

**HIRAM MONSERRATE**  
COUNCIL MEMBER, 21<sup>ST</sup> DISTRICT

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THE COUNCIL  
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Douglas N. Daft  
Chairman & CEO  
The Coca Cola Company  
One Coca Cola Plaza  
Atlanta, GA 30313

## Appendix B

Dear Mr. Daft;

As you know, the growing Latino communities in New York City are becoming increasingly concerned at reports of violence and aggression against Coca Cola employees in your Colombian bottling plants. As the representative of one of the largest Colombian communities in the United States, I am, in turn, growing increasingly concerned that these serious – and seemingly life-threatening -- allegations are not being investigated and addressed.

Specifically, I refer to the following facts:

- Isidro Gil was murdered inside the walls of the Coca-Cola bottling plant in Carepa, Colombia. The manager of this plant, who fled just before this assassination, was known to consort with the paramilitaries in the region and had made threats to wipe out the union prior to this assassination. The family of Isidro Gil was never compensated for their loss and Coca-Cola has never denounced this murder.
- Panamco (d/b/a "Coca Cola") brought criminal charges against five (5) employees and trade unionists at its Bucaramanga plant in 1996 -- charges which led to the imprisonment of 3 of these unionists for 6 months. These charges were later dismissed as without merit by the prosecutor, and these individuals were reinstated by Panamco.

These individuals and their families were never compensated for the suffering they endured as a result of their imprisonment, and Coca-Cola has never condemned their wrongful imprisonment at the hands of Panamco. What's more, Panamco brought penal charges against all of the Plaintiffs to the lawsuit filed against Coca-Cola in Florida very shortly after this lawsuit was commenced. These criminal charges, filed in response to the Plaintiffs' lawsuit and their publicizing of their allegations therein, are still pending against the Plaintiffs, apparently with Coca-Cola's acquiescence.

In addition, I am concerned about the following eye-witness accounts from your employees in Colombia:

- Workers at the Coca-Cola bottling plant in Barrancabermeja continue to witness known paramilitaries freely entering the plant and meeting with management. In October of

2002, employees witnessed a meeting between managers Reynaldo Gonzalez and Martha Yaneth Orduz and known paramilitaries, including Saul Rincon. When Reynaldo Gonzalez was questioned about these meetings and asked to confirm whether the individuals he has meet with are indeed paramilitaries, he replied, "yes, they are paramilitaries, and members of an association, why don't you say that to them?" Paramilitary Saul Rincon later appeared at the company and told a union leader that Reynaldo Gonzalez, the company official, had asked for him.

As late as May of 2003, known paramilitary leaders have been witnessed freely entering the Barrancabermeja facility. Meanwhile, these same paramilitaries continue to threaten trade unionists who work at this facility, including William Mendoza who recently visited this country.

- Witnesses have averred that the Panamco management (namely, John Ordonez) makes payments to the paramilitaries every 28th of the month. This fact has been corroborated by members of Colombia's own Defense Ministry. And, this is in accord with the statements of paramilitaries who freely admitted to NPR reporter Steven Dudley that they have bases near all the Coca-Cola bottling plants in Colombia and that they are there to protect these facilities.
- As Coca-Cola has been made aware, paramilitaries in Baranquilla recently threatened union workers with murder and stated that Panamco management in Baranquilla asked them to carry out violence against them.

In light of the above, I would ask that Coca-Cola take the following affirmative actions: (1) sponsor an independent fact-finding delegation to Colombia to allow us to make a fair assessment of the aforesaid allegations, particularly the allegations of ongoing collaboration between Coca-Cola's bottlers and the paramilitaries; (2) cause the immediate dismissal of the aforesaid criminal charges against the Plaintiffs; (3) publicly denounce anti-union violence in Colombia without regard to who is responsible for this violence.

I truly believe that such affirmative actions would go along way to preserving the lives of workers at your bottling plants in Colombia while also demonstrating to Colombians and the greater Latino community both in New York City and Colombia a good faith concern on your part for these workers. I look forward to working with you to find a long-term solution that respects workers' rights and provides a quality product and service to the customers of Coca Cola. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Hiram Monserrate  
Council Member  
21<sup>st</sup> District, Queens