

URGENT ACTION

PARAMILITARIES KILL FATHER AND SON IN COLOMBIA

Manuel Ruíz, a member of the community council of Apartadocito, and his son, were abducted and subsequently killed by paramilitaries in northern Colombia on 23 March. Other members of the family and community may be in danger.

On 23 March paramilitaries abducted **Manuel Ruíz** and his 15-year-old son **Samir de Jesús Ruíz**, members of the Afro descendant and Afro mestizo community of Apartadocito in the Curvaradó River Basin, Chocó Department. They were travelling between the town of Mutatá, Antioquia Department, and the area of Apartadocito. According to witnesses, paramilitaries stopped them in an area known as "El Basurero" near Mutatá. Manuel Ruíz managed to telephone his family to tell them they had been forced out of the vehicle they were in and that their abductors were demanding a large sum of money for their release. Before their abduction, they had been approached by paramilitaries in Mutatá and accused of being guerrillas, and were subsequently stopped briefly by police.

On 24 March a paramilitary informed Manuel Ruíz and Samir de Jesús Ruíz's family that they had been killed that morning. On 27 March, members of the communities of the Curvaradó River Basin, accompanied by national and international observers, found the body of Manuel Ruíz in the Río Sucio area. On 28 March the body of his son Samir de Jesús Ruíz was found near the river in the Cañaduzales area.

The killing of Manuel Ruíz and Samir de Jesús Ruíz occurred just before a government inspection was to be carried out of an area known as Los Piscingos. Manuel Ruíz was to guide the government inspectors. The inspection was a response to a court order of 7 March 2012 instructing that a census of the area be carried out to help determine the rightful owners of land. The family of Manuel Ruíz and others were displaced from Los Piscingos by paramilitary forces in a joint military-paramilitary operation in the area in 1996. Following the abduction and killing of Manuel Ruíz and his son the family have left Apartadocito fearing for their safety.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Express concern for the safety of the family of Manuel Ruíz and other members of the communities of the Curvaradó River Basin; and urge the authorities to guarantee their safety in strict accordance with their wishes;
- Demand a full and impartial investigation into the abduction and killing of Manuel Ruíz and Samir de Jesús Ruíz, with those responsible brought to justice;
- Urge them 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 bodies.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 10 MAY 2012 TO:

President

Presidente 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**

Minister of Agriculture and Rural

Development
 Señor Juan Camilo Restrepo
 Ministerio de Agricultura y Desarrollo Rural, Avenida Jiménez No 7-65, Piso 3, Bogotá, Colombia
 Fax: +57 1 286 2649

**Salutation: Dear Minister Restrepo
 /Estimado Sr. Ministro Restrepo**

Attorney General

Eduardo Montealegre
 Fiscalía General de la Nación
 Diagonal 22B No. 52-01 (Ciudad Salitre)
 Bloque C Piso 4
 Bogotá, Colombia
 Fax: +57 1 570 2000 ext 2020

**Salutation: Dear Attorney General
 /Estimado Sr. Montealegre**

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

The Apartadocito community council is part of the body which governs the collective land holding of Curvaradó.

Since the 1990s, paramilitaries, either acting alone or in collusion with the armed forces, have been responsible for killings, death threats and the forced displacement of Afro-descendant and Indigenous People living in the Jiguamiandó and Curvaradó River Basins and the Indigenous *resguardo* (reservation) of Urada-Jiguamiandó. As a means to guarantee their safety, members of the Afro-descendant communities of Curvaradó and Jiguamiandó created Humanitarian Zones to assert their rights as civilians not to be drawn into the conflict. The communities have sought to defend their land rights and prevent the expansion of illegal African palm plantations and other economic activities within their territory. Many of their members have been threatened and killed as a result. In the last couple of years a number of people living in the Jiguamiandó and Curvaradó region who have complained about the occupation of their lands by African Palm growers and other economic interests have been killed by paramilitaries, who continue to maintain a strong presence in the region despite the large army presence. Those living in the *resguardo* of Urada-Jiguamiandó have also been subject to repeated death threats and several have been killed since the late 1990s.

In 2011 a large-scale paramilitary presence an hour away from the Humanitarian Zones of Caracolí, Tesoro-Camelias and Caño Claro-Andalucía, and the area of El Firme and No Hay Como Dios, in the Curvaradó River Basin, was reported in the wake of a visit by government ministers to the area. It was hoped that this would result in commitments to return lands stolen, often violently, by paramilitaries operating on behalf of African Palm, banana and cattle-ranching interests operating in the region. The return of these lands was ordered by the Constitutional Court in a ruling in May 2010. Reports indicate that paramilitaries are plotting to kill Afro-descendants campaigning for the restitution of stolen lands. In recent years, attempts have been made on the lives of leaders and people living in the Humanitarian Zones. In 2008, Walberto Hoyos Rivas, a leader of the Curvaradó River Basin Community, was killed by paramilitaries.

Afro-descendant communities, along with Indigenous People and peasant farmer communities are among those most affected by Colombia's long running internal armed conflict. They have been subjected to enforced disappearance by the security forces or by paramilitaries, either acting alone or in collusion with the armed forces and abducted by guerrilla groups.

Name: Manuel Ruíz, Samir de Jesús Ruíz, their family and community members

Gender m/f: Manuel Ruíz (male), Samir de Jesús Ruíz (male), their family and community members (both)

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