

23 November 2006

UA 314/06 Fear for safety/death threats

COLOMBIA **Washington Vladimir Angulo Cuero (m)**
Willington Cuero Solis (m)
Other members of the human rights group *Proceso de Comunidades* ***Negras en***
***Colombia* (PCN), Process of Black Communities in** **Colombia**

Several members of the Afro-Colombian human rights organisation *Proceso de Comunidades Negras en Colombia* (PCN), Process of Black Communities in Colombia, have reportedly been threatened and abducted by army-backed paramilitaries. This appears to be part of a pattern of targeted persecution of the PCN and their work.

PCN member Willington Cuero Solís, who lives in Bogotá, received a telephone call on 2 November warning him to "*cuídese y cuide a los suyos*" ("take care of yourself and your loved ones"). This threat is thought to be part of an on-going paramilitary campaign of harassment against the PCN. Willington Cuero Solís had already been forced to flee his home in the municipality of Buenaventura, Department of Valle del Cauca.

PCN activist Washington Vladimir Angulo Cuero was reportedly abducted on 30 October and held for approximately five hours by a group of men who told him they were paramilitaries. Two men approached him outside a shopping centre; one held a gun to his back whilst they pushed him into a dark blue van with heavily tinted windows. The men then drove around the streets of Bogotá, repeatedly threatening to kill him because of his work with the PCN. Before they abducted him Washington Angulo had noticed the two men following him, and believing they were going to rob him he telephoned a colleague from the PCN for help. When this colleague arrived at the shopping centre and could not find him he called a number of government and state authorities, including the office of the Vice-President and the Minister of Interior and Justice's protection programme, telling them that Washington Angulo was missing. Eventually, one of the men in the front of the van received a phone call, after which he reportedly told his companions, *A este tipo no le podemos tocar, no le podemos hacer nada ..es la orden* ("we cannot do anything to this guy, we can't touch him ..these are our orders.") They left Washington Angulo on the outskirts of the city. Amnesty International believes that Washington Angulo is still in serious danger.

Washington Angulo has been receiving threats since 2004, when he was living in the municipality of Buenaventura. It is reported that in 2004 he escaped death at the hands of a paramilitary group when the man sent to kill him turned out to be an old friend of his. In 2005 he reportedly escaped an attempted abduction. He has been living in Bogotá since May 2006; he fled his home in the municipality of Buenaventura following the 1 May 2006 killing of his younger brother, supposedly by paramilitaries based in Buenaventura.

These attacks appear to form part of a systematic and sustained assault on PCN members, apparently by army-backed paramilitaries. Astolfo Aramburo, a member of the PCN youth team, was followed by two men, thought to be paramilitaries, on 25 October. He managed to contact the PCN-Bogotá team, who immediately arrived to collect him. Astolfo Aramburo is the son of a leading member of the PCN. In the past few years 14 members of the Aramburo family have apparently been killed by army-backed paramilitaries, three of them in a paramilitary massacre in Buenaventura in April 2005.

On 16 June, Elizabeth García Carrillo, a human rights worker with the PCN and partner of Carlos Rosero, a member of the Directorate of the PCN, was threatened by two men who took her identity documents and copied numbers from her mobile telephone.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The PCN is a coalition of over 80 Afro-descendent organisations and works mainly in western Pacific Coast departments of Colombia, including the Valle del Cauca Department, the Caribbean Coast and other regions. It was founded in 1989 and focuses on securing respect for the human rights of Afro-descendent communities in these regions and recognition of their land rights.

The security forces and their paramilitary allies have frequently labelled members of human rights organizations, including communities and organizations campaigning for land rights, as guerrilla collaborators or supporters. They have frequently gone on to attack or kill those labelled in this way. Guerrilla forces have also threatened or killed human rights defenders.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Spanish or your own language:

- expressing concern for safety of members of the *Proceso de Comunidades Negras en Colombia* (PCN), following reports that several members have recently been threatened and abducted;
- calling on the authorities to take effective action to protect PCN members, as deemed appropriate by those under threat themselves, thus allowing them to continue their legitimate human rights work in safety;
- urging the authorities to conduct full and impartial investigations into the abduction of Washington Vladimir Angulo Cuero and the threats received by Willington Cuero Solís and other members of the PCN.
- 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;
- reminding the authorities that their obligations to human rights defenders are laid out in the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, the Organization of American States Human Rights Defenders in the Americas resolutions and in repeated recommendations made to them by the UN.

APPEALS TO:

President of the Republic

Señor Presidente Álvaro Uribe Vélez

Presidente de la República, Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No.7-2, Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 337 5890

+ 57 1 342 0592

Salutation: Dear President Uribe/ Excmo. Sr. Presidente Uribe

Vice- President of the Republic

Dr. Francisco Santos Calderón

Vicepresidente de la República, Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No.7-2, Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 444 2158

Salutation: Dear Vice-President Santos / Exmo. Sr. Vicepresidente

Attorney General

Dr. Mario Germán Iguarán Arana

Fiscal General de la Nación, Fiscalía General de la Nación

Diagonal 22B (Av. Luis Carlos Galán No. 52-01), Bloque C, Piso 4, Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 570 2000 (a message in Spanish will ask you to enter extension 2017)

Salutation: Estimado Sr. Fiscal / Dear Mr Iguarán

COPIES TO:

Human Rights Ombudsman

Sr. Volmar Antonio Pérez Ortiz, Defensor del Pueblo, Defensoría del Pueblo,

Calle 55, No. 10-32/46 oficina 301, Bogotá, Colombia

and to diplomatic representatives of Colombia accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 3 January 2007.
