

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

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## Colombia: Killing of election candidates must stop

Amnesty International condemns the killing of yet another election candidate in the run up to the 28 October regional and local elections. Some 27 election hopefuls have reportedly been killed since the start of the year, with around 17 believed to have been killed since campaigning got fully under way in September.

Adolfo León Álvarez Rodríguez, a mayoral candidate in Ataco Municipality, Tolima Department, was shot dead on 16 October by as yet unidentified gunmen in the rural area of the municipality.

"The killing and intimidation of candidates and other civilians poses a serious threat to freedom of expression," said Susan Lee, Director of Amnesty International's Americas Programme.

"The Colombian authorities must provide effective guarantees to ensure the safety of candidates and other civilians, and have a duty to investigate and bring to justice all those responsible for such attacks."

Amnesty International condemns politically motivated killings and acts of intimidation against candidates and other civilians and calls on the security forces -- acting alone or in conjunction with paramilitary groups -- and the guerrillas to respect the right of Colombians to participate in the elections free from coercion and fear.

### Background

The guerrilla group Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, FARC) have been blamed for most of the killings, although army-backed paramilitaries are also believed to be responsible for some of the deaths.

Other election candidates have also been physically attacked, threatened and kidnapped, forcing a number of them to resign and to leave their home towns for fear of their lives.

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