

URGENT ACTION

PARAMILITARY DEATH THREATS

Thirteen Colombian human rights defenders and politicians have been declared "military targets" by a paramilitary group, and told they will be killed.

The paramilitary organization Anti Land Restitution Army (Ejército Anti Restitución de Tierras) sent an email on 4 July which named 13 people it described as "military targets", including human rights defenders and politicians. The email included photographs of the 13, naming them in a list headed "targets". The death threat read, "13 guerrillas disguised as human rights defenders, 13 military targets." It continued, "Our army has clear instructions to kill these bastards who want to take away the land from the well-to-do citizens to give it to guerrillas like them. You are warned and informed since we have you fully identified, as well as your [protection] schemes and those without ..." Many of those named in the death threat work in areas where people have supported claims for the return of their lands, under the Victims and Land Restitution Law that came into force at the beginning of this year. There will be a public hearing in Congress on 18 July about the policy on land restitution and return, in which leaders of groups around the country seeking land restitution are planning to take part. Several such leaders have been killed since Congress approved the law in mid-2011.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Expressing concern for the safety of the 13 (naming them) and urging the authorities to protect them, in strict accordance with their wishes;
- Calling on the authorities to order full and impartial investigations into the death threat, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- Reminding them to fulfil their obligation to protect human rights defenders, as set out in the 1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders;
- Urging 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 intergovernmental organizations.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 17 AUGUST 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

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

Office of the Attorney General

Luís Eduardo Montealegre
 Fiscal General de la Nación
 Diagonal 22B No. 52-01 (Ciudad Salitre)
 Bloque C Piso 4 Bogotá, Colombia
 Fax: +57 1 570 2000 ext. 2020 or 2023
 (say "me da tono de fax por favor")

**Salutation: Dear Attorney
 General/Excmo. Sr. Fiscal General**

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.

**AMNESTY
 INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In the course of Colombia's long-running armed conflict millions of hectares of land have been stolen, often through violence to the rightful owners, especially Indigenous Peoples, Afro-descendent and peasant farmer communities. The various parties to the conflict –paramilitaries and the security forces, either acting alone or in collusion with each other, and guerrilla groups - have driven over 5 million people from their homes.

Leaders of displaced communities and those seeking the return of stolen lands have been killed or threatened, especially since the Land and Victims Restitution Law was approved in June 2011 and came into force at the beginning of 2012. This law acknowledges the existence of an armed conflict in the country, and the rights of its victims. It provides for reparations for many survivors of human rights abuses, including those perpetrated by state agents. However, many other victims of the conflict will be excluded from making claims for reparation, while significant areas of stolen land might still not be returned to their rightful owners. There are not enough safeguards to ensure that people whose land is returned to them are not forced to again hand over control over their land, even to those who had driven them off it. Many of those campaigning for land restitution, or seeking to return to their lands, have been threatened or killed, and this may undermine the implementation of the law.

Since February 2012 paramilitary forces who call themselves “anti restitution armies” have been reported in several parts of Colombia. The paramilitary “Anti Land Restitution Army”, which some estimates suggest is 1,000 strong, began taking action in July 2012 in the Montes de María area of the north-western Departments of Bolívar and Sucre.

During the armed conflict in Colombia, which has lasted over four decades, 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 continuing threats against human rights defenders and other vulnerable groups in different parts of the country that they are still operating.

Several of those named in the threat also participated in the 6 March 2012 demonstration organized by the National Movement of Victims of State Crimes (*Movimiento Nacional de Víctimas de Crímenes de Estado, MOVICE*) calling for the implementation of an effective and comprehensive process for the restitution and restoration of lands violently seized by all parties to the conflict – the paramilitaries, the security forces and guerrilla groups.

Names: Male: Iván Cepeda, Diego Martínez, Jeison Pava, Juan David Díaz Chamorro, Franklin Castañeda, José Humberto Torres and Pedro Geney. Female: Gloria Cuartas, Piedad Córdoba, Soraya Gutiérrez, Ayda Quilcué, Yessika Hoyos and Lilia Solano
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