

PUBLIC

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UA 52/08 Fear for safety/ Death threats

COLOMBIA **David Ravelo Crespo (m), Secretary General of the *Corporación Regional para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos* (CREDHOS), Regional Human Rights Corporation**

David Ravelo, Secretary General of the Regional Human Rights Corporation (*Corporación Regional para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos*, CREDHOS), has been informed that paramilitaries are planning an attempt on his life.

On 30 January, David Ravelo received a phone call from a resident living in a neighbourhood with a heavy paramilitary presence in the city of Barrancabermeja, Santander Department. The resident informed David Ravelo about rumours that paramilitaries wanted to kill him.

On 11 February, David Ravelo was told, apparently by a reliable source with close contacts with former paramilitaries, that paramilitaries had had him under surveillance for two weeks, waiting to find the right time to kill him. In response to this threat David Ravelo has reportedly confirmed that he had noticed men following him during his travels in Barrancabermeja during this period. Unknown men have also been seen around the CREDHOS offices in the same city.

On 18 February, David Ravelo learned through another reliable source with paramilitary contacts that he could be killed that same night. David Ravelo reported the threats to the Colombian authorities, and fearing for his safety, decided to leave Barrancabermeja.

David Ravelo was recently interviewed for a local radio programme and a TV programme about recent killings and threats that have taken place in Barrancabermeja.

Human rights organizations which have been reporting human rights violations in Barrancabermeja and in the department of Santander have a long history of threats and attacks against them. In July 2007 a paramilitary death threat sent by email was received by CREDHOS. The email threatened a group of NGOs working in Barrancabermeja, and named David Ravelo as one of those at risk.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In Colombia's 40-year-old armed conflict, human rights organizations are frequently labelled as guerrilla collaborators or supporters by the security forces and paramilitary groups. As a result they often suffer threats, enforced disappearance or killings. Guerrilla groups have also threatened or killed human rights defenders they consider to be siding with the enemy.

Colombia's army-backed paramilitary groups have supposedly demobilized in a government-sponsored process. The threats against David Ravelo appear to show that paramilitaries continue to operate in Barrancabermeja despite this supposed demobilization. NGOs sources suggest that so far this year at least 19 people have reported paramilitary threats to the local authorities in Barrancabermeja.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Spanish or your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of David Ravelo Crespo, and other members of the non-governmental human rights organization CREDHOS, following a reported paramilitary plan to kill him;

- urging the authorities to ensure that all measures deemed appropriate by David Ravelo Crespo and other members of the organization are taken to guarantee their safety;
- calling for full and impartial investigations into the reported paramilitary plans to kill David Ravelo Crespo, with the results of the investigation made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- calling on the authorities to take decisive action to confront and dismantle paramilitary groups operating in the region and to break their links with the security forces, in line with repeated UN recommendations; and
- expressing concern that the government has taken no effective action against paramilitary groups in the Barrancabermeja area, despite UN recommendations to combat and dismantle these groups.

APPEALS TO:

President of the Republic

Señor Presidente Álvaro Uribe Vélez

Presidente de la República, Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No.7-2, Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: +57 1 337 5890 / 342 0592

Salutation: Dear President Uribe/ Excmo. Sr. Presidente Uribe

Governor of Santander Department

Sr. Horacio Serpa

Gobernador del Departamento de Santander

Gobernación de Santander, Calle 37, No. 10-30, Bucaramanga, Santander, Colombia

Fax: + 57 7 633 98 89

Salutation: Dear Governor Serpa / Sr. Gobernador Serpa

Attorney General

Dr. Mario Germán Iguarán Arana

Fiscal General de la Nación, Fiscalía General de la Nación

Diagonal 22B (Av. Luis Carlos Galán No. 52-01) Bloque C, Piso 4

Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 570 2000 (a message in Spanish will ask you to enter extension 2017)

Salutation: Estimado Sr. Fiscal/Dear Mr Iguarán

COPIES TO:

Non-governmental Human Rights Organization

CREDHOS

Av. 52 No. 25-49

Barrancabermeja, Santander

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 8 April 2008.