

URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS THREATENED

Paramilitaries have threatened to kill four women human rights defenders working in the departments of Cauca and Valle del Cauca in south-western Colombia. Members of other human rights organizations and a trade union were also threatened.

On 11 December **Martha Lucía Giraldo**, a member of the Valle del Cauca Branch of the National Movement of Victims of State Crimes (*Movimiento Nacional de Víctimas de Crímenes de Estado*, MOVICE), which campaigns on behalf of victims of human rights violations, received a text message on her mobile phone which read: "You are the ones that do not allow development in this country, supporting families of guerrillas and depressing them with those stupid ideas of freedom; therefore you are on our death list" (*Ustedes son los que no dejan que este país progrese apoyando a familias de guerrilleros [sic] y a los que depimen [sic] con esas ideas estúpidas de libertad por lo tanto son declarados objetivos de muerte nuestros*)

The message, signed by the paramilitary group Black Eagles New Generation (*Águila Negras Nueva Generación*), also threatened the human rights organizations Social Research and Action Association (*Asociación de Investigación y la Acción Social*, NOMADESC), Committee of Solidarity for Political Prisoners (*Fundación Comité de Solidaridad con los Presos Políticos*, FCSPP), and other human rights NGOs and Indigenous leaders.

Cristina Castro of the FCSPP also received a death threat on her phone, again signed by the Black Eagles New Generation. Similar death threats were also sent to the mobile phones of NOMADESC director **Berenice Celeyta**, and **Ayda Quilcué**, a former leader of the Cauca Indigenous Regional Council (*Concejo Regional Indígena del Cauca*, CRIC). One of the text messages also threatened the Colombian University Workers and Employees Trade Union (*Sindicato de Trabajadores y Empleados Universitarios de Colombia*, SINTRAUNICOL).

The threats followed events organized in the municipalities of Cali and Zarzal in Valle del Cauca Department on 10 December, to mark International Human Rights Day.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Spanish or your own language:

- Calling on the authorities to order a full and impartial investigation into the death threats against members of MOVICE, NOMADESC, CSPP, CRIC and the trade union SINTRAUNICOL working in the departments of Cauca and Valle del Cauca; publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- Demanding that they provide protection for those threatened, as agreed with those in danger;
- Reminding the authorities to fulfil their obligations regarding the situation of human rights defenders, as laid out in the 1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.
- 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.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 2 FEBRUARY 2011 TO:

President

Presidente de la República

Palacio de Nariño

Carrera 8 No.7-26

Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: +57 1 596 0631

Salutation: Dear President Santos/

Excmo. Sr. Presidente

Minister of Interior and Justice

Señor Germán Vargas Lleras

Ministerio Del Interior y De Justicia

Carrera 9a. No. 14-10, Bogotá

Colombia

Fax: +57 1 599 8961

Salutation: Dear Minister Vargas/

Estimado Sr. Ministro Vargas

And copies to:

NOMADESC

Carrera 4 No. 4-43 ofi. 201

Cali, Colombia

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the second update of UA 126/10. Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR23/021/2010/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Dozens of human rights defenders have been threatened or killed in the departments of Valle del Cauca and Cauca. In the past year paramilitary groups, including the Black Eagles New Generation, have frequently threatened human rights defenders as well as Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities in Cauca department.

On 30 October several human rights defenders in Bogotá, as well as in Valle del Cauca, Cauca and Nariño departments in south-western Colombia, received an identical text message with a death threat from the paramilitary group Black Eagles New Generation. The text message threatened a list of around 25 individuals and organizations, including the Black Communities Process (*Proceso de Comunidades Negras*, PCN), the CRIC and the Trade Union Congress (*Central Unitaria de Trabajadores*, CUT). On 10 October, the Black Eagles New Generation had sent an email naming nearly 70 Colombian NGOs and individuals to several key human rights defenders, telling them to "assume they will be dead" (*dense por muertos*). (See UA 237/10, 12 November 2010, AMR 23/034/2010)

During Colombia's long-running internal armed conflict, the security forces and paramilitary groups have frequently labelled human rights organizations and trade unions as guerrilla collaborators or supporters, and have gone on to threaten, abduct or kill them. Guerrilla groups have also threatened or killed human rights defenders and trade unionists they consider to be siding with their enemies.

Colombia's paramilitary groups supposedly demobilized in a government-sponsored process that began in 2003, but it is clear from the threats against human rights organizations and trade unions, in Valle de Cauca, Cauca, Nariño and elsewhere, that they are still operating.

Guerrilla forces have also been responsible for numerous killings and threats against Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities in south-western Colombia in recent years.

Further information on UA: 126/10 Index: AMR 23/039/2010 Issue Date: 22 December 2010

