

Bogotá, June 18, 2014

US Department of Homeland Security

I'm Francisco Santos former vicepresident of Colombia between 2002 and 2010. I was elected in the same ticket with President Alvaro Uribe Velez.

Prior to that I was Editor of the biggest newspaper in the country, El Tiempo, where I also wrote a column that was very aggressive against the drug barons and the guerrilla and paramilitary groups. In retaliation for what I wrote, Pablo Escobar kidnapped me for 8 months. After I was freed I created a human rights NGO that helped victims of this crime called Pais Libre (Free Country).

I became a Human Rights activist and led the biggest protests against the criminal groups in the late 90's. IN the year 2000 the guerrilla group Farc had a plan to kill me so I had to leave for exile in Spain for two years.

This history led Mr. Uribe to pick me as his running mate. Once in government he gave me the task of protecting human rights, which in 2002 were in crisis. During eight years we worked to protect union leaders, human rights NGO's, political opposition, indigenous groups and social activists.

I met former minister of Agriculture Andrés Felipe Arias during our government. We developed a strong ideological bond forged in our common and radical opposition to drug gangs and the terrorist groups Farc and Eln. As such we have very strongly opposed the peace talks by the current government with the latter groups that are taking place in Cuba.

Our political relationship is very strong. During the primaries in my party (Centro Democratico) for the presidential campaign he wrote most of the speeches and led the team that structured the political platform. Obviously, regarding security and peace talks it took a hardline approach towards both issues.

I can testify that Andrés Felipe Arias, his wife Catalina and their two little kids, Eloisa and Juan Pedro, have been systematically threatened due to his political and ideological stance. Indeed today Mr. Arias is one of the most threatened and persecuted persons in Colombia right now. Those threats can be attributed not only to the terrorist group Farc but also to the Executive and judicial branch of

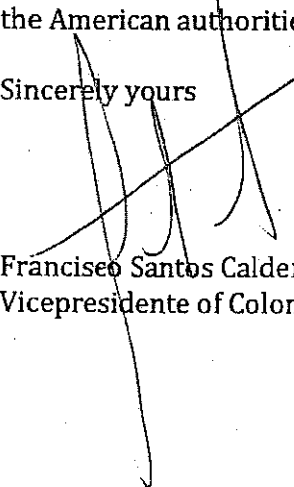
Colombia in retaliation for his political views and his well-known loyalty to our political party now in opposition.

It is not fortuitous that he was illegally sent to prison during almost two years without solid evidence. Needless to say, Mr. Arias was arrested, psychologically tortured and inhumanly separated from his family only because of his political views.

Just as Mr. Arias is being prosecuted without any judicial guarantees, many members of our party have been unfairly incarcerated solely for opposing the political agenda of President Juan Manuel Santos and the judicial branch. Former presidential candidate Luis Alfredo Ramos, former High Commissioner for Peace Luis Carlos Restrepo and journalist Ernesto Yamhure have been prosecuted unfairly just as it's happening with Mr. Arias.

With deep pain and great sadness for he is one of the brightest colombians with a great future, I was informed that Andrés Felipe Arias and his family are seeking asylum in the United States as a way to protect his life and freedom. I plead with the American authorities that his petition is granted.

Sincerely yours


Francisco Santos Calderón
Vicepresidente of Colombia 2002-2010