

# URGENT ACTION

## HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYER AT RISK

**Paramilitaries have offered a bounty for the killing of Colombian human rights lawyer José Humberto Torres, a member of the Political Prisoners Solidarity Committee (*Comité de Solidaridad con los Presos Políticos*, CSPP). His life is at risk, along with those of other CSPP members.**

Paramilitaries and politicians linked to paramilitaries who are currently in prison as well as the paramilitary group "Los Rastrojos" have made it known that they have raised approximately US \$120,000. They will pay this amount to whoever kills human rights lawyer **José Humberto Torres** of the Political Prisoners Solidarity Committee (*Comité de Solidaridad con los Presos Políticos*, CSPP). This follows a threat issued by the paramilitary group, the Rastrojos Urban Commands, in late February, to the CSPP and other national NGOs and individuals (see UA 72/12: [www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR23/012/2012/en](http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR23/012/2012/en)).

José Humberto Torres has received repeated death threats because of his human rights work. He is a spokesperson for the Colombian human rights platforms, a coalition of NGOs which engages with the Colombian government on protecting human rights defenders. In his work as a human rights lawyer, José Humberto Torres recently filed a request for criminal investigations to be opened against several members of the Colombian Congress for their alleged links with paramilitaries and their responsibility regarding crimes committed by paramilitaries. José Humberto Torres also played a prominent role in criminal proceedings which led to the conviction of the former Director of the Civilian Security Department (*Departamento Administrativo de Seguridad*, DAS) for his part in the killing of an academic, Alfredo Correa de Andreis, in September 2004.

### Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Express concerns for the safety of José Humberto Torres and other members of CSPP and urge the Colombian authorities to take decisive measures to guarantee his safety, according to his wishes;
- Urge the Colombian authorities to order full and impartial investigations into the threats to kill José Humberto Torres; 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;
- Urge 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 27 APRIL 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**

#### Director of the National Protection Unit of the Ministry of Interior

Sr. Andrés Villamizar  
 Unidad Nacional de Protección  
 Ministerio del Interior  
 Carrera 9a. No. 14-10,  
 Bogotá, Colombia  
 Email: [andres.villamizar@mininterior.gov.co](mailto:andres.villamizar@mininterior.gov.co)

**Salutation: Dear Mr Villamizar  
 /Estimado Sr. Villamizar**

#### **And copies to:**

#### CSPP

Fundación Comité de Solidaridad con los  
 Presos Políticos  
 Calle 26 4A-45, Piso 12  
 Torre KLM  
 Bogotá, DC  
 Colombia

**Also send copies to diplomatic representatives 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

José Humberto Torres has been a member of the CSPP for over 30 years. He has participated in several judicial proceedings against paramilitaries, including extrajudicial executions committed by paramilitaries in collusion with the Colombian armed forces. Among the crimes currently under investigation is the killing of Nelson Mejía Sarmiento, mayor of Santo Tomás Municipality, Atlántico Department in April 2004. The CSPP was founded in 1973 and works on human rights issues in several regions of the Colombia. Members of the CSPP have been repeatedly threatened.

The Supreme Court of Justice is investigating illegal links between politicians and paramilitary groups. Dozens of former members of Congress were investigated, many of whom were convicted and imprisoned. Demobilized paramilitaries, often high ranking commanders, are providing information as witnesses in the trials of former members of congress and other politicians suspected of illegal links with paramilitaries, in what has been termed as the “parapolitics scandal”. Former governors, military and police commanders, as well as businessmen are also among those providing testimony.

Despite government claims that all paramilitaries demobilized in a government-sponsored programme that began in 2003, such groups continue to operate and commit serious human rights violations against human rights defenders and other civilians. This is sometimes in collusion with the security forces, or with their consent.

Name: José Humberto Torres

Gender m/f: male

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