

URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER'S LIFE IN DANGER

Colombian human rights defender Abelardo Sánchez Serrano was threatened by two armed men in the city of Barrancabermeja, Santander Department, Colombia, on 13 January. His life is now in danger.

On 13 January, **Abelardo Sánchez Serrano**, a member of the Regional Human Rights Corporation (*Corporación Regional para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos*, CREDHOS) in Barrancabermeja, was on his way to the CREDHOS office when two men on a motorbike approached him. One of the men pointed a pistol at him and told him to stop “denigrating the armed forces. We already have one son-of-a-bitch guerrilla of CREDHOS in jail and if it is necessary to give it to the rest of them we will do it to shut you up” (*de estar denigrando de la fuerza pública que ya tenemos a un hijueputa guerrillero de Credhos encarcelado y que si es necesario si hay quedarle al resto, pues lo haremos para acallarlos*). Before leaving, the men told Abelardo Sánchez Serrano that he had 72 hours to leave the city. He now fears that his life, and the lives of other CREDHOS activists, are in danger.

CREDHOS campaigns for justice for victims of human rights violations committed by the security forces, sometimes in collusion with paramilitary groups, in Santander Department and the surrounding area. In recent years CREDHOS has also campaigned on over 20 cases of extrajudicial executions of civilians carried out by members of the armed forces, who falsely claimed the victims were “guerrillas killed in combat”. The day before Abelardo Sánchez Serrano was threatened, CREDHOS had helped to organize a press conference to call for an event to commemorate the 23rd anniversary of the killings of 12 judicial officials in Santander department. When they were killed, on 18 January 1989, the judicial officials were investigating the alleged role of the security forces and paramilitaries in the deaths of 19 people. The officials were themselves killed by paramilitaries, acting in collusion with the armed forces.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Expressing concern for the safety of Abelardo Sánchez Serrano and other members of CREDHOS, and calling on the authorities to protect them, in line with their wishes;
- Urging the Colombian authorities to order full and impartial investigations into the death threats against Abelardo Sánchez Serrano; to publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- Remind the Colombian authorities to fulfil their obligations regarding the protections of human rights defenders as specified in the 1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, to which Colombia is a state party;
- Urging the authorities to take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups and break their links with the security forces, in line with stated government commitments and recommendations made by the UN and other intergovernmental organizations

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 1 MARCH 2012 TO:

President

Señor Juan Manuel Santos
 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 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:

NGO
 CREDHOS
 Av. 52 No. 25-49
 Barrancabermeja, Santander
 Colombia

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

CREDHOS is a regional human rights organization campaigning for justice for human rights violations around Barrancabermeja and the Magdalena Medio area. Over the years members of CREDHOS have repeatedly faced death threats. Another member of CREDHOS, David Ravelo Crespo, has been detained, accused of links with guerrilla groups, since September 2010. Human rights organizations have expressed concerns that the case against David Ravelo is part of an effort to discredit and silence CREDHOS. 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.

During the armed conflict in Colombia, which has lasted over four decades, extrajudicial executions have been carried out by the security forces in a widespread and systematic manner. They are part of the terror tactics used by the security forces as part of their counter-insurgency strategy. The Attorney General's Office is investigating more than 2,000 cases of extrajudicial executions reportedly committed by the security forces. Those campaigning for justice in cases of extrajudicial executions have been subject to death threats or have been killed by members of the security forces or paramilitaries working with them.

Name: Abelardo Sánchez Serrano

Gender m/f: male

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