



Advocacy for Human Rights in the Americas

April 1, 2015

Diego Mora
Director, National Protection Unit
Ministry of the Interior
Avenida Calle 26 No. 59-41/65
Bogota, Colombia

Dear Mr. Mora,

We appreciate the meeting held at the Colombia Embassy on March 18 to discuss protection issues facing peace advocates and supporters, human rights defenders, trade unionists, Afro-Colombian and indigenous leaders. In follow up to the meeting, we have a few questions and wanted to go further into detail concerning some of the cases mentioned in the appendix and new ones that have arisen since the letter sent to you on March 2.

Since the March 2 letter we have received the following information of new death threats and security incidents concerning our partners:

-On March 11, the SINALTRAINAL office in Cartagena received a call where the caller stated: *"Watch out b**h don't hang up. Tell those *(expletive) directors of SINALTRAINAL led by Edwin Molina that they stop harassing the companies.....as of now we declare them military objectives and give them 24 hours to get out of here, if you also follow them you'll also be targeted."* This threat comes after SINALTRAINAL began a campaign denouncing labor abuses committed against some 1,800 workers linked to Tiempo Servicios SAS and Seatech International. Basically, these workers were granted third party contracts without the authorization of the Ministry of Labor. Now they are facing issues including the retention of their salaries, and not receiving payments for incapacities and health. Given that 28 members of SINALTRAINAL were murdered over the years, these threats are particularly concerning.

-On March 9, the Black Eagles paramilitary group circulated email death threats to 14 individuals and two human rights organizations (Jose Alvear Restrepo Lawyers' Collective- CCAJAR and the Committee of Solidarity with Political Prisoners-CSPP). The individuals listed are analysts, politicians, and others who are engaged in efforts to support the peace process in

Havana. They include: Leon Valencia, Ariel Avila, Senators Claudia Lopez and Ivan Cepeda, Bogota Mayor Gustavo Petro, Gloria Florez and Jorge Rojas.

-The La Playita Humanitarian Zone community leaders continued to be threatened by paramilitary groups in February and March. The Intereclesial Commission for Justice and Peace (CIJP) reports racial attacks by members of the Colombian police. On February 26, a member of the police stated to leaders Orlando Castillo, William Mina and Pompilio Castillo that *“blacks are burdensome and lets go blow (off) your head,”* after the men demanded that he return their identification documents. On March 3, Efrén Chirimia, Wounaan leader was warned against entering a humanitarian zone. The next day, the Gaitanista Self-Defense Forces murdered Manuel Gamboa in the Ciudadela San Antonio neighborhood. Five paramilitaries, including alias *“Pempé”* who recently escaped prison, circled the humanitarian zone that same day. On March 8, paramilitaries entered the humanitarian zone despite the fact that police were present. The next day, several paramilitaries threatened to kill the Hernandez Torres family for having reported the murder of Óscar Hernández Torres. They threatened to kill others of the family if the case proceeds in the judicial system.

-On February 22-23, Diego Martinez of the Permanent Committee for the Defense of Human Rights (CPDH) received threatening phone calls. His CPDH colleagues Hugo Salazar, Erika Gómez, César Murillo and Nathalia Ruano had received similar calls and noticed that they were targets of surveillance in recent months. CPDH is advocating that human rights organizations are granted a voice at the peace talks and for justice in abuses relating to security forces.

-AFRODES members in Llano Verde (Cali), mainly displaced persons from Buenaventura that are living in a free shelter provided by authorities, are suffering death threats and intimidation at the hands of the paramilitary named Los Tureños. This group is actively recruiting minors and controlling the local population through fear and death threats. Sources report that 42 persons were killed from January-February and another 22 murdered in February. One of the murders included dismemberment similar to those that take place in Buenaventura. This situation has led IDP leaders to become displaced from the area. The latter are being targeted for reporting the abuses taking place in Llano Verde.

At the meeting, we were not able to discuss some details of concerns raised by our partners given the sensitive nature of these situations. Here we raise them in the hopes of finding a solution for these problems:

Afro-Colombian Activists of Northern Cauca We would like to follow up regarding the letter sent to you on March 26 by the Movilizacion de Mujeres Afrodescendientes of Northern Cauca

(see attached) that explains in detail problems with the protection measures granted to Francia Marquez and Victor Hugo Moreno. The letter also states that multiple agreements made by the UNP and these activists have not been implemented including progress in developing collective measures for these communities. Several threats and security incidents are reported in the letters which are of concern since they show a deteriorating security situation pattern. It is worth noting that the February 15 threat also includes activist Roller Escobar of UAFROC. Mr. Escobar was only granted measures until the end of January. We understand that within the context of an action taken by Representative Ivan Cepeda, Mr. Escobar and Arie Aragon were supposed to go through a CERREM to determine measures. We would like to know the status of measures requested by all of these activists in northern Cauca and what the UNP's plans are in implementing the protection commitments made with these communities.

AFRODES We are pleased to hear that the UNP is advancing with the Decree required to be able to provide collective measures for groups of individuals. However, we did not hear of further efforts to develop such measures for the 140 AFRODES leaders who are under threat. We insist that this effort moves forward because the situation for AFRODES leaders remains critical. Furthermore, follow through is required in the cases of Bernardo Cuero and Erlendy Cuero (Vice President) who have yet to receive individual measures despite their high level of risk and repeated security incidents against them. Regional leaders including Clara Portilla (Nariño) remain without the UNP resolving the issues facing their measures. Leaders with measures are experiencing many problems including delays and denials of requests for protection for regional trips and a scaling back of gas required for mobility in protection unit car. The latter greatly impedes leaders' ability to do their work and exposes them to risk when they must use other forms of transportation. The commitments Colombia made to the OAS IACHR in terms of protection for AFRODES remain without implementation. We understand a meeting took place last month between yourself and AFRODES. We are interested in knowing how the collective and individual measures are advancing.

Alberto Yepes of CEEU At the meeting you mentioned that Mr. Yepes had his measures reinforced. The information we received indicates otherwise. Six months ago Mr. Yepes underwent a security risk analysis that took 3 months to come to fruition. On February 6, he met with you along with Jahel Quiroga and Jose Humberto Torres. At these meetings, problems Mr. Yepes has faced including denial of protection support for necessary work trips, denial of tickets for escorts and fuel required for the car to travel via land were presented. In terms of the results of the risk study, Mr. Yepes has yet to be informed of the outcome. The problems with his measures have not been resolved. This has greatly curtailed his ability to carry out his

work with the Human Rights Observatory of CEEU. What steps are being taken to remedy this situation?

Benildo Estupiñan Solis of Rostros y Huellas del Sentir Humano GARIFUNA We understand that Mr. Solis has yet to receive measures and that escorts from Empresa Guardianes have refused to accompany Mr. Solis in his work in “red areas” of Buenaventura. At your February 11 visit to Buenaventura within the Framework of the Committee for the February 19 March these issues were raised with the UNP. He has since been told he needs to wait for a future CERREM. We wish to know what the status is of Mr. Solis’s case and when he will receive measures.

CRIC, ONIC and ACIN We were pleased to hear that the UNP has met with the ACIN and CRIC to discuss security. However, it was not clear to us what steps are being taken to address their security concerns beyond giving support to the Guardia Indigena. On February 1, the Rastrojos circulated a threat against these organizations that also listed key leaders Aida Quilque, Feliciano Valencia, Vicente Otero and others. We would like to know what specific steps the UNP has taken to reinforce the security of the leaders listed on this threat.

Marco Romero of CODHES We were happy to learn that Mr. Romero’s measures were not taken away and that CERREM will be taking place soon to reinforce their office that at this time remains vulnerable. We understand, however, that issues remain with the provision of fuel for transportation and tickets to travel. We would like to know how all of this advances.

MOVICE At the meeting we did not get to discuss specifics about the multiple members of MOVICE experiencing security problems. We would like to know what actions have been taken in those cases. Also to inform you that on March 20, MOVICE issued urgent actions concerning Malena Mariet Martinez, Juan David Diaz and Ingrid Vergara of MOVICE Sucre due to new threats and incidents.

We understand that Luis Olave, Fernando Tapia of CENAFRO and Jorge Rojas continue to have problems with their measures and would like to know how the UNP is addressing these problems.

Since our meeting the following cases have been brought to our attention which we would like to mention:

Miguel Conde, Palm Sector Labor Leader in Magdalena Medio-SINTRAINAGRO Mr. Conde was informed by the UNP Santander that his security scheme is going to be reduced. This is highly problematic given that he was just declared a military target by paramilitary groups who accused him of links to the ELN last week. Taking away his vehicle and forcing him to ride in

public transport or on a motorcycle with his bodyguard in the back at this time exposes him to harm. We strongly advise the UNP to reverse this decision.

Enrique Antonio Rosado Bolano of Sintramienergetica Mr. Rosado Bolano is engaged in a joint labor rights project with ASOTREDP concerning violations linked to Drummond Company in the Caribbean Coast. On March 4 and 12, two Drummond workers died in labor accidents. Mr. Bolano has received death threats and he and his family been the subject of followings, persecution and intimidation. We urge the UNP to intervene in this situation in order to guarantee Mr. Bolano and his family safety.

At the meeting you mentioned that the UNP has designated a focal point for Afro-Colombian leaders and organizations under threat. If you could kindly provide us with this person's contact information we would greatly appreciate it.

Lastly, the Embassy circulated a March 16 release from the Ministry of the Interior that states that actions are being taken to go after perpetrators of death threats made against human rights defenders. We are interested in learning more specific details of this effort in particular what actions are being taken and in which part of the country? Further, do these actions include threats against all of the groups and individuals listed in the March 2 letter's appendix?

In closing, we look forward to obtaining a written response from the UNP concerning the March 2 letter signed by WOLA along with 11 U.S. organizations and 21 individuals and the additional issues raised in today's communication.

Sincerely,



Gimena Sanchez