

URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS GROUP THREATENED IN COLOMBIA

Members of the Colombian human rights NGO the Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission (Comisión Intereclesial Justicia y Paz), including priest Father Javier Giraldo, are in danger following the appearance of threatening graffiti in Bogotá, Colombia's capital.

On the morning of 22 April, threatening graffiti appeared on a number of walls in central Bogotá. Some of the graffiti accused members of the **Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission** of being terrorists ("*ONG Justicia y Paz= terrorista*"). Other graffiti made an explicit reference to **Father Javier Giraldo**, a Jesuit priest and a member of the Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission. The graffiti called for the death of Javier Giraldo (*Javier Giraldo = Muerte*). Some of the graffiti messages state: "Against the Marxist priest- national action" (*Contra el cura marxista - Accion nacional*). It is thought that this refers to either Father Javier Giraldo, or another priest, **Father Alberto Franco**, who is also the lawyer who represents the Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission. Both men are high-profile human rights defenders in Colombia. Father Javier Giraldo also oversees a database of human rights violations reported around Colombia.

The Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission has been receiving death threats for several years. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, part of the Organization of American States, has in recent years called on Colombia to protect members of the organization as a result of these death threats.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Spanish or your own language:

- Expressing concern for the safety of members of the Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission, including Father Javier Giraldo and Father Alberto Franco, because of the explicit threat against them and because the two priests could be the target of the graffiti against "the Marxist priest".
- Calling for a full and impartial investigation into these threats, and for those responsible for ordering and writing the threats to be brought to justice;
- Urging the authorities to provide effective protection to those individuals affected who request it and in strict accordance with their wishes and the protection measures granted by the Inter-American Commission of Human rights of the Organization of the American States;
- Reminding the authorities to fulfil their obligations to ensure human rights defenders can carry out their work without fear, as laid out in the 1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 15 JUNE 2010 TO:

Minister of the Interior and Justice

Sr. Fabio Valencia Cossio
Ministerio Del Interior y de Justicia
Carrera 9a. No. 14-10,
Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: +57 1 599 8013

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

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Sr. Jaime Bermúdez
Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores
Calle 10 No 5-51, Palacio de San
Carlos, Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: +57 1 381 47 21

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

And copies to:

Acting Attorney General

Dr. Guillermo Mendoza Diago
Fiscal General de la Nación (e)
Diagonal 22B (Av. Luis Carlos Galán
No. 52-01) Bloque C
Piso 4, Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: +57 1 570 2000 (dial extension

2017 on hearing the welcome message)

**Salutation: Dear Attorney General/
Estimado Sr. Fiscal General**

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives of Colombia 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

The Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission campaigns on behalf of civilian communities in conflict regions in Colombia, whose members have been killed, tortured or forced to flee from their homes by the security forces and paramilitary groups. Many of these communities have also been targeted by guerrilla groups.

The Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission has been supporting the cause of the Afro-descendant and Indigenous communities living in and around the Curvaradó and Jiguamiandó River Basins in the department of Chocó, where paramilitaries have occupied the land of some Afro-descendant communities and have attempted to force the Afro-descendant communities to grow plantations of African Palm, a cash crop used in products ranging from cooking oil to soap and where powerful mining interests are trying to develop operations.

Their human rights work with these communities and on important cases of impunity against senior members of the security forces has made them target of threats and attacks.

During Colombia's 40-year armed conflict, members of human rights organizations, trade unions 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.

Those labelled Marxists have frequently been the target of threats and other human rights violations committed by the security forces and paramilitary groups. In Colombia, this accusation is akin to be labelled a member of a left-wing guerrilla group

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