



human rights *first*

**30<sup>th</sup>**  
**ANNIVERSARY**  
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**PARTICIPATE**

December 4, 2008

Dr. Mario Hernán Iguarán Arana  
Fiscal General de la Nación  
Diagonal 22-B #52-01  
Bogotá, Colombia

cc.

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Dr. Carlos Franco  
Presidente del Programa de Derechos Humanos  
Calle 7 No 6 – 54  
Bogotá, Colombia

Dear Attorney General:

**Detention of Human Rights Defender Carmelo Agamez in Sincelejo**

We, the **1,502 signatories listed below**, join **Human Rights First** in writing to express our concern about the detention of Carmelo Agamez. We urge you to immediately move him from his current prison location and to close the criminal investigation against him.

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Agamez is Technical Secretary of the Movement of Victims of State Crimes (MOVICE) section in Sucre department. On November 8, 2006, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) awarded Agamez, and others from MOVICE, protective measures, recognizing the risks he faces as a result of his human rights advocacy. He has exposed alleged links between local public officials and paramilitaries and urged the prosecution of paramilitary leaders in the region.

On November 13, 2008, five men in plainclothes, who identified themselves as police, raided Agamez's house. Only Agamez's wife was home at the time. We understand that the men failed to produce an arrest or search warrant. Two days later, on November 15, 2008, Agamez voluntarily visited the Sincelejo Prosecutor's office, where he was detained and held in the custody of the Judicial and Investigative Police (SIJIN). He was subsequently moved to La Vega prison in Sincelejo, where he remains. We understand that he is being held in Patio Two of that prison with the paramilitary leaders and public officials who were detained partly on the basis of his human rights advocacy. The Sincelejo prosecutor has charged him with conspiracy to commit a crime with paramilitary forces, alleging that he participated in a paramilitary meeting in 2002.

We are concerned by the failure to abide by due process standards. Agamez was reportedly not notified of the charges against him for several days. Moreover, the only evidence the prosecutor allegedly has is uncorroborated testimony from witnesses. One of those witnesses is not impartial, being the wife of Jorge Blanco, a mayor recently charged with corruption after Agamez and MOVICE publicly exposed his links to paramilitaries. We fear that his arrest may be related to his human rights advocacy and his public denunciations of official corruption. Shortly before his detention Agamez had criticized the current Mayor of San Onofre, Edgar Benito Revollo, of corruption.

Agamez has devoted his career to exposing human rights violation by paramilitaries. In 2006 he was included in a paramilitary "death list" and has received numerous paramilitary death threats. It is highly unlikely that he is part of a paramilitary group while at the same time seeking the prosecution of paramilitary leaders.

We urge you to immediately move Agamez from Patio Two at La Vega prison, where he is being held with the very paramilitary members he has criticized. We also urge you to order your human rights unit in Bogota to immediately review the investigation and detention of Agamez. The review should analyze whether the criminal investigation comports with the due process standards contained in the Colombian Procedural Code and international law.

We also urge the Inspector General to appoint a Judicial Inspector to review the investigation and, unless there is sufficient, corroborated evidence, to recommend Agamez's release.

Thank you for your attention in this urgent matter. We will continue to closely monitor this situation.

Sincerely,

*The names of the 1,259 signatories have been hidden for privacy reasons.*