

Oidhaco General Assembly in Brussels

## “The European Union should condemn recent threats to 100 human rights defenders in Colombia”

**Brussels, September 19, 2014.** The General Assembly of the International Office for Human Rights - Action on Colombia (**Oidhaco**), a network of more than 35 European organisations, which met in Brussels yesterday, has sent an open letter to the Baroness Catherine Ashton, the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, asking her to make a statement on the serious situation faced by some 100 people who work to defend peace and human rights in Colombia.

On September 8, 2014, a number of Colombian organisations received a threatening and insulting e-mail message, with an attached document entitled “Black List”, which listed by name approximately 100 human rights defenders and declared them to be military targets. The following day on “National Human Rights Day” in Colombia, a new email with the subject line “Military objective” was sent, and included further names. The message, which was extremely violent in content, and gave the recipients fifteen days to leave the country, was signed by the Black Eagles Capital Bloc. The message read: “(...) now we are going to execute you (...) we know where your relatives and your children are, so get lost and leave the country to get on with its work, or we will kill you bastards one by one (...)”<sup>1</sup>.

In its letter to the Baroness Catherine Ashton, **Oidhaco** expresses particular concern about the inclusion of Yanette Bautista in these lists. Ms. Bautista is one of the people who were part of the first delegation of victims to Havana as part of the peace process between the government of Juan Manuel Santos and the FARC. She is also a member of the Operating Committee of the Colombia-Europe-United States Coordination Group (*Coordinación Colombia Europa Estados Unidos*), a coalition of organisations working on Human Rights and Peace. **Christiane Schwarz**, Oidhaco President, affirms that: “To build lasting peace, it is essential that there are guarantees to work on the defence of human rights, the pursuit of truth, justice and reparation, and support for victims and communities in their territories. The Colombian government must provide these guarantees”.

The letter also refers to a statement made by the Office in Colombia of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, condemning these threats. “The European Union must also show that it rejects these threats, supports those who have been threatened and their work, and calls upon the Colombian government to implement measures to ensure their protection and investigate the facts”, says **Schwarz**.

**For further information contact Vincent Vallies on (0032) 2 536 1913.**

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*The International Office on Human Rights - Action Colombia, represents a network of 35 European organisations. From its headquarters in Brussels, Oidhaco accompanies Colombian civil society initiatives which work towards the full respect of human rights and international humanitarian law, and a negotiated solution to the internal armed conflict. Since 2012, Oidhaco has been granted Special Consultative Status before the United Nations Economic and Social Council.*

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<sup>1</sup> Our translation. The original reads: “(...) Ahora si los vamos a ajusticiar (...) tenemos ubicados a sus familiares a ustedes a sus hijos o se largan y dejan que el país funcione o los jodemos hijueputas vamos a matarlos uno por uno (...)”