

To Colombian Authorities: Protect Ricardo Esquivia Ballestas

We are global recipients of Tanenbaum's *Peacemakers in Action* Award and peacebuilders from armed conflicts across the world. Spanning different religions, beliefs and conflicts, we have experienced war, reconciliation and, at times, political persecution by those who profit from war and attempt to undermine movements of justice and peace. As a Network, we are a powerful voice with connections to the highest levels of government and civil society. When we speak with one voice, our calls are heard.

Today, we, the *Peacemakers in Action* Network, speak with one voice to call on the Government of Colombia to end religious harassment and political persecution of Ricardo Esquivia, our fellow *Peacemaker*, a Mennonite and a lifelong peace activist, as well as the staff and volunteers of the peace movement affiliated with the Sembrandopaz, and peasant community leaders of Alta Montaña of Montes de Maria.

Credible sources share alarming information about escalating threats to these individuals in an effort to undermine the non-violent peace movement in Montes de Maria. Though some details remain unconfirmed, we *Peacemakers in Action* believe the information received to be trustworthy. We call on the Government of Colombia to take heed of the mounting evidence that Ricardo and his associates' lives and safety are at risk.

- In recent weeks, several community leaders in Montes de Maria have received written death threats.
- On September 9, 2013, a trusted associate, of Ricardo Esquivia, Jorge Luis Montes Hernandez, was arrested on reportedly false charges.
- Sources confirm that Colombia's military is manufacturing a case against *Peacemaker* Ricardo Esquivia, accusing him of being a guerrilla associated with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC.

As the *Peacemakers in Action* Network, we stand firmly with our brother, Ricardo Esquivia, and call upon the Government of Colombia to take the following actions:

- Ensure the immediate and complete protection of the lives and well-being of Ricardo Esquivia Ballestas and the other community leaders of the Alta Montaña of Montes de Maria, and the staff and volunteers of the Asociacion Sembrando Semillas de Paz, 'Sembrandopaz'.
- Release Ricardo Esquivia's associate, Jorge Luis Montes Hernandez, from the maximum security prison where he is allegedly being held without concrete evidence.

- Conduct an immediate, thorough and transparent investigation into the current political and religious persecution of Ricardo Esquivia, the staff and volunteers of the peace movement affiliated with the Sembrandopaz, and peasant community leaders of Alta Montaña of Montes de Maria.
- Identify and organize a face-to-face dialogue with the perpetrators of this persecution to put an end to these false allegations.
- Ensure the cessation of harassment against foreign volunteers of the Mennonite Church working with Sembrandopaz as part of their faith as members of a historic peace church.

As the *Peacemakers in Action* Network, we stand as a voice for peace and justice. Today, we call on the Government of Colombia to heed our calls and end political persecution of Ricardo Esquivia and his associates in Montes de Maria – immediately!

Peacemakers in Action Network

Ricardo Esquivia - Colombia
Director, Sembrandopaz

Canon Andrew White - Iraq
Vicar, St. George's Church

Dr. William Lowrey
Fmr. Director, World Vision, USA/ South Sudan

José "Chencho" Alas – El Salvador
Director, Foundation for Sustainability and Peacemaking in Mesoamerica

Pastor James Wuye – Nigeria
Co-President, Kaduna Mediation Center

Imam Muhammad Ashafa – Nigeria
Co-President, Kaduna Mediation Center

Azi Hussain - Pakistan
President, Peace & Education Foundation

Dr. Ephraim Isaac – Ethiopia
Prof. Harvard University

Dr. Yehezkel Landau – USA/ Israel
Prof. Hartford Seminary

Jamila Afghani – Afghanistan
President, Noor Educational and Capacity Development Organization

Hind Kabawat – Syria
Lawyer & Fellow, George Mason University

Friar Ivo Markovic – Bosnia & Herzegovina
Director, Face to Face

Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge – South Africa
President, Embrace Dignity

Father Sava Janjic – Kosovo
Abbot, Decani Monastery

Dishani Jayaweera – Sri Lanka
Co-President, Center for Reconciliation and Peacebuilding

Dr. Benny Giay – West Papua
Chairman, Kingmi Synod

Sakena Yacoobi – Afghanistan
President, Afghan Institute of Learning

MP Betty Bigombe - Uganda
Member of Parliament & Minister of Water Resources

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