

URGENT ACTION

DEFENDER AT RISK AFTER HOUSE BREAK-IN

On 13 May, information documenting human rights abuses was stolen from the home of Danilo Rueda, a Colombian human rights defender. He is a member of the organization Inter-Church Commission of Justice and Peace, whose members have previously received death threats.

On 13 May, Colombian human rights defender and member of the NGO Inter-Church Commission of Justice and Peace (*Comisión Intereclesial de Justicia y Paz*), **Danilo Rueda**, had his home in Bogotá broken into. He returned to find books thrown on the floor, folders open and his computer running. No valuables were stolen but two USB memory sticks were missing. The information on the memory sticks included information about the joint military and paramilitary operation "Génesis", in February 1997, which resulted in the killing and enforced disappearance of many civilians. The NGO's office in Curvaradó, Chocó Department, was also broken-into at the end of March.

The Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission works with Afro-descendant and Indigenous communities living in and around the Curvaradó, Jiguamiandó and Cacarica River Basins in Chocó, to support them to keep hold of their land in disputes with economic interests and paramilitaries. On 18 April, Danilo Rueda and the NGO were accused by a former community council member of being guerrillas and of trying to get the land for themselves. The person that accused them is reportedly linked to a former military commander, retired general Rito Alejo del Río. Rito Alejo del Río has also repeatedly accused the members of the NGO of being guerrillas. Rito Alejo del Río is under criminal investigation for coordinating joint paramilitary and military strategies, including operation "Génesis". The existence of these operations was confirmed by former paramilitaries in court hearings on 11 and 12 May.

On 1 April **Gisela Cañas**, a lawyer working with the NGO received a text message death threat: "Listen Gisela bloody bitch...we know where you are and we will kill you for defending foolish things, we give you 48 hours to leave the country". She is working with Indigenous communities in Putumayo Department and the lower Atrato area in the north of Chocó Department.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Spanish or your own language:

- Express concern for the safety of Danilo Rueda, Gisela Cañas and other members of the Inter-Church Commission of Justice and Peace and urge the authorities to take measures to protect them, in strict accordance with their wishes;
- Call on the authorities to order a full and impartial investigation into break-ins of Danila Rueda's home and the Curvaradó office of the Inter-Church Commission of Justice and Peace, to publish the results and to bring those responsible to justice;
- Urge the authorities to state publicly that raids on the offices of civil society organizations will not be tolerated.
- Urge them to fulfil their obligations regarding the situation of human rights defenders, as laid out in the 1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 29 JUNE 2011 TO:

President

Señor Juan Manuel Santos
 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 Interior and Justice

Señor Germán Vargas Lleras
 Ministerio Del Interior y De Justicia
 Carrera 9a. No. 14-10, Bogotá
 Colombia

Fax: +57 1 599 8961

Salutation: Dear Minister Vargas/
 Estimado Sr. Ministro Vargas

And copies to:

Human rights organization
 Comisión Intereclesial de Justicia y Paz
 Calle 61A, No. 17-26 (Chapinero),
 Bogotá, Colombia

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
 INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission campaigns on behalf of civilian communities in conflict regions in Colombia, whose members have been killed, tortured or forced to flee from their homes by the security forces and paramilitary groups. Many of these communities have also been targeted by guerrilla groups.

The Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission has been supporting the cause of the Afro-descendant and Indigenous communities living in and around the Curvaradó, Jiguamiandó and Cacarica River Basins in the department of Chocó. These populations have faced repeated threats carried out by paramilitary forces advancing powerful economic interests.

Their human rights work with these communities and on important cases of impunity against senior members of the security forces has made them the target of threats and attacks. Over the years they have faced numerous attacks, including illegal break-in to their office, death threats to its members, attempts of forced disappearance, kidnappings, attempted killings, as well as judicial persecution and defamation campaigns.

On 26 March, Daniel Rueda was accused of being a liar by an army general delegated to represent Colombia in the hearings of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, when he denounced collusion of paramilitaries with the Colombian armed forces in Argelia, Cauca Department. Father Javier Giraldo and Father Alberto Franco, two priests who work with the organization, have also been victims of a defamation campaign.

During Colombia's 45-year-old armed conflict, members of human rights organizations, trade unions and other social organizations have often been labelled as guerrilla collaborators or supporters by the security forces and paramilitaries. As a result they are often killed, threatened or subjected to enforced disappearance. Guerrilla groups have also threatened or killed human rights defenders they consider to be siding with the enemy.

Other NGOs such as the National Movement of Victims of State Crimes, (*Movimiento Nacional de Víctimas de Crímenes de Estado, MOVICE*), Foundation Territory for Dignity in Life (*Fundación Territorios por Vida Digna*) and Network for Life and Human Rights in Cauca (*Red por la Vida y los Derechos Humanos en Cauca*) have also denounced the theft of sensitive information from their offices in recent months.

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