

URGENT ACTION

PARAMILITARIES THREATEN TRADE UNION LEADER

A Colombian paramilitary group has threatened to kill trade union leader Juan Carlos Galvis and two of his children, and also LGBTI activists in Barrancabermeja.

On 11 July an envelope was left at the home of a human rights defender working for the NGO coalition Space of Human Rights Workers in Barrancabermeja (*Espacio de Trabajadores y Trabajadoras de Derechos Humanos, ETTDH*) in the city of Barrancabermeja, in the northern region of Magdalena Medio. The envelope was addressed to "Coca Cola Trade Union Barrancabermeja" (*Sindicato de Coca Cola Barrancabermeja*). Later that day, in a meeting of ETTDH member organizations, including the trade union National Union of Food Industry Workers (*Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Industria de Alimentos, SINALTRAINAL*), which represents workers at the Coca Cola bottling plant, the human rights defender passed the envelope to one of the union's leaders, **Juan Carlos Galvis**.

The envelope contained photos of two of Juan Carlos Galvis's children and a death threat bearing the logo of a paramilitary group calling itself the "Anti-Restitution Army Medio Magdalena" which asked "Do you know where your children are?" (*¿Sabe usted donde están sus hijos?*), named a daughter and a son of his and gave him 24 hours to leave the city. The message said the paramilitaries were going to kill "gay people" in the city including Juan Galvis's son. The **LGBTI activists** of Barrancabermeja, who are also part of ETTDH, had organized a march on 5 July. SINALTRAINAL and other members of ETTDH supported this march: a similar march in 2012 attracted paramilitary death threats against LGBTI activists. Juan Carlos Galvis, who had left Barrancabermeja following previous death threats, was in the city in recent months on an election campaign for the Trade Union Congress (*Central Unitaria de Trabajadores, CUT*).

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Expressing concern that Juan Carlos Galvis, his family, SINALTRAINAL and LGBTI activists in Barrancabermeja were all threatened by a paramilitary group on 11 July, and calling on the authorities to provide them with effective protection, in line with their wishes;
- Demanding that the authorities order full and impartial investigations into the threat; publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- Urging the authorities to take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups, in line with stated government commitments and recommendations made by the UN and other intergovernmental organizations.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 27 AUGUST 2013 TO:

President

Presidente Juan Manuel Santos
Presidente de la República, Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No.7-26
Bogotá, Colombia
Fax: +57 1 596 0631

**Salutation: Dear President Santos/
Excmo Sr. Presidente Santos**

Minister of Interior

Señor Fernando Carillo Flórez
Ministro del Interior
Calle 12B No 8-46, Primer Piso
Bogotá, Colombia
Fax: +57 1 2839876
Email: mesadeentrada@mininterior.gov.co

**Salutation: Dear Minister/
Estimado Sr. Ministro**

And copies to:

Trade union
SINALTRAINAL
Calle 71 No 21-89
Barrio de la Libertad
Barrancabermeja
Colombia

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

During Colombia's long-running armed conflict, members of trade unions, human rights organizations and other social organizations have often been labelled as guerrilla collaborators or supporters by the security forces and paramilitaries. As a result they are often killed, threatened or subjected to enforced disappearance. Guerrilla groups have also threatened or killed human rights defenders they consider to be siding with the enemy.

Colombia's paramilitary groups supposedly demobilized in a government-sponsored process that began in 2003, but it is clear from the threats against human rights organizations and trade unions, in the Magdalena Medio area and elsewhere, that they are still operating. Guerrilla forces have also been responsible for numerous killings and threats in Colombia in recent years.

SINALTRAINAL was founded in 1982 to defend and promote food workers' labour rights. Since its creation, at least 22 SINALTRAINAL members have been killed or subjected to enforced disappearance; dozens have been attacked or threatened.

In recent years, SINALTRAINAL has been involved in a number of labour disputes, often with large multinational companies. These disputes have often coincided with reports of threats and attacks against members of the union, mainly by members of the security forces or paramilitary groups.

Name: Juan Carlos Galvis and his family, SINALTRAINAL, LGBTI activists in Barrancabermeja
Gender m/f: both

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