

URGENT ACTION

INDIGENOUS ACTIVISTS THREATENED

There are reports that the Colombian security forces are using excessive force against Indigenous Peoples protesting in several parts of the country, while paramilitaries directly threaten Indigenous leaders and organizations.

Thousands of Indigenous people in Colombia have been demonstrating for respect of their human rights since 12 October. Scores of demonstrators have been injured in different parts of the country in situations which suggest that the security forces have used excessive force. In the context of these demonstrations, Indigenous leaders and organizations have been threatened by a paramilitary group.

Los Rastrojos paramilitary group issued a written death threat to Indigenous activists and organizations dated 15 October. The paramilitaries demanded that Indigenous demonstrators marching in Cauca, Caldas, Risaralda, La Guajira, Huila and Antioquia Departments return to their communities within 24 hours otherwise they would carry out "social cleansing" (*limpieza social*) killings against them. The death threat suggested the marches were part of a strategy by the guerrillas to push their demands and use Indigenous people as "cannon fodder" (*carne de cañon*).

Those labelled subversives or guerrilla collaborators have frequently been the target of serious human rights violations by the security forces or paramilitaries who sometimes operate with them. The paramilitaries threatened to declare several Indigenous leaders and organizations as military targets if protests continue. These included Indigenous leaders and members of the Cauca Indigenous Regional Council (Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca, **CRIC**) the Indigenous Organization of Colombia (Organización Indígena de Colombia, **ONIC**) and the Association of Indigenous Authorities of the North of Cauca (Asociación de Cabildos Indígenas del Norte del Cauca, **ACIN**), as well as Elder Leaders (*Consejeros Mayores*) and advisors, **Ayda Quilcué, Feliciano Valencia, Gilberto Yajué, Luis Acosta, Henry Caballero, Jorge Vicente Otero, and Luis Fernando Arias**. Luis Fernando Arias is a leader of the ONIC. The others named are all Indigenous activists in Cauca department.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Expressing concern for the safety of ONIC, CRIC and ACIN members and the Indigenous leaders mentioned above following the paramilitary death threat;
- Calling for full and impartial investigations by the civilian justice system into these threats, for the results to be made public, for those responsible to be brought to justice and for authorities to take appropriate measures to guarantee the safety of those under threat;
- Urging full and impartial investigations by the civilian justice system into the injuries of many protesters, to establish if these were the result of excessive use of force by the security forces.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 2 DECEMBER 2013 TO:

President

Señor Juan Manuel Santos
 Presidente de la República,
 Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No.7-26,
 Bogotá, Colombia
 Tel/Fax: +57 1 596 0631 (keep trying)

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

Defence Minister

Señor Juan Carlos Pinzón
 Ministerio de Defensa
 Carrera 54, No.26-29
 Bogotá, Colombia
 Fax: +57 1 266 1003

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

And copies to:

Colombian Indigenous Organization
 ONIC
 Calle 13, No.4-38
 Bogotá,
 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

All warring parties in Colombia's long-running armed conflict have repeatedly failed to respect the civilian population's right not to take part in the armed conflict and have been responsible for serious human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law. Amnesty International has repeatedly called on both sides in the conflict – guerrilla groups and the security forces – to put an immediate and unconditional end to human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law.

Since 12 October thousands of Indigenous community members have been involved in demonstrations demanding respect for their rights which they consider to be threatened by mining, oil and other economic interests encroaching on their lands. The warring parties – the armed forces, either acting alone or in collusion with paramilitaries, and guerrilla forces – are responsible for serious human rights abuses against members of the Indigenous communities including threats and killings. In recent months there have also been several large-scale demonstrations by peasant farmers in different parts of the country. Government and State officials have insinuated that these are being led or infiltrated by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, FARC). In the past such accusations have frequently been followed by death threats or killings carried out by paramilitary forces operating at times in collusion with the security forces.

Many Indigenous demonstrators have been injured in different parts of the country in situations which suggest that the security forces have used excessive force. On 19 October the Cauca Indigenous Regional Council (Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca, CRIC) and Association of Indigenous Authorities of the North of Cauca (Asociación de Cabildos Indígenas del Norte del Cauca, ACIN) reported that in La Augustina area of the municipality of Santander del Quilichao, department of Cauca, 15 people had been injured including minors after being shot at by members of the security forces during the course of demonstrations.

On 16 October Indigenous demonstrators occupied part of the road which leads to Buenaventura Municipality, Valle del Cauca Department. Anti-riot police units (Escuadrón Móvil Antidisturbios, ESMAD) then initiated an operation to remove demonstrators from the road. According to information received, the security forces fired tear gas canisters filled with shrapnel directly at demonstrators and beat demonstrators. Sixteen demonstrators have been seriously wounded and in total over 60 have been injured. According to information received, security forces prevented injured demonstrators from being taken to medical centres in Buenaventura and Dagua Municipalities for several hours.

According to reports in the media the security forces have stated that demonstrators threw stones at them when they tried to remove them from the roads. Amnesty International has not been able to confirm this. The security forces have a duty to guarantee the safety of their colleagues, but this should not be used as an excuse to ignore international standards on the use of force by security forces.

Names: Ayda Quilcué (f), Feliciano Valencia (m), Gilberto Yajué (m), Luis Acosta (m), Henry Caballero (m), Jorge Vicente Otero (m), Luis Fernando Arias (m), members of CRIC, ACIN and ONIC

Gender m/f: both

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