

**COLOMBIA**Pablo Cruz Hurtado, human rights defender

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Amnesty International is very concerned for the safety of Pablo Cruz Hurtado, a human rights defender who has been threatened with death by both paramilitary forces and guerrilla groups in Currillo, Caquetá department, and in Bogotá, where he fled after his girlfriend was murdered. Despite this the Ministry of Interior has reportedly refused to provide him with protection.

In November 1999, while working with the *Comité Permanente por la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos* (CPDH), Permanent Committee for the Defence of Human Rights in Bogotá, Pablo Cruz Hurtado got a phone call in which he was told: "Now we have found you, this time we are going to kill you" (*Ya te ubicamos y ahora si te vamos a matar*).

In 1996, while serving as *Personero Municipal*, Municipal Ombudsman, in Currillo, Caquetá department, Pablo Cruz Hurtado sought a court injunction (*tutela*) against the armed forces who, as part of counter insurgency operations, had sealed off the only access road to the municipality of Currillo. In the past those who have taken out *tutelas* against the armed forces have risked being labelled guerrilla sympathizers and frequently become the victim of human rights violations.

The same year he had opposed attempts by the principal left-wing guerrilla group, the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC), Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, to disrupt local elections. As a result he was threatened with death unless he left the area immediately. When he denounced these threats to the *Consejería Presidencial para los Derechos Humanos*, Presidential Human Rights Office, they made a recommendation to the head of the armed forces that he be given protection.

In areas with a strong guerrilla presence, local state officials, such as *Personeros Municipales* are often considered by the army and their paramilitary allies to be guerrilla supporters. In 1997 and 1998 army-backed paramilitary forces belonging to the *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC), United Self-defence Force of Colombia, entered the region. Pablo Cruz Hurtado denounced their presence to municipal and departmental authorities whereupon he began to receive death threats from the AUC who accused him of being a guerrilla auxiliary.

In 1999, FARC death threats against Pablo Cruz Hurtado increased and on 8 March they were reportedly responsible for the deliberate and arbitrary killing of his girlfriend during a public event in Currillo.

Despite the recent death threats against him, the Ministry of Interior has reportedly refused a request by the CPDH to allow him to enter their special protection program.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Human rights defenders, trades unionists, regional human rights ombudsmen and similarly active members of the civilian population are often victim to human rights violations. These include threats, killings and "disappearances". In Colombia's long running armed conflict neither the left wing armed opposition groups nor the armed forces and their paramilitary allies recognize the civilian population's right to neutrality or life.

In 1998, only after intense national and international pressure for them to do so, the Interior Ministry protection program for human rights defenders, trade unionists and others began to provide a number of protection measures for those at risk.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in Spanish or your own language:**

- expressing concern for the safety of Pablo Cruz Hurtado whose life has been repeatedly threatened in Currillo, Caquetá department, and now in Bogotá;
- calling on the authorities to guarantee his safety by implementing immediate and appropriate protection measures;
- urging the authorities to conduct full, prompt and impartial investigations into the threats against Pablo Cruz Hurtado, for the results to be made public and for those responsible to be brought to justice.

**APPEALS TO:**

Minister of the Interior

Dr. Néstor Humberto Martínez, Ministro del Interior  
Ministerio del Interior, Carrera 8, No.8-09, Piso 2  
Santafé de Bogotá, COLOMBIA

**Telegrams: Ministerio del Interior, Bogotá, Colombia**

**Telexes:45406 MINGO CO**

**Faxes:+ 57 1 286 8025 / 281 5884 / 342 3201**

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

President of Colombia:

Señor Presidente Andrés Pastrana, Presidente de la República  
Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No. 7-26, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

**Telegrams: President Pastrana, Bogotá, Colombia**

**Telexes:44281 PALP CO**

**Faxes:+ 57 1 286 7434/ 284 2186/ 337 1351**

**Salutation:Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente / Dear President Pastrana**

People's Ombudsman:

Dr. José Fernando Castro Caycedo  
Defensor del Pueblo, Defensoría del Pueblo  
Calle 55 No.10-32, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

**Telegrams:Defensor del Pueblo, Defensoria del Pueblo,  
Bogota, Colombia**

**Faxes:+ 57 1 346 1225/285 6908 / 314 7300( ext 2246) / 6915455**

**Salutation: Estimado Dr. / Dear Dr.**

**COPIES TO:**

Human Rights Organization

Comité Permanente por la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos (CPDH)  
AA 12817, Santafé de 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 10 January 2000.