLA

8th Day Center for Justice en Chicago

Latin American Organizations

Acción Urgente para Defensores de los Derechos Humanos (ACUDEH) (Mexico)

Asociación Civil de Educación y Desarrollo (ACED) (Venezuela)

Comisión Ética contra la Tortura CECT (Chile)

Comisión de Justicia, Paz e Integridad de la Creación (Venezuela)

Comité Cerezo (Mexico)

Comité Dorothy Pará (Brasil)

Comité de Familiares de Asesinados y Desaparecidos de la Dictadura Militar Héctor

Comité Oscar Romero de Buenos Aires (Argentina)

Comité Oscar Romero COR (Chile)

Coordinadora Nacional Cristiana de Panamá Héctor Gallego, CNCP-HG (Panama)

Coordinadora Popular de Derechos Humanos de Panamá, COPODEHUPA (Panama)

El Consejo Directivo del "Secretariado Internacional Cristiano de Solidaridad con los
Equipo de servicios de las CEB (Nicaragua)

FUNDACIÓN PUEBLO INDIO DEL ECUADOR – SICSAL (Ecuador)

Gallego, COFADEPA-HG (Panama)

Pueblos de América Latina, Mons. Romero" (SICSAL)

Union de Comunidades Indígenas de la Zona Norte del Istmo-OAXACA (MEXICO)

Red Nacional de Organismos Civiles de Derechos Humanos “Todos los Derechos para Todos y Todas”, made up of 73 organizations in 21 states of Mexico: Agenda LGBT

(Estado de México), Asistencia Legal por los Derechos Humanos, A.C. (Distrito Federal); Asociación Jalisciense de Apoyo a los Grupos Indígenas, A.C. (Guadalajara, Jal.); Asociación para la Defensa de los Derechos Ciudadanos "Miguel Hidalgo", A.C. (Jacala, Hgo.); Casa del Migrante Saltillo (Coahuila), Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir, A.C. (Distrito Federal); Centro "Fray Julián Garcés" Derechos Humanos y Desarrollo Local, A. C. (Tlaxcala, Tlax.); Centro de Apoyo al Trabajador, A.C. (Puebla, Pue.); Centro de Derechos Humanos "Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas", A. C. (San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chis.) ; Centro de Derechos Humanos Digna Ochoa A.C; Centro de Derechos Humanos "Fray Francisco de Vitoria O.P.", A. C. (Distrito Federal); Centro de Derechos Humanos "Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez", A. C. (Distrito Federal); Centro de Derechos Humanos "Don Sergio" (Jiutepec, Mor.); Centro de Derechos Humanos "Fray Matías de Córdova". A.C. (Tapachula, Chis); Centro de Derechos Humanos de la Montaña, Tlachinollan, A. C. (Tlapa, Gro.); Centro de Derechos Humanos de las Mujeres (Chihuahua), Centro de Derechos Humanos "Juan Gerardi", A.C. (Torreón, Coah.); Centro de Derechos Humanos Paso del Norte (Cd. Juárez); Centro de Derechos Humanos Victoria Diez, A.C. (León, Gto.); Centro de Derechos Indígenas "Flor y Canto", A. C. (Oaxaca, Oax.); Centro de Derechos Humanos Toaltepeyolo (Tlilapan, Veracruz); Centro de Derechos Indígenas A. C. (Bachajón, Chis.); Centro de los Derechos del Migrante (DF); Centro de Justicia para la Paz y el Desarrollo, A. C. (CEPAD) (Guadalajara, Jal.); Centro de Reflexión y Acción Laboral (CEREAL-DF) (Distrito Federal); Centro de Reflexión y Acción Laboral (CEREAL-Guadalajara) (Guadalajara, Jal.); Centro Diocesano para los Derechos Humanos "Fray Juan de Larios", A.C. (Saltillo, Coah.); Centro Juvenil Generando Dignidad (Comalcalco, Tabasco); Centro Hermanas Mirabal de Derechos Humanos (León, Gto.), Centro Mexicano de Derecho Ambiental (Distrito Federal), Centro Mujeres (La Paz, BC.), Centro Regional de Defensa de DDHH José María Morelos y Pavón, A. C. (Chilapa, Gro.); Centro Regional de Derechos Humanos "Bartolomé Carrasco", A. C. (Oaxaca, Oax.); Ciencia Social Alternativa, A.C. - KOOKAY (Mérida, Yuc.); Ciudadanía Lagunera por los Derechos Humanos, A. C. (CILADHAC) (Torreón, Coah.); Ciudadanos en Apoyo a los Derechos Humanos, A. C. (Monterrey, NL); Colectivo Educación para la Paz y los Derechos Humanos, A.C. (San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chis.); Colectivo contra la Tortura y la Impunidad (Distrito Federal); Comité Cerezo (Distrito Federal); Comisión de Derechos Humanos y Laborales del Valle de Tehuacán, A.C. (Tehuacan, Pue.); Comisión de Solidaridad y Defensa de los Derechos Humanos, A. C. (Chihuahua, Chih.); Comisión Independiente de Derechos Humanos de Morelos, A. C. (CIDHMOR) (Cuernavaca, Mor.); Comisión Intercongregacional "Justicia, Paz y Vida" (Distrito Federal); Comisión Parroquial de Derechos Humanos "Martín de Tours", A.C. (Texmelucan, Pue.); Comisión Regional de Derechos Humanos "Mahatma Gandhi", A. C. (Tuxtepec, Oax.); Comité de Defensa Integral de Derechos Humanos Gobixha A.C.(Codigodh A.C); Comité de Defensa de las Libertades Indígenas (Palenque, Chis.); Comité de Derechos Humanos Ajusco (Distrito Federal); Comité de Derechos Humanos "Fr. Pedro Lorenzo de la Nada", A. C. (Ocosingo, Chis.); Comité de Derechos Humanos "Sembrador de la Esperanza". A. C. (Acapulco, Gro.); Comité de Derechos Humanos "Sierra Norte de Veracruz", AC. (Huayacocotla, Ver.); Comité de Derechos Humanos de Colima, No gubernamental, A. C. (Colima, Col.); Comité de Derechos Humanos de Comalcalco, A. C. (Comalcalco, Tab); Comité de Derechos Humanos de Tabasco, A. C. (Villahermosa, Tab); Comité de Derechos Humanos y Orientación Miguel Hidalgo, A. C. (Dolores Hidalgo, Gto.); Comité Sergio Méndez Arceo Pro Derechos Humanos de Tulancingo, Hgo AC (Tulancingo, Hgo.); El

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