

PUBLIC

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Fear for safety/ Death threats

COLOMBIA

José Humberto Torres (m)]
Príncipe Gabriel González (m)] members of the Committee of Solidarity for
Carolina Rubio (f)] Political Prisoners (*Fundación Comité de*
María Cedeño (f)] *Solidaridad con los Presos Políticos*, FCSPP)
Nicolás Castro (m)]
Jesus Tovar (m), member of the Trade Union Congress (*Central Unitaria de*
Trabajadores, CUT) in Atlántico Department
Javier Correa (m), member of the National Union of Food Industry Workers
(*Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Industria de Alimentos*,
SINALTRAINAL)
María Cardona (f), member of the Permanent Committee of Human Rights (*Comité*
Permanente de Derechos Humanos, CPDH)
Martha Cecilia Díaz (f), President of the Public Services Workers Union of Santander
(*Asociación Santandereana de Servidores Públicos*, ASTDEMP)
Nicanor Arciniegas (m), member of ASTDEMP
Other members of CUT in Santander Department and members of other human rights
organizations and trade unions in Santander and Atlántico Departments

On 22 April, members of the Trade Union Congress (*Central Unitaria de Trabajadores*, CUT) in Santander Department, northeastern Colombia, received a written death threat from the paramilitary group, the New Generation of the Black Eagles in Santander (*Nueva Generación de Águilas Negras de Santander*). The threat, dated 18 April, warned against holding any marches or demonstrations to mark International Workers' Day on 1 May. It said, "There is a detachment of men available who will fulfil our orders and cleanse all you servants of the guerrilla" ("*hay dispuesto un destacamento de hombres quienes cumplirán nuestras ordenes y haran limpieza de todos ustedes serviles de la guerrilla*"). It named 17 members of human rights and trade union organizations as "military targets" including human rights activists Carolina Rubio, Príncipe Gabriel González and María Cardona, trade unionists Martha Cecilia Díaz, Javier Correa and Nicanor Arciniegas.

On 23 April, José Humberto Torres, a lawyer for the Committee of Solidarity for Political Prisoners (*Fundación Comité de Solidaridad con los Presos Políticos*, FCSPP), and Jesús Tovar, a leading member of the CUT in Atlántico Department, on Colombia's northern coast, received a death threat via email, signed by a group also calling itself the Black Eagles (*Aguilas Negras al Rearme*). The threat, dated 21 April, accused them of being guerrillas and said that "The demobilization has not weakened us; on the contrary it has rearmed us – a bullet for you" (*El desmovilizarnos no nos ha debilitado por el contrario nos ha rearmado...bala para ustedes*). It also said, "Look, son-of-a-bitch Jose Humberto, take care, wherever we see you we will give it to you" (*Mira a hijueputa de Jose Humberto que se cuide, donde lo veamos lo damos...*). It also warned members of other human rights and trade union organizations not to speak out and named FCSPP members María Cedeño and Nicolás Castro as people they are keeping under surveillance.

During Colombia's 40-year-old armed conflict, human rights organizations, trade unions and other social organizations have often been labelled as guerrilla collaborators or supporters by the security forces and paramilitaries. Human rights abuses against trade unionists often coincide with periods of labour dispute. International Workers' Day on 1 May is a period of intense activity in the trade union movement. Twenty-two Colombian trade unionists have been killed so far this year, most recently Jesús Heberto Caballero Ariza, a

member of the Atlántico branch of the union of SENA Public Sector Employees (*Sindicato de Empleados públicos del SENA, SINDESENA*). He had been kidnapped, and is believed to have received death threats in the months before his death. His body was found on 17 April, apparently showing signs of torture.

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

- calling on the authorities to guarantee the safety of José Humberto Torres, Jesus Tovar, Javier Correa, Carolina Rubio, Príncipe Gabriel González, María Cedeño, Nicolás Castro, Martha Cecilia Díaz, Nicanor Arciniegas and other members of the CUT, other trade unions and human rights organizations, CPDH and FCSPP, in the Departments of Santander and Atlántico, using all measures deemed appropriate by those at risk;
- calling for full and impartial investigations into the death threats received on 22 and 23 April, the results of which should be made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- calling for decisive action to confront and dismantle paramilitary groups and investigate and break their links with the security forces, in line with repeated UN recommendations;
- calling on the authorities to produce policy and plans, in conjunction with human rights defenders, to guarantee their safety according to the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights and Responsibilities of Individuals, Groups and Institutions to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and to make these plans public.

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

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

Director of the Presidential Programme for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law

Dr. Carlos Franco Echevarría

Director del Programa Presidencial de Derechos Humanos y Derecho Internacional Humanitario

Vicepresidencia De La República De Colombia, Calle 7 No 6-54, Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 565 9797

Salutation: Dear Dr. Franco Echevarría/Estimado Dr. Franco Echevarría

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:

FCSPP

Calle 26 No. 4 A-45 piso 12 torre KLM,

Bogotá, D.C., 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 11 June 2008.